

French Romanticism and the Reinvention of Love

By

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Au charchour

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Abstract

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The dissertation focuses on French Romanticism as a space of experimentation for imagining alternative social contracts founded on the reinvention of heterosexual gender standards and sex-practices. By depicting the unhappy fate of heterosexual couples—whose love is challenged by sexual and gender norms, and expectations such as monogamous marriage, parenthood, and unequal domesticity,—novels by Germaine de Staël, George Sand, and Théophile Gautier articulate, I argue, a notion of “heterosexual trouble” by triggering a Romantic utopian vision of a non-normative heterosexuality. In chapters devoted to dandyism, I develop this idea by exploring the tensions in the efforts of authors such as Charles Baudelaire and Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly to define dandyism as a male preserve in spite of the advent, in their own texts, of the female dandy and her problematic relationship with her male counterpart. I include an analysis of style in my study, and argue that specific features of these works can be considered the formal inscription of the notion of “heterosexual trouble.” In addition, the dissertation extends

beyond the French literary context to consider Spanish Romanticism. I argue that the theme of “heterosexual trouble” can also be found in the works of Spanish authors such as Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Rosalia de Castro, and Carolina Coronado. In the final chapter, devoted to the reinvention of love in fin-de-siècle Decadent literature, I argue that the theme of “heterosexual trouble” is depicted through a parody of the language and practices of the new science of sexology. The dissertation approaches Romantic love through the perspective of both men and women in their reaction to a normative heterosexuality and shows men to be as tormented and frustrated (if not more so) by the dynamics of masculine domination as women are.

Introduction

“Les romans sont les dialogues socratiques de notre temps.”
Friedrich Schlegel

Rimbaud famously wrote in *Une saison en enfer* that “love has to be reinvented.” Although he was critical of Romantic authors,¹ I will argue in this dissertation that his call for a reinvention of love had in fact been addressed in French Romantic literature. Richard C. Sha opens his article “Romanticism and the sciences of perversion” by stating that “It is perhaps no real news that the Romantics were fascinated by non-reproductive or perverse forms of sexuality” (43). If Romanticism is indeed perceived as sexually transgressive, with many texts by Byron, Blake, Chateaubriand and Sand evoking incest, homoeroticism, polygamy and intergenerational love, the question of the heterosexual couple remains to be analyzed. In this dissertation, I will explore the Romantic politics of love by focusing on what I will articulate as the concept of heterosexual trouble. I will attempt to demonstrate that French Romantic literature can be seen as a space in which sexual and gender norms are challenged by heterosexual couples seeking to experience their love outside of the institution of marriage.

In her *Feminist Introduction to Romanticism*, Elizabeth Fay underlines the crucial role played by individualism in the Romantic sensibility:

Closely related to the question of inspiration is the notion of *individualism*. The Romantic artist discovered in himself a new conception of the self as not just part of society but standing in relation to society. [...] The idea of

¹ For instance in the letter to Paul Demeny, also known as *Lettre du voyant*. See Rimbaud.

a responsibility to assess society, particularly during the turmoil leading to the French Revolution, was driven by *radical questioning*, often also thought of as “transgression,” either of limits or of laws. This is the questioning of traditional institutions such as organized religion (the Anglican Church in particular), marriage (“free love,” the sincere sexual relation outside marriage, was promoted among some), and, ultimately (as in France), the monarchy. (11)

The radical questioning that Fay mentions as a consequence of a strong individualism includes the politics of love through a critique of marriage: it is this radical questioning in the field of love that I want to address through the dialectics of masculinity and femininity as it is developed in French Romantic literature.

Paradoxically, however, such individualism makes the Romantic subject, regardless of his/her sex, prone to a peculiar dispersion of the self. Blanchot’s definition of the Romantic temperament opens up a space for difference and queerness:

Il en résultera [...] ce caractère dit romantique qui, du reste, est très attrayant, dans la mesure où il lui manque précisément tout caractère, s’il n’est rien d’autre que l’impossibilité d’être quoi que ce soit de déterminé, de fixe, de sûr – d’où la frivolité, la gaieté, la pétulance, la folie : finalement, la bizarrerie et tout ce que Novalis condamnera, lorsqu’il reprochera lucidement à l’âme romantique de se rendre trop faible par dispersion et d’être efféminée. (525)

Romantic behaviour, or the Romantic soul, is queer at least in two respects: first because of its unstable identity and weirdness (“bizarrerie”), which is one of the salient characteristics of Romanticism generally, and second because of its “effeminacy,” which brings out a gender slippage: the choice of the word “effeminate” instead of “feminine” implies a problematic masculinity. The Romantic subject offers itself as a paradox: its essential characteristic is the very impossibility to be characterized as a fixed, knowable entity. The gender confusion evoked by the term “efféminée,” highlights this shunning of concrete gender categories such as masculinity and femininity. I will argue that the

dialectics of masculinity and femininity at stake in French Romantic literature is purposefully in contradiction with the concept of sexual difference between men and women.

Although Blanchot focuses mainly on German Romanticism, I would like to analyse the categories of gender and sexuality in French Romantic literature in order to argue that difference, as form and subject, is one of its main features as regards to heterosexuality. I will elaborate what is intrinsically queer about Romanticism, as it is realized in both style and content. I believe queerness is at the heart of the Romantic project because Romanticism, in its rejection of Classical norms, in its critical reception of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and in its embrace of artifice, madness and contradiction, articulated a modern crisis in rethinking the politics of love by troubling the dialectics of masculinity and femininity. An aphorism by Novalis, quoted by George Gusdorf in *Du néant à Dieu dans le savoir romantique*, sums up the queerness inherent in Romanticism: “Chaos et Eros, voilà la meilleure définition du Romantisme” (74). We shall not take Chaos and Eros separately, but combined in their dynamics. I will argue in the next chapters that in French Romanticism in particular, sexual disorder is his signature as a disruptive force: what is at stake is the call for a new politics of love, and the perceived disorder is the necessary consequence of the attempt to reject of a pre-existing sexual order. I will focus primarily on the deconstruction of heterosexuality as a theme and a style through the orchestration of heterosexual trouble.

In his “Lettre sur Julie,” Benjamin Constant pays a tribute to a dear friend recently passed away. As he recalls Julie’s life and meditates on her practice of love, this is how he ends up theorizing the role of love in women’s lives:

Presque toutes les femmes parlent bien sur l'amour : c'est la grande affaire de leur vie ; elles y appliquent tout leur esprit d'analyse, et cette finesse d'aperçu dont la nature les a douées pour les dédommager de la force. Mais comme elles ont un intérêt immédiat, elles ne sauraient être impartiales. Plus elles ont de pureté d'âme, plus elles sont portées à mettre aux liaisons de ce genre une importance, je ne dirai pas, pour ne scandaliser personne, exagérée, mais cependant en contraste avec l'état nécessaire de la société. (*Le romantisme* 91-2)

Constant understands that for women, love of is the utmost importance, but instead of wondering how and why society forces them to have no other destiny than being in love, he regrets that, when they write about it, they are biased. Constant coyly states that he wishes to avoid the term “exaggeration,” though this is precisely what he means. Moreover, he implies that if women’s laments were taken seriously, it would threaten the social order. I will argue, throughout my dissertation, that writing about love for Romantic authors means writing about its reinvention, and this is precisely, to challenge the social order. The works I will study offer the description of heterosexual trouble and articulate, through it, a critique of heteronormativity, figured as the foundation of society. But, contrary to what Constant seems to suggest, this call for a reinvention of love is not written by women against men; it is written by authors of both sexes for an audience of men and women.

The publication of the six issues of the *Athenaeum* from 1798 to 1800, corresponds to what both Foucault and Laqueur, from different perspectives, agree in presenting as a crucial historical transition: Foucault, in *Les mots et les choses*, locates the transition from the classic episteme to the modern one—a global change in the cultural perception of reality and knowledge—at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Laqueur, in *Making Sex*, locates the transition from the one-sex model to the two-sex model—

radicalizing the cultural impact of the concept of sexual difference—“sometime in the eighteenth century” (149).

Foucault’s distinction between utopia and heterotopia is helpful in assessing Romanticism’s reinvention of love:

Les utopies consolent : c’est que si elles n’ont pas de lieu réel, elles s’épanouissent pourtant dans un espace merveilleux et lisse ; elles ouvrent des cités aux vastes avenues, des jardins bien plantés, des pays faciles, même si leur accès est chimérique. *Les hétérotopies* inquiètent, sans doute parce qu’elles minent secrètement le langage, parce qu’elles empêchent de nommer ceci et cela, parce qu’elles brisent les noms communs ou les enchevêtrent, parce qu’elles ruinent d’avance la “ syntaxe ”, et pas seulement celle qui construit les phrases, – celle moins manifeste qui fait “ tenir ensemble ” (à côté et en face les uns des autres) les mots et les choses. (9)

The concept of heterosexual trouble, by which the heterosexual couple resists, through rejection or failure, heteronormativity, is an example of such a heterotopia: it subverts the ability of language to name, structure and preserve the gender and sexual rules that constitute heteronormativity.² I will argue that the constraints and coherence of the complementarity and separation of men and women are constantly undermined not just by the topic of heterosexual trouble but also through Romantic writing: the reinvention of love is fueled by a language working against the rhetoric of sexual difference and the political order of heteronormativity. In this case, still using Foucault’s terminology (*Les mots et les choses* 13), this study on the reinvention of love can also be read as an *epistemology* of heterosexuality in French Romantic literature.

Although Laqueur writes that “literature constitutes the problem of sexuality and is not just its imperfect mirror,” most of his discussion of the transition from the one-sex

² Foucault presents literature as a compensation for the loss of transparency of language, which can no longer be trusted in terms of knowledge and representation: “La dernière des compensations au niveau du langage, la plus importante, la plus inattendue aussi, c’est l’apparition de la littérature” (312-313).

model to the two-sex model is based on medical texts (17). He also writes in his introduction that the writings of Sade are helpful for understanding the persistence, or resistance, of the one-sex model vis-à-vis the two-sex model:

In some of the rhetoric of evolutionary biology, in the Marquis de Sade, in much of Freud, in slasher films, indeed in any discussion of gender, the modern invention of two distinct, immutable, and incommensurable sexes turns out to be less dominant than promised. (21)

Yet Laqueur does not discuss why and how literature (whether sadistic or not) plays this fundamental role in articulating the tensions between the two models, and more precisely the attempt to design an alternative space for a heterosexuality reluctant to adjust to the new paradigm of sexual difference: on the contrary, his analysis of texts by Rousseau, Diderot and Wollstonecraft are used to emphasize the shift towards the two-sex model. By focusing mainly on medical discourses and literature promoting sexual difference, Laqueur neglects the role played by Romantic literature not just in the transition from one model to the other one, but most importantly in its blurring of the shift in question. Indeed, as both models unite in the same political regime of masculine domination, and as French Romantic literature is interested in the radical critique of sexual and gender norms, whether associated with the one or two-sex models, the articulation of heterosexual trouble does not fit Laqueur's paradigmatic shift.³

According to Sha, Romanticism established a critical exchange with scientists of its time—especially in the rejection of the biological concept of function—being reluctant to confirm and illustrate medical theories on sexual health and reproduction:

By distancing sexual and aesthetic pleasure from purpose, moreover, the Romantics could make eroticism a site for thinking about mutuality rather

³ In the third chapter of his *Perverse Romanticism. Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832*, Sha demonstrates that Laqueur's paradigm is not relevant to assess the perversion inherent in Romanticism.

than hierarchy. Perversity thus demands nothing less than the reimagination of human relationships generally. (2)

The consequence of a critical rejection of the purpose of the function led the Romantics to pair the quest for beauty and the quest for pleasure as the same resistance to the duty to produce and reproduce for the sake of usefulness. Although Sha is right to imply that such perversion leads to the rethinking of an alternate society based on a different practice of love, his book is devoted mainly to the critical connections between Romantic artists and scientists: by the end of his argument, the “reimagination of human relationships” remains to be articulated. My dissertation is devoted to articulating the attempt to reinvent love as it happens in French Romantic literature.

Romanticism, as a theory of gender and sexuality, experiments a new politics of love in an ambiguous way: embracing the project of a non-normative heterosexuality but failing to articulate a coherent, distinctive alternative. The concept of heterosexual trouble challenges the legitimacy of heteronormativity, but without ever solving the problem: “le romantisme finit mal, c’est vrai, mais c’est qu’il est essentiellement ce qui commence” (Blanchot, *L’entretien infini* 517). What matters is not so much the—unknown—destination, but the questioning which prompts the resistance and creativity: just as the role of visionary prophet was assigned to Romantic poets for thinking social justice (Romantic authors as inspired readers of Lamennais, Saint-Simon and Fourier⁴), I want to argue that French Romantic authors adopted the role of what we might call the “queer prophet,” calling for a reinvention of love beyond gender norms and the

⁴ In *Fondements du savoir romantique*, Gusdorf comments on Victor Hugo’s political trajectory and concludes: “Le romantisme, en France, fera cause commune avec l’idéologie de gauche, alors qu’en Allemagne il se fige dans une attitude traditionaliste et catholiciante” (152).

monogamous, reproductive standards of heterosexuality. It is the dialectics of femininity and masculinity as they are illustrated in this alternative literary space that I will explore.

In her book *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, Lynn Hunt crosses the psychoanalytical concept of Family Romance with historical material as well as painting and literary criticism in order to map the political unconscious of the French Revolution as a family drama for the Nation. Among the issues involved in this family crisis—abolition of the father, competition between brothers—is the central question of women:

The problem that Freud saw emerging after the murder of the father—what to do with the women—proved very difficult to resolve. Republican men were no more misogynist than their predecessors, but they faced a new ideological challenge. If patriarchy, custom, and tradition were no longer adequate justifications for authority in the state or for the father's authority over his children, then just what was the justification for women's separate, different, and unequal roles in both the family and the state? (123)

If the French nation is to be conceived as a family, then the Revolution, with its call for a new social contract and its symbolic rejection of paternal authority, made it theoretically possible and legitimate for women to claim their own rights in terms of freedom, equality and solidarity along with their brothers. But the family drama got worse, and the negotiation of a new social order ended in the Terror. Likewise, the possibility of a sexual revolution raised more anxiety than excitement among the brothers who preferred to send their sisters back to the position of wives and mothers with no right to vote or to participate in politics. Hunt argues in her last chapter, "Rehabilitating Family," that the classical model of the nuclear, patriarchal family which could have been challenged and modified by the ideology of human rights ended up being reinforced and promoted as a way to recover from the trauma of the French Revolution. The new Civil Code, adopted

in 1804, curtailed women's rights even more and divorce became illegal again in 1816. The state authorities indeed chose to strengthen heterosexual relations and alienate women's call for new freedom.

I will argue that French Romanticism, as a literary and political movement in ambiguous reaction to the French Revolution, was a site of resistance against this rehabilitation of family. Within the family romance of the French Revolution, Romantic authors, I shall argue, play a queer role: they articulate a deconstruction of sexual difference based on a critique of the traditional, patriarchal, heterosexual couple. At the same time that Napoleon, followed by the Restoration Monarchy, promoted the family as a model of strength and stability for the Nation, I will argue that French Romanticism opened up a space in which heterosexuality is a failure, in which marriage is denied and criticized, in which heroines are not mothers and heroes are anti-heroes, in which the dialectics of masculinity and femininity aim at designing a non-normative heterosexuality.

In the literary critique of sexual difference that happens in French Romanticism, style matters: a study of the text is essential in analyzing this critique. In his foreword to the collection of essays *Straight Writ Queer, Non-Normative Expressions of Heterosexuality in Literature*, Calvin Thomas makes an important statement that I will discuss further in this thesis: "literary expression itself queers heterosexuality, [...] writing itself, always already beside itself, is what can never define but disturb identity" (4). Although I do not agree with the idea that every kind of literature is in itself queer, I want nevertheless to argue that some specific texts of French Romanticism elaborate a queering of heterosexuality, and more precisely illustrate a queer heterosexuality. The

stylistic impact of this illustration can be distinguished through specific features that I will call and define as textual androgyny.

This Romanticism is not essentially a female, or “women only,” Romanticism, but one represented by authors of different sexes. The adventures of the androgynous, bisexual *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, in the novel written by Théophile Gautier with a preface-manifesto against the stupidity and prudery of the bourgeoisie, can be considered the example *par excellence* of the preaching of disorder in terms of style and content. As I will argue in the second chapter, even misogynist writers like Baudelaire and Barbey d’Aurevilly have preached, in their own way, the advent of sexual disorder, a dialectics of masculinity and femininity which challenged both gender and sexual norms. In the end, their explicit misogyny cannot obscure their important contribution to the deconstruction of sexual difference.

The creative works of utopians like Fourier, Saint-Simon and Lamennais were widely discussed at the beginning of the nineteenth century and inspired ideas of social justice and feminism among Romantic writers. Saint-Simon’s feminism was essentially political and spiritual: he and his disciples were in favor of equality between the sexes and called for a religion of the universal mother. Fourier’s feminism was more concerned with the necessary advent of a sexual revolution: rejection of marriage, promotion of non-monogamous, non-reproductive and non-heterosexual acts.⁵ If Mme de Staël died too early to make the connection with these theorists, George Sand’s feminism was affected by contemporary utopians. In his *Epopée Saint-Simonienne*, Bernard Jouve devotes a

⁵ Fourier praises, among other things, sexual service to old people, free expression of perversions and the cult to a holy prostitution.

whole chapter to the influence of Saint-Simon on George Sand. In one of her letters sent to a disciple of Saint-Simon in 1835, Sand is euphoric:

J'aime vos prolétaires parce qu'ils sont prolétaires et puis parce que je crois qu'il y a en eux la semence de la vérité, le germe de la civilisation future. [...] Dites-leur que je veux faire connaissance avec tous, dites que je ne serai plus femme-esclave, mais femme libre autant que notre méchante législation le permet. (302)

In this quote, just as in the famous epigraph to *Les Misérables* which is dedicated to children, women and proletarians, the social questions of class and sex are not opposed but combined. In chapter 1, I will argue through an analysis of *Lélia* and *Isidora*, that if Sand was preaching disorder in her novels, this disorder was just part of her dialectics aiming at a new sexual order. I will decipher the kind of heterotopic society constructed in Sand's novels, and her belief in a new politics of love beyond her critique of heteronormativity.

More than any previous theories, queer theory has been adamant in the deconstruction of the concept of sexual difference as the matrix of an oppression labeled heteronormativity. If the term heteronormativity was coined by queer theory—precisely by Michael Warner in his *Fear of a Queer Planet*⁶—its content was defined in the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s by two feminist lesbians: Adrienne Rich in *Compulsory Heterosexuality*⁷ and Monique Wittig in a series of essays published under the title of *The Straight Mind*. Heteronormativity is the result of an essentialist definition of sexual difference, dividing humanity into two essentially different sexes, and attaching to this essential difference a set of cultural and political meanings. Men and women are different because of the difference of their anatomical organs. This difference implies also that

⁶ In the introduction, Warner quotes Wittig and her theory of heterosexuality as a social contract (page xxi)

⁷ “I am suggesting that heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a *political institution*” (9).

men and women are fundamentally different in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, and that the elementary structures of society rely on the combination of this difference, on men being masculine and sexually attracted to women, themselves being feminine and sexually attracted to men. Heteronormativity does not consist just in privileging heterosexuality over any other form of sexualities, but more precisely in defining a set of rules concerning gender and sexuality which establish that, ideally, everyone should fit one model of heterosexuality: it is a normative practice of heterosexuality whose goal is to confirm an essentialist theory of sexual difference. In a heteronormative system, each sex is automatically linked to its corresponding gender: a man can only be masculine; a woman can only be feminine. Consequently, gender is not a social concept because the body of each sex *naturally* produces its gender. Likewise, sexuality is automatically linked to the sex of the human subject: the sexuality of every man is oriented towards women in a procreative, monogamous way, and the sexuality of every woman is oriented towards men in the same way. By enforcing a procreative and monogamous (hetero)sexuality, heteronormativity implies not only a politics of gender and sexuality through the concept of sexual difference, but also a politics of kinship in which women are assigned the duty to reproduce: they are “given” domestic space and domestic chores in order to achieve reproduction, whereas men are given public space and political agency in order to achieve production. Thus, the concept of heteronormativity separates gender, sexuality and cultural agency depending on the sex of the subject and in the name of the naturalness of sexual difference, forbidding any fusion or confusion between the sexes because it would challenge the superiority of one

sex, gender and type of sexual attraction over another one (men over women, masculine over feminine, heterosexual over homosexual).

Given this definition of heteronormativity, it is clear that women, homosexuals and transgender subjects do not benefit from a concept that institutes heterosexual masculine domination as a political regime. Monique Wittig, in an essay, “La catégorie de sexe,” included in *The Straight Mind*, does a critique of heterosexuality not as a sexual orientation *per se*, but rather as the key concept for articulating the notion of sexual difference as a social contract involving the exploitation of women:

L'idéologie de la différence des sexes opère dans notre culture comme censure, en ce qu'elle masque l'opposition qui existe sur le plan social entre les hommes et les femmes en lui donnant la nature pour cause. [...] La catégorie de sexe est une catégorie politique qui fonde la société en tant qu'hétérosexuelle. (42)

What the conceptual analysis of heteronormativity reveals is that notions such as heterosexuality, sex and sexual difference, which were taken for granted on the grounds of their apparent naturalness, are actually constructed from a historical and social point of view, and thus subject to a deconstruction that would make explicit their political foundations.

Following on from Adrienne Rich and Monique Wittig, queer theorists have extensively studied how the concept of heteronormativity specifically oppresses women, homosexuals and transgender subjects:⁸ the study of this oppression requires many perspectives including, among other fields, feminism, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, and politics. The homosexual subject, whether gay or lesbian, and the transgender subject, whether operated or not, have been two important human

⁸ Among them, Teresa de Lauretis (*Technologies of Gender*), Gayle Rubin (*Thinking Sex*), Judith Butler (*Bodies that Matter*), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (*Epistemology of the Closet*).

tropes for locating and discussing the dynamics of heteronormativity. From Esther Newton's *Mother Camp* to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, the study of queer people has been the most constant and relevant approach to heteronormativity and its discontents. However, since the publication in 1995 of *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, by Jonathan Ned Katz, followed in 2000 by *Straight with a Twist, Queer Theory and the Subject of Heterosexuality*, edited by Calvin Thomas, heterosexuality has been distinguished from heteronormativity and become a new, exciting subject of inquiry for queer studies. In his *Invention de la culture hétérosexuelle*, Louis-Georges Tin observes that the question asked by Foucault in his *Histoire de la sexualité* obscures another question that needs to be addressed:

Le problème n'est pas tant " Pourquoi parlons-nous tellement de sexualité ? ", question que pose Michel Foucault au début de *La Volonté de savoir*, mais " Pourquoi parlons-nous si peu de l'hétérosexualité ? ", question qui constitue le préalable de cette étude. En ce sens, la volonté de savoir (la sexualité) dissimule en réalité une volonté de cacher (l'hétérosexualité). (192)

Heterosexual people are also subject to the forces of heteronormativity, and struggle between the reluctance to adjust sexual and gender standards of a heterosexual normalcy and the need to fit this norm.⁹ This struggle is the point of my thesis, in which I study the emergence of a queer heterosexuality in French Romantic and, to a lesser extent, Decadent literature: heterosexuality is not synonymous with heteronormativity, which refers to a political regime based on masculine domination. As one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, one is not born heteronormative, but is raised to become one. The heterosexual characters from the Romantic studied here end up being rebels, even

⁹ Here Tin is close to Gayle Rubin's essays *Traffic in Women* and *Thinking Sex*, in which she recognizes that heterosexual subjects, whether males or females, should also be interested in liberating themselves from sexual and gender norms.

unhappy ones, against the sexual and gender norms that structure the heteronormative regime.

The ideological trap would be that the study of a queer heterosexuality would end up, ironically, strengthening a heterosexual “privilege” as a norm against which everything else—“perversions” or “resistance”—is measured. I will argue, however, that the point of queering heterosexuality in French Romantic literature is precisely to disconnect heterosexual characters from the essentialist category of heterosexuality, in order to describe their position as a challenge to heteronormativity: this challenge, even when it ends in despair or tragedy, never promotes monogamous, compulsory marriage based on sexual reproduction and fixed gendered identities. What is ultimately significant is not so much the difficulty of eliminating heteronormativity completely, but the articulation of a constant effort, on the part of heterosexual couples in love, to fight, sometimes to their very deaths, the logic of heteronormativity: my use of the concept of heterosexual trouble focuses mainly on this resistance to heteronormativity, rather than on its outcome. I will demonstrate that French Romantic literature is the space in which heteronormativity is challenged at its very heart, in the heterosexual couple itself. In these texts, heterosexual characters can be no less queer than “traditional” figures of queerness (homosexual and transgender characters), to the point that, in the case of *Lélia* and *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, for instance, it becomes impossible and meaningless to categorize the eponymous characters as heterosexuals at all: their heterosexuality is so queer that it can be hardly recognized as such. Far from affirming the privileged status of heterosexuality, this queering of the heterosexual regime within the space of these works abolishes its normative status vis à vis its “others.”

In his book *L'Eros romantique*, Pierre Laforgue offers a comparative analysis between what he calls the *éros libertin* and the *éros romantique*. Whereas the *éros libertin* is the idle game of seduction between aristocrats of the same social class under the ancien regime, respecting and sharing the same codes in their “hunt,” the post-revolutionary *éros romantique* is an effort to practice love beyond these codes. *Eros romantique* is not just as a social practice based on the power relationship between masters of seduction, but an exploration of what becomes of love when it is no longer practiced as a cruising game.

Dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIème siècle le libertinage peut être littéralement défini comme un jeu de société ; il est une pratique sociale, en particulier il est solidaire du statut aristocratique de ceux qui s’y livrent. [...] C’est de ce libertinage des *Liaisons dangereuses* qu’ont hérité les romantiques. C’est contre lui qu’ils ont élaboré leur érotique. (28-29)

Alongside their will to liberate literature from the rigid codes that structured Classicism, Romantic authors also wished to liberate the experience of love from the conventions associated with *libertinage*. Instead of losing one’s virtue or one’s honor (defined as social values) by surrendering to the seductive assault of a expert in seduction, the new danger became to lose one’s sanity or one emotional well-being by exposing oneself to the tempest of love. While in courtly love, love becomes its own absolute, it is strictly codified, especially in terms of the gendering of the man and the woman.¹⁰ In French Romantic texts, in contrast, codes are not replaced by new codes, but the constraint of codes is abandoned altogether and an experimental, non-dogmatic approach to articulating sex, gender and desire is posited. If, as Blanchot asserted, Romanticism is about aiming at something new, but it is doomed to end in failure, I argue that, when it comes to sexual politics, it is also an attempt to reject a former model, heteronormativity,

¹⁰ See Tin’s analysis of courtly love in *L’invention de la culture hétérosexuelle*.

but that what could be practiced beyond these norms is a destination unknown and never reached. In the works I discuss here, the utopia of a new love is coveted and imagined but never found, which locates the Romantic experiment between two failures: a failure of the heteronormative model which is rejected, and a failure in the search for an alternative model. But these two failures do not have the same meaning: the heteronormative failure is due to the political rejection of an oppression, whereas the second failure could be associated with the experience of love as an unachievable fantasy.

In her seminal book *The Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick locates at the end of the nineteenth century the crucial moment of a historical turning point in Western civilization: the proliferation of discourses on the definitions of, and problematic dialectics between, homosexuality and heterosexuality and how they inform the constitution of modern Western identity:

I'll argue that the now chronic modern crisis of homo / heterosexual definition has affected our culture through its ineffaceable marking particularly of the categories secrecy / disclosure, knowledge / ignorance, private / public, masculine / feminine, majority / minority, innocence / initiation, natural / artificial, new / old, discipline / terrorism, canonic / noncanonic, wholeness / decadence, urbane / provincial, domestic / foreign, health / illness, same / different, active / passive, in / out, cognition / paranoia, art / kitsch, utopia / apocalypse, sincerity / sentimentality, and voluntariness / addiction. (11)

It is actually a disputable point whether what Sedgwick calls the epistemology of the closet started being the crucial, yet implicit, almost clandestine theme of literature at the end of the nineteenth century: it appears that the notions of the “open secret,”¹¹ repressed homosexual desire within homosocial bonding and the epistemology of the closet are

¹¹ Laforgue argues that the dynamics of unveiling a sexual secret is at the core of Romantic love, including homosexual love: « Significativement un motif traverse ces romans, celui du secret. Par nature le secret doit rester secret et cependant exige d'être dévoilé; c'est dans la tension entre ces deux pôles que la plupart de nos textes trouvent sens. » (19)

already illustrated around 1830 in Romantic works written by canonical authors. In *Claude Gueux*, for instance, Victor Hugo depicts the passion between Claude Gueux and Albin, two men in jail, in order to address the issue of social justice; in Stendhal's *Armance*, inspired by the Marquis de Custine's scandalous outing, a man runs away from his fiancée and the institution of heterosexual marriage for reasons he can not even confess—sexual impotence, repressed homosexuality?—; in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, D'Albert finds himself in a homosexual panic because he is in love with another man, Théodore. Other novels and novellas give a consistency and an illustration of the epistemology of the closet well before fin-de-siècle literature, which appears more as a radical extension of the Romantic exploration of forbidden, impossible love than the creation of a new articulation of Western homosexual identity.¹² Nonetheless, whether the emergence of a problematic homosexual identity and the consequential dynamics of an epistemology of the closet are a turning point in the history of Western culture at the end of the nineteenth century or not, the crucial moment of the “modern crisis of homo / heterosexual definition” was only possible as the consequence of what preceded it: the no less modern crisis of heteronormativity that happened in French Romantic literature earlier in the century. The study of novels by Staël, Sand and Gautier, in the first chapter, will articulate the concept of heterosexual trouble and its relevance to understanding the Romantic politics of love.

In the second chapter, I will study dandyism as it is theorized and illustrated in the works of Barbey d'Aurevilly and Baudelaire in order to assess whether dandyism, in its pretention to masculine self-sufficiency, presents a solution to heterosexual trouble. I will argue that the ban on female dandyism at stake in the works of Barbey and Baudelaire

¹² See Philippe Lejeune.

does not prove to be successful and that, ironically, it reintroduces the concept of heterosexual trouble by confronting a male dandy with a female one.

In the third chapter, I analyze the stylistic role of heterosexual trouble in the prose of the works previously studied. I argue that heterosexual trouble is not just a subject, but also has a style with specific features—a style that I call textual androgyny. I will also examine classic works of dandyism (Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Baudelaire's *La Fanfarlo*, and Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Les diaboliques*) for their characteristics of style. I thus describe and define stylistic dandyism as a thread uniting the works from this corpus of texts.

As Romanticism is a European movement, I devote the fourth chapter to a comparative study with another national Romantic literature in order to investigate the possible transnational significance of the concept of heterosexual trouble. Because of the connections—historical, political and cultural—between France and Spain in the early nineteenth-century and the importance of Spain and “Spanishness” in the French Romantic imaginary, I study the dialectics of masculinity and femininity as the articulation of heterosexual trouble in three Spanish Romantic novels (Avellaneda's *Dos mujeres*, Coronado's *La sigea*, and Castro's *La hija del mar*).

In the last chapter, I turn to the “Dark Romanticism” of Decadence¹³, in which I study heterosexual trouble and the reinvention of love based on a very particular heterosexual couple: the male doctor and the allegedly mad female patient. This couple is a topos of Decadent literature and illustrates the growing importance of medicine through sexology. Based on an examination of Baudelaire's *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, Lorrain's *La*

¹³ See Mario Praz.

dame aux lèvres rouges, and Rachilde's *La jongleuse*, I argue that the theme of heterosexual trouble is articulated through the parody of sexology.

When it comes to the resistance against heteronormativity, it is clear that women have politically much more to gain than men. Yet this does not make the critique of heteronormativity a struggle of women against men. Rather both men and women felt the need to reinvent love and challenge the rules of heterosexuality. As Latouche writes in his novel *Fragoletta*, in which the main character is a hermaphrodite: “la chaîne de l’esclavage a toujours deux bouts, et elle pèse aussi à la main de celui qui le conduit” (295). I argue throughout that men also suffer from heteronormativity and are instrumental in questioning its norms. In the end, Romantic love cannot be interpreted solely as the battle between sexes. In *The Male Malady*, Margaret Waller asserts that Romantic love fails because the hero chooses the wrong person: “The mal du siècle protagonist must suffer the consequences of choosing the wrong partner” (15). But as I will attempt to show, this “wrong” choice is essential to (perhaps even voluntary so) the critique of heteronormativity. A feminist perspective would argue that women in Romantic novels are miserable because their male lovers do not understand that they dream of something other than domestic duties and motherhood, and the texts studied here will certainly provide material to confirm this. But Romanticism is also about contradiction and disorder, when both the male and female subjects decide to love each other while knowing—and sometimes enjoying—the prospect that it is likely to end in failure. Corinne, in Mme de Staël’s eponymous novel, knows that her passion for Oswald is not the choice of happiness. Although she is courted by Italian men who want her to

keep on being autonomous as an artist, she chooses Lord Nelvil who wants her to sacrifice her career for him:

Corinne avait tort, pour son bonheur, de s'attacher à un homme qui devait contrarier son existence naturelle, et réprimer plutôt qu'exciter ses talents ; mais il est aisé de comprendre comment une femme qui s'est beaucoup occupée des lettres et des beaux-arts, peut aimer dans un homme des qualités et même des goûts qui diffèrent des siens. (431-32)

Corinne's unhappiness in loving someone so inconsistent with her own ambitions is ironically a consequence of her status as an exceptional woman: she is attracted to difference because she is an artist ("une femme qui s'est beaucoup occupée des lettres et des beaux-arts"), the essence of which is the imaginative ability to go outside of herself. Instead of looking for self-replication, Corinne's ability to love depends on her quest to embrace difference, even if this difference leads to a tragedy. It may appear, at the end of our journey through Queer Romanticism, that the concept of heterosexual trouble contributes to an understanding of love as the challenge of alterity: the attempt to move beyond the "self" conceived as a fixed, "normative," entity, and to embrace, in Baudelaire's famous phrase,¹⁴ the other through the fantasy of difference—a movement which marks the birth of the modern subject.

¹⁴ "Les foules," *Le spleen de Paris, Petits poèmes en prose*.

Chapter 1:

Heterosexual Trouble

“Que d’inexplicables contradictions dans les sentiments que vous m’inspirez !”
Rousseau, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*

In her book *George Sand and Idealism*, Naomi Schor addresses the concept of idealism which was used to dismiss Sand’s writing and exclude her from the canon. Idealism was gendered as feminine whereas the “noble” genre, Realism, was gendered as masculine. Arguing that Sand’s works should be reevaluated and incorporated into the canon, Schor articulates a new definition of idealism to offer a positive critique of Sand’s fiction: Schor deconstructs the notion that idealism is a minor category appropriate for women writers and argues that, instead, Sand’s idealism is a feminist critique of a reality based on male domination and represented in realist writing. In this case, idealism is not the denial of reality, in the realm of fantasy devoid of any logic, but rather the attempt to transform reality instead of simply describing it: “Rethinking idealism is a way of reclaiming its utopian dimension, the ability of an ideal to empower and to mobilize the disenfranchised” (14).

The five novels I analyse in this chapter have in common such an idealism and apply it specifically to the field of gender and sexuality; they all claim an individual freedom—“La liberté, en effet, tient étroitement à l’ordre de l’idéal” (Paul Bénichou, *Le temps des prophètes* 19) —which not only resists sexual and gender norms, but also advances the possibility of a new politics of love. *Delphine* and *Corinne*, by Germaine de

Staël, *Lélia* and *Isidora*, by George Sand, and *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, by Théophile de Gautier, are all Romantic novels that are an “idealist” rejection of the “reality” of an assigned heterosexuality which, as a social contract, is not accepted by its modern subjects. These subjects are willing to question the categories of sex and gender in order to re-invent love. In each of these novels, female characters, in spite of being sexually attracted to men, reject the heterosexual prescriptions—marriage, household and motherhood—and associate heterosexuality with an alienation of their agency as free-thinking subjects. In so doing, they do not rely on resignation but rather trigger a crisis which encompasses their male lovers, confronting both subjects of the heterosexual couple with the utopian call for a new politics of love. This “heterosexual trouble” is a crucial component in the plot of these novels: in them, literature became an idealist space for a rethinking of love. This could not happen without challenging the normative standards surrounding the practice of heterosexuality. Thus we find another instance in which Romanticism is not just a literary genre, but a historical moment in the formation of modern subjectivity.¹

In his book *Le temps des prophètes*, Bénichou analyses Romanticism as the historical moment at which literature becomes invested with a spiritual mission: “la promotion de la littérature au rang de pouvoir spirituel des temps modernes” (7). This new, profane gospel calls for a global change of humanity in the name of Progress, relying on the individual’s personal synthesis of reason and passion in the quest for a new

¹ See Gusdorf: “L’âge romantique consacre l’avènement d’un style de vie, d’intelligence et de sensibilité, appelé à devenir pour la suite des temps une constante de culture” (*Fondements du savoir romantique* 54) ; Blanchot: “Commençant de se rendre manifeste à elle-même grâce à la déclaration romantique, la littérature va désormais porter en elle cette question – la discontinuité ou la différence comme forme (527); and Benichou: “Ils [the writers of the “grande cohorte romantique”] annoncent une autre époque de la poésie, une altération du rôle et des pouvoirs que le romantisme victorieux attribuait au poète” (*Le temps des prophètes* 9).

order: in this way, according to Bénichou, new times require modern prophets. The old sexual order, grounded in the laws of nature, persisted in spite of the rupture associated with the French revolution. Geneviève Fraisse, in her essays *Muse de la raison* and *Les deux gouvernements, la famille et la cité*, has highlighted the historical evolution through which patriarchy made its way beyond the French revolution.² By maintaining the patriarchal family as the only legitimate model, this sexual order appears in these novels as a failure and a source of unhappiness. The failure of heterosexuality is not the failure of desire between men and women, but the failure of a social contract that does not respect the new aspirations of modernity, in which women reclaim equal agency and force men to rethink the practice of love.

Although the terminology I use (heteronormativity, heterosexuality as a social contract) is anachronistic because sexology did not exist and had not yet coined the concept of heterosexuality, I want to argue that French Romanticism articulates nonetheless, within its own terms, the tumultuous birth of the modern concept of heterosexuality and, more precisely, the attempt to resist the normative process at stake in its creation. As Foucault writes in *La volonté de savoir*, “là où il y a pouvoir, il y a résistance”: French Romanticism, and more specifically the novels studied in this chapter, illustrate both the modern model of heteronormativity and the modern resistance to it. This tension between surrendering a heterosexual normalcy and struggling for a new politics of love is illustrated by one of the first French Romantic novels, Senancour’s

² While Geneviève Fraisse focuses more on the fields of history and political science, other essays focus on literature to give an account of the same persistence of patriarchy in modern times. For example, see Janet Beizer and Catherine Nesci.

Obermann, published in 1804, whose influence on Sand's *Lélia* is well known.³ In this epistolary novel, the main character, a lonely, melancholic man who left France to live out his spleen in the Swiss Alps, warns women against the trap of love: in itself love is good, but in the context of masculine domination, for a woman to love a man is to embrace her own alienation. Expecting love in such a context should not be the only destiny for a noble subject. Although *Obermann* is a man, his analysis of love reveals a political perspective on the dynamics of power between the sexes, and a call for rebellion on the side of the alienated subject, the woman:

Femmes aimables, ne sentirez-vous pas ce que vous valez ? – Le besoin d'aimer ! – Il ne vous excuse pas. Le premier des besoins est de ne pas s'avilir, et les besoins du cœur doivent eux-mêmes vous rendre indifférent quiconque n'a de l'homme autre chose que de n'être pas femme. [...] Si l'homme est l'ami naturel des femmes, les femmes n'ont souvent pas de plus funeste ennemi. Tous les hommes ont le sens de leur sexe ; mais attendez celui qui en a l'âme. (404)

Femmes sincères et aimantes, belles de toutes les grâces extérieures et des charmes de l'âme, si faites pour être purement, tendrement, constamment aimées !... n'aimez pas. (406)

Man should be a friend, but as a matter of fact, he is the enemy because he turns love into a game for his own pleasure. Locking his female lover up in the private space of the household and asking her to occupy herself with motherhood and domestic chores are normative ways used by a man to assign his wife a limited, unequal freedom. Man is responsible for making love alienating, but because women also have a soul, and should be proud of what they are worth (“Ne sentirez-vous pas ce que vous valez ?”), they are encouraged to end this voluntary servitude, thus rejecting the abusive power of men (“n'aimez pas”). If love is a noble feeling, it should be appropriate only between noble

³ Sand published a preface for the 1833 edition of *Obermann*, in which she noted the themes of seclusion and inexhaustible desire: “Oberman, au contraire, c'est la rêverie dans l'impuissance, la perpétuité du désir ébauché” (4) and “C'est une âme qui n'a pas pris le temps de vivre” (6).

subjects of desire. Moreover, if heterosexual trouble could be synthesized in one sentence, and in the most confusing way, then Obermann should be quoted when he advises women not to pay attention to a man who is a man just for not being a woman (“Le premier des besoins est de ne pas s’avilir, et les besoins du cœur doivent eux-mêmes vous rendre indifférent quiconque n’a de l’homme autre chose que de n’être pas femme”). A man who would think of his masculinity as based on the complete exclusion of womanhood is judged—by a male character—as unworthy of being loved by a woman. The sentence can be read as a rejection of heterosexual love as the necessary combination of radically different genders, masculinity and femininity, leaving hope for another dialectics in which fusion or confusion between the genders would help articulate a different politics of love between the sexes. Instead of approaching the woman as the absolute Other, Obermann wishes men were able to define their manhood not on the exclusion of, but rather on the attempt to embrace and include womanhood. Therefore Obermann suggests that women should refuse to love men as long as men do not understand how to respect and understand them. This, however, would require a critique of the concept of sexual difference. It is this refusal of conventional love and this call for its reinvention that connects the five novels studied here.

Germaine de Staël or the tragedy of being a *femme d'esprit* in *Delphine* and *Corinne*.

Two years before Senancour published *Obermann*, Staël published her first novel *Delphine*, a successful and scandalous epistolary novel in two volumes, which launched her career as a writer. *Delphine* infuriated Bonaparte—who was not yet Emperor—because of its so-called promotion of Protestantism in France. This work, much more than *Obermann*, develops the idea that women have a right to be recognized as equal subjects and should fight not to lose their agency within the practice of love. In 1807 Staël published her second novel *Corinne ou l'Italie*, which articulated some crucial aspects of Romanticism (illustrated by the combination of various literary genres and the conversations between Corinne and the count d'Erfeuil in which Corinne rejects the duty to imitate the tradition of the Masters from previous centuries) and addressed the issue of female genius. Indeed the main character, Corinne, is a poetess who is celebrated in Italy not because of her beauty but because of her artistic talents: however, because of her status as an independent artist, she is misunderstood by the man she loves, who on the one hand is attracted by her genius, but on the other hand interprets this female genius as a threat to his vision of domestic happiness. Also a source of political scandal, Staël's second novel was censored by Napoleon, who imposed additional conditions on her exile.

In both her novels, Staël articulates a heterosexual trouble that results from the crisis of the classic rules of heteronormativity: reproductive and monogamous sexuality and the separation of genders into the domestic sphere for women and the public sphere for men. *Delphine* and *Corinne* prefer dying alone and unhappy to becoming socially-approved housewives. They have relationships with men, but outside of the institution of marriage and without having children, refusing to surrender to the expected destiny of a

housewife. What remains of heterosexuality if the men and women who engage in it start questioning the consistency of the definitions of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality? I plan to show how this trouble is illustrated in Staël's novels and to analyze it as opening a literary space for an alternative discourse challenging inherited norms and codes about gender and sexuality: this alternative discourse expresses not only the wish but also the way to create a new politics of heterosexuality. Because such trouble is linked to the act of questioning the coherence of norms, and challenging the dynamics of mainstream practices, it also creates a space for their potential or imagined subversion, a non-normative or queer heterosexuality.

Delphine can be read simultaneously as a story of love and its impossibility: Léonce de Mondoville and Delphine d'Albémar love each other—the reciprocity of their feelings is explicit throughout the two volumes—but they can hardly enjoy intimacy together. The legitimacy of their love is constantly challenged by external rules of duty, virtue and benevolence. Léonce, the male subject, longs for death and gets it at war, whereas Delphine commits suicide in order not to survive her lover. The epigraph that opens the novel: “Un homme doit savoir braver l'opinion, une femme s'y soumettre” (Vol. 1, 48), is taken from Staël's mother, Germaine Necker, and can be interpreted as ironic because it is constantly challenged by Delphine and Léonce throughout the novel. The use of the verb *devoir* leaves space for ambiguity: it is a duty for men to challenge public opinion, just as it is a duty for women never to challenge it; precisely the fact that it is a duty, however, makes it cultural rather than natural. This ambiguity is further reinforced by the fact that “ought to” implies that the proper behaviors of men and women, defined as “male” and “female,” are not achieved: indeed, in the novel, the

opposite happens, challenging the legitimacy of the gender roles stated right at the beginning of the text.

The heterosexual trouble starts with the fact that Delphine identifies and is identified as a *femme d'esprit*, which means that she likes to think for herself and is ready, in the name of her free use of reason, to confront social opinion, whereas Léonce, who comes from a conservative, Catholic family, values above all the consent of his mother and the approval of society concerning his way of life. The aphorism taken from Germaine Necker can be understood as the fundamental rule given by society concerning the politics of heterosexual love: what becomes of love between a man and a woman if they do not apply this gendering of duty? Delphine expresses such concern when she begins to understand the dynamics of tension between herself, Léonce, and society:

Ce bonheur ou ce calme dont je jouis, que deviendraient-ils néanmoins, si par un renversement bizarre c'était moi, faible femme, moi dont la destinée réclame un soutien, qui saurais mépriser l'opinion des hommes, tandis que l'être fort, celui qui doit me guider, celui qui doit me servir d'appui, aurait horreur du moindre blâme ? (Vol. 1, 127)

The expression “renversement bizarre” seems relevant enough to illustrate what is queer in this heterosexual couple: a strange reversal as far as gender is concerned, which provokes a crisis in the definition of femininity and masculinity. Delphine thinks of heterosexuality in terms of cultivating happiness when heterosexuality as a social contract is more oriented toward the quest for collective approval. Léonce's mother refuses the idea that her son should marry a woman who claims to have an agency of her own:

Je n'ai pas d'idée fixe sur cette femme qui me paraît, d'après tout ce que j'entends dire, un être tout à fait extraordinaire ; mais je serais désolée, quand même mon fils serait libre, qu'il devînt son époux. On ne peut jamais soumettre ces esprits qu'on appelle supérieurs aux convenances de

la vie ; il faut supporter qu'ils vous donnent un jugement nouveau sur tout, et qu'ils vous développent des principes à eux, qu'ils appellent de la raison ; cette manière d'être me paraît souverainement absurde, particulièrement dans une femme. (Vol. 2, 172)

Léonce's mother blames Delphine on two levels: politically speaking, for promoting the spirit of the Enlightenment (thinking for herself, freely, in the name of reason, and arguing for new ideas), and socially speaking, for not understanding that the main duty of a woman is to obey her husband and sacrifice her autonomy to fulfill his happiness and guarantee his respectability.⁴ Significantly, Léonce's mother refers to Delphine in an abstract, masculine pronoun ("ils") in opposition to what she should be: "une femme" instead of these "esprits supérieurs": by doing so, she uses a language that reproduces the "un-naturalizing" process she is describing and rejecting. Similarly, her language betrays a reliance on hearsay and general opinion—"j'entends dire," "qu'on appelle"—rather than on a judgment which she would have formed herself. As a woman and an aristocrat, Delphine is expected to oppose the Revolution (the novel takes place in 1790 and 1791, when most of the French aristocracy is emigrating or fighting against the Revolution) and to believe that her role is to work discreetly for her husband's happiness and career. However, not only does she not look for social approval but she also claims that it is legitimate for women who are gifted as artists or thinkers to enjoy the expression of their talent, and that the preservation of their agency should not marginalize them socially or sentimentally. She is eager to argue with men and women that it is right to open up the

⁴ In a letter to his mother, Léonce tries to convince her that he will discipline Delphine and rectify her passion for freedom: "Elle croit que la morale suffit à tout, et qu'il faut dédaigner les préjugés reçus, les convenances admises, quand la vertu n'y est point intéressée ! Mais le soin de mon bonheur la corrigera de son défaut" (Vol. 1, 186).

values of freedom and reason to women because they share the same “human soul” that men have: genius is linked with the soul, not with the sex of the subject.⁵

Madame de Vernon, an ally of Léonce’s mother in her crusade against the choice of Delphine as wife, publicly “outs” Delphine as an enthusiastic reader of Rousseau and forces Léonce to recognize the incompatibility between Delphine’s pro-revolutionary opinions and his mother’s anti-revolutionary ones:

On annonça Léonce: quels vœux je faisais pour que cette fatale conversation ne recommençât pas ! Mais Madame de Vernon, impitoyablement, appelle Monsieur de Mondoville, et lui dit : “ Est-il vrai que Madame votre mère déteste Rousseau ? Madame d’Albémar, qui est très enthousiaste, et de ses écrits et de ses idées politiques, les soutient contre Madame du Marset, qui s’appuie du sentiment de Madame votre mère. ” (Vol. 1, 147)

Rousseau’s status as the radical theorist of the social contract, one of the intellectual fathers of the French Revolution, and as a citizen of Geneva and a Protestant make him despicable to the French Catholic aristocracy. It is not a coincidence that Delphine concentrates in her person a passion for Rousseau, a tolerance of Protestantism—she helps Monsieur de Serballane, who is ostracized because of his Protestantism (Vol 1, 91)—and an espousal of the right of divorce, which will be shortly legalized by the Revolution. She is thus three times an outcast: as a traitor to her social class (she is not against the Revolution), to her religion (she is not prejudiced against Protestants) and to her sex (she does not plan to become a housewife).

⁵ Whereas Rousseau’s heroine, Julie, believed in the difference of soul between the sexes (“Une femme parfaite et un homme parfait ne doivent pas plus se ressembler d’âme que de visage” [83]), in the nineteenth-century proponents of equality such as Michelet and Sand promote the idea of the same, androgynous soul for men and women alike. See Michelet: “Le génie, la puissance inventive et génératrice suppose [...] qu’un homme est doué des deux puissances, qu’il réunit en lui ce qu’on peut appeler les deux sexes de l’esprit” (*Le Peuple*, quoted in Gusdorf, *L’homme romantique* [91]).

However, Romanticism is not the extension of the Enlightenment, but rather its critical reception: if Delphine as a character does read Rousseau with passion and is blamed for that, *Delphine* as a novel engages with Rousseau in a critical way. Carole Pateman has argued in her *Sexual Contract* that the theorists of the social contract, including Rousseau, theorized it only for male subjects, excluding from full citizenship all female subjects. Staël had herself already articulated the same critique of Rousseau long before. Her first philosophical essay, *Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J.-J. Rousseau*, published in 1788 when she was twenty, is often read as a tribute to the philosophy of Rousseau, but should also be read as a feminist critique of Rousseau's essays on both the social contract and modern education. In *Emile ou de l'éducation* (1762), Rousseau recognizes that sexual difference implies, in the name of the laws of nature, a social difference in terms of gender: he argues that boys and girls should not be given the same education and the same social destiny.

En tout ce qui tient au sexe, la femme et l'homme ont partout des rapports et partout des différences : la difficulté de les comparer vient de celle de déterminer dans la constitution de l'un et de l'autre ce qui est du sexe et ce qui n'en est pas. [...] Si la femme est faite pour plaire et pour être subjuguée, elle doit se rendre agréable à l'homme au lieu de le provoquer. (445-46)

Cultiver dans les femmes les qualités d'homme, et négliger celles qui leur sont propres, c'est donc visiblement travailler à leur préjudice. [...] Croyez-moi, mère judicieuse, ne faites point de votre fille un honnête homme, comme pour donner un démenti à la nature. (454)

Rousseau states that men and women are equal where sex is not concerned, but when it comes to sex—and sexual difference is the matrix of the structure of society—women and men have unbridgeable differences. Rousseau's understanding of sex is based on the laws of nature, which are never explained in his treatise on education: he himself admits in the passage quoted above that it is difficult to tell what derives from sex and what does not.

Although the philosophers of the Enlightenment rejected any *argument d'autorité* in order to think freely beyond prejudice and superstition, it seems that the belief in sexual difference as a natural, indisputable law remained unquestioned. As a result of this vision of sexual difference, the domestic sphere is the realm of the housewife, and the rest of the world is for men, including the political agency associated with public sphere.⁶

Staël, as an assiduous reader of Rousseau, rejected the status of a housewife as the only social expectation for a woman and the exclusion of women from the public sphere. In her essay on Rousseau, she wonders why women with talent should not express this talent and why love would be impossible if it were based on reciprocity:

Que devrait-on penser d'un époux assez orgueilleusement modeste pour aimer mieux rencontrer dans sa femme une obéissance aveugle qu'une symétrie éclairée ? Les plus touchants exemples de l'amour conjugal ont été donnés par des femmes dignes de comprendre leurs maris et de partager leur sort, et le mariage n'est dans toute sa beauté que lorsqu'il peut être fondé sur une admiration réciproque. Néanmoins beaucoup d'hommes préfèrent les femmes uniquement consacrées aux soins de leur ménage ; et pour plus de sûreté à cet égard, ils ne seraient pas fâchés qu'elles fussent incapables de comprendre autre chose. (40-41)

The ironic oxymoron “orgueilleusement modeste” implies that a man who prefers a submissive woman rather than an equal partner as a wife is a man with a “modest,” problematic masculinity, because he would not be confident enough to feel love through “mutual admiration.” Thus the oxymoron reverses the logics of accusation: it is not the wife seeking reciprocity who is against nature, but the rather the husband who expects a blind submission from his wife. This reciprocity goes against the strict separation of space (public for men, private for women) and sphere of action (household for women, a career and politics for men) that constitutes heterosexuality before and after the French

⁶ As is well known, French women were not granted the right to vote until 1944.

Revolution. Ironically, Rousseau and Léonce's mother would agree with one another that Delphine, as a woman, should not claim equal freedom in her relationship with Léonce. In this extract, Staël recognizes that most men prefer to have an obedient wife,—thus one without agency,—because they think it is the best way to make sure that she will carry out her responsibility as a housewife. However she promotes an ideal of love that should interpret education not in terms of crisis—the rebellion of a wife against the authority of her husband—but as the ultimate bliss of love: “enlightened symmetry” and “reciprocal admiration” instead of “blind submission.”

Sometimes in the novel, out of despair and love for Léonce, Delphine regrets her personality and tries to convince herself that he, indeed, is the superior “man” of the couple: “La noblesse de ses expressions, la dignité de ses regards, m'en imposent quelques fois à moi-même : je jouis de me sentir inférieure à lui” (Vol 1, 457). But this happens only “quelques fois” and is not the general feeling that governs their relationship: most of the time she claims her love for freedom above anything else and prefers talking politics with men to playing cards in a separate room with women.⁷ Perhaps more important, the *jouissance* confessed by Delphine is phrased in such a way that it leaves space for ambiguity: she is not so much overwhelmed by Léonce's superiority as she indulges the pleasure of putting herself in a position of inferiority and letting herself embrace its “delights.” Thus, the ambiguity about Delphine's transitory sensation of inferiority towards Léonce relies on the possible combination, or alternation, between the fantasy of acting like every other normal couple (which would resolve the heterosexual

⁷ Delphine writes in a letter to Léonce, “Le généreux protecteur de mes premières années, estimait assez mon caractère pour vouloir développer ma raison, et jamais il ne m'a fait admettre aucune opinion, sans l'approfondir moi-même, d'après mes propres lumières. Je puis donc vous parler sur la religion que j'aime, comme sur tous les sujets que mon cœur et mon esprit ont librement examinés.” (Vol 1, 419)

trouble) and the fantasy, for a superior woman, to perform and enjoy, when she wishes, the reversal of power within the couple.

Delphine is chided for reading Rousseau, and indeed she is the fictional illustration of a feminist appropriation of Rousseau: she claims her own right to have access to the social contract, and does not recognize the rhetoric of the laws of nature that Rousseau invokes to justify a social contract defined only for men. Staël argues that what matters is not the sex but the soul of the subject, which makes equality possible, even when it comes to artistic talent:

Le seul tort qu'au nom des femmes je reprocherais à Rousseau, c'est d'avoir avancé, dans une note de sa *Lettre sur les spectacles*, qu'elles ne sont jamais capables de peindre la passion avec chaleur et vérité. Qu'il leur refuse, s'il le veut, ces vains talents littéraires, qui, loin de les faire aimer des hommes, les mettent en lutte avec eux ; qu'il leur refuse cette puissante force de tête, cette profonde faculté d'attention dont les grands génies sont doués : leurs faibles organes s'y opposent, et leur cœur, trop souvent occupé, s'empare sans cesse de leur pensée, et ne la laisse pas se fixer sur des méditations étrangères à leur idée dominante ; mais qu'il ne les accuse pas de ne pouvoir écrire que froidement, de ne savoir pas même peindre l'amour. C'est par l'âme, l'âme seule, qu'elles sont distinguées.
(49)

There is much irony in this passage because Staël, as a female author, writes a philosophical essay in which she agrees with Rousseau that women, because of their organs, cannot compete with men in the upper sphere of philosophy, and yet she is proving the contrary by writing her philosophical essay. The conclusion of her passage, in which she states that the soul matters, and not the sex, is a way of confirming that she disagrees utterly with Rousseau. However, somewhat covertly, Staël implies a new set of literary criteria: Rousseau denies women “talents,” but these talents are qualified as “vain” anyway, and if women’s heart always interferes with thought (“leur coeur s’empare sans cesse de leur pensée”), this seems to place them right in the avant-garde of the Romantic

movement. What is at stake is not just the ability of women to be able to write about love with passion and authenticity, but more generally not to be disqualified as females when they want to express their talent. Having written on Rousseau, and then introduced German philosophy, especially that of Kant, into France,⁸ Staël has not just argued but also proved that women are capable of thinking freely and brilliantly. This is why, if Delphine as a character is shamelessly passionate about Rousseau, *Delphine* as a novel illustrates the feminist critique that Mme de Staël formulates against Rousseau in her 1788 essay.

The gender trouble that confuses Delphine and Léonce does not depend on a characterisation of Delphine as a butch woman (“*hommase*” is the nineteenth-century term *par excellence* used to describe a mannish woman) nor Léonce as a sissy; on the contrary, she is described as a young, beautiful, “feminine” woman and he as a brave, strong, “masculine” man. However, in spite of this traditional implementation of gender conventions, the dialectics of femininity and masculinity in this heterosexual couple are consistently problematized: Delphine is accused of behaving against nature by relying more on her soul than on her sex, and Léonce often breaks down and acts in what would be called a hysterical behaviour.⁹ Léonce’s masculinity seems obvious because he is often described as a warrior and because his temper is quarrelsome. For example, he engages in a duel with Monsieur de Serballane because he mistakes Delphine’s

⁸ *De l’Allemagne*, in which a chapter is devoted to the philosophy of Kant.

⁹ On the subject of hysteria in the 19th century, see Jann Matlock: “Nineteenth century hysteria takes shape through the stories told by medical and psychiatric experts. It is far less the diagnosis name for a set of symptoms than a category for perceptions. [...] Through their embodiment in proliferating medical case studies, the narratives of hysteria radically transformed the social and cultural perceptions through which difference was understood” (3). Also, see Jan Goldstein.

compassion for him as proof of an outrageous adultery. It is actually stated in the letter written by Madame d'Artenas to Delphine that

les hommes peuvent se brouiller avec qui ils veulent, un duel brillant répond à tout ; cette magie reste encore du courage, il affranchit honorablement des liens qu'impose la société ; ces liens sont les plus subtils, et cependant les plus difficiles à briser. (vol. 1, 327)

The institution of the duel, which survived the French Revolution and was embraced by the bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century, was a performance of bravery (“courage” in the words of Madame d'Artenas) between men in order to solve issues of honor outside of the legal justice system.¹⁰ It was also a way of displaying publicly one's masculinity. The question was not so much about losing or winning, but of taking part and establishing oneself as a man by risking death, even if this risk led much of the time only to injury. Running away from a duel was the worst thing that a man could do for his masculinity: thus Lorenzaccio in Musset's play loses all respect because of his rejection of the duel. Léonce, far from escaping the possibility of the duel, provokes it out of jealousy and outrage. In the end he brings about his own death in a masculine way: he takes part in the counter-Revolution and is killed by soldiers of the other camp, leaving him with the aura of a fearless hero.

But this traditional masculinity is constantly questioned by the plot of *Delphine* and the language Staël uses to describe Léonce's temper: what if, instead of dying like a brave hero on the battlefield, Léonce died out of a suicidal despair? What if the rage, or outrage, shown by Léonce was actually a manifestation of the hysterical temper defined as someone who easily loses control of himself? This is when the expression used earlier by Delphine comes to mind : the strange reversal (“renversement étrange”) that disrupts

¹⁰ See Robert Nye.

the structure of the heterosexual couple. For instance Léonce, attending a performance of Voltaire's *Tancrède*, cannot help but disturb the play. Delphine, who was spying on him, reports the incident:

Au quatrième acte, il me parut qu'il n'avait plus le pouvoir de se contraindre ; je vis son visage baigné de pleurs, et je remarquai dans toute sa personne un air de souffrance qui m'effraya ; je crois même que, dans mon trouble, je fis un mouvement qu'il aperçut, car à l'instant même il se baissa de nouveau pour se dérober à mes regards ; mais lorsque Tancrède, après avoir combattu et triomphé pour Aménaïde, revient avec la résolution de mourir, lorsqu'un souvenir mélancolique, dernier regret vers l'amour et la vie, lui inspire ces vers, les plus touchants qu'il y ait au monde :

Quel charme, dans son crime, à mes esprits rappelle
L'image des vertus que je crus voir en elle ! etc.

Un soupir, un cri même étouffé, sortit du cœur de Léonce ; tous les yeux se tournèrent vers lui ; il se leva avec précipitation, et se hâta de s'en aller ; mais il chancelait en marchant, et s'arrêta quelques instants pour s'appuyer ; son visage me parut d'une pâleur mortelle ; et comme on refermait la porte sur lui, je crus le voir manquer de force et tomber. (Vol. 1, 265)

Later in the nineteenth century, many medical essays would be written about hysteria in terms similar to those used here to describe Léonce's reaction. In 1847, Jean-Louis Brachet published a *Traité de l'hystérie*¹¹ in which he defines hysteria as a female nervous disorder, but leaving some theoretical space for the marginal possibility of male hysteria: "L'hystérie est pour ainsi dire la maladie nerveuse des femmes ; elle est même, selon quelques auteurs, l'apanage exclusif de leur sexe, sa maladie spéciale" (1). Brachet reports that according to some of his colleagues, hysteria only concerns women, but he does not himself embrace this strict gendering. Paradoxically, while Brachet allows for

¹¹ Brachet's position on the link between hysteria and women is ambivalent: on the one hand, he admits that men can be hysterical, and on the other hand, he still addresses women as the natural target of hysteria. In her book *Scenes of Seduction*, Matlock pays tribute to Brachet for his crucial articulation of knowledge on hysteria: "Prior to Brachet's *Traité de l'hystérie*, we can find philosophical treatises on hysteria (Frédéric Dubois d'Amiens), theoretical analyses with lists of supposed symptoms, influences or causes (Loyer-Villermay, Georget, Félix Voisin), and even a collection of observations from other sources (Ladnouzy). Before 1847, however, no work provided such a rich collection of personal observations, such an adept fulfilment of the promises of the clinic" (175).

the (unusual) possibility of hysterical men, he does not report or theorize further cases of male hysteria: this lack of information can be understood as symptomatic of the difficulty of approaching hysteria outside of the realm of the feminine. By making public an excessive emotional behaviour, Léonce proves that hysteria does not have to be biologically rooted in the uterus, hormones or genitals, and if it still is defined as a nervous illness, men would be as susceptible to it as women. George Sand, in a letter sent to Flaubert¹² who had complained about his own hysteria, agrees that it is reductive to exclude men from this sickness:

Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire d'être hystérique ? Je l'ai peut-être été aussi, je le suis peut-être ; mais je n'en sais rien, n'ayant jamais approfondi la chose et en ayant ouï parler sans l'étudier. N'est-ce pas un malaise, une angoisse causés par le désir d'un impossible *quelconque* ? En ce cas, nous en sommes tous atteints, de ce mal étrange, quand nous avons de l'imagination ; et pourquoi une telle maladie aurait-elle un sexe ?(150)

George Sand confesses her ignorance as far as hysteria is concerned, but she defines it from a romantic point of view, as the quest for “an impossible something” which includes and affects subjects of both sexes. Brachet himself, after spending many pages defining the essence of femininity and the reality of sexual difference, concludes surprisingly that it remains impossible to draw a clear, scientific frontier between the sexes: “Malgré cette prédominance particulière à chaque sexe, nous devons avouer qu'il n'y a rien d'exclusif, et que les limites à poser ne sont pas entièrement infranchissables” (73). So hysteria, because it is gendered as feminine, but often illustrated as affecting men, may be considered one of the tropes of gender subversion in the nineteenth century.¹³ Later on, with the founding essays written by Freud on hysteria, this disorder will be approached as

¹² Quoted from Goldstein's article “The Uses of Male Hysteria: Medical and Literary Discourse in Nineteenth-Century France” (134-65).

¹³ I will return to the issue of hysteria in the second chapter on Dandyism.

a mental disorder affecting both men and women.¹⁴ The scene in which Léonce creates a scandal can be read as such a case of male hysterical behaviour: instead of respecting both the concentration of the audience and the performance of the actors, Léonce literally makes his own scene by attracting everybody's attention ("tous les yeux se tournèrent vers lui") and performing the resurrection of Tancredi: he is going through Tancredi's mortal torment. By doing so, he demonstrates what many associated with women: the nervous breakdown and the obsessive need to seduce. The hysteria seems all the more convincing when Delphine notices that Léonce has recognized her, and that the spontaneous show he puts on in the middle of the official play is motivated by her gaze. He pretends to hide from her ("je fis un mouvement qu'il aperçut, car à l'instant même il se baissa de nouveau pour se dérober à mes regards") but he wants to elicit her compassion and guilt by simulating his mortal torment publicly. Then, what appears as a loss of control actually may derive from a controlled performance: the simulation of the loss of control in order to reclaim attention and renew communication while pretending to end it definitively.

The climax of this scene is when Léonce, about to disappear through the door, faints and simulates his own death. This behaviour constitutes an unveiling of Léonce's masculinity as problematically feminine. In the gay camp culture, such a hysterical temper displayed by a man fits the category of the drama queen: the drama queen has to overreact and make herself the center of attention. As David Halperin has argued in his essay "Amour Folle," the queering of tragedy into melodrama is the signature of the drama queen as a female gay icon or a gay queen. Léonce in this particular case seems to apply successfully to the category of the drama queen because he does his best to act in a

¹⁴ See Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis.

dramatic way, not taking the risk of dying—as in a duel—but of being ridiculously hysterical. In the second volume of the novel, as the tragic end approaches with the deaths of both Léonce and Delphine, Léonce is often described as a depressed man out of control:

Ses larmes redoublaient, il essayait, mais en vain, de se contraindre, et rejetant sa tête en arrière, avec l'impatience de ne pouvoir triompher de ses émotions, il couvrit son visage de son mouchoir, et des cris de douleur lui échappèrent. (Vol 2, 74)

Indeed Léonce, in a letter to his mentor Monsieur Barton, describes himself as a woman:

Vous m'avez connu de la fermeté, eh bien! A présent je suis très faible, je crains comme une femme tous les mouvements subits ; ce qui va se décider pour moi est trop fort ; il y a trop loin de ce désespoir à ce bonheur. (Vol 2, 268)

Far from the first descriptions of Léonce as a brave man of honour, and in spite of his masculine choice of death on the battlefield, Léonce often appears “as weak as a woman,” shouting and crying instead of talking, staggering instead of walking, and fainting instead of maintaining his composure and presence of mind. The heterosexual couple formed by Delphine and Léonce is “troubled” in multiple ways, such that they do not even know who is the “man” and who is the “woman” in their relationship.

It is not just the content of *Delphine*, but also its literary genre which contributes to heterosexual trouble: as Caroline Jacot Grapa made it clear in her essay on *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, “le pacte épistolaire repose sur la fiction de la non-fiction” (26), which means that the reader must keep in mind that the transparency of emotions, felt or reported by the characters, cannot be taken for granted. The epistolary novel relies on an emphasis on feelings over events, and this emphasis is articulated through narratives of contradictions or projections of these feelings which complicate their interpretation both

for the fictional characters and the reader. For instance, when Delphine reports in her letter Léonce's hysteria at the theatre, it is impossible for the reader to decipher whether this hysteria was objectively described or merely interpreted as such by Delphine, who was horrified but also delighted to "see" that Léonce was out of control because of his tormented relationship with her. By focusing on introspection and blurring the frontier between construction and authenticity of emotion, the epistolary novel helps articulate at the level of the text the gender and sexual confusions at stake between the male and female lovers. Staël, in her analysis of the epistolary novel as a genre in *De l'Allemagne*, insists on the modernity of a literature devoted to the understanding of subjectivity and intimacy:

Les romans par lettres supposent toujours plus de sentiments que de faits. Jamais les anciens n'auraient imaginé de donner cette forme à leurs fictions ; et ce n'est même que depuis deux siècles que la philosophie s'est assez introduite en nous-mêmes pour que l'analyse de ce qu'on éprouve tienne une si grande place dans les livres. Cette manière de concevoir les romans n'est pas aussi poétique, sans doute, que celle qui consiste tout entière dans des récits ; mais l'esprit humain est maintenant bien moins avide des événements même les mieux combinés que des observations sur ce qui se passe dans le cœur. (366)

What Staël theorizes in *De l'Allemagne* is put into practice in *Delphine*: the two volumes of this epistolary novel focus mainly on love between a man and a woman as a source of intense confusion, of a series of misunderstandings and complications that are subject to constant subjective analysis. It is through the analysis of this permanent confusion that heterosexuality is articulated: the pressure of gender and sexual norms, the duties assigned to men and women, the social expectations associated with heterosexual love, and, above all, the will to challenge them, are expressed letter after letter by the

characters as they try to decipher “ce qui se passe dans le coeur.” The epistolary novel is an appropriate literary genre for articulating the politics of love in a modern way.

Delphine was conceived in the wake of the success encountered by Laclos’ *Les liaisons dangereuses*, which remains the most famous epistolary novel written in French. The contrast between *Les liaisons dangereuses* and *Delphine* may appear more starkly now in the light of Pierre Laforgue’s opposition of *éros libertin* and *éros romantique*: in the *Liaisons dangereuses* love is a game based on the techniques of seduction (“éros libertin”), and this game is “feminist” in the way that Madame de Merteuil claims equal agency with the other chief player, Valmont. In contrast, *Delphine* is concerned with love as absolute, reciprocal and shared (*éros romantique*): it is not a battle of egos based on conceit and seduction, but rather the subjective, sincere effort invested in the quest for mutual feelings of passionate love. While it may demonstrate a “feminist” attempt to rethink heterosexuality beyond heteronormativity, its failure leaves the reader with heterosexual trouble instead of a new, successful model: as Léonce wrote in the letter quoted above, there is too much of a discrepancy between his despair and the path to happiness in love.

Published five years after *Delphine*, Staël’s *Corinne ou l’Italie* is not an epistolary novel per se—though part of it is in letters—but it depicts a similar heterosexual trouble based on the tragic love story between the mysterious poetess Corinne and the British aristocrat Lord Nelvil. There is reciprocity of feeling in the love that Corinne and Lord Nelvil share, but the quest for happiness is challenged by social norms, and Lord Nelvil, like Léonce, was raised to believe that the duty of a woman in love is to sacrifice her individual talent in order to focus on her husband’s happiness.

Oswald Nelvil, in despair over the death of his father, visits Italy and is surprised by the cultural difference between his country and this Mediterranean land. Staël, just as she will do it in her essays *De la littérature* and *Réflexions sur le suicide*, depicts England as the country of spleen *par excellence*, and Italy as the land of joy and tolerance:¹⁵ she then makes Oswald the stereotype of the melancholic man, unable to survive the memory of his father, ruminating his sorrow everywhere he goes, and Corinne a celebrated artist. In a letter written by Oswald to Corinne, he is so surprised and confused by this cultural gap on the question of sexual difference that he confesses: “Ici l’on dirait, presque, que les femmes sont le sultan et les hommes le sérail” (157). Here, in this almost oriental land, it is *almost* (“presque”) as if women were not submissive to men, and were even their masters (“sultan”). There is a reciprocity not just in the shared feelings of love, but in the contradiction of this attraction: on one hand Corinne knows she should not be in love with a man who wants her to leave Italy and become a housewife in England, and on the other hand Oswald knows he should marry a respectable woman who would have been approved by his father; but he paradoxically loves Corinne for her distinctive genius even if his goal is to force her to sacrifice her genius for him. She would like him to embrace and accept her status as an independent artist, whereas he is willing to forgive her for this infamous status if she stops being a public poetess:

Je te pardonnerai d’avoir quitté le pays de ton père et le mien, une si noble patrie ; j’espérerai que l’amour t’y rattachera, et que tu préféreras l’amour domestique, les vertus sensibles et naturelles, à l’éclat même de ton génie.
(394)

Corinne, indeed, was born in Italy but had to go and live with her British father in England when her Italian mother died. As she grew up and lost her father as well, her

¹⁵ “Le suicide est très rare dans les pays du midi. L’air qu’ils respirent leur fait aimer la vie” (*Oeuvres complètes*, Tome 1, Vol.1, 377).

stepmother, Lady Edgermond, tried to educate her according to the conservative standards of respectability for decent young women. When Lady Edgermond selected Mr Maclinson to be an appropriate husband for Corinne, the latter refused to marry him because she refused, more generally, the destiny of a housewife doomed to live in the shadow of her husband. The “amour domestique” that Oswald asks Corinne to embrace is precisely the reason why she ran away from her stepmother and from England, and dropped her family name to become an artist in Italy. Conversely, when he was alive, Oswald’s father, who was a friend of Corinne’s father, had visited Lady Edgermond and selected her other daughter, Lucile, as the ideal wife for his son. Corinne was not selected specifically because she did not fit the housewife model, whereas Lucile, docile and obedient, was the perfect candidate. When Corinne reveals this past to Oswald, he finds himself facing a tragic dilemma: “déchirer le coeur de Corinne, ou manquer à la mémoire de son père” (472), and just like Léonce in *Delphine*, he cannot make the decision to confront public opinion, to go against his father’s will which was based on social rules and reflects the patriarchal politics of love.

Oswald and Corinne share with Léonce and Delphine the same signs of failure in their love: no marriage, no children, and a fundamental disagreement on femininity and masculinity. The women, whether *femme d’esprit* (Delphine) or acclaimed artist (Corinne), are brave enough to confront the sexual and gender doxa in order to live freely,— although this freedom ends up being sacrificed in the name of an impossible love—whereas the men, whether faithful to the mother (Léonce) or the father (Oswald), can only abide by the rules and look for the approval of social opinion.

The connection between heterosexual trouble as a critique of sexual and gender norms and Romanticism as a critique of standards of content and style inherited from Classicism is more developed in *Corinne* than *Delphine*. For instance the question of genius is addressed in the novel in order to evoke Corinne's status as an artist and her modern vision of the arts. In spite of being a woman, Corinne can be as gifted as any man because the soul, and not the sex, is the locus of genius. Before Oswald meets Corinne in person, he hears about her from the crowd gathered to acclaim her poetry. Nobody would think of denying her artistic talents because she is a woman:

Oswald sortit pour aller sur la place publique ; il y entendit parler de Corinne, de son talent, de son génie. On avait décoré les rues par lesquelles elle devait passer. Le peuple, qui ne se rassemble d'ordinaire que sur les pas de la fortune ou de la puissance, était là presque en rumeur pour voir une personne dont l'esprit était la seule distinction. (50)

A person whose spirit was the only distinction: this last sentence recalls the passage quoted above from *Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J.-J. Rousseau* which ended with the same conclusion: "C'est par l'âme, l'âme seule, qu'elles sont distinguées." By associating genius with spirit, Staël aims at dissociating genius from the body, and more precisely from the gendered body. The choice of the spirit as the matrix of genius is Staël's strategy to dissociate the concept of genius from that of sexual difference. Not only is genius available to both genders, which thus breaks from conceptions of genius as essentially masculine,¹⁶ but Corinne goes further in rethinking the meaning of genius. In

¹⁶ Genius is theorized by Kant in *The Critique of Judgement* as a transcendence over nature, not only because of its creativity, but because it sets unprecedented artistic rules and inspires aesthetic emotions: "We thus see that genius is a *talent* for producing that for which no definite rule can be given" (189) and "Every one is agreed that genius is entirely opposed to the *spirit of imitation*" (190). Staël summarizes Kant's view on genius and sublime in *De l'Allemagne* (454-6). As women are traditionally opposed to men because of their deeper complicity with nature (menstruation, motherhood), genius is implied—although Kant does not explicitly ban women from genius—to be masculine. The concept of genius being associated with the realm of aesthetics, and female artists being considered as against nature, it is expected that only men could express genius.

a discussion about the arts with her friend the Comte d'Erfeuil, who stands for the ideology of French Classicism, she confronts him on the question of imitation:

Il est vrai, répondit le comte d'Erfeuil, que nous avons en ce genre les véritables autorités classiques ; Bossuet, La Bruyère, Montesquieu, Buffon, ne peuvent être surpassés ; surtout les deux premiers, qui appartiennent à ce siècle de Louis XIV, qu'on ne saurait trop louer, et dont il faut imiter, autant qu'on le peut, les parfaits modèles. C'est un conseil que les étrangers doivent s'empresse de suivre aussi bien que nous. – J'ai de la peine à croire, répondit Corinne, qu'il fût désirable pour le monde entier de perdre toute couleur nationale, toute originalité de sentiments et d'esprit, et j'oserai vous dire, M. le comte, que, dans votre pays même, cette orthodoxie littéraire, si je puis m'exprimer ainsi, qui s'oppose à toute innovation heureuse, doit rendre à la longue votre littérature très stérile. Le génie est essentiellement créateur, il porte le caractère de l'individu qui le possède. La nature, qui n'a pas voulu que deux feuilles se ressemblent, a mis encore plus de diversité dans les âmes, et l'imitation est une espèce de mort, puisqu'elle dépouille chacun de son existence naturelle. (176-177)

More than just a dispute between two friends on their personal artistic tastes, this response by Corinne can be read as one of the very first statements of French Romanticism. Twenty years before Hugo's preface to his play *Cromwell*, eighteen years before the publication of *Racine and Shakespeare* by Stendhal and three years before Staël introduces the philosophy and literature of German Romanticism into France in her essay *De l'Allemagne*, Corinne as a character can be seen as the Romantic artist *par excellence* and *Corinne* as a novel a manifesto for a new, modern literature. One of the main controversies between Classicism and Romanticism is indeed the question of imitation: according to classical standards, the artist should be inspired by the masterpieces of the past which, as Count d'Erfeuil states, serve as "authorities" and "models." In this sense, imitation is the effort to understand and recreate the genius of the past in the present. On the contrary, according to the theorists of Romanticism, the genius of the past does not have to be recreated by contemporary artists, precisely because

genius exists in time and place, as *Corinne* suggests—in the individual, in other words. Moreover, this individuality is “natural,” and the artist who creates according to it follows the models of the true creator, Nature itself. Artistic creation thus consists not in following past models (leading to the opposite of creativity, “sterility” and “death”), but in following their individuality, diversity, and local (“national”) color.

Corinne illustrates this originality as its literary genre is as “confused” as the gender tensions it depicts: being at the same time a novel, a travel guide to Italy, a combination of poetical songs and philosophical meditation, in narrative terms it does not comfortably fit into any established literary genre and indeed received much criticism for its peculiar form. In an essay devoted to the exploration of Italy in *Corinne*, “La niche vide du Panthéon: Monuments et beaux-arts de Rome,” Alexandre Minski brings out this impossibility of determining the genre of *Corinne*:

Mais quel est le *genre* de *Corinne* ? On peut se poser légitimement la question car le titre, qui est le nom de l’héroïne, implique un récit romanesque [...]. Mais le sous-titre dirige le lecteur vers genre descriptif. Est-il donc un roman entrelardé de considérations artistiques à destination du futur voyageur ? Un guide touristique articulé à une trame romanesque ? (17-18)

Instead of interpreting this original form as a flawed novel, we should consider it the consequence of a Romantic experimentation with both genres and genders.¹⁷ Imitation on the one hand, originality on the other: two separate visions of genius which indicate the theoretical gap between the Comte d’Erfeuil’s Classicism and *Corinne*’s Romanticism. *Corinne*’s rejection of “Classical” imitation in the arts shares the same logic as her rejection of a “classical” model of heterosexuality.

¹⁷ See Lucia Omacini: “Mme de Staël, par contre, insouciant de toute catégorie, de toute proportion, aurait bouleversé la rhétorique des genres : ‘Elle veut élever son ton fort au-dessus de celui qui convient à un roman ou à un ouvrage ; elle veut même quelque fois mettre de la poésie dans son style’” (217).

Heterosexual trouble is not formulated by coincidence in French Romanticism; it is connected to Romanticism's call for creation and originality in the realm of love, sex and gender. In her novels, George Sand will be just as radical as Staël in her call for a queer heterosexuality—but in her own way. Two major differences reflect a different critique of heterosexuality between Staël and Sand: on the one hand, Sand wrote both under the influence of, and as a reaction against utopian thinkers, and on the other hand Sand included sexuality in her description of heterosexual trouble whereas Staël focused her critique of heterosexuality on gender. This attention to sexuality by a female writer explains the level of misogyny that Sand faced in the critical reception of her works.

George Sand or the Utopia of Modern Love in *Lélia* and *Isidora*.

Published in 1833, *Lélia* is one of Sand's most enigmatic novels: both its style and its content have long puzzled its readers. The enigmatic aspect of the novel can be articulated regarding heterosexual trouble: is the crisis of the old politics of love the opportunity to praise an alternative heterosexuality that would fit modern times, or is this crisis one of the unfortunate legacies of the French Revolution and its false promises of emancipation? It is significant to notice that the first edition of *Lélia*, which is the one on which I will focus, was dedicated to Henri de Latouche, author in 1829 of *Fragoletta*.¹⁸ In this work a French soldier in Naples in 1799 falls in love with Camille, known as Fragoletta, who happens to be both a man and woman: because of his/her status as a hermaphrodite, the love story ends tragically with Fragoletta's murder by his/her lover.¹⁹ *Lélia* is thus dedicated to the author of a novel which described the impossibility of a heterosexual relationship because of a non-conformity of one character with the gender norms of his/her society: Sand's novel, as we shall see, can also be read as the narrative of a failure, the story of a gender deviance leading to the impossibility of heterosexual love.

¹⁸ Sand published a new version, with a different ending, in 1839. Sand wrote it under the constraint of a contract signed in 1834 with her publisher Buloz who asked her to publish a new edition of *Lélia*. Because *Lélia* had been read as scandalous novel and fueled much criticism of its unhappy, immoral ending, and because Sand did not want to lose her trial against her husband concerning their divorce and the custody of her children, she delayed as much as she could the rewriting of *Lélia*. She ended up publishing a new version which was less disturbing for her readers. Pierre Reboul notices two significant changes: "Lélia entre au couvent et en devient abbesse; Trenmor, de sage philanthrope, serein et inactive, devient un homme d'action, chef secret d'un *venta*. Ces deux modifications expriment la mutation de la pensée : naguère acte d'accusation, *Lélia* devient acte de foi – en Dieu, dans le progrès et dans l'humanité" (344). I will analyse the first version of *Lélia* because its confusion and disorder (the second version being an attempt to reduce the "nihilism" expressed in the first version) help articulate what is the trouble with heterosexuality.

¹⁹ Even more significant is the fact that de Latouche felt offended by the dedication and asked Sand to remove his name from the novel. The feminist value of *Lélia*, which was not present in *Fragoletta*, may explain why de Latouche was not willing to recognize Sand's novel as a–political–tribute to his work.

From the first sentences of the novel, a definition is given of the heterosexual trouble at stake in *Lélia*:

Qui es-tu ? et pourquoi ton amour fait-il tant de mal ? Il doit y avoir en toi quelque affreux mystère inconnu aux hommes ? (7)
J'en suis à ne pas savoir si vous êtes capable d'aimer un homme et – je ne trace ce mot qu'avec effort, tant il est horrible – je crois que *non* ! (17)

These questions are uttered by a young poet, Sténio, who is in love with an older, mysterious, woman, Lélia. Lélia is sexually and psychologically impenetrable: she does not have sex with Sténio and she behaves in a way that remains enigmatic for him; thus he constantly hesitates between calling her an angel or a demon. Indeed, at the end of the novel, the priest Magnus, who loses his mind because of his frustrated love for Lélia, ends up strangling her and treating her like the incarnation of the devil on earth.²⁰ Sténio, indeed, is not the first man to love Lélia and to be confronted by her impenetrability: the novel also introduces the figure of Trenmor, who had formerly loved her and been sent to prison for contracting debts because of his passion for gambling, and Magnus, who thought he would stop being obsessed by Lélia if he became a priest. What Sténio does not know, and is confessed by Lélia to her sister Pulchérie, is that Lélia's first love for a man, when she was young and naïve, had broken her heart and more generally her ability to believe in a happy, satisfactory heterosexuality:

Femme, je n'avais qu'une destinée noble sur la terre, c'était d'aimer. [...] Je recommençais à maudire ma servitude au premier instant de liberté que son oubli ou son indolence me laissait. Je me faisais de mon amour une religion, une vertu au moins ; mais je voulais qu'il m'en sût gré, lui qui n'obéissait qu'à une préférence instinctive. J'avais tort. Il ne pouvait que mépriser mon héroïque faiblesse, quand moi je chérissais son lâche empire sur moi. (173)

²⁰ Magnus tells Lélia before strangling her: "Rentre dans la terre, Satan, je te maudis au nom du Christ !" (323).

The use of two oxymorons (“héroïque faiblesse” and “lâche empire”) in the same sentence to describe the relationship between Lélia and her first lover indicates that the dynamics of love is based on a double bind that relies on a twisted, unequal game of power. This power game cannot be a promise of mutual respect and understanding: the male lover takes advantage of his social privileged position within a patriarchal society, whereas the female lover is frustrated not to be recognized for the quality of her love (“je voulais qu’il m’en sût gré”), the spirituality of her devotion (“Je me faisais de mon amour une religion”) contrasting with the brutality of the male instinct (“lui qui n’obéissait qu’à une préférence instinctive”). Lélia, forever hurt by the failure of this first and last love, is only able to share the revelation of her past with another woman, a courtesan, her sister Pulchérie. She does not want to give a name to the man who taught her the social misery of a woman in love in a society which defines love as the only destiny for women and the source of their legal slavery (“servitude”). It is not love in itself that she now loathes, but the social conditions that make its practice so unfair and painful for women, turning them into the submissive shadows of their male partner. If love implies obedience and resignation, then Lélia prefers to become impenetrable—both literally and figuratively—as a protection against more servitude and disillusionment, rather than being part of a heterosexuality that dooms her soul to disappointment.

In the second volume of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, Beauvoir devotes a chapter to the woman in love, “L’amoureuse,” and interprets the duty to love as a trap to justify the relegation of women to the passivity and the domestic sphere:

Le mot “amour” n’a pas du tout le même sens pour l’un et l’autre sexe et c’est là une source de graves malentendus qui les séparent. Byron a dit justement que l’amour n’est dans la vie de l’homme qu’une occupation, tandis qu’il est la vie même de la femme. [...] Puisqu’elle est de toute

façon condamnée à la dépendance, plutôt que d'obéir à des tyrans – parents, mari, protecteur – elle préfère servir un dieu ; elle choisit de vouloir si ardemment son esclavage qu'il lui apparaîtra comme l'expression de sa liberté ; elle s'efforcera de surmonter sa situation d'objet inessentiel en l'assumant radicalement ; à travers sa chair, ses sentiments, ses conduites, elle exaltera souverainement l'aimé, elle le posera comme la valeur et la réalité suprême : elle s'anéantira devant lui. L'amour devient pour elle une religion. (540)

This extract sums up Lélia's unfortunate position at the beginning of her apprenticeship of love: falling in love is a religion. If love is only one of the many options for men to while away the time and engage in the game of seduction, it is on the contrary a life duty for women and the only way for them to elect a name and a face for their new dependency. The irony is that the notion of freedom here, freedom to love a new man who will take them away from her parents, is just a transition from one precariousness to another. Behind the idealized man is the domineering husband, whose personal happiness has to become his wife's priority. Lélia's disillusionment happened when she realized it had been a mistake to worship a man when there were so many other things in the world to taste, discover and enjoy:

Alors vint un homme et je l'aimai. Je l'aimai du même amour dont j'avais aimé Dieu et les cieux, et le soleil et la mer. Seulement je cessai d'aimer ces choses et je reportai sur le lui l'enthousiasme que j'avais eu pour les autres œuvres de la Divinité. [...] J'avais vécu en sens inverse de la destinée naturelle. Au lieu de commencer par la jouissance et de finir par la réflexion, j'avais ouvert le livre de la vie au chapitre de la science. (166-67).

By letting the man she loved eclipse all the other wonders in the world, by skipping the first step (“jouissance”) and opening the book of life in the chapter of knowledge, Lélia put herself against the timing of natural destiny: her union with the “beloved” man made her ignore the prerequisite experiences that would have guaranteed the length and strength of this love story. The religion of love soon became a crucifixion, and Lélia in

spite of her tragic disillusionment, had the courage to escape the trap and to refuse the destiny of a housewife. In Sand's novel, Lélia is qualified as a "philosopher" (67) and an impious person (12). The religion of love is a lie, just like religion itself: if Lélia cannot be happy in love, at least she aims to be as free as possible, resisting heterosexual love and "raising" heterosexual trouble.²¹

If Lélia is an impious person, it is not because she wishes to be blasphemous, but because, as a philosopher, she claims to have her own, personal relationship with, and interpretation of, God and the Scriptures. In a surprisingly Nietzschean passage, in which she has once again to defend herself against the accusation of being diabolical, she advocates for a "genealogy of morals:"

Vous demandez si j'adore l'esprit du mal. L'esprit du mal et l'esprit du bien, c'est un seul esprit, c'est Dieu ; c'est la volonté inconnue et mystérieuse qui est au-dessus de nos volontés. Le bien et le mal, ce sont des distinctions que nous avons créées. (15)

Good and evil, and also masculinity and femininity: these concepts should be interpreted as socially constructed. I would argue here that, if the main question, and drama, of the novel is Lélia's enigmatic character based on her rejection of love, the issue of heterosexual trouble connects with the ethical question: it is not a coincidence that Lélia, by questioning sexual difference as a social construct, also questions the distinction between good and evil as an evolving set of cultural standards: it is precisely because she is rejecting her status as a "normal" woman that she is then accused of being impious.

²¹ Lélia asks Sténio if he believes in love: "Hélas ! Lélia, s'écria Sténio en tordant ses blanches mains, vous êtes femme et vous n'y croyez pas ! Où en sommes-nous, où en est le siècle ?" If Beauvoir was a good reader of Byron, it is regrettable that she was not able to read either Staël or Sand's texts in a feminist way, since their novels illustrate the content of many of her analyses in *Le Deuxième Sexe*: Staël and Sand are often quoted, but always from a psycho-biographical point of view, as if their texts were not useful to support Beauvoir's interpretation of masculine domination.

Like the hermaphrodite Fragoletta, Lélia is described as both Roméo and Juliette, a male and a female character:

C'est l'attitude aisée et chevaleresque des jeunes héros de Shakespeare : c'est Roméo, le poétique amoureux ; c'est Hamlet, le pâle et ascétique visionnaire ; c'est Juliette, Juliette demi-morte, cachant dans son sein le poison et le souvenir d'un amour brisé. (46)

Lélia's personality is enigmatic to the point of embracing both Roméo and Juliette, the two poles of the Shakespearian heterosexual couple. Like Roméo, "poétique amoureux," she is an artist inspired by her tumultuous emotions, and like Juliette, "demi-morte," she is haunted by the spectre of an impossible love and is ready to administer the poison. The subjectivity of Lélia is tormented enough to illustrate that a woman is also capable of feeling the existential anxiety of a Hamlet. Sténio is also described as an effeminate boy, displaying the charm of a virgin or an angel, devoid of this aggressive masculinity usually attached to men:

N'a-t-il pas mis en lui la beauté des anges? [...] Je n'ai pas entendu une voix de jeune fille qui fût plus harmonieuse et plus douce que la sienne. Et puis sa démarche lente, ses attitudes nonchalantes et tristes, ses mains blanches et fines, son corps frêle et souple, ses cheveux d'un ton si doux et d'un mollesse si soyeuse, son teint changeant comme le ciel d'automne, ce carmin éclatant qu'un regard de vous répand sur ses joues, cette pâleur bleuâtre qu'un regard de vous imprime à ses lèvres, tout cela, c'est un poète, c'est un jeune homme vierge, c'est une âme que Dieu envoie souffrir ici-bas pour l'éprouver avant d'en faire un ange. (50)

Sténio is a man, but a peculiar one: he is young, a virgin soul in a chaste body, ready like Lélia in times past to be torn apart by the misunderstanding of love. His feminine gender and subtle poetic mind (his voice is described as softer than any young girl's and his attitude is "slow" and "nonchalant") give him the sad privilege of sharing with other exceptional souls like Lélia's the tragedy of awaiting an impenetrable vision of love. Delphine, in Staël's novel, used the expression "strange reversal" to depict the

heterosexual trouble between her and Léonce. In *Lélia*, the strange reversal is even more tangible:

Mais moi, je n'ai pas la volonté qui fait la grandeur et l'énergie du rôle viril. [...]
Eh bien ! Lélia, c'est pour cela que je vous aime, vous avez pris mon rôle, que les hommes vous refusaient. Loin de répudier le vôtre, je vous le demande à genoux. (225)

Contrary to Léonce and Oswald, who were hoping to discipline Delphine and Corinne and turn them into housewives, Sténio encourages Lélia to be herself and have the gender of her choice, and he goes as far as embracing for himself the status of the woman of the couple. Sténio wants to join Lélia in her quest for an ideal love, and the drama comes from the fact that Lélia's scars will not heal with an inversion of gender: inventing a new politics of love implies freedom of gender but also freedom in terms of sexuality.

George Sand was an acute reader of Utopian theorists like Fourier and Saint-Simon, both of whom believed that no economical and political revolution would be successful if it was not, as well, a sexual revolution.²² For instance Fourier, in his *Nouveau Monde amoureux*, articulates a radical critique of heterosexual marriage as an institution of alienation for women. It promotes instead a model of sexual freedom—including polygamy and homosexuality for both sexes—and a form of “holy” prostitution in order to share the practice of love with everyone in the community (the *phalanstère*) including the aged. In her relationship with Sténio, especially when it comes to the question of jealousy and possession, Lélia similarly tries to convince him that the binary monogamous structure of the heterosexual couple is alienating and reductive:

²² Gusdorf articulates the links between social thinkers and Romanticism: “La pensée sociale, très active entre 1830 et 1848, est imprégnée de romantisme, même chez les théoriciens les plus calculateurs. Fourier, utopiste, réformateur, se proclamait lui-même le ‘suzerain du romantisme’” (*Fondements du savoir romantique*, 163).

Trenmor sera mon frère et vous mon fils. Il sera mon appui comme je serai le vôtre et, tous trois, aidés l'un par l'autre, unis dans un saint amour, nous arriverons peut-être à la vérité, à la sagesse, au repos peut-être. [...] A mesure que je vis, je ne puis me refuser à reconnaître que les idées adoptées par la jeunesse, sur l'exclusive ardeur de l'amour, sur la possession absolue qu'il réclame, sur les droits éternels qu'il revendique, sont fausses ou tout au moins funestes. Toutes les théories devraient être admises et j'accorderais celle de la fidélité conjugale aux âmes d'exception. (230)

Sand had not read *Le Nouveau Monde amoureux* because it had been hidden by Fourier's disciples and was not published until 1967, one year before the May 68 riots, but Lélia's discourse on what should be the modern politics of love is surprisingly closer to Fourier than to Saint-Simon. Saint-Simon's call for an emancipation of women was not as "queer" as Fourier's: it was essentially political (the right to vote, as illustrated by the trajectory of his disciple and *suffragette* Jeanne Deroin in 1849²³) and religious (the Saint-Simonian myth of the universal mother²⁴), whereas Fourier's emancipation was focused on a new politics of sexuality, gender and love. In this respect, and paradoxically, since George Sand was in touch with various disciples of Saint-Simon, *Lélia* appears to be almost an illustration of the thesis developed in *Le Nouveau Monde amoureux* concerning the plea for a new politics of love: the "ménage à trois" that Lélia dreams of seems to be, indeed, a queer family. Trenmor as a brother, Sténio as the son, and the three of them united by a "holy" love: the classic structure of kinship—the nuclear heterosexual family—is rejected by Lélia who prefers to create an incestuous family of her own with two other lovers, called brother and son, and beyond the bonds of marriage and monogamy. Going one step further in the creation of an alternate model, Lélia rejects monogamous love as valid for only a few exceptional people ("âmes d'exception"), whereas most of humanity should

²³ Actually, Jeanne Deroin had asked George Sand to be candidate for the legislative elections in 1849 but, as the latter refused and was outraged by this proposition, Jeanne Deroin became candidate. See Joan Scott.

²⁴ See the chapter 6, "Les compagnons de la femme," in *Jouve* (153-69).

embrace the free circulation of sexual pleasure between consenting partners. According to *Lélia*, love should not be linked with possession but with sharing: the verb *être* against the verb *avoir*, women not being objects of exchange but subjects of desire, just like men. *Lélia*, like Fourier's texts, can be read as a utopia of modern love, looking for a new, better model to reframe the old regime of heterosexuality.

It is understandable that *Lélia* was often interpreted as the novel of frigidity: the main character refuses any sexual contact with men, and seems reluctant to enjoy sexual pleasure. *Lélia*'s frigidity is one symptom, maybe the most revolting for men, of heterosexual trouble: men's sexual satisfaction is challenged by the sexual abstinence of their female partner, and this "strike" can be defined as a reaction of women against a male sexuality that does not respect female desire and expectations. On a psychoanalytical level, *Lélia* complains that her dreams are nightmares full of what she calls "*orgie de la peur*," an orgy of fear. She is not just frigid, but haunted and hurt by what was lived as a sexual assault:

C'est toujours un pêle-mêle d'ossements, une orgie de la peur qui sent le carnage et des cris de douleur, des paroles de menace proférées par des animaux mutilés. Croyez-vous que les rêves soient une pure combinaison de hasard ? (112)

Dreams are not, indeed, random and insignificant: the way *Lélia* describes her nightmares indicate the trauma of sexual violence, the palimpsest of the fear of rape—the fact that animals are mutilated in her nightmares indicates that the rape may have already happened, linking fear with trauma. Threats are uttered, subjects become screaming animals (bestiality suggests the dehumanisation of the subject), the orgy is full of fear and shouts of pain. *Lélia* asks a rhetorical question because she knows that these nightmares are symptomatic of the failure of her first love relationship. When this relationship ended,

Lélia, in spite of her young age, was already a wreck devastated by the storm of love (and life): “Quand vint l’âge de vivre, il fut trop tard : j’avais vécu” (167).

In *Le deuxième sexe*, Beauvoir devotes a chapter to the “Sexual Initiation,” in which she interprets female frigidity from a feminist point of view. Frigidity is not, in itself, a female problem or a feminine sickness, it is rather a defensive strategy used by women in reaction to the selfish, brutal, male sexuality which does not recognize the question of reciprocity in heterosexual intercourse:

L’attitude de l’homme a donc une extrême importance. Si son désir est violent et brutal, sa partenaire se sent entre ses bras changé en une pure chose ; mais s’il est trop maître de lui, trop détaché, il ne se constitue pas comme chair ; il demande à la femme de se faire objet sans qu’elle ait en retour prise sur lui. Dans les deux cas son orgueil se rebelle ; pour qu’elle puisse concilier sa métamorphose en objet charnel et la revendication de sa subjectivité, il faut que, se faisant proie pour le mâle, elle fasse aussi de lui sa proie. C’est pourquoi, si souvent, la femme s’entête dans la frigidité. (Vol. 2, 176)

Beauvoir argues that female frigidity has to be understood as a reaction to the male attitude, especially if his sexuality is disconnected from his female partner’s emotions. Frigidity, then, is a rebellion against a sexual misunderstanding, the denial of female desire and pleasure. Men are predetermined not to care for their partner’s sexual expectations precisely because, as Rousseau wrote in his *Emile*, women have the natural duty to please them. Women are expected not to have any desires of their own—or they should sacrifice them—because only male desire matters and should be fulfilled.

Lélia is the novel of a rebellion against this model of heterosexuality: by refusing to obey the Church, by fleeing the institution of marriage and reproduction, by resisting sexual intercourse with men, Lélia triggers a heterosexual crisis in order to call for new politics of love. This new politics of love would end up in the experimentation of a

community starting with Lélia, Sténio and Trenmor. By replacing the nuclear heterosexual family by an incestuous, bisexual, non-monogamous family, the new community would experience love beyond any sexual and gender norms, and outside of constraints in terms of age, monogamy, or social contract like marriage.

As long as men are not willing to consider this call for a new politics of love—Sténio makes the effort to praise gender inversion, and would be happy to be Lélia's feminine lover, but he still struggles with polygamy,—as long as the sexual utopia of queer heterosexuality is not put into practice, Lélia engages in what could be called an ethics of cruelty. Instead of being the only one, as a female subject, suffering from heterosexual gender and sexual norms, Lélia's position as a single, enigmatic, autonomous woman forces her potential lovers (Magnus, Trenmor, Sténio) to share the failure of an impossible love and to experiment the excruciating frustration of miscommunication between the sexes. Cruelty, then, is a question of perspective: from the male point of view, Lélia is cruel because she refuses to engage in any heterosexual relationship, she is held responsible for making men suffer, and she is accused of being on the side of Satan. From a dialectical point of view, this ethics of cruelty is necessary in order to force men to rethink heterosexual norms: the reader may wonder whether Sand wrote Lélia having in mind the project of creating a feminist model of rebellion, and what would happen if Lélia were to become a model of revolt for other women.

An episode illustrates well this ethics of cruelty: Lélia meets with her sister, the courtesan Pulchérie, who confesses that she discovered sexual pleasure in her arms a few years before, and then receives Lélia's own confession about her unhappy trajectory. Pulchérie sums up well Lélia's dilemma: "J'ai vu seulement que vous aviez une existence

problématique comme femme” (154). As they look alike, Lélia asks her sister to make love to Sténio in her name in the darkness, so that Sténio would think he could at last have access to Lélia’s body. He makes love to Pulchérie, but ends up discovering the truth: “Lélia, vous m’avez cruellement trompé ! Vous vous êtes jouée de moi avec un sang-froid que je ne puis comprendre (221)”, to which she answers : “Suis-je responsable de l’impuissance misérable de l’amour physique à calmer et à guérir l’ardeur cuisante et fantasque de vos rêves ? (227)”.

The misunderstanding could not be more exasperating: she tries to relieve him by offering him her sister as a “trick” and he accuses her of trapping him out of cruelty. Lélia, faithful to her call for a free circulation of pleasure between adults, believes that Sténio would be relieved to have sex with a simulation of her own body, but Sténio is outraged by this substitution and, later in the novel, out of despair over Lélia, he commits suicide. Sténio’s negative, extreme reaction against Lélia’s experiment on his sexuality suggests either a critique of Lélia’s sexual utopia (Sténio is not interested in the free circulation of pleasure, he is only seeking intimacy with Lélia) which, like every utopia, is doomed to fail once it is experienced, or the fact that Sténio was not ready, or mature enough, to embrace Lélia’s sexual fantasies.

Lélia’s ethics of cruelty, just like her frigidity, should not be interpreted from a medical point of view as a sickness or from a religious point of view as Satanism, but rather as an attempt to share with men the burden of the failure of heteronormativity.²⁵

Mario Praz has established, in *The Romantic Agony* that the aesthetics of cruelty were a major theme of Romantic literature, especially with the mortal beauty of the Medusa, or

²⁵ Rachilde, in her novels *Monsieur Vénus*(1884), *La Marquise de Sade* (1887)and *La jongleuse* (1900), will take one step further a feminist ethics of cruelty.

the rehabilitation of Satan. But an ethical approach to cruelty—and not just an aesthetic one—in Sand’s novel allows us to develop a feminist perspective of the Romantic trope of the “femme fatale.”

In *Lélia*, just as in Staël’s *Delphine* and *Corinne*, heterosexual trouble is connected to the Romantic concept of the imagination. Lélia responds to Sténio’s accusation of cruelty with reference to the gap between imagination and “reality:”

Est-ce ma faute si, dans votre imagination riche et féconde, vous aviez attribué à ces choses plus de valeur qu’elles n’en ont ? Est-ce ma faute si votre âme, comme la mienne, comme celle de tous les hommes, possède des facultés immenses pour le désir et si vos sens sont bornés pour la joie ? [...] Vous avez confondu le plaisir avec le bonheur. Nous faisons tous de même avant de connaître la vie, avant de savoir qu’il n’est pas donné à l’homme de réaliser l’un par l’autre. (227)

The (ab)use of imagination explains the specificity of Romantic idealism: the human subject cannot be satisfied by reality since he, like Lélia, was blessed with the gift of imagination, with the ability to dream of a lost world (childhood) or a heavenly land (the u-topia). The blessing of imagination is also a curse: in its unlimited flight, the spirit ends up burning its wings because of the limitations of the human body. However the reality of this disenchantment is fully recognized as part of Romanticism, whose idealism is connected, or rectified, by a cruel irony: Lélia, like Sténio, once mistook hedonistic pleasure for immaterial happiness, and seems to have never recovered from her disenchantment.²⁶ In this sense, Lélia may already know that the new politics of love she is contemplating will never have a chance to be something other than a failure if it were ever to be experienced. In her response to Sténio, Lélia includes her soul with every man’s in this diagnosis of melancholia: women, like men, have access to melancholia

²⁶ In *L’entretien infini*, Blanchot writes that “le romantisme finit mal, c’est vrai, mais c’est qu’il est essentiellement ce qui commence, ce qui ne peut que mal finir, fin qui s’appelle suicide, folie, déchéance, oubli” (517).

because they can also be torn apart by the tragedy of the human condition. The irony of life, with which Romantic authors deal, is that they are given imagination in order to dream of an ideal beyond, but they are also given an imperfect body with limited senses that prevent them from reaching this. Lélia's discourse is very close to Gusdorf's definition of the Romantic consciousness in his *Fondements du savoir romantique*:

Le cheminement de la conscience claire n'est qu'une longue ligne brisée, discontinue, un pointillé à la limite de l'univers antagoniste ; toute prétention à l'équilibre est à la longue intenable ; l'unité et l'identité ne sont qu'un vœu pieux autant qu'illusoire. L'homme est un danseur de corde, suspendu au-dessus de l'abîme dans lequel il finira par tomber, à la lisière entre le jour et la nuit, entre la vie et la mort, entre le rêve et la réalité. (199)

Between life and death, between dream and reality: this is, indeed, both Lélia's and Sténio's condition. She is often described as pale, with a gothic touch of vampirism (48), whereas Sténio faints often, cries even more, and ends up killing himself. Both are poets, and dreamers, even if their dreams are often sullied by nightmares: in the end they do not know if reality is unbearable because or in spite of their imagination. Following Gusdorf's argument that the concepts of unity and identity are not only problematic but also doomed to fail, I would argue that this is a reason why French Romanticism plays a crucial role in the articulation of heterosexual trouble: it provides a space for questioning the unity of the heterosexual couple and for deconstructing the dialectics of femininity and masculinity among subjects of both sexes. In this respect, Proudhon was anti-feminist enough to define and denounce Romanticism in his pamphlet *Les femmelins*, as a dangerous cultural castration of the Nation of France.

Published in 1846, 13 years after *Lélia*, when Sand had become disaffected with the disciples of Saint-Simon²⁷ and Romanticism was declining, *Isidora* can be read in many ways as a rewriting, or an update, of *Lélia*. This time, the main characters, Jacques and Isidora, do not end up dying, and the gothic touch of *Lélia* has vanished in favor of a more realist approach to heterosexual trouble: if Sténio was a poet, Jacques is a student interested in the social sciences, and if *Lélia* and Pulchérie were inverse and complementary sisters—the devilish saint and the holy whore,—Jacques will find out that his neighbour Julie and the courtesan Isidora are actually one and the same woman. However, heterosexuality remains troubled: Jacques is in love with his neighbour Julie because she is generous and educated, reading Rousseau on her own and willing to help whoever needs financial support. But Julie by day also happens to be Isidora by night, a courtesan who has recourse to prostitution as revenge for her earlier disillusionment with men. She is in a power relationship with the Comte Félix: she is trying to have him marry her as a social profanation (a sort of *Dame aux camélias*, or *Nana*, *avant la lettre*) while he is trying to make her his possession out of jealousy. Julie/Isidora, absorbed by her battle with Félix, prefers to leave Jacques because, in spite of his willingness to love and respect her, she is convinced that their love story would also degenerate into a power relationship. In her farewell letter, on her way to Italy to regain the Comte's heart, she gives him her analysis of the situation:

Jacques, je pars pour l'Italie. Ne songez plus à moi. J'ai réfléchi. Vous n'auriez jamais pu m'aimer sans vouloir me dominer et m'humilier. Je domine et j'humilie Félix. J'ai encore besoin de cette vengeance pendant quelque temps. Ne croyez pas que je sois heureuse : vingt fois par jour je suis comme prête à me tuer ! Mais je veux mourir debout, vois-tu, et non pas vivre à genoux. (55)

²⁷ Quoted in Bernard Jouve: "J'ai connu les saint-simoniens, hélas !" (299).

If Julie were not Isidora, she would still be able to believe in love, to preserve an idealism about heterosexual relationships, but like *Lélia* she had experiences with men, and this past is traumatic. Thus she is not willing to believe in love as long as the gender and sexual rules remain unchanged. Julie became Isidora as she decided to resist the only horizon available for women in love: submission *vis à vis* men, a social destiny of resignation and sacrifice. Instead, and not with pleasure, but out of anger and despair, she accepts love as a battlefield and decides to master the techniques of seduction as a courtesan in order to fight back against men's politics of love.

As in *Lélia*, an ethics of cruelty is at stake: Félix and Jacques, in spite of their differences in terms of social class and vision of love, share the same privileged sex and are assessed as enemies by Julie/Isidora, who takes revenge against the oppression of women that results from heteronormativity. At this point it is difficult for the reader to determine whether Isidora is taking revenge out of duty or cruelty, in order to save her dignity or enjoy the pleasure of reversing the power game between her and men. The way she phrases her need to extend her vengeance (“j’ai encore besoin de cette vengeance pendant quelques temps”) underlines the fact that she was hurt enough in the past to focus on a personal victory over men before engaging in love again.²⁸ If happiness is now perceived as an illusion by her, at least she is eager to stand up for her dignity and contest the legitimacy of marriage: since the institution of marriage leads to the socially approved slavery of women, her revolt will be to embrace explicit prostitution in order to denounce marriage as the façade for a prostitution that dares not speak its name. By using the verbs “humiliate” and “dominate,” Julie/Isidora depicts love in a cynical way and allows for no

²⁸ If there were evidence of pleasure in Isidora's revenge, the influence of Laclos and Sade over Sand would be more explicit, connecting Isidora with the marquise de Merteuil or the infamous Juliette.

respect and reciprocity. At this point, the ethics of cruelty is a defensive strategy used by women who refuse the gender and sexual norms attached to masculine domination.

Isidora starts with an extract from the research journals of Jacques Laurent, a student from a poor background who came to Paris to conduct research in social and political science. The journal begins with the following question:

La femme est-elle ou n'est-elle pas l'égale de l'homme dans les desseins, dans la pensée de Dieu ? La question est mal posée ainsi, il faudrait dire : L'espèce humaine est-elle composée de deux êtres différents, l'homme et la femme ? (8)

The question of sexual difference is not just the main topic of the novel, but also the main question that Jacques Laurent plans to address from a scholarly point of view. Whereas this question is addressed from a scientific perspective by a young male subject, the very same question is also on Julie's and Isidora's mind: even if Julie and Isidora are the same person, they represent the coexistence of what a woman could be if she were treated with respect and equality, and what a woman becomes when she rejects her alienation as a female subject by society. For instance, Julie is a free thinker and she discusses the question of sexual difference as a philosopher: Jacques is thrilled to find out that she happens to be a reader of the *Social Contract*, and she reveals to him her criticisms of Rousseau's theory of sexual difference:

Il n'a pas compris les femmes, ce sublime Rousseau, disait-elle. Il n'a pas su, malgré sa bonne volonté et ses bonnes intentions, en faire autre chose que des êtres secondaires dans la société. Il leur a laissé l'ancienne religion dont il affranchissait les hommes ; il n'a pas prévu qu'elles auraient besoin de la même foi et la même morale que leurs pères, leurs époux et leurs fils, et qu'elles se sentiraient avilies d'avoir un autre temple et une autre doctrine. Il a fait des nourrices croyant faire des mères. (33)

Like Staël's heroine, Delphine, Julie reads and admires "ce sublime Rousseau," yet she is very critical of his philosophy when it comes to the question of women. Julie denounces

what Fraisse in her essay *Les deux gouvernements: la famille et la cité* will also trace to Rousseau.²⁹ His theory of sexual difference allowed the Revolution to happen without questioning masculine domination, but rather redistributing power between men, from the father—the King—to brothers, clarifying the separation of gender in terms of space and agency: “cité” for men—political, public space—and family for women—the reproduction of kinship in the private realm of the house. Women are assigned by Rousseau the function of motherhood, and more precisely nursing, but Julie claims that they would also benefit from equality with men and should be able to subscribe as well to the social contract.

If Julie is very articulate in her philosophical critique of Rousseau, her counterpart, the courtesan in her, Isidora, bears the same regret but in a more outraged way, speaking from her experience as a despised, misunderstood woman: “C’est que je suis une énigme pour moi-même. Malade d’amour, je n’aime pas. Une fois, dans ma vie, j’ai cru aimer...” (134). Isidora (like Lélia) is weary of love as long as it is articulated in terms of masculine domination, forcing women to sacrifice their talent and their legitimate quest for happiness in order to serve their husbands. She rejects not love in itself (the ideal of love haunts her), but rather its degeneration into a power struggle which creates conflict instead of mutual admiration between men and women. Then, the question of feminine identity can be considered as both the symptom and the consequence of this “sickness:” what is a woman if she decides to reject the social destiny prescribed for her by men? What makes a woman if she gives, to quote Rousseau, “the lie to nature?” (*Emile*, 454) Once she is perceived as against nature—Lélia accused of being a demon, Isidora marginalized as a prostitute—how can she survive in society and what identity can she claim? The moment of revolt turns Julie into Isidora, triggers the identity crisis and

²⁹ See chapters 1 and 2 of her book.

confronts the female rebel with the stigma of monstrosity: “Une courtisane intelligente, douée d’un esprit sérieux et d’un coeur aimant ! mais c’est une monstruosité !” (129).

The woman as a monster is a question of perspective: from the social point of view, a woman who rejects heteronormativity is perceived as against nature; from Sand’s perspective, however she makes the brave attempt to call for a new politics of love and rethink heterosexuality in a way that would emancipate both men and women from sexual and gender norms. Love has to be reinvented in order to generate a modern social order.

Jacques Laurent, because he is young and new to Paris, finds himself in the position of a student, not a master: his main subject is the enigma of sexual difference and he is willing to address it without prejudice. *Isidora* presents Jacques Laurent as the stereotype of the early nineteenth-century social thinker who can be interpreted as a disciple, or at least an epigone, of Fourier or Saint-Simon. On the one hand his approach is based on the social sciences in the way that he is looking for the objective truth (the terminology used in Jacques’ cahiers mimics the language of these theorists) that would reveal female identity; on the other hand his research on women is connected, more generally, with the quest for a completely new social order taking into account politics and economics, male domination and the rule of the bourgeoisie:

Le pauvre aussi, le travailleur sans capital, qui certes n’est pas généralement faible et pusillanime, accepte depuis le commencement des sociétés la domination du riche et du puissant. C’est qu’il n’a pas reçu, plus que la femme, par l’éducation, l’initiation à l’égalité. (18)

This mix between a scientific approach and a utopian goal is the signature of the writings of social thinkers like Fourier and Saint-Simon who would connect the emancipation of the proletariat with that of women in order to reframe the political, cultural and economic

structures of society. Instead of having recourse, like Rousseau, to the concept of nature in order to justify sexual difference, Jacques Laurent prefers to take a critical approach to the political concept of voluntary servitude.³⁰ This servitude can be explained and challenged by the conditions and consistency of education: women can be aware of their alienation if they are given the possibility of articulating it in political terms, if their mind is educated just as male minds are, with the same access to knowledge.

If Sand was enthusiastic about Saint-Simon when she published *Lélia* in 1833, she is disappointed with his disciples when she publishes *Isidora* in 1846. The result of this frustration can be seen in the way Jacques, in spite of his good will, ends up being ashamed of his research, of the philosophical distance he maintains between himself and his subject: he makes the decision not to continue or publish his works on sexual difference. As he finds himself torn between his love for Isidora and a new love for the Comte's sister, Alice, he does not know how to handle what he interprets as a confusion:

Je me croyais jadis un grand philosophe, et je n'étais encore qu'un enfant. Aujourd'hui je voudrais être un homme, et je crains de n'être qu'un mince philosophe, un *philosopheur*, comme dit Isidora. [...] Et j'écrivais sur la philosophie ! et je prétendais composer un traité, formuler le code d'une société idéale, et proposer aux hommes un nouveau contrat social !... Eh bien, oui, je prétendais, comme tant d'autres, instruire et corriger mes semblables, et je n'ai pu m'instruire et me corriger moi-même. (449-50)

This identity crisis here is significant because it shows that addressing the question of sexual difference should not be reduced to the issue of female identity. Jacques wanted to solve the enigma of female identity but, along the way, he discovered, first, that Julie was also Isidora, and, second, that his love for her was in contradiction with his love for another woman. In the end, both Isidora and Jacques, each one trying to understand the

³⁰ The concept of voluntary servitude was first theorized by La Boétie in *Traité de la servitude volontaire* in 1576.

logic of sexual difference in her/his own way, reach the conclusion that they are an enigma to themselves: confusion, instead of clarification, awaits them in their effort to understand the dialectics of femininity and masculinity, and thus the nature of selfhood.

For Jacques, the crisis is double: he is not the philosopher he thought he was, and he does not take for granted his masculine identity: “today I would like to be a man.” Even if women are much more alienated than men by heteronormativity, it is naïve and pointless to address the issue of sexual difference by thinking that only female identity is at stake. Rethinking heterosexuality triggers a crisis which concerns both men and women: thus Jacques ends up being caught in the enigma of his own identity, facing the discovery that he is just a child and needs to become a man—which requires, as well, knowing what it means to be a man *and* a woman. Through the character of Jacques, male philosophers, even when they are feminist, are blamed for not understanding and feeling in their own soul and body that rethinking heterosexuality implies much more than a philosophical treatise: it poses a challenge to one’s own identity. Although many of Sand’s novels have a woman as the main character, it is interesting to note that Jacques ends up being the main character of this one: in spite of its title, dedicated to a female character, it is Jacques, whose masculine crisis is articulated throughout the novel, who is the most developed character. In this case, the title may highlight the confusion between male and female characters as they both get lost in the labyrinth of gendered identities. If Jacques blames himself for not being personal enough in his quest for the understanding of femininity, we shall see in the next section that the same thing cannot be said about Gautier’s heroine, Mademoiselle de Maupin: she, on the contrary, takes the quest for

femininity to a very personal level, to the point of challenging her identity in the most extreme way—by changing sex.

Théophile Gautier and the fantasy of artifice in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

The enigma of identity which seizes both Isidora and Jacques as far as sex and gender are concerned, is the main theme of Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Baudelaire, in his tribute to this novel written by his master, recognized in it the triumph of the "idée fixe,"³¹ the quest for beauty in itself. The preface of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is usually considered a Romantic manifesto—a provocative, anti-bourgeois *éloge* of the amorality of art. Gautier specifically states that "le seul de vous qui ait le sens commun, c'est un fou, un grand génie, un imbécile, un divin poète bien au-dessus de Lamartine, de Hugo et de Byron; c'est Charles Fourier" (49)—the novel itself is an illustration of this manifesto based on the pursuit of a third sex. The main character, D'Albert, confesses at the beginning of the novel:

J'ai désiré le cor des frères Tangut, le chapeau de Fortunatus, le bâton d'Abaris, l'anneau de Gygès ; j'aurais vendu mon âme pour arracher la baguette magique de la main d'une fée, mais je n'ai jamais rien tant souhaité que de rencontrer sur la montagne, comme Tirésias le devin, ces serpents qui font changer de sexe ; et ce que j'envie le plus aux dieux monstrueux et bizarres de l'Inde, ce sont leurs perpétuels avatars et leurs transformations innombrables. (112)

This confession would be ironic if it were read like a wish, but it is actually a plan, and one that is being implemented by Théodore de Sérannes, who is also *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. Instead of accusing himself of looking for the impossible and indulging in madness, the Romantic subject not only accepts his dreams as chimerical but wants to embody them in the realm of the tangible: denying the frontier between fantasy and reality in order to blend the "fairy tale" with modern society. The Romantic subject is Faustian by definition—"j'aurais vendu mon âme pour arracher la baguette magique de la

³¹"Ce roman, ce conte, ce tableau, cette rêverie continuée avec l'obstination d'un peintre, cette espèce d'hymne à la Beauté, avait surtout ce grand résultat d'établir définitivement la condition génératrice des œuvres d'art, c'est-à-dire l'amour exclusif du Beau, l'*Idée fixe*" (497).

main d'une fée"—because his obsession to fulfil his personal fantasies matters more than any fear of God or respect for ethics. Thus Mademoiselle de Maupin was born a female and, because she associates boredom with the condition of a woman, she decides to contest the social destiny which is stamped on her sex since her birth and to defy “natural” sexual difference. The queer aspect of her fantasy is articulated both in her project and in her prose: the project, in reference to Tiresias, denies the laws of nature, and aims at bridging the gap between the sexes; and the use of adjectives like “monstrous” and “bizarre” to depict her role models—pagan gods from India—illustrates an aesthetics which challenges the social and Classical norms of representation, “bienséance” and “vraisemblance,” decency and verisimilitude. Mademoiselle de Maupin’s project does not have to be queered: it is already queer in itself. D’Albert is not a chimera or a fantasy that should remain in her imagination; the novel is the narrative of its own experiment and the assault of artifice on the natural:

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. (356)

This confession by Théodore, made at the end of the novel, echoes the preliminary project but brings into relief the social consequence of such an individual adventure: heterosexual trouble, if not the radical rejection of the possibility of heterosexuality. Théodore/Madeleine considers him/herself as a being for whom no name is yet invented, a transgender creature who describes herself with attributes of both sexes (the soul and body of a woman, the spirit and strength of a man), and who is reluctant to engage in heterosexual relationships with men or women for fear of being integrated into the normative system. If no name has yet been invented for this new kind of hero, then a new

kind of language must give it a proper consistency: hence the need for stylistic experimentation. In his essay *No Future*, Lee Edelman defined queerness as the rejection “of every substantialization of identity, which is always oppositionally defined” (4), an identity whose position is not positive but reactive, resisting a normative model rather than advocating a set of new rules. The queerness of Théodore, in his attempt to refuse any label and any position on the sex scale, is indisputable, but it is also specifically linked to Romanticism in its tribute to madness and fantasy: “Il n’y a peut-être pas sur la terre de fantaisie plus folle et plus vagabonde que la mienne” (62). While Lélia warned Sténio about the danger of indulging in one’s own imagination, Théodore ignores any possibility of disenchantment in order to turn his fantasy—as wild as it gets—into a reality for him and in the eyes of his fellows.

Like Lélia and Isidora, also accused of being monstrous or against nature, Mademoiselle de Maupin uses her fantasy as a defensive and creative strategy to gain an agency denied her on the basis of her sex. The focus on fantasy allows us to understand the negativity of boredom and melancholia as the matrix for a personal, atypical agency: the flight of the hero away from norms. And because this flight is perceived as individual, sterile and asocial, the Romantic hero is often interpreted as an anti-hero.³² In the case of Mademoiselle de Maupin, the refusal of a life of boredom gives her the strength to change her sex:

Il nous est défendu de prendre la parole, de nous mêler à la conversation autrement que pour répondre oui et non, si l’on nous interroge. Aussitôt que l’on veut dire quelque chose d’intéressant, l’on nous renvoie étudier notre harpe ou notre clavecin. [...] A force de vouloir nous empêcher d’être romanesques, l’on nous rend idiots. Le temps de notre éducation se passe non pas à nous apprendre quelque chose, mais à nous empêcher d’apprendre. [...] J’avais laissé mon titre de femme ; dans la chambre où

³² See George Ross Ridge: “All anti-heroes evidence romantic irony to some extent” (128).

j'avais fait ma toilette étaient serrées vingt années de ma vie qui ne devaient plus compter et qui ne me regardaient plus. Sur la porte on eût pu écrire : Ci-gît Madeleine de Maupin. (222-23)

If women were educated like men, and were given the same agency, if equality between the sexes were a fact, Madeleine would thrive with fantasy alone; her quest for adventure—to be or not to be romanesque, that is the Romantic question—would not necessitate denying her sex. It would be irrelevant, after such a feminist passage, in which Madeleine explains to the reader how alienating it is to be a woman in nineteenth-century France, to qualify *Mademoiselle de Maupin* as an “androcentric” novel because of the sex of its author: the tribute to sexual fantasy does not have to take priority over the feminism which grounds it. In *Isidora*, Jacques was working on the hypothesis that education could be for both women and the proletariat a source of empowerment: here, Madeleine confirms that the education of women consists in making sure that they will not learn anything that would prevent them from becoming pious housewives. Indeed, in *Corinne ou l'Italie*, the difference between Corinne and her half-sister Lucile is linked to their education: Corinne was raised in Italy and received a liberal education which allowed her to become an independent and talented artist, whereas Lucile was raised in England and was taught to be discreet, decent and submissive in order to become the perfect wife.

In *Mademoiselle de Maupin* heterosexual trouble is articulated through three components: cross-dressing, homosexuality and contagion. In her will to abandon her female identity and become convincing as a man, Madeleine learns how to dress and act like a man: her lifestyle is that of a *chevalier*, she has a horse, she engages in homosocial bonding and from time to time she even engages in the masculine institution *par*

excellence, the duel. The cross-dressing, in her case, is not ephemeral but constant, and is one of the many means she uses in order to be taken for a man:

A force d'entendre tout le monde m'appeler monsieur, et de me faire traiter comme si j'étais un homme, j'oubliais insensiblement que j'étais une femme ; - mon déguisement me semblait mon habit naturel, et il ne me souvenait pas d'en avoir jamais porté d'autre. (293)

If the woman manages to pass as a man in society, then heterosexuality is in trouble because the effects of cross-dressing can appear as “natural”—even to the subject—as the effect of a person who does not cross dress.³³ Heterosexuality being based on the radical distinction between the sexes, the success of Madeleine's passing as a man challenges everyone's ability to tell one sex from another. Psychologically, this cross-dressing is not described as a masquerade but as a real sex change: Madeleine *herself* identifies with the knight Théodore de Sérannes, to the point that the artifice seems natural. If the artifice may seem as natural as nature itself, we must ask what becomes of sexual difference, grounded on the laws of nature?

The second component of heterosexual trouble is the disruption of homosexual desire. D'Albert finds himself in love with Théodore, but since he is a man in love with another man, he denies the gender of Théodore and wants to think he is a woman in disguise: the homosexual panic makes him look for the femininity in his male target. But sometimes, out of despair and love, he recognizes that the situation is extremely peculiar:

Il faut que Théodore soit une femme déguisée; la chose est impossible autrement. (199) [...] Ce qu'il y a de singulier, c'est que je ne pense presque plus à son sexe et que je l'aime avec une sécurité parfaite. Quelques fois je cherche à me persuader que cet amour est abominable, et je me le dis à moi-même le plus sévèrement possible ; mais cela ne vient

³³ In *Histoire de ma vie*, Sand remembers that, when she moved to Paris, she started cross-dressing as a man in order to save money, and she describes the freedom which it accorded to her: “Je voltigeais d'un bout de Paris à l'autre. Il me semblait que j'aurais fait le tour du monde. [...] Personne ne faisait attention à moi et ne se doutait de mon déguisement” (281).

que des lèvres, c'est un raisonnement que je me fais et que je ne sens pas : il me semble réellement que c'est la chose la plus simple du monde et que tout autre à ma place en ferait autant. (212)

Just as artifice in the end appears as natural as nature itself, homosexual desire for D'Albert, in spite of his attempt to deny it, eventually rules his heart and seems just as natural as heterosexual desire. The irony is that D'Albert is ready to overcome his homosexual panic when Théodore really is a woman in disguise: at this point, it is not just the frontier between man and woman which is blurred, but also the frontier between homosexuality and heterosexuality. In the end, both Théodore and D'Albert manage to forget the original sex of Madeleine de Maupin: Théodore really thinks he is a man and D'Albert really accepts his love for another man.

The third and last component of heterosexual trouble is the contagiousness of Madeleine's fantasy. Toward the end of the novel, she tells the story of her meeting with a charming fifteen year old girl: Ninon. When she finds out that Ninon is in love with "le chevalier de G***," who is perceived by Madeleine as a horrible misogynist, she decides to hire the services of Ninon for a while: not only she is going to distract her from this despised man, but she is going to turn Ninon into her own page boy—without revealing to her that she is also an organic woman passing as a man.

Tous les jours je découvrais dans cette aimable enfant quelque nouvelle qualité qui me la faisait chérir davantage et m'applaudir de la résolution que j'avais prise. — Assurément les hommes n'étaient pas dignes de la posséder, et il eût été déplorable que tant de charmes du corps et de l'âme eussent été livrés à leurs appétits brutaux et à leur cynique dépravation. (355)

In spite of not being reproductive as a woman, Madeleine becomes contagious as a gender outlaw by turning other girls—onto whom she may project herself—into male impersonators. By doing so, even if her fantasy is highly secret and personal, she tutors

other girls about how to enjoy a life based on the denial of one's sex: her fantasy thus becomes political, an alternate model which can be shared among other women. In the end, Ninon, whose heart and life would have been damaged by a man, is given the chance to be educated about the importance of being free and sexually distant from men.

In *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Gautier goes so far in the deconstruction of sexual difference that an analysis of the dialectics of femininity and masculinity in this novel cannot help but remind the reader of queer and psychoanalytical texts written on heterosexuality as a problematic regime of desire and identity. It appears clearly, for instance, that Madeleine's departure from her given sex and her self-definition as beyond or outside the sex scale—"Je pense que j'aurais très bien pu poser pour une statue de l'Incertitude personnifiée" (331)—echoes what Judith Butler has written on Herculine Barbin's autobiography: "Herculine is not an "identity", but the sexual impossibility of an identity" (*Gender Trouble* 23). Herculine Barbin, an intersexual subject—or a hermaphrodite, to speak the language of the nineteenth century—whose memoirs were published and introduced by Michel Foucault, also offers the narrative of a move beyond the binary matrix of sexual difference. One of the main concepts of queer theory, which is that gender is performative—"identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results," (*Gender Trouble*, 25)—and that sex is always already gendered, is illustrated throughout *Mademoiselle de Maupin* by the memoirs of her sexual odyssey: her new gender seems as natural as her anatomical one, but its naturalness and social approval were earned on the artifice which turned sex into gender, instead of defining gender as the cultural interpretation of sex. The concept of artifice, which was rehabilitated by Romanticism, theorized and praised by Baudelaire in his

essay *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, and espoused by the Decadents, is used by Butler in her definition of gender:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one. (*Gender Trouble* 6)

Mademoiselle de Maupin is indeed the novel of gender as a free-floating artifice.

Madeleine, by successfully becoming a man, Théodore de Sérannes, proved indeed that masculinity could also be attached to a female body: “il arrive souvent que le sexe de l’âme ne soit point pareil à celui du corps, et c’est une contradiction qui ne peut manquer de produire beaucoup de désordre” (294). While Staël theorized a dissociation between the sex and the soul, Théodore confuses this dissociation by connecting the soul with a sex of its own, but only to oppose it to the sex of the body: in this way, he articulates what will become, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the medical rhetoric about inverts.³⁴ But Théodore’s point here is not so much to classify perversions, but rather to provoke disorder when it comes to the understanding of gender norms. By distinguishing two sexes within one subject and linking artifice with the soul, Romanticism promoted a modern spirituality based on the rehabilitation of fantasy as the ultimate experience.

In his essay *Between Genders, Narrating Difference in Early French Modernism*, Nathaniel Wing interpreted D’Albert’s spleen as the symptom of heterosexual melancholia (36): D’Albert’s reluctance to recognize the homosexual “nature” of his desire *vis à vis* Théodore triggers what Butler has conceptualised as a melancholia specific to heterosexual subjects: as heterosexuality is grounded in the homosexual taboo which precedes the incest taboo, its gender identity is melancholic as a reaction against

³⁴ See Richard Von Krafft-Ebing.

the loss of the possibility of homosexual desire (Butler, *Gender trouble* 70). Indeed, homosexual panic within D'Albert can be linked to the heterosexual melancholia triggered in him by Théodore:

J'ai vu autrefois un jeune homme qui m'a volé la forme que j'aurais dû avoir. Ce scélérat était juste comme j'aurais voulu être. Il avait la beauté de ma laideur, et à côté de lui j'avais l'air de son ébauche. [...] D'autres fois j'avais d'horribles envies de démangeaisons de l'étrangler et de mettre son âme à la porte de ce corps qui m'appartenait, et je rôdais autour de lui les lèvres serrées, les poings crispés comme un seigneur qui rôde autour de son palais où une famille de gueux s'est établie en son absence. Quoi que Théodore soit très beau, je n'ai pas cependant désiré sa beauté, et j'aime mieux qu'il l'ait que moi (200-01)

D'Albert, because of his heterosexuality, is not supposed to be attracted to another man, to someone whose gender is not different from his: this taboo constitutes the masculine gender as the rejection of a sexual attraction to the same gender. This loss is the matrix of his melancholia because he is doomed to be attracted to women whose gender has to be different from his—he needs to love someone he would not like to become. Thus, in order to prevent any irruption of homosexual desire, whenever he finds himself attracted to another man he interprets this desire as an aesthetic model—“he had stolen the shape I should have had”—instead of facing the sexual impulse at stake. Another way of denying homosexual desire is to turn it into violence—the obsessive will to kill the desired man³⁵—as an expression of homosexual panic. Consequently, D'Albert resists the irruption of homosexual desire by rejecting a comparison between the “scélérat” from the past and Théodore: whereas he wanted to look like the “scélérat,” he claims to appreciate Théodore's beauty without jealousy, only from an aesthetic point of view.

³⁵ A famous example is illustrated in *Billy Budd*, by Herman Melville.

Mademoiselle de Maupin can also be interpreted as surprisingly close to one of Lacan's most famous concepts: the object petit a. In his essay on *Théorie Queer et Psychanalyse*, Javier Sáez gives the following definition of the objet petit a:

L'objet *a*, ou "objet petit a", est introduit par Lacan en 1963 pour désigner un objet qui se soustrait, qui échappe, jusqu'à ne plus être représentable, à un "reste" non symbolisable. L'objet *a* représente dans le vocabulaire de Lacan ce qui déchaîne le désir. Ce sont tous les objets qui ont un rapport avec la séparation. [...] La vérité du désir reste cachée à la conscience du sujet car cet objet est un "manque". (35)

La vision qu'a Lacan de la sexualité montre que le désir n'est pas déterminé par le genre de l'objet élu, mais par l'objet *a*, qui est indépendant du genre. En dissociant le désir du genre, Lacan dissocie le désir de l'hétérosexualité comme norme. (107)

Madeleine de Maupin, through her fantasy of changing her original sex, stands for the allegory of androgyny: by stating "je suis d'un troisième sexe à part et qui n'a pas encore de nom" (356), Madeleine seeks to shed her former identity and embody another one which would not belong to the symbolic, and would reject any attempt to be placed into a coherent, unified identity. According to Lacan, not only does the object petit a resist the symbolic order, but it is also linked with separation and triggers within the subject the frustrated quest for an enigmatic desire which is beyond the apparatus of sexual difference: Madeleine de Maupin ends up attracting both Théodore and Rosette, and remains a mystery for both of them as long as she conveys the aura of androgyny: "Il n'y a presque plus de différence entre Pâris et Hélène. Aussi l'hermaphrodite est-il une des chimères les plus ardemment caressées de l'antiquité idolâtre" (212). The climax of enigma and separation happens at the very end of the novel, when Madeleine/Théodore spends part of the night with D'Albert and the other part with Rosette, having sex with both of them and disappearing in the morning: she leaves a farewell letter for D'Albert, in

which she explains to him that it is already time to end their relationship, lest it fall into routine and lose its spark:

En vivant avec vous dans une grande intimité, j'aurais sans doute eu l'occasion de vous voir en bonnet de coton ou dans quelque situation domestique ridicule et bouffonne. –Vous auriez nécessairement perdu ce côté romanesque et mystérieux qui me séduit sur toutes choses, et votre caractère, mieux compris, ne m'eût plus paru si étrange. (374)

Although Madeleine claims that she is attracted to mystery and strangeness, and cites her quest for this as a reason to leave D'Albert, she acts so as to remain, for D'Albert and Rosette, an object of infinite desire, an unidentified sexual object who haunts others as the vision of an impossible Ideal. At the moment when she seems to surrender—by accepting to have sex with both of her lovers—she leaves and thus ensures that she will be forever regretted, a chimera close to, but never quite, becoming real. Ironically, and cruelly, she asks D'Albert to take care of Rosette and to cherish her memory from time to time: “Aimez-vous tous deux en souvenir de moi, que vous avez aimée l'un et l'autre, et dites-vous quelques fois mon nom dans un baiser” (375). Just as Lélia was either naïve or cruel when she asked Sténio and Trenmor to form with her a queer family, Madeleine not only runs away from her two lovers but dares ask them to think of her while in each other's arms. The cruelty comes from the fact that Madeleine offers only her memory, instead of her body, and leaves Rosette and D'Albert to one another in relationship formed of lack, remembering the spectre of their common, regretted lover. Madeleine leaves them but, paradoxically, she forever haunts them by becoming the queer fantasy involved in the constitution of a heteronormative relationship between Rosette and D'Albert. Madeleine's fantasy is not just to pass as a man, because in this case the sex change would confirm rather than deconstruct the sexual difference; her fantasy is more

to embody a fascinating chimera which both triggers and exasperates desire, without ever being caught in the net of reification. This is what Lacan writes in his *Écrit* “Position de l’inconscient:”

Ce que notre expérience démontre de vacillation dans le sujet concernant son être de masculin ou de féminin, n’est pas tellement à rapporter à sa bisexualité biologique, qu’à ce qu’il n’y a rien dans sa dialectique qui représente la bipolarité du sexe, si ce n’est l’activité et la passivité, c’est-à-dire une polarité pulsion-action-de-l’extérieur, qui est tout à fait impropre à la représenter dans son fonds. (124)

This third sex without any name that Madeleine/Théodore plans to become and remain is the main cause for heterosexual trouble in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. It is also the pretext and the context in which Romanticism can elaborate a specific prose, a way of writing which is appropriate to delivering a literature of artifice. Contrary to what Marlène Barsoum concludes in her analysis of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*—“The story of the androgyne cannot be told. The text of the androgyne, consequently, proves to be an impossible text” (112),—I believe that the text of the androgyne can be told and has been written in its own way: in what I call a stylistic dandyism, which I shall discuss in chapter 3.

Aspects of the trouble: Unnatural Heterosexuality

Although much of this chapter has focused on gender trouble in its critique of heteronormativity, sexuality itself became more and more crucial in this critique from Staël's novels to Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. In *Delphine* and *Corinne*, queerness does not reside within sexual acts themselves: the queerness is to be found in a rejection of heterosexual institutions like compulsory marriage and motherhood, perceived as an alienating political regime.³⁶ Neither *Delphine* nor *Corinne* is willing to accept this political regime: their ambitions are not linked to motherhood and the status of housewife is repellent to them. In spite of social disapproval, sentimental misery and eventually death, they create a situation of non-reproductive, extramarital, stigmatised heterosexuality.

This point leads to another aspect of the deconstruction of heteronormativity: a specific temporality is associated with heterosexuality, and this normative temporality is rejected in the five novels studied in this chapter. In her introduction to *In a Queer Time and Space*, Judith Halberstam describes the normative agenda of a heteronormative social destiny:

The time of reproduction is ruled by a biological clock for women and by strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples. [...] this timetable is governed by an imagined set of children's needs, and it relates to beliefs about children's health and healthful environments for child rearing. The time of inheritance refers to an overview of generational time within which values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next. It also connects the family to the historical past of the nation, and glances ahead to connect the family to the future of both familial and national stability. (5)

³⁶ Monique Wittig writes in her introduction to *The Straight Mind* that "l'hétérosexualité est le régime politique sous lequel nous vivons, fondé sur l'esclavagisation des femmes" (11).

At least three rules are the consequence of a heteronormative timetable: the duty for the couple to turn into parents by producing and raising children, the duty of generational inheritance, and the inscription of familial stability within a larger, national identity. Thus, the heteronormative subject has a past and a future: the present is dedicated to both caring for inheritance and for reproduction; it does not have an autonomy outside of this linear narrative which reinforces the historical narrative. On the contrary, the novels by Staël, Sand and Gautier focus on the present as a moment of rupture and crisis, with its own potential for change beyond the duties of inheritance and reproduction. Corinne, for instance, refuses to inherit from her stepmother the typical education of a Victorian lady: in the end she rejects the husband chosen for her and prefers to drop her family name and leave her country in order to construct her identity as an artist. What matters most, for her, is not fidelity to her father's land and the perpetuation of the family line, but rather the experience of her freedom, and the expression of her artistic talent. Whether in the case of Delphine and Léonce, or Lélia and Sténio, or Jacques and Isidora, none of the couples end up getting married and producing children to become a heterosexual, socially approved, family: there is no space for what Lee Edelman calls "reproductive futurism" in these couples.³⁷ They live in the present, are not rooted in a nation or a family, and their discussions focus more on the individual issues of desire, identities and the possibility of mutual respect and admiration. Patriarchal and patriotic duties are resisted by women in love, who lead their male partners to find themselves in an unexpected position of possible subversion when it comes to sexuality or gender. Sténio, for instance,

³⁷ Edelman in *No Future*: "queerness names the side of those who do not "fight for the children," the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism. [...] queerness attains its ethical value precisely insofar as it accedes to that place, accepting its figural status as resistance to the viability of the social" (3).

recognizes in Lélia his master and tells her he is willing to embrace an inversion of genders (“vous avez pris mon rôle, que les autres vous refusaient. Loin de répudier le vôtre, je vous le demande à genoux”[225]). Likewise, in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the heterosexual *chevalier* D’Albert, who refused to believe that his beloved friend Théodore was a man, finally accepts his homosexual desire: “j’ai découvert l’affreuse vérité... Silvio, j’aime... Oh ! non, je ne pourrai jamais te le dire... j’aime un homme !” (195).

The cases of Corinne and Isidora could be interpreted as exceptions, or contradictions, to the resistance against heteronormative temporality, as they both end up having an experience of motherhood: Isidora becomes the mother of Agathe, Corinne is in charge of the education of Juliette (the child of Lord Nelvil and Lucile), who looks and talks like her; both Isidora and Corinne are delighted with this generational relationship. But in both cases, the experience of motherhood is not associated with the heterosexual contract as neither of the daughters is biologically produced by her mother, who instead raises her outside of institution of marriage. Isidora adopted Agathe out of charity and without any pressure of the motherhood instinct (“je n’avais jamais songé à adopter un enfant, je n’avais jamais regretté de n’en point avoir”[169]): she knew Agathe was an orphan and she was wealthy enough to give her a proper education. Not only did she raise her without the company of men, but she actually analyses the success of her motherhood thanks to the total absence of any man:

Agathe m’aime, et c’est tout ; et moi, l’âme la plus exigeante et la plus jalouse qui fut jamais, je m’habitue à l’idée qu’il est bon d’être celle des deux qui aime le plus. C’est là un miracle, n’est-ce pas ? un miracle que j’eusse en vain demandé à l’amour d’un homme et qu’a su opérer l’amitié d’une enfant. (177)

Not only does the link between Isidora and Agathe owe nothing to the institution of marriage and the sexual intercourse between Isidora and another man, but the “miracle” of such an intense, fulfilling love is explained entirely by the fact that no man was there to spoil it. Moreover, no man would have been able to give Isidora the equivalent of the love she has been experiencing with her daughter: single motherhood replaces the heteronormative model. Corinne also enjoys a sense of motherhood that diverges from heteronormativity through suggestions of incest. Before Juliette meets with Corinne, she had already surprised her father Lord Nelvil by her physical resemblance to Corinne (Lucile, Juliette’s mother, is Corinne’s half-sister). When Lord Nelvil and Lucile visit Italy, Corinne, who knows she is going to die soon, asks the favor to spend time with their daughter Juliette and to give her an extended education so that she will not just look like her but also perpetuate her artistic talents through her. Corinne’s experience of motherhood could be understood as a revenge against Lord Nelvil: he did not want to marry her because of the disapproving spectre of his father, but then he will be haunted by the spectre of Corinne who will survive in the guise—literal and figurative—of his daughter Juliette. The special connection between Corinne and Juliette is a process of reincarnation based on education, by which Corinne will renew her genius and embody her legend beyond her death. As Corinne confesses to her half-sister Lucile:

Puisque je dois bientôt mourir, mon seul désir personnel est encore qu’Oswald retrouve dans vous et dans sa fille quelques traces de mon influence, et que jamais du moins il ne puisse avoir une jouissance de sentiment sans se rappeler Corinne. (579)

Corinne’s last wish, explicitly stated to her sister, is to haunt Oswald, to force him to associate every possible pleasure with her name and memory, and to remember her by her influence over his daughter Juliette. But Juliette’s physical resemblance to Corinne

makes their relationship more than one of a tutor and pupil. Juliette appears the child of a fantasized marriage between Corinne and Nelvil, in which Corinne is present only in spirit and whose force of will prevails over the sex of the real mother, Lucile. Thus, the models of motherhood illustrated in *Isidora* and *Corinne* function more as anti-models of heteronormative motherhood because they are experienced against, or in the absence of, men, and based on a link which is disconnected from sexual reproduction.³⁸

It is not illogical that the resistance to a heteronormative temporality would go hand in hand with the same resistance to a heteronormative geography: as stated in the quotation from Halberstam above, time and space work together to fix the heterosexual identity in a temporal and spatial agenda. Besides a linear trajectory devoted to reproductive futurism, the heterosexual subject is also expected to be rooted in the nation, a patriarchal space in which the regeneration takes place through the heterosexual family. The main signs of resistance to a heteronormative geography in the texts discussed here are free-floating mobility in general and exile in particular. Madeleine offers, in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the best example of wandering: initially, as a woman, she is assigned one space, the household, and one mission, the production of children and the management of the household chores, but she redefines her identity by running away and turning into a wandering knight. Once she becomes Théodore, she is free to go wherever her fantasy wishes, and the novel ends with her disappearance: once again escaping the space in which her lovers (Rosette and D'Albert) needed her company. The freedom of circulation practiced by Théodore illustrates the rejection of roots associated with a heteronormative geography.

³⁸ If *Isidora* and *Corinne* offer a serious critique of heteronormative motherhood, the relationship between Maupin and Ninon function more as an ironic version of it, since Maupin initiates Ninon to the joys of cross-dressing and hopes to be imitated by her in her *personal* fantasy.

Even more dramatic is the choice of exile, the anti-patriotic rejection of one's nation, when individual freedom requires an escape from a too familiar space. Exile is a strategy that allows individualist women to enjoy more agency in a new context where social pressure is less normative either because of their status as foreigners or because the cultural gap promotes different rules and more personal freedom. Corinne, refusing to marry a man who was chosen for her, runs away from her family and country to Italy, where women are granted much more individual freedom: "il y a des pays où l'amour subsiste hors des liens sacrés du mariage, parmi ces pays, celui où le bonheur des femmes est le plus ménagé, c'est l'Italie" (163). There, she refashions her identity and becomes what she could not have become in Scotland: a female artist. Italy, again, is the choice of Isidora: when Jacques expects to start a relationship with her, she escapes to Italy where she plans to pursue her revenge against Félix: it is in Italy, after the death of Félix, that she will be able to reconstruct her identity and enjoy both a good reputation in her village and the bliss of motherhood. Against the assignment of a specific space, the practice of an arbitrary mobility and the choice of exile are strategies (and allegories) of a movement that allows Romantic characters, especially women, to reinvent their destiny beyond family, society, and country.

Perhaps the most radical aspect of the critique of heteronormativity comes from the fact that the very category of sex is deconstructed throughout the love stories narrated in the novels of Staël, Sand and Gautier. Because of the gender fusion—and confusion—which is voluntarily sought by female characters in these novels, the male partners end up sharing an identity crisis about their gender and sexuality—Jacques, by the end of *Isidora*, knows he is not a man. The circulation of desire and emotions between the couple is no

longer linked to the clear, opposite polarity of the sexes, but rather to the experimental new dialectics of femininity and masculinity between the two subjects in love. As Monique Wittig wrote in *The Straight Mind*: “Comme il n’existe pas d’esclaves sans maîtres, il n’existe pas de femmes sans hommes. [...] C’est l’oppression qui crée le sexe, et non l’inverse” (42). Because of the strange reversal, “renversement bizarre,” which happens between Delphine and Léonce, but also between Lélia and Sténio, the question of knowing who is the man and who is the woman in the couple is highly problematic, and enables us to begin thinking of a new politics of love. Queer heterosexuality can only start when sexual difference between lovers is no longer essential.

The figure which perhaps queers heterosexuality the most in nineteenth-century literature is the dandy. Performing an unabashed androgyny, or seducing women without affirming the structure of the couple, the dandy might be seen to solve, or at least to avoid, heterosexual trouble. The male dandy, theorized by Baudelaire and Barbey d’Aurevilly as a master in the art of seduction,³⁹ embraces a new, non-normative masculinity—the third sex applied to Mademoiselle de Maupin comes to mind—and is careful never to be trapped by heterosexual love which is described as a vulgar trap for “common” people. But this impenetrable personality only works as long as there is no reciprocity, in the absence of an equally fascinating female dandy. What happens if, in spite of Baudelaire and Barbey d’Aurevilly’s ban on female dandyism, women could also have access to this male preserve? I shall examine this in the next chapter.

³⁹ In his essay “Un dandy d’avant les dandys,” Barbey focuses on how Lauzun managed to seduce the most difficult woman to seduce in his time: Mademoiselle de Montpensier. His dandyism comes from the fact that “la conduite de cet homme est un chef d’oeuvre”: his superior skills of seduction, combined with the distance from love he never fails to maintain, makes him a new kind of artist: a dandy (135).

Chapter 2:

The Female Dandy

“Along with having sex, being sexed is also hard work.”
Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*

I argued in the preceding chapter that French Romantic literature offers a specific space in which to articulate a non-normative heterosexuality. In the five novels studied, heterosexual trouble was analysed as a resistance to sexual and gender norms; this resistance triggers an identity crisis within the heterosexual couple and raises the issue of a new politics of love. In this chapter, I would like to consider the theme of heterosexual trouble through another crucial aspect of Romanticism, dandyism. The dandy seems to answer the question of a reinvention of love by avoiding the heterosexual contract—no marriage, no couple, no children—and experimenting with a new dialectics of femininity and masculinity. One would expect that, given the crucial role of androgyny in dandyism, individuals of both sexes could be dandies if, along with other marks of “distinction,” they would perform an identity constantly on the edge of sexual difference, blurring the “natural” line between masculinity and femininity. In this chapter, I will address a seeming contradiction in the dialectics of masculinity and femininity at work in dandyism. The two main theorists of French dandyism, Baudelaire and Barbey d’Aurevilly, defined dandyism as a male preserve: however the attempt to ban women from dandyism in fact opens up the possibility of a female dandy in their works. As I will argue, Baudelaire and Barbey d’Aurevilly were theorists *malgré eux* of female dandyism. Consequently, female

dandyism reasserts and reinforces what male dandyism was supposed to solve: heterosexual trouble.

In her essay *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the Fin de Siècle*, Rhonda K. Garelick traces the creation of the modern media star in the problematic relation between, and transition from, the dandy to the female performer:

Both indulge in self-conscious, highly theatrical gender play—the dandy in his sexually ambiguous polish, the woman in her explicitly staged and painted erotic charms. Placed side by side so often in fin-de-siècle culture, these two figures cast a curious light on each other’s performances, then ultimately fuse their roles, forming something beyond androgyny, giving birth to the concept of the “star” as we know it today. (3)

This fusion between the dandy and the female performer articulates a problematic relationship, oscillating between rivalry and complicity. The dandy and the female performer rely on the appeal of their persona to create an aura, but they do not perform seductiveness on the same ground: the dandy has an “aristocratic” perspective on himself and his audience—dandyism as a creation of a post-revolutionary aristocracy, when the aristocracy, in class terms, effectively disappears—whereas the female performer embodies a seduction suited for a consumer, democratic society, in which her aura is associated with sales and entertainment. The dandy’s audience is somewhat private: high society, because he will not mix with the crowd, and his performances remain purposely limited, because he will not allow any vulgarity. On the contrary, the female performer “shamelessly” addresses the crowd and has recourse to explicit eroticism. Most importantly, in a homophobic and misogynistic society, it is more suited for a woman to perform seduction on stage than for a man. Barbey d’Aurevilly, comparing his character from “le bonheur dans le crime” Hauteclair Stassin with her lover Serlon de Savigny, notes a gap: “Les hommes sont tous les mêmes. L’étrangeté leur déplaît, d’homme à

homme, et les blesse ; mais si l'étrangeté porte des jupes, ils en raffolent" (161). The word "étrangeté," which could be translated by either strangeness or queerness, is much too disturbing in a man-to-man context, because the dynamics of desire is likely to fall into homoeroticism or homosexuality, whereas "étrangeté" becomes socially acceptable in its disturbing affects if it is deployed in a heterosexual scheme. In this sense, the separation of space between the dandy (the private, selective sphere) and the female performer (the public, commercial stage) is not only due to the gap between elitism and democracy but also to the public constraint assigning the dandy a sphere of limited influence and publicity. Oscar Wilde's trial and conviction illustrate these limits assigned to the dandy when he goes too far in publicizing his not so enigmatic seductiveness (from an impenetrable charm to an explicit homosexual desire). However, if the dandy is given constraints in the sphere of his seduction, the female performer is also given equally frustrating ones: her fame as a star is connected to her ability to become a living doll for a masculine, heterosexual audience. The female performer cannot reach the status of an icon without enacting the prostitution process by which she caters for the male desires of a commercial audience.

That is when rivalry fuses with complicity: indeed, whom does the female performer need in her attempt to become a worshipped goddess? Who would be able to write plays for her, and then write laudatory reviews in her praise? And vice versa: if the dandy is forbidden the stage for himself, because no strangeness/queerness should be publicly allowed from man to man, where else but in the field of writing could the dandy transfer and perform his seductiveness? The case of Oscar Wilde, writing *Salomé* in French for his friend Sarah Bernhardt, illustrates the dynamics of this original "couple"

consisting of the dandy and the female performer, each one competing for fame but also uniting their talents in order to make the play successful.

The fusion, analysed by Garelick, between the dandy and the female performer can be even more confusing than what she allows: indeed the female performer did not rely only on the seduction of her female eroticism. For instance, Sarah Bernhardt, who would often play male parts (Hamlet being her most famous one) and appropriate for herself “the sexually ambiguous polish” associated with the male dandy, illustrates that her seduction did not have to be specifically feminine. Maintaining a flamboyant independence the dandy ends up collaborating with the female performer who replicates his seductive skills in her own quest for fame.¹ In her analysis of *Une femme par jour*, by Jean Lorrain, Garelick remarks the competition at stake and the dandy’s revenge:

Lorrain’s style oscillates, then, between sinister preciosity and the rhapsodic. The music hall and the theatre fascinated him; but his writing also contained the anxious misogyny of the dandy who finds his terrain invaded, the spectacle-personality who sees an unexpected rival in women of the stage. His response was to take a textual control of these female performers and remake them in the decadent image—to turn them into frightening, moribund dolls. (46)

A dandy like Jean Lorrain, famous for his harsh, cruel reviews in the Parisian press, in which he would launch or destroy the career of an artist, was a strategic ally for every female performer thirsty for success. If, in his literary texts, Lorrain was sarcastic towards the decadence of female performers, he oscillated between praise and sarcasm in his reviews for the daily press. Just like Samuel Cramer, Baudelaire’s “hero” from *La Fanfarlo*, who strategically decided to publish insulting and ironic reviews against the dancer la Fanfarlo in order to pique her interest and make her want to meet him, Lorrain would publish harsh critiques of female performers so that they would have to beg for his

¹ See Barbey: “Ce qui fait le dandy, c’est l’indépendance” (69).

friendship and hope for a reversal of opinion in his subsequent reviews. In his biography *Jean Lorrain: Miroir de la Belle Époque*, Thibaut d'Anthonay reminds his reader that the friendship between Lorrain and the famous courtesan “cocotte” Liane de Pougy all began with an article published in 1894 in *L'Écho de Paris* in which Lorrain was extremely hostile and sarcastic towards her. Starting her career at the Folies-Bergère, Liane de Pougy, indeed, had no choice but to do her best to meet and please Jean Lorrain.²

From the beginning, theories of dandyism excluded women. Baudelaire and Barbey d'Aurevilly articulated this exclusion, defining dandyism as a male preserve. In *Mon coeur mis à nu*, Baudelaire cannot be more explicit:

La femme est le contraire du Dandy.
 Donc elle doit faire horreur.
 La femme a faim et elle veut manger. Soif, et elle veut boire.
 Elle est en rut et elle veut être foutue.
 Le beau mérite !
 La femme est *naturelle*, c'est-à-dire abominable.
 Aussi est-elle toujours vulgaire, c'est-à-dire le contraire du Dandy. (406)

A woman cannot be a dandy because she is too close to nature, submissive to her natural, bodily instincts, whereas the dandy's stoicism and impassivity allow him to avoid the laws of nature: she remains common in her naturalness; he transcends human nature in his artifice. In this passage Baudelaire is not original, but rather recycles the classic rhetoric of misogyny: women are closer to nature than men, they must be disciplined like animals.³ However, his treatment of the dandy becomes more original in *Le peintre de la*

² “La plus grande tape de l'année : les débuts aux Folies-Bergère de Mme Liane de Pougy. [...] Pour une personne qui doit sa réputation à un coup de revolver mal placé et répond au doux nom de “Balle dans le c...oeur” dans la stricte intimité, ce début dans un croissant de lune peut paraître hardi, mais c'est une hardiesse qui fait sourire” (525). Another illustration of this love-hate relationship between the dandy and the female performer is a caricature, drawn by Sem, which represents la Belle Otero (another “cocotte”), alone and blasée, looking at Liane de Pougy walking arm in arm with Jean Lorrain. See d'Anthonay (Illustration 8).

³ Baudelaire's misogyny has been studied with interesting psychoanalytical insight by Leo Bersani in his *Freud and Baudelaire*.

vie moderne, in which, through the works of Constantin Guys, he theorizes modernity not just as a philosophical or historical concept, but as a new affect. Two chapters from *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, “La femme” and “Eloge du maquillage,” are in contradiction with Baudelaire’s statement against the female dandy in *Mon cœur mis à nu*. In “La femme,” Baudelaire perceives woman as a potential idol in her combination of female body and surrounding female aura:

La femme est sans doute une lumière, un regard, une invitation au bonheur, une parole quelquefois : mais elle est surtout une harmonie générale, non seulement dans son allure et le mouvement de ses membres, mais aussi dans les mousselines, les gazes, les vastes et chatoyantes nuées d’étoffes dont elle s’enveloppe, et qui sont les attributs et le piédestal de sa divinité ; dans le métal et le minéral qui serpentent autour de ses bras et de son cou, qui ajoutent leurs étincelles au feu de ses regards, ou qui jasant doucement à ses oreilles. (809)

So it appears that, in contrast to his claim in *Mon cœur mis à nu*, a woman is not so natural, or not only natural: here she is perceived as the combination of corporeality and costume, or any kind of accoutrement—metal, mineral, fabric—and it would be a wrong to separate the “envelope” from the body. The woman then appears beautiful as long as she is not seen as purely natural, but with artifice surrounding her, on her: whether with clothing, jewellery, or make-up. Baudelaire uses in this chapter the Latin expression *mundus muliebris* to describe the whole package of feminine accoutrement, and by doing so he creates a peculiar feminine essence consisting in the chemistry between female body and ornament. To make this chemistry confusing, Baudelaire uses natural terms such as “metal” and “mineral” to describe ornamental objects, and make them seem even more natural by using the verb “to snake” which gives them an animal life: within the woman, it becomes impossible to tell the artifice from the naturalness. The Dandy, according to Baudelaire, also has recourse to the charms of elegance through clothing,

jewellery, and make-up. The dandy and the woman both have access to the “perfection de la toilette” (807).

It is also noteworthy that, in his chapter on women, Baudelaire evokes feminine beauty only from the perspective of the artist: the woman is beautiful for the artist who, in return, recreates and immortalizes her beauty by his work of art. In this respect, the woman remains an object, a source of inspiration; she does not own her beauty although she is implicitly praised for her choice of ornament, the control of her appearance: qualities that require taste and spirit. So while she is no longer natural, she still only satisfies by her artifice the fetishism of the male artist.

In his essay *Le fétichisme dans l'amour*, published in 1887, Alfred Binet articulates his definition of fetishism as a sexual perversion which is part of the dynamics of love and affects everyone, but on different levels. When fetishism is the main tendency at work in the love process, it is a “grand fétichisme” and it is “pathological” because the fetishist is more interested in the separate object of desire than in the human being supporting this object. When fetishism is a minor tendency in the love process, it is a “petit fétichisme” and it is “normal” because the object of fetishism does not eclipse the human being with which it is associated (33). Fetishism happens when a sexual tension is aroused by a specific object (whether inanimate, like a shoe, or animate, like a foot) which is associated with a human being. Fetishism is a perversion according to nineteenth-century medical theory because it is not focused on genitals and procreation, but rather on an unexpected and specified source of eroticism.

Baudelaire, by positing that the beautiful woman is a source of inspiration for the artist because of her fusion of female body with material accoutrement, suggests the

fetishist connection between male artist and female muse. Raising this question of *jouissance* about a man confronted with the elegance of a sophisticated toilette—“Quel est l’homme qui, dans la rue, au théâtre, au bois, n’a pas joui, de la manière la plus désintéressée, d’une toilette savamment composée ?” (*Le peintre* 809)—Baudelaire switches from the artist to the man and from inspiration to excitement, making more palpable the sexual dynamics of fetishism. The word “désintéressée” stresses the fact that the focus on the female accoutrement is detached both from the human being at stake and from the personality of the *jouisseur*, which is the main feature of fetishism. From a theoretical point of view, Baudelaire recognizes the artificiality of the *mundus muliebris*, which relies on performance and ornament. The woman cannot be a dandy herself, in spite of her independent mastery of artifice, because the male subject will be artistically inspired and sexually excited only if she is assigned a separate space, a world of her own distinct from the man’s: the *mundus muliebris*. No Baudelairian fetishism would be possible without a fine line between masculinity and femininity, which requires that the perspective be based on the male gaze only, and that the woman have the mission to stimulate this, but without pretending to have an agency of her own.

In *La Fanfarlo*, Baudelaire describes the scene when Samuel, the dandy, is finally going to enjoy sexual intimacy with the actress la Fanfarlo. Unexpectedly, he not only refuses the horror of any sexual contact, but demands in the most capricious way that la Fanfarlo put on the fancy costume which she had worn for her part in the theatre as Colombine:

Voilà que Samuel, pris d’un caprice bizarre, se mit à crier comme un enfant gâté : “je veux Colombine, rends-moi Colombine ; rends-la-moi telle qu’elle m’est apparue le soir qu’elle m’a rendu fou avec son accoutrement fantasque et son corsage de Saltimbanque !”

La Fanfarlo, étonnée d'abord, voulut bien se prêter à l'excentricité de l'homme qu'elle avait choisi, et l'on sonna Flore ; celle-ci eut beau représenter qu'il était trois heures du matin, que tout était fermé au théâtre, le concierge endormi, le temps affreux,—la tempête continuait son tapage,—il fallut obéir à celle qui obéissait elle-même, et la femme de chambre sortit ; quand Cramer, pris d'une nouvelle idée, se pendit à la sonnette et s'écria d'une voix tonnante : “ Eh ! n'oubliez pas le rouge ! ” (336)

This scene illustrates perfectly Baudelairian fetishism and its consequences in terms of the relationship between male and female subjects: the dandy refuses the perspective of heterosexual, genital intercourse, and demands that his partner turn into the female muse in order to appease his desire for the *mundus muliebris*, the “accoutrement fantasque,” the “corsage de saltimbanque,” the “rouge” which had first attracted him even more than la Fanfarlo herself had. Moreover, this fetishism quite literally turns la Fanfarlo, originally a free individual (she had “chosen” him), into a kind of mechanical doll, obedient to his whim. Baudelairian fetishism in *La Fanfarlo* is based on masculine domination—although this domination is derided and greatly undermined by irony.

However, if fetishism does not emancipate woman from the male gaze and still posits her as an object in the chapter “La femme,” from *Le peintre de la vie moderne*, the following chapter, “Eloge du maquillage,” makes a significant move toward asserting the artifice and autonomy of woman:

La femme est dans son droit, et même elle accomplit une espèce de devoir en s'appliquant à paraître magique et surnaturelle ; il faut qu'elle étonne, qu'elle charme ; idole, elle doit se dorner pour être adorée. Elle doit donc emprunter à tous les arts les moyens de s'élever au-dessus de la nature pour mieux subjuguier les cœurs et frapper les esprits. Il importe fort peu que la ruse et l'artifice soient connus de tous, si le succès en est certain et l'effet toujours irrésistible. (811)

This portrait also applies to the dandy as he is presented in the chapter of that name from the same essay. Like the woman, the dandy has a duty to astonish and mesmerize: “le

plaisir d'étonner et la satisfaction orgueilleuse de ne jamais être étonné" (807). Like the woman, the dandy has recourse to art in order to escape nature, constitutes himself as an enigmatic icon, and strategically uses artifice in his politics of seduction. If, in "La femme," a woman seemed to be an object of desire and a source of inspiration for the male artist, here she is her own artist, creating her beauty out of artifice in order to fascinate and subjugate her audience: she is granted an agency and a responsibility in her ability to transcend nature. Like the dandy, she is an artist and her body is her field of experimentation: she shares with him a disgust for nature, a taste for artifice, and a mission to captivate an audience in order to be worshipped: "Elle doit se dorner pour être adorée." In the end, the woman is not just the inspiration of the modern painter, she is actually herself an *incarnation* of the modern painter: "maquillage" is her palette of paints, and her face a living, ephemeral masterpiece. As Michèle Hannoosh wrote in her book *Baudelaire and Caricature*: "Like the modern artist, women attempt, by means of fashion and make-up, to draw the eternal from the transitory" (286).⁴ As an artist of her own person, the fashionable, made-up woman has much in common with the dandy who is the figure of the modern artist. The ban on female dandyism is thus impossible, in spite of Baudelaire's explicit theory.

⁴ See Jessica R. Feldman. Although Feldman understands that female dandyism is at stake in Baudelaire's *Peintre de la vie moderne* ("Far from passively providing the male artist with inspiration, Baudelaire's woman embodies and communicates the enigma that defines Baudelaire from first to last: that identity exists in both concentrated self and ethereal cloud" (137), she does not confront Baudelaire's theory of dandyism with the dandyism in practice in *La Fanfarlo* nor Barbey's treatise on dandyism with the dandyism articulated in *Les diaboliques*. The book *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*, edited by Susan Fillin-Yeh, addresses female dandyism, but more from an art history point of view (the lives and works of Coco Chanel, Romaine Brooks, Claude Cahun). See also Miranda Gill.

Barbey d'Aurevilly, also explicitly misogynistic in his essays on female writers,⁵ shares with Baudelaire the fact that his texts open up a space for thinking female dandyism. Although in his essay on *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*, he does not explicitly state that a woman cannot be a dandy, it seems to be implied because none of the dandies he mentions from the past—Alcibiades, Pascal, Rancé—are women. However, in a letter to his friend Trebutien written on 20 July 1844 while he was working with enthusiasm on his essay, he confesses to an interesting literary project:

J'attends de pied ferme vos anecdotes sur Brummell. Il faut enfin que je l'enlève ! Après lui, ce sera le tour de *cet* ou *cette* autre Androgyne, lady Hamilton, car ces gens-là me font furieusement l'effet d'être sur la limite des deux sexes. (*Lettres à Trébutien* 82)

Barbey is so enthusiastic about his current project of writing a treatise on dandyism that he is thinking of writing a second hagiography: after Brummell, Emma Hamilton. She is not explicitly compared to Brummell as a Dandy, but as a figure of Androgyny. As Lady Hamilton is known to have acted like an Amazon or a pirate—a reputation based on her presence in the British army, when she would embark on the *Foudroyant* with Lord Nelson against the French navy⁶—and was rumoured to have had lesbian relationships,⁷ she embodies the “androgyny” that Barbey d'Aurevilly associated with dandyism. But Emma Hamilton was also an artist of her person. Known as a model of fashion and beauty in the British high class, Emma Hamilton was first a low-class actress and prostitute who managed to enter the aristocracy after her marriage to Sir William

⁵ See his introduction to contemporary bas-bleuisme, in which he wrote: “Les femmes qui écrivent ne sont plus des femmes. Ce sont des hommes, – du moins, de prétention, – et manqués !” (29).

⁶ See Adrien Fauchier-Magnan. About her presence in the navy: “On connaissait son empire sur l'esprit de l'amiral, et sa présence consentie deux fois à bord du *Foudroyant*, tandis que Marie-Caroline se voyait impitoyablement reléguée à Palerme, avait suscité bien des commentaires. On la traita de femme cruelle et sanguinaire” (227).

⁷ Donoghue mentions that Lady Hamilton had been rumored to have been a lover of Anne Conway Damer, and also that Napoleon had accused her of having had an affair with Queen Maria Carolina during her stay in Naples (145).

Hamilton. In her biography *England's Mistress: the Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton*, Kate Williams describes Lady Hamilton's sway over fashion on her return to London from Naples in 1792:

At Queen Charlotte's birthday gala a few months after Emma departed, almost every woman was dressed "à la Lady Hamilton" in flowing, simple white crêpe and satin, embroidered in silver, gathered with a silver or diamond belt, with their hair arranged in a loose Grecian style, circled with a jewelled headband and a few feathers. [...] The Lady's magazine was the lead fashion magazine, consulted by fine ladies, dressmakers and genteel women alike, and it began to promote the "à la Emma" look in earnest. (172)

Had Lady Hamilton been beautiful and well-dressed, it would not have been enough to make her shine above the average—"Emma became the most painted woman in Europe" (Williams 98)—but she was a designer and her own model at the same time, a pioneer in offering her style, combining in a unique way simplicity and exoticism. Just like George Brummell, who was said to be the creator of the modern version of jacket and tie, which then became a standard in clothing, Lady Hamilton launched her "brand" in terms of clothing and turned it into a regular outfit for elegant women.

Perhaps more important, Lady Hamilton invented and performed what she called her *attitudes*. Inspired both by her years as a performer and by her later exposure of ancient Greek culture as wife of the British consul in Naples, the celebrated Sir William Hamilton, her *attitudes* were a kind of *tableau vivant*, a solo performance in which Lady Hamilton, wearing simply a white dress and a shawl (based on the Muses of Antiquity), went through a series of poses and dances, expressing the aura of legendary female figures (Medea, Cleopatra, Agrippina) or the state of mind of feminine emotional situations, going back and forth between classical and modern references. She started performing her *attitudes* at her husband's villa, in Naples, around 1784, and became an

attraction for aristocrats and artists from all over Europe. In 1791, the artist Pietro Novelli produced drawings of her performing her *attitudes*. Not only had Lady Hamilton been the muse of painters like George Romney and Elisabeth Vigée le Brun, who immortalized her as Circe, a bacchante, a peasant, or a spinster, but she was also able to fascinate, on her own stage, as a performer, an audience of artists including Goethe and Thorvaldsen. There is a definite connection between such performance and dandyism: the performance of seduction through the pose, through wit, through the seductive appeal of a unique personality.

Eventually, the other essay Barbey wrote on dandyism, “Un dandy d’avant les dandys,” was not about Lady Hamilton, but a portrait of a French man from the seventeenth century, Antonin Nompars de Caumont, Duke of Lauzun, known as Monsieur de Lauzun. According to Barbey, Lauzun’s historical life offers signs of dandyism and would make him one if the term were not anachronistic.⁸ Lauzun is praised by Barbey as a master in the art of seduction, and his best exploit is the successful seduction of the most difficult woman to seduce: la Grande Mademoiselle (Mademoiselle de Montpensier). Actually, most of Barbey’s portrait of Lauzun is based on Mademoiselle de Montpensier’s memoirs, in which she confesses her unhappy love for Lauzun. Barbey pays tribute to her depiction of Lauzun’s personality, and praises her for understanding dandyism *avant la lettre*:

Toujours les singularités, l’originalité, l’extraordinaire, l’imprévu pour elle dans sa routine de *high life* et de princesse ! elle avait deviné le dandysme moderne, cette femme-là ! car évidemment il est ici... (124)

⁸ In order to resolve the question as to whether dandyism is universal or historically framed, Barbey writes that “le dandysme a sa racine dans la nature humaine de tous les pays et de tous les temps [...] mais c’est l’Angleterre qui l’a le mieux fait retentir” (117). The “root” of dandyism is universal, but, historically and geographically speaking, the best “soil” was the Puritan, British context, between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for which Brummell gave the best possible example of dandyism.

Here again, dandyism is attached to a man, Lauzun, but it is understood by a woman who is as peculiar as her male lover: the choice of the verb guess, “deviner,” is significant because it both means to understand and to predict (the “devin”, in French, is a diviner). Barbey implicitly suggests that before himself, and in her own way, Mademoiselle de Montpensier had provided a theory of dandyism in her approach to Lauzun: likewise, Barbey approached a dandy, Brummell, in order to theorize dandyism. The fact that dandyism as a philosophy could be exemplified by a woman opens a space for thinking through the relationship between women and dandyism, and the study of three stories included in *Les diaboliques* will take my argument one step further in this direction.

In her book *The Figure of the Dandy in Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Le bonheur dans le crime"* Davina L. Eisenberg argues that this story illustrates perfectly the principles of dandyism as theorized in *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*. Serlon and Hauteclair form a couple that raises the question of knowing who the dandy is: the man, the woman, or both? Eisenberg's answer is articulated around the indisputable rule that female dandyism is not possible:

There are no female dandies. It was precisely a woman's role in utilitarian society to be fashionable and to be looked at as a display of her husband's wealth. In other words, a woman was not at odds with society, but within its conventions. A dandy can only be a man or a “woman” acting like a man. Only a man has the right to transgress his gender, whereas a woman does not have the right to transgress hers. Barbey illustrated this point in his treatment of Hauteclair in “Le bonheur dans le crime.” As she appears with Serlon in the Jardin des plantes, her clothes are just a slight modification of those of Serlon, characterized by sobriety (“noir”), simplicity (“tout en noir”) and accessory (“gant violet”). I shall demonstrate later that Hauteclair is merely Serlon's feminine side rather than a protagonist in her own right. (45-46)

Although Eisenberg's point is to argue that "Le bonheur dans le crime" illustrates in fiction the philosophy of dandyism theorized by Barbey, she actually refers, in this paragraph, to Baudelaire's theory of Dandyism, which sometimes differs from Barbey's. For instance, the ban on female dandyism to which she refers was explicitly stated by Baudelaire in *Mon coeur mis à nu* but cannot be found in Barbey's *Du dandysme*. Moreover, the hypothesis that Hauteclair is not a character of her own but merely Serlon's feminine side is problematic precisely because the dandy's androgyny has to be performed by himself, in a fusion of his masculine and feminine sides. A dandy is much too independent to transfer his femininity onto a woman. George Brummell, for instance, never had recourse to a woman as an externalization of his feminine side. The unity of the dandy rests on his androgyny, and he would not be able to transcend sexual difference if he needed a woman as a feminine supplement to his masculine nature. This excerpt from "Le bonheur dans le crime" situates Hauteclair from another perspective:

Excepté ce détail *ridicule* (comme aurait dit le monde) et qui montrait assez de dédain pour les goûts et les idées du jour, tout était simple et *dandy* comme l'entendait Brummell, c'est-à-dire *irremarquable*, dans la tenue de cet homme qui n'attirait l'attention que par lui-même, et qui l'aurait confisquée tout entière, s'il n'avait pas eu au bras la femme, qu'en ce moment il y avait... Cette femme, en effet, prenait encore plus le regard que l'homme qui l'accompagnait, et elle le captivait plus longtemps. (148)

This paragraph offers an unexpected reversal of the dandy's situation as it is described in Barbey's treatise on Brummell: Serlon is the perfect dandy, or would be perceived as such, were it not for the presence of another person who actually attracted much of attention. A dandy has the duty to capture the attention; his appearance must trigger a gaze of curiosity and fascination. Between Serlon and Hauteclair, one captivates the gaze more, and it is the woman. It is significant to note that Barbey does not write that

she was in Serlon's company but that he was in hers: "l'homme qui l'accompagnait." Introduced initially as the dandy of the story, Serlon is outshone by his partner and reduced to being an accompanist. Later, when doctor Torty reminds the reader of how they met, he insists that Serlon and Hauteclaira would fence together and that, when they fenced for the first time, she touched him many times and he was unable to touch her. The dandy, like a Sphinx, has to be enigmatic and impenetrable: Hauteclaira, who became better than her father in the art of fencing, was also better than her lover Serlon, and praised as an impenetrable master in this phallic sport. In the end, she is described as a dandy, without any reference to Serlon:

Y avait-il de l'affectation dans cette manière de se montrer ou de se cacher, qui excitait les imaginations curieuses ?... Cela était bien possible ; mais qui le savait ? qui pouvait le dire ? Et cette jeune fille, qui continuait le masque par le voile, n'était-elle pas encore plus impénétrable de caractère que de visage, comme la suite ne l'a que trop prouvé ? (136)

The ability to remain enigmatic while displaying oneself ("montrer," "cacher") and the superiority of psychological impenetrability over physical mystery ("plus impénétrable de caractère que de visage") are typical features of dandyism and are applied here to this girl, Hauteclaira, who appears as the Sphinx of the story. The paradox of her superiority comes not only from the fact that she is a woman, but also that she becomes a master of deceit and fascination as she accepts the role of a low-class maid working in the service of Serlon. Even as a maid, she conveys an attitude that is judged by the narrator as higher than Serlon's:

En descendant les marches de son escalier, ses jupes flottant en arrière sous les souffles d'un mouvement rapide, elle semblait descendre du ciel. Elle était sublime d'air heureux. Ah ! son air était à quinze mille lieues au-dessus de l'air de Serlon ! (167-8)

In spite of her sex and social position, Hauteclaira conveys an aura that is much stronger than Serlon's: like Brummell, who was not born an aristocrat, but managed to seduce British high society, Hauteclaira transcends her condition as a woman and a maid by the divinity ("elle semblait descendre du ciel") she is able to perform.⁹

Far from being a mere extension of Serlon (Eisenberg argues that she is not "a protagonist in her own right"), Hauteclaira illustrates the unexpected, scandalous example of female dandyism, and of a female dandy outshining a male one. The famous episode introducing "Le bonheur dans le crime" recounts an act of bravery in which, panther against panther, Hauteclaira slaps the face of a black panther at the Jardin des plantes. Originally, Barbey was inspired by a real anecdote in which a woman challenged her partner's masculinity by an act of bravery at the Jardin, as he described it in a letter to Trébutien (18 February 1854):

Voici une anecdote – bien française – qui m'a été contée par le héros. C'est F... sceptique, railleur, indolent, – mais gentilhomme. Il était au Jardin des Plantes avec Mlle de ... âgée de dix-neuf ans. Ils se trouvaient devant la cage du lion, pour le moment tranquille et menaçant sur ses quatre pattes étendues. Mlle de... est de la race des *Mathildes de la Mole*, à ce qu'il paraît. Elle s'ennuyait. – Elle ôta son gant, et plongeant sa main dans la cage du Roi des Déserts, elle se mit à caresser sa crinière et terrible face avec une langueur presque impertinente. Cela dura quelque temps. F... qui est froid comme un Basilic, moulé dans la lymphe d'un Dandy anglais, se prit à ricaner et dit : " Quelle folie ! " [...] Voilà donc un Gentilhomme – repris Mlle de... qui n'ose pas faire ce que fait une jeune fille de dix-neuf ans ! (30)

The seductive confrontation between F..., qualified as a dandy, and Mlle de..., described as the descendant of Stendhal's extravagant heroine, Mathilde de la Mole,¹⁰ ends up being a humiliating experience for the male dandy: challenged by Mlle de..., he tries to

⁹ Cf. the social ascendancy of Emma Hamilton.

¹⁰ While beyond the scope of my study, the question may be raised, then, about Stendhal's influence in the "making" of the female dandy in French Romantic literature.

prove his masculinity and *sang froid* by caressing the lion, but the lion almost tears his hand apart. This anecdote is helpful not only for tracing the genealogy of “Le bonheur dans le crime,” but also for understanding that the relationship between Serlon and Hauteclair, even if it is described as a blissful, immoral, love story, is also that of the rivalry between man and woman within the heterosexual couple. Beneath the anecdote of a male dandy ridiculed by a young woman lies a case of heterosexual trouble.

A final manifestation of Hauteclair’s dandyism is her rejection of the laws of nature, particularly the maternal instinct:

Vous n’êtes donc pas triste de ne pas avoir d’enfant, madame la comtesse? Je n’en veux pas ! – fit-elle impérieusement. J’aimerais moins Serlon. Les enfants, – ajouta-t-elle avec une espèce de mépris, – sont bons pour les femmes malheureuses ! (171-2)

Far from illustrating Baudelaire’s statement, in *Mon cœur mis à nu*, about the vulgarity and naturalness of women, Hauteclair, by rejecting with scorn and without regret the “necessity” of motherhood for women, confirms that a woman can be dandy by transcending, like men, the laws of nature. Moreover, the aphoristic wit by which she justifies her decision (“children are good for unhappy women”) is also worthy of a dandy’s art of conversation.

The surprise, in “Le bonheur dans le crime,” comes not only from the crime and its happy, immoral ending, but also from the revelation that one dandy can hide another one: the female dandy. Although the reader is explicitly invited to consider Serlon as the legitimate dandy of the story, Barbey also stages a rivalry within a heterosexual couple in which the woman seems to master the art of dandyism and the dialectics of masculinity and femininity more than her male partner. Hauteclair outshines Serlon in the Jardin des Plantes and surpasses him in fencing, and also manages to express the specific stoicism

and *froideur* that Baudelaire associates with dandyism: in leaving her town, abandoning her former identity, and accepting to work for Serlon's wife as the maid Eulalie, she never loses her self-control both in obeying her scornful mistress and in poisoning her successfully.

In another story from *Les diaboliques*, "Le Dessous de cartes d'une partie de whist," Barbey gives a positive description of the countess du Tremblay de Stasseville which ends on a surprising note:

Elle aurait pu, comme lord Byron, parcourir le monde avec une bibliothèque, une cuisine et une volière dans sa voiture, mais elle n'en avait pas eu la moindre envie. Elle était mieux qu'indolente ; elle était indifférente ; aussi indifférente que Marmor de Karkoël quand il jouait au whist. Seulement, Marmor n'était pas indifférent au whist même, et dans sa vie, à elle, il n'y avait point de whist : tout était égal ! C'était une nature stagnante, une espèce de *femme-dandy*, auraient dit les Anglais. (218)

Possessing the distinctive indifference that is the signature of dandyism, an indifference that even Byron, the arch-dandy, and Karkoël, the seeming dandy of the story, were unable to reach, the countess is explicitly called a "woman dandy." She is enigmatic, alone and stoical in a way that applies to dandyism as well: "Rien du dedans n'éclairait les dehors de cette femme. Rien du dehors ne se répercutait dedans !" (219). Like Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who rejected gallantry from noble men from all over Europe—until she met Lauzun—the countess remained scornfully single in spite of her wealth and her privileged situation:

Pour peu qu'on eût poussé ses meilleures amies, elles lui auraient découvert dans le cœur la certaine barre historique qu'on avait inventée contre une femme bien charmante et bien célèbre du siècle dernier, afin d'expliquer qu'elle eût laissé toute l'Europe élégante à ses pieds, pendant dix ans, sans la faire monter d'un cran plus haut. (191)

Mme du Tremblay's chosen loneliness echoes la Grande Demoiselle's situation at the beginning of Barbey's essay "Un dandy d'avant les dandys:" she is the impossible target of all men's ambition, but scornfully refuses to engage with anyone.

"Le Dessous de cartes d'une partie de whist" features two main characters, the countess du Tremblay de Stasseville and a Scottish dandy, Marmor de Karkoël, who met while playing whist. The story suggests that the countess had a secret affair with Karkoël and that she killed her daughter, Herminie, because the latter was also having an affair with him: the ending of this *ménage à trois* is rather brutal, as Karkoël leaves for India after Herminie's mysterious death, triggering the countess's own suicide. The clandestine affair between the countess and Karkoël is not without parallel with the love story between Hauteclair and Serlon in "Le bonheur dans le crime:" the lovers engage in a hidden passion that depends on the immorality of a murder, and above all, they are both described with the personality of a dandy:

Mais hors ces hiéroglyphes de geste et de physionomie que savent lire les observateurs, et qui n'ont, dans la langue des hiéroglyphes, qu'un fort petit nombre de mots, Marmor de Karkoël était indéchiffrable, autant, à sa manière, que la comtesse du Tremblay l'était à la sienne. (196)
Mme du Tremblay, de son côté, avait sur le front, dans les lèvres et dans le regard, le calme qui ne la quittait jamais, même quand elle ajustait l'épigramme, car sa plaisanterie ressemblait à une balle, la seule arme qui tue sans se passionner, tandis que l'épée, au contraire, partage la passion de la main. Elle et lui, lui et elle, étaient deux abîmes placés en face l'un de l'autre ; seulement l'un, Karkoël, était noir et ténébreux comme la nuit ; et l'autre, cette femme pâle, était claire et inscrutable comme l'espace. (210-1)

Even if Mme du Tremblay and Karkoël have their own specificity; they share the superiority of being impossible to decipher, of displaying a cold, vertiginous ("abîme") attitude that people fear and cannot have access to. Like a dandy, Mme du Tremblay masters the art of conversation and maintains a distance by the art of her cruel epigrams,

which echoes Brummell's impertinence within the British high class. So, in addition to the card game which is the main intrigue of the story, another game, more subtle and bloody, is going on between these two masters of deceit and contempt: the game of love and seduction.

As in *Les liaisons dangereuses*, the game between the countess and the Scottish dandy will be a heartless battle of vanity and manipulation: after Karkoël seduces Mme du Tremblay's daughter, Hermine, the latter is killed publicly but secretly during a whist game by her mother who has recourse to a highly mortal poison which can only be found in India. As Karkoël ends up disappearing to India after Herminie's death, the countess commits suicide with the same poison she had used against her daughter. But the suicide, in this case, does not result from despair. It is rather the final, scandalous note in her contempt for her society:

Une fois morte, et quand il a fallu fermer son salon, [...] on a voulu mettre ces beaux résédas en pleine terre et l'on a trouvé dans la caisse, devinez quoi !... le cadavre d'un enfant qui avait vécu... (216)

Thus is revealed yet another of the countess's murders. If, in "Le bonheur dans le crime," Hauteclair refused to have children, leaving this fate for unhappy women, Mme du Tremblay goes one step further not only in killing the child born of the affair between Herminie and Karkoël, but in staging the enigma of its very existence and its death. In this sense, Mme du Tremblay's suicide is not an act of weakness, but part of her final performance: the mystery of this dead child is meant to be her last, haunting, sarcastic epigram:

Il y a une effroyable, mais enivrante félicité dans l'idée qu'on ment et qu'on trompe; dans la pensée qu'on se sait seul soi-même, et qu'on joue à la société une comédie dont elle est la dupe, et dont on se rembourse les frais de mise en scène par toutes les voluptés du mépris. (201)

This psychological analysis, used in “Le dessous de cartes d’une partie de whist” to describe the state of mind of the countess, may just as well illustrate dandyism as a social performance: in order to escape the boring comedy of social norms, the dandy chooses to perform his own, original comedy, in which he uses his independence and unique tastes to ridicule the mediocrity of his fellows. However, the real mystery for the reader is not so much the secret story of this dead child, but rather the reality of emotions between Mme du Tremblay and Karkoël, and the dialectics of power at work in their peculiar couple.

A final example of the possibility of female dandyism can be illustrated in the opening story of *Les Diaboliques*: “Le rideau cramoisi,” in which an old dandy, Brassard, remembers the influential impact of an eighteen year old girl, Albertine, over his life, when he was serving as a young soldier in the French army. Albertine may not be a female dandy *per se*, but she should be recognized as the person who initiated Brassard into dandyism. Brassard became a dandy later in life, but he was an *ingénue* at the time of his encounter with Albertine:

Je n’étais qu’un bambin de sous-lieutenant, fort épinglé dans ses uniformes, mais très gauche et très timide avec les femmes.
[...] Je puis bien, si vous êtes curieux, vous la raconter, cette histoire, qui a été un événement, mordant sur ma vie comme un acide sur l’acier, et qui a marqué à jamais d’une tache noire tous mes plaisirs de mauvais sujet. (58-59)

The story is thus a sort of *roman d’apprentissage* in the life of a shy, young man who would later turn into a dandy. While Albertine is not a dandy as so far as she lacks independence, distinction in her clothing, and the art of conversation (“Ce qu’elle y disait, correct, toujours fort bien dit, mais insignifiant” [68]), she excels in three fields

which can be associated with dandyism. First, her beauty and air of superiority separate her from the bourgeois mediocrity of her parents. Second, she is a master in the art of *imprévu*. And third, she is able to perform a cold indifference which makes her impossible to penetrate. This is how she is first described by Brassard:

Cet air, qui la séparait, non pas seulement de ses parents, mais de tous les autres, dont elle semblait n'avoir ni les passions, ni les sentiments, vous clouait... de surprise, sur place... *L'infante à l'épagneul*, de Velasquez, pourrait, si vous la connaissez, vous donner une idée de cet air-là, qui n'était ni fier, ni méprisant, ni dédaigneux, non ! mais tout simplement impassible, car l'air fier, méprisant, dédaigneux, dit aux gens qu'ils existent, puisqu'on prend la peine de les dédaigner ou de les mépriser, tandis que cet air-ci dit tranquillement : " Pour moi, vous n'existez même pas. " (67)

Brassard is so stunned by this air of supreme indifference, which is even beyond scorn because it fails to recognize other people's existence, that he does not understand how Albertine could be the biological daughter of her bourgeois parents. Like the dandy, who strives to be a living work of art, Albertine is compared to a living version of the Spanish Infanta, painted by Velasquez, who displays the same, surprising, unearthly attitude. The expression "clouait... de surprise, sur place" with its suspension points, performs what it describes, Albertine's impact on Brassard.

An artist of the *imprévu*, she almost makes Brassard swoon, at dinner, when she secretly takes his hand, in front of her parents but secretly, for a few seconds before she presses her foot over his:

Je n'eus que l'incroyable sensation de cette main audacieuse, qui venait chercher la mienne jusque sous ma serviette! Et ce fut inouï autant qu'inattendu ! [...] Je crus que j'allais m'évanouir... que j'allais me dissoudre dans l'indicible volupté causée par la chair tassée de cette main, un peu grande, et forte comme celle d'un jeune garçon, qui s'était fermée sur la mienne. (69)

Here again, Albertine surprises Brassard in the most audacious and unexpected way: she does not only try to caress his hand, but rather holds it firmly, with the strength of a young boy. The eroticism of the language (he swoons, feeling an unspeakable “volupté”) and the action of the phallic hand suggest a reversal of gender roles: Brassard seems to be the “woman,” and Albertine the “man.” By describing Albertine’s as a masculine hand, Brassard gives her a hint of androgyny, a crucial element as we have seen, in the aura of the dandy. But more importantly, the scene focuses on her astonishing boldness (“inouï autant qu’inattendu !”). Just as when Hauteclairre slapped the panther with her glove and shocked Serlon, Brassard could have explained “Folle!...,” but unable to voice his intense emotions, he is all the more overcome, subjugated by her action.

Albertine is also master at what Brassard calls her “incroyable sang-froid,” and which consists in her ability to perform a perfect stillness, including when she has to go through her parents’ bedroom at night or when she is in bed with Brassard. Nothing seems to disturb the impassive self-assurance with which she inflames Brassard. Because of such a permanent self-possession, Albertine is almost a “man:”

Je ne comprenais pas comment cette femme, si sûre d’elle-même qu’on pouvait croire qu’au lieu de nerfs elle eût sous sa peau fine presque autant de muscles que moi, semblât ne pas oser me faire un signe d’intelligence qui m’avertît,—qui me fît penser—qui me dît, si vite que ce pût être, que nous entendions,—que nous étions connivents et complices dans le même mystère. (75)

Brassard describes Albertine in such a way that she could never be mistaken for a lustful, vulgar woman, ruining her virtue for a moment of promiscuity. On the contrary, Albertine is closer to masculinity than he himself is (“Honteux pourtant d’être moins homme que cette fille hardie” [70]), and in this strange relationship he considers her an equal (“Nous sommes deux hommes, et nous pouvons nous parler comme deux

hommes...” [89]). As in the passage quoted above, he does not perceive her as mainly made of nerves, as women should be, but rather as made of muscles, as men are.

Barbey makes clear that Brassard’s dandyism originated in the encounter with Albertine. As Brassard states:

Il est des choses qu’on n’oublie point. Il n’y en a pas beaucoup, mais il y en a. j’en connais trois : le premier uniforme qu’on a mis, la première bataille où l’a donné, et la première femme qu’on a eue. Eh bien ! pour moi, cette fenêtre est la quatrième chose que je ne puisse pas oublier. (57)

The fact that Brassard is initiated into dandyism by a woman contradicts Barbey’s statement about Brummell in his essay *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*, in which he suggests that one does not become a dandy, but rather is born one: Brummell “ne s’était donné que la peine de naître” (9).

Thus, this chapter ends with two paradoxes: the ban on female dandyism was lifted by the very same authors who theorized dandyism as a male aristocracy. Both Baudelaire and Barbey d’Aurevilly, willingly or not, allowed their texts to legitimize the possibility of female dandyism. The second paradox is that, while dandyism is a philosophy of and a tribute to individualism, the approach of the female dandy inscribes the dialectics of masculinity and femininity within the heterosexual couple. Indeed, the three cases of female dandyism represented in Barbey’s *Les diaboliques* reformulate heterosexual trouble through the problematic relationship between a male and a female dandy: in his works, the female dandy never appears on her own, disconnected from men, but always in the course of a love/rivalry game between her and a male dandy. The male dandy, who thinks that he can avoid the vulgarity and naturalness of sexual difference by being androgynous, has to face the dialectics of masculinity and femininity outside of his solipsism, in relation to an equally fascinating woman, who can perform dandyism just as

well as he can. The irony of this situation echoes Samuel Cramer's destiny: starting his career as a dandy and an artist, he ends up being outwitted by the respectable, bourgeois Mme de Cosmelly and cheated by la Fanfarlo. Instead of "solving" heterosexual trouble by rejecting the structure of the couple and incarnating the harmony of androgyny, dandyism reaffirms the necessity and the difficulty of challenging heteronormativity. Dandyism appears then as a reformulation of the heterosexual trouble studied in chapter one.

Is heterosexual trouble only a theme or could it also be studied at the level of the language itself? The next chapter will analyze the ways in which heterosexual trouble is inscribed in these texts in the features of their prose.

Chapter 3:

Textual Androgyny and Stylistic Dandyism

“Le lecteur en pensera ce qu’il voudra ; ce sont de simples conjonctures que nous lui proposons : nous n’en savons pas plus là-dessus que lui.”
Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*

It was established in the previous chapters that French Romanticism creates a literary space in which heteronormativity is challenged by heterosexual couples who question the legitimacy of both sexual and gender norms associated with heterosexuality. Heterosexuality itself is defined as much more than just a sexual orientation, but rather a political regime.

In *De la littérature dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales* Staël defines style as something more than pure form, as the transcription of the content it expresses: “Le style ne consiste point seulement dans les tournures grammaticales : il tient au fond des idées, à la nature des esprits. Il n’est point une simple forme” (381). Style cannot be reduced to a grammatical ornament nor disconnected from its content; it should be understood as a form whose originality reflects the originality of its content. I would like to argue, in this chapter, that French Romanticism addresses the dialectics of femininity and masculinity not only in the content of heterosexual trouble, but also in the specificity of its style. I will define this “textual androgyny” as the stylistic expression of heterosexual trouble, articulated through gender ambiguities and the confusion of literary genres. Furthermore, I will argue that within the Romantic texts under discussion there

exists a subcategory of textual androgyny that I will call “stylistic dandyism” and that I define as the stylistic inscription of the features which distinguish dandyism as a theme: literary figures of irony and antinomy, neologisms and foreign words, a dilettante authorial voice, and textual extravagance.¹

In the preface to the new edition of one of his first works published in 1841, *L’amour impossible*, Barbey d’Aurevilly begs the reader to forgive him for a text that has, in his opinion, the typical drawbacks of a first novel written by a young artist. Although he seems ashamed of this *début*, he does not prevent its re-edition and makes it available for new readers. One of the excuses he uses to justify his novel is the bad influence of Sand’s *Lélia*:²

Mais que voulez-vous ? On lisait *Lélia*, – ce roman qui s’en ira, s’il n’est déjà parti, où s’en sont allés l’*Astrée* et la *Clélie*, et où s’en iront tous les livres faux, conçus en dehors de la grande nature humaine et bâtis sur les vanités des sociétés sans énergie, – fortes seulement en affectations. (12)

L’amour impossible bears the influence of Sand’s *Lélia*, which “contaminated” literature like a plague, including Barbey’s first novel. The question I want to raise is not the relevance of Barbey’s critique of Sand’s novel, but rather how the spectre of *Lélia* haunts *L’amour impossible* and raises the question of the stylistic expression of a new way of suffering.

In the last pages of *L’amour impossible*, the male protagonist, Maulévrier, pays a visit to the Marquise de Gesvres and catches her reading *Lélia*. Aware of the scandal caused by Sand’s novel, the marquise dismisses it in an ambiguous way: “un livre qu’ils

¹ See Karin Becker. Although the title of her book suggests stylistic dandyism, her book is largely a psychobiographical study of writers who were also dandies.

² If *Lélia* had an impact on *L’amour impossible*, Jacques Petit points out—quoting Barbey’s reviews—that another of Sand’s novels, *Leone Leoni*, was highly influential for Barbey’s scandalous novel, *Une vieille maîtresse*. See Petit’s introduction to *Une vieille maîtresse*.

disent faux et qui n'est que la moitié de la vérité de ma vie" (150). The problem is not so much that *Lélia* is false, but rather that its truth is incomplete, as if the fiction did not venture to go far enough in its pursuit of its message. The Marquise points out the gap between a tormenting content–love as a “pain game”–and a style which provides relief, a compensation for fictional or real melancholia:

Mais *Lélia* ! mais eux, ces artistes, ces grandes imaginations, ces hautes pensées,—continua-t-elle en jetant le livre qui l'avait émue et qu'elle n'aimait que comme un fragment de miroir,—ils ont beau souffrir, sont-ils donc si à plaindre ? Si l'amour leur manque, comme à nous, n'ont-ils pas tout le reste ? N'ont-ils pas des facultés supérieures qui leur créent des intérêts très vifs, et les défendent de l'ennui et de la fatigue d'exister ? Quand ils n'auraient que la faculté de parler magnifiquement de ce qu'ils souffrent, cela ne les soulagerait-il pas un peu ? La femme qui a fait *Lélia*, fût-elle *Lélia* elle-même, n'a-t-elle pas eu un dédommagement en se racontant avec une telle éloquence ? (150-151)

The Romantic writer thus should not be read with too much compassion: the spleen displayed throughout the text is not just about pain, but is also associated with a specific pleasure that can be understood as the compensation obtained through the way suffering is recounted. There is a specific joy about narrating spleen which was already formulated by Rousseau's heroine, Julie, commenting on the prose of her lover's letter: “Quoi que vous puissiez dire, votre coeur est plus content du mien qu'il ne feint de l'être. [...] Votre lettre même vous dément par son style enjoué” (*Julie* 23). The lover's complaint is expressed in such a specific way that its style somehow betrays an implicit joy (“enjoué”) beyond explicit formulations of frustration. Far from being a problematic contradiction within Romanticism, the pleasurable style used to express sentimental distress is at the heart of the Romantic fusion of pathos and aesthetics. When it comes to the content of heterosexual trouble, Romantic authors' ability to speak “wonderfully” about what

afflicts them (“parler magnifiquement de ce qu’ils souffrent”) involves certain recurrent features of style, specifically gender ambiguity and the confusion of literary genres.

If this combination of pain and pleasure, spleen and happiness, is a theme of French Romanticism, the Marquise de Gesvres suggests in her critical praise of *Lélia* that this unexpected blending of contradictory emotions could also be, as a kind of prose, a stylistic feature of the movement. The apparent contradiction at stake in *Lélia* is articulated in the contrast between *Lélia*’s grief as a literary character—“Je m’effraie d’aimer et de vivre” (91)—and her relief (“dédommagement”) as the receptacle of an exhilarated authorial voice (“facultés supérieures qui leur créent des intérêts très vifs”; “en se racontant avec une telle éloquence”). The problematic confusion suggested by the Marquise de Gesvres between the character and the author, *Lélia* and George Sand (“la femme qui a fait *Lélia*, fût-elle *Lélia* elle-même”), combined with the confusion between the eloquence of a style and the languor of a character, confirms Andrew Bennett’s argument about Romantic authorship as being energized by its own complexities and contradictions:

If Romanticism figures the author as expressing his own ideas, thoughts, volitions, that is to say, it also figures the literary work as being involved in, or indeed as constituting, an alienated reflection on itself, and at the same time as transcending those originating ideas and volitions. (52)

In this sense, what I have called textual androgyny becomes the attempt to transcend aesthetically the pain of heterosexual trouble by the compensating originality of its prose. Thus the expression of confusion—whether of semantic gender or literary genre—illustrates the dynamics of a prose which indulges in the delight of melancholia by turning the expression of pain into a blissful embrace of the art of suffering. The “belle éloquence” evoked by the Marquise about *Lélia* suggests a specific way of creating beauty out of the

expression of suffering. Bénichou, in *L'école du désenchantement*, sums up the originality of the French Romantic writers he studies (Sainte-Beuve, Nodier, Musset, Nerval, Gautier) by pointing out the aesthetic glorification of misfortune: “Ils disent tout le mal du désir non satisfait, et ne savent remédier à leur infortune qu’en la glorifiant, plus ou moins explicitement, au sein même de leurs plaintes” (9). This glorification is not so much a catharsis—no purification of passions is sought—but rather an embrace of pain through its artistic description: style thus matters crucially to this process of the glorification of unsatisfied desire.³ By focusing on style as a compensation for pain, we reach the point at which an ethical problem—the problematic politics of love—is if not solved, at least transferred, by means of aesthetics. As an aphoristic play on words, the marquise de Gesvres could have said about Romantic characters: “ils ont certes beau souffrir, ils souffrent bellement.”

In his novella *La Fanfarlo*, Baudelaire recounts the love story between a dandy, Samuel Cramer, a bourgeoisie, Mme de Cosmelly, and a female performer, la Fanfarlo. Samuel’s views on sexuality may suggest stylistic characteristics of the “androgynous” text itself:

Quoique Samuel fût une imagination dépravée, et peut-être à cause de cela même, l’amour était chez lui moins une affaire des sens que du raisonnement. C’était surtout l’admiration et l’appétit du beau ; il considérait la reproduction comme un vice de l’amour, la grossesse comme une maladie d’araignée. Il a écrit quelque part : Les anges sont hermaphrodites et stériles. (337)

The rejection of reproduction, the resistance to being part of any future and the will to embrace sterility can only lead to a narrative that structures itself around the possibility of

³ In his poem “Tous imberbes alors, sur les vieux bancs de chêne”, Baudelaire evokes this glorification of pain in his own way: “Et devant le miroir j’ai perfectionné / L’art cruel qu’un Démon en naissant m’a donné / – De la Douleur pour faire une volupté vraie, – / D’ensanglanter son mal et de gratter sa plaie” (149).

leading nowhere. Androgyny goes along with sterility: it prevents the advent of reproduction. Samuel, an atheist and provocateur, associates angels with a hermaphroditic and sterile body, linking it with the queerness of a “dysfunctional” and unnatural body.

This hermaphroditism may be inscribed at the level of the text through two main techniques. First, the author can become “hermaphroditic” by signing the text with a name of the opposite sex, or giving one of the characters two names of opposite sexes. Second, androgyny appears semantically in the text when gender references of nouns and pronouns are deliberately unclear. I will illustrate each of these below.

Although an author’s name is on the margin of the text because it stands on the cover outside the novel, it often has, even in this “marginal” position, a key role to play in the text itself. As mentioned above, George Sand was identified with her heroine Lélia by the Marquise de Gesvres, who could just as well be taken for Barbey himself: in Romantic literature, much more than in either Classical or Naturalist works, authors have been closely associated with their characters, a confusion inscribed in the Romantic aesthetics of the self.⁴ Moreover, Chateaubriand, Senancour, Lamartine, Musset, Sand, Stendhal, among others, often promoted the autobiographical interpretation of their fictional works. Indeed, most of them ended up writing their own autobiographies and sometimes encouraged the confusion between themselves and their fictional characters.⁵ For our purposes, what matters is to indicate that the life, including the sex of the Romantic author, was far from overlooked and insignificant in a literary genre which

⁴ In his essay “Expressivity: the Romantic theory of authorship,” Bennet shows that Romantic authors interrogate, more than they unify or simply, their own subjectivities. As a result, the self-consciousness is crucial, but also fragmented, complex, and contradictory.

⁵ See Gusdorf : “Le romantisme peut être considéré comme une extrapolation de la littérature du moi” (*L’homme romantique* 236). See also Corinne Pelta.

focused specifically on the politics of love. Aurore Dupin, in this respect, had an interesting gender itinerary as an author since, as is well known, she started writing in collaboration with Jules Sandeau under the sole name of “J. Sand:” with a single name for two sexes, and especially with an initial which gives no indication of the sex of the author, there is already a hermaphroditic fusion at stake in this collaboration. Once she became independent and embarked on a career of her own, Aurore Dupin entered posterity with the pseudonym George Sand, a masculine name for a female writer (the lack of “s” in “George” signals a difference), and vice versa for Barbey d’Aurevilly: in 1843, he published texts about fashion for the *Moniteur de la mode* under the feminine name of Maximilienne de Syrène.⁶ A similar game of hermaphroditic pseudonyms is found in *La Fanfarlo*, in which the very first sentence discloses the other identity of the character:

Samuel Cramer, qui signa autrefois du nom de Manuela de Monteverde quelques folies romantiques, – dans le bon temps du romantisme – est le produit contradictoire d’un blême Allemand et d’une brune Chilienne.
(321)

In this ironic use of Romantic clichés—the exotic Latin woman and the spleenetic northern man—Baudelaire defines his dandy as another Romantic cliché, that of the androgynous poet. Here, the pseudonymous sex change is located not outside the text as a name on the cover, but thematized within it, making androgyny a key element, as the parody suggests, in the constitution of Romantic identity. More than a fanciful, insignificant pseudonym, the Romantic Manuela expresses an aspect of Samuel’s self (Manuela is almost an anagram of Samuel) and even though Samuel stopped writing Romantic texts, the narrator describes him as still betraying this aspect of his personality:

⁶ This year is also when Barbey starts writing his treatise *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell*.

Il était toujours le doux, le fantasque, le paresseux, le terrible, le savant, l'ignorant, le débraillé, le coquet Samuel Cramer, la romantique Manuela de Monteverde. Il raffolait d'un ami comme d'une femme, aimait une femme comme un camarade. (322).

Recalling the “undetermined intellectual sex” used by Barbey to qualify the dandy, Samuel embraces this androgyny by loving a male friend like a woman and a woman like a male friend. He is both “le Samuel Cramer” and “la Manuela de Monteverde,” and each configuration is a kind of androgynous oxymoron: “le *coquet* Samuel,” “la *romantique* Manuela.”

By the end of the story, when he has become the most repellent type of bourgeois and *arriviste*, the narrator reminds his reader, out of irony, that Samuel once was a Romantic female writer: “Pauvre Manuela de Monteverde ! – Il est tombé bien bas” (339). The combination, for the same character, of the feminine “Manuela” and the masculine pronoun “il” is a comical illustration of the gender ambiguity at stake in textual androgyny.

The other, perhaps more relevant literary illustration of two names for one person, two sexes for the same body, is *Mademoiselle de Maupin*: the original woman, Madeleine de Maupin, and the seductive male chevalier, Théodore de Sérannes. As she confesses in her memoirs, Madeleine had to die for Théodore to be born:

C'était là où, avec mes robes et mes jupes, j'avais laissé mon titre de femme; dans la chambre où j'avais fait ma toilette étaient serrées vingt années de ma vie qui ne devaient plus compter et qui ne me regardaient plus. Sur la porte, on eût pu écrire : Ci-gît Madeleine de Maupin ; car en effet je n'étais plus Madeleine de Maupin, mais bien Théodore de Sérannes,—et personne ne devait plus m'appeler de ce doux nom de Madeleine. (223)

However, if Madeleine claims to have died as a woman in order to be reborn as a man called Théodore,⁷ her love stories with both a man and a woman will interrogate her gender identity not so much as a successful transition from femininity to masculinity, but rather as the constant fusion of her two genders, leading her to identify as the incarnation of incertitude and a member of the third sex (356). The name she gave to herself as a form of baptism, Sérannes, seems to be a pun that can be understood as the contraction of the words quoted above, “serrées” and “années,” referring to that fact that her twenty previous years actually do matter despite her assertion to the contrary, since they literally create her self-given name Sérannes. Her oscillation between Madeleine and Théodore is inscribed throughout the text, leaving the reader uncertain about which name should be retained as the real, or the only one to name him/her. On the one hand, most of the novel is the story of the adventures of Théodore, since it is only by the end that the sex change is officially revealed, but on the other hand the title of the novel is *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, thereby insisting on Théodore’s underground, “original” gender. This principle of uncertainty is written in such a way that, by the end of the novel, the reader is unable to assign Madeleine a specific gender identity, as she leaves both her lovers, and her readers, without clarifying what is beyond her escape. It is also unclear, when she has sex with d’Albert and Rosette—the same night, but separately—whether she has done so as Madeleine or Théodore, thus making the androgyny complete not only about gender but also about sexuality.

The second inscription of androgyny in these texts is semantic: the choice of words and the use of grammar with gender agreements open up a space for either gender

⁷ Although Théodore is used most of the time as a masculine name, it can also be used as a name for women. Maupin has thus selected an appropriate name for a woman passing as a man.

inversion or gender confusion concerning the sex of the characters at stake. In *Delphine*, for instance, some sentences are purposely ambiguous as far as the gender of the referent is concerned. In the first letters that open the second volume of *Delphine*, Léonce promises to respect Delphine in the following way: “Je te jure par tout ce qu’il y a de plus sacré sur la terre, de te respecter comme un frère” (12). The expression “like a brother” may refer either to Léonce or to Delphine, leaving space for gender ambiguity. The reader cannot know for sure if Léonce thought of himself and Delphine as two brothers or as brother and sister. Likewise, in the letter written by Madame de Lebenzei to her husband, describing how Léonce takes care of Delphine when she is ill, another gender ambiguity appears: “Depuis que Delphine est presque convalescente, il invente mille soins nouveaux comme l’amie la plus attentive” (14). In this sentence, far from being protective like an elder brother, Léonce is associated with the most compassionate female friend, making gender confusion more explicit about his devotion and affection towards Delphine.

In *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the grammatical gender agreements fluctuate depending on the position of the narrator. When he identifies, or is identified, as Théodore, for instance at the beginning of the novel, the agreements are masculine: “je me croirais manqué,” “tant que je ne serai pas parvenu à mon but” (68). As the novel goes on and Théodore “comes out” as a member of the third sex, the agreements slip into the feminine, even when she is called Monsieur Théodore—for instance by Ninon, whom she encourages to cross-dress as well—: “si j’étais restée chez moi” (344), “je restai confondue” (351). Gautier thus suggests to what extent gender is a matter of language (“il m’échappait souvent de dire,” “lorsque je t’écris”),—hence the role of literature in its

depiction and analysis. This back and forth between two grammatical genders is expressed by Madeleine in a letter to her friend Graciosa:

Je perdais insensiblement l'idée de mon sexe, et je me souvenais à peine, de loin en loin, que j'étais femme ; dans les commencements, il m'échappait souvent de dire, sans y songer, quelque chose comme cela qui n'était pas congruent avec l'habit que je portais. Maintenant cela ne m'arrive plus, et même, lorsque je t'écris, à toi qui es dans la confiance de mon secret, je garde quelquefois dans les adjectifs une virilité inutile. (356)

Although she states in this passage that she has finally forgotten her original sex enough that she can pass successfully as a man, she nonetheless keeps on identifying, at least partially, as a woman, since she notices that when she sends a letter to her friend Graciosa she should not express herself with a useless masculine gender (“une virilité inutile”). In this case, the use of an unnecessary masculine gender signifies not so much the successful transition from a gender to another one but rather the confusing and unstable oscillation between the two genders.

In his novella *Le chevalier des Touches*, Barbey offers many examples of such textual androgyny. Men are described as transvestites and women as masculine characters. The abbé de Percy is introduced as such: “*Elle*, ou plutôt *il* – car c'était un homme – était chaussé avec l'élégance d'un abbé de l'ancien régime” (27) whereas his sister, who has the masculine name of Barbe de Percy, is described as a mannish woman : “Fée plus pâle, aux traits plus hardis, à la voix plus forte, tranchait par la brusquerie *hommasse* de toute sa personne” (32). The analogy between the author's name, Barbey, and the name of his mannish female character, Barbe de Percy adds to the hermaphroditic confusion. As if the reader would not be bemused enough by this textual androgyny, Barbey italicises the elements of it. In the second chapter, entitled “Hélène et Pâris,” the reader soon discovers

that Hélène is a man, the Chevalier des Touches, and that Pâris is a woman, Barbe de Percy, who cross-dressed as a man to take part in the famous “expédition des douze,” whose goal was to liberate “la belle Hélène,” by then held prisoner. The nickname of “la belle Hélène” was given to the Chevalier des Touches by his friends and allies as an affectionate mockery in its joint allusion to the Trojan War and its *opéra bouffe* version, Offenbach’s *La Belle Hélène* of 1864 (59). As for Barbe, she is compared to the Chevalier d’Eon (63), a famous French transvestite of the eighteenth century, and becomes the male liberator of the female prisoner: “Aurais-je jamais cru que l’un des Pâris de notre *belle Hélène* fût... ma soeur ?” (66). If Pâris happens to be a woman and Hélène is actually a man, sexual difference no longer makes sense, which is echoed by this passage from *Mademoiselle de Maupin*: “Il n’y a presque pas de différence entre Pâris et Hélène. Aussi l’Hermaphrodite est-il une des chimères les plus ardemment caressées de l’antiquité idolâtre” (212). The irony is that it is not only idolatrous Antiquity that cherishes the chimera of the Hermaphrodite, but also, and even above all, the Romantic nineteenth century.

Throughout the novella, Barbey uses masculine agreements for Barbe Percy—“ce singulier gendarme en cottes bouffantes, qui n’avait, *lui*, jamais été une demoiselle” (65)—and feminine agreements for the Chevalier des Touches—“*elle* avait une vaillance acharnée et féroce” (104) — always emphasizing through italics the words articulating this androgyny. In the end, and this is maybe the climax of this hermaphroditic style, Barbey creates a neologism between *un damoiseau* and *une demoiselle*: “ce jeune damoisel de Chevalier des Touches” (103). In another work, “Le rideau cramoisy,” Barbey again has recourse to gender ambiguity when it comes to the character of Alberte. Sometimes she is

explicitly described as a woman (“Elle était digne d’être la maîtresse d’un soldat !”[83]), and sometimes she is clearly identified as a man (“Nous ne sommes pas des bégueules entre nous. Nous sommes deux hommes, et nous pouvons nous parler comme deux hommes”[89]), so that her gender is alternatively perceived as feminine and masculine, complicating her alleged identity as a woman.

In her essay on *George Sand and Idealism*, Naomi Schor raises the following question: “Is the scandal of *Lélia* a scandal of genre rather than of gender?” (56). Pondering Sainte-Beuve’s critique of *Lélia*, in which he regrets that Sand’s prose was not realistic enough, Schor argues that the confusion of genre comes from the fact that *Lélia*’s problematic sexuality structures the narrative as an oscillation through the “fall from allegorical abstraction into the psychological realism” (63). We might say that the unorthodox mixing of genres in *Lélia* is not disconnected from sexual and gender confusion but rather is wholly consistent with, and perhaps even derives from, it. Indeed, along with gender ambiguity, confusion about the literary genre of the text can be considered a feature of textual androgyny. As is well known, the “scandal” of Romanticism was partly a stylistic one: whereas Classicism had rules to be respected, Romanticism was more concerned with experimentation.⁸ Moreover, Romanticism refused to establish new stylistic norms, resisting categorization like the dandy him or herself who, in Barbey’s words about Brummell “ne se fixe ni ne se laisse fixer” (75). The French Romantic text is impossible to fix in stable generic, categories. *Corinne ou l’Italie*, for instance, can be read as the unexpected combination of different genres that are not supposed to go together. In his essay “La niche vide du Panthéon : Monuments et

⁸ See David Duff: “Though the Romantics were adept at recognizing and exploiting the resources of genre, they were also alert to artistic possibilities that appeared to lie beyond them, and they cultivated a notion of literariness that often sought to elude or transcend traditional conceptions of genre” (8).

beaux-arts de Rome,” Alexandre Minski notes that Staël’s novel also features pages of poetry, philosophical reflections on the arts, analytical descriptions of art-works, and is at times travelogue, at times epistolary novel.⁹ The heterosexual trouble thematized in the plot and conveyed by an androgynous play of pronouns is also linked to the generic confusion of the work.

Another relevant example is provided by *Lélia*, which was greeted by Sainte-Beuve as an “oeuvre lyrique et philosophique” (591) and a “roman-poème” (593), here again combining different genres such as poetry, philosophy and the novel. The scandal of *Lélia* is not only associated with the sterility of Lélia’s heart, her notorious frigidity, but also with the unexpected confusion of literary genres that do not converge and do not lead the reader anywhere beyond the specific pleasure of the prose itself. Laforgue, in his essay “*Lélia* : poésie, philosophie et érotique de la désespérance en 1830,” comments on the hybrid nature of Sand’s novel :

Lélia, roman ? *Lélia*, poème ? *Lélia*, roman-poème ? Ces questions sont régulièrement posées à propos de *Lélia* et elles sont pour ainsi dire le préalable obligé à toute étude de cette œuvre. Cette interrogation de nature générique semble, en effet, devoir être la seule approche possible d’un texte qui échappe à toute catégorisation. (*Romanticocco* 135)

Lélia, indeed, can be read as a poem in prose, as a philosophical meditation on despair, each one of the characters being an allegory of an idea, as a political plea in favour of a new sexual utopia, and as a novel with plot, dialogue, and narrative. Schor has demonstrated that it is because of “the pressure of the vicissitudes of female sexuality under patriarchy” that *Lélia* is a failed allegory, by which the idealist genre had to be mixed with the genre of realism (67). It would be a mistake to rectify this confusion by

⁹ See Michel Delon. Also, José-Luis Diaz.

giving the novel a unity when the point is precisely to combine and confuse many literary genres.

The reader of Sand's *Isidora* (1846) is also likely to notice, and be disturbed by, the genre of the text: is it a novel about an impossible love between Jacques and Isidora, or is it a philosophical essay based on the journals of Jacques as he tries to theorize the concept of sexual difference? As the author recalls in the introduction of the book, *Isidora* has to be read as the combination of two "cahiers," both written by Jacques, one of them being his "travail" and the other being his "journal." But instead of being published in a separate way, the different genres of Jacques' essays and memoirs are mingled in the book, making the reader switch from a philosophical prose—

La femme est-elle ou n'est-elle pas l'égal de l'homme dans les desseins, dans la pensée de Dieu ? La question est mal posée ainsi ; il faudrait dire : l'espèce humaine est-elle composée de deux être différents, l'homme et la femme ? (8)

to the fictional prose in which it is inserted: "J'ai passé toute ma soirée d'hier à poser la première question, et je me suis couché sans l'avoir rédigée de manière à me contenter (8)".

This switching back and forth between the two makes the literary genre of *Isidora* impossible to categorize precisely. Like *Lélia* and *Corinne*, *Isidora* offers a striking example of the confusion of literary genres relating to gender ambiguity: in each novel, the range of reflections on sexual difference triggered by heterosexual trouble create a genre of its own based on the coexistence of poetry, philosophy, idealism, and realism. In this sense, textual androgyny owes its transgenre specificity to the transgender themes it articulates.

The particular form of “heterosexual trouble” which is dandyism also spawned a style with certain identifiable features. This does not mean that texts on dandyism are stylistically the same. Rather, elements of these texts relate, I argue, to the heterosexual trouble they thematize: artifice, the authorial voice as dilettante, the literary figures of irony and antinomy, and, finally, signs of textual extravagance.

Irony is a recurrent literary figure in the dandyistic text: as it uses words in order to reverse or undermine their meaning, it creates a doubt, or at least a space for various interpretations, and finally prevents any notion of ultimate, definitive meaning. Irony confuses more than it clarifies, and complicates the dynamics of the literal understanding of words and their deeper meaning. In *Du dandysme et de George Brummell*, Barbey argued that the use of irony is one of the distinctions of the dandy: “L’Ironie est un génie qui dispense de tous les autres. Elle jette sur un homme l’air de sphinx qui préoccupe comme un mystère et qui inquiète comme un danger” (77).

In *La Fanfarlo*, Baudelaire takes a significant step in his use of irony: when it comes to the personality and the pathetic destiny of Samuel Cramer, the text seems so saturated with irony that the reader cannot help but wonder whether to take it seriously, ironically, or both. The following statement about Samuel illustrates this point:

Samuel s’arrêta avec respect, – ou feignit de s’arrêter avec respect; car, avec ce diable d’homme, le grand problème est toujours de savoir où le comédien commence. (333)

The statement brings out the impossibility of determining whether to interpret Samuel’s actions seriously or ironically—so much so that even the author/narrator is unsure. This action of the story bears this out: the first pages of *La Fanfarlo* introduce Samuel as a dandy and a *poseur*; however, he ends up falling in love sincerely and passionately with

la Fanfarlo, although he was only supposed to play with her heart to win Mme de Cosmelly's love. Just as it is difficult to decipher whether Samuel is "natural" or acting a role, it is difficult for the reader to decipher whether the prose has a literal or an ironic meaning. Consequently, the presence of irony in stylistic aims at creating a doubt, a confusion as far as the reader's reception of the text is concerned: the irony threatens to become the overall tone of the text, and the reader has to decide what is, or could be, ironic without always reaching a conclusion.¹⁰

In *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, the reader is constantly teased by the narrator's irony concerning his/her own identity: as Théodore's journal is full of double-entendres that implicitly go back and forth between his present and her former gender identities, and because the reader is never sure whether to believe or doubt Théodore's account, the confessions have a tone more ironic than sincere. Théodore likes to play with the naturalness of his status as a man, although the reader and he himself know that his gender is far from being natural:

– Je me croirais manqué sous de certains rapports, inharmonique ou dépareillé, – contrefait d'esprit ou de cœur ; car enfin ce que je demande est juste, et la nature le doit à tout homme. [...] Une maîtresse pour moi, c'est la robe virile pour un jeune Romain. (68)

In the first sentence, the irony relies on the fact that Théodore expects to find a female lover because he takes for granted that nature owes each man the company of a caring woman, but his wish cannot be taken literally since he is not a man by nature, but rather a man by cross-dressing. It is of course deeply ironic to invoke nature from the perspective

¹⁰ In his article "Le fade et le pimenté : modes de séduction dans "La Fanfarlo" de Baudelaire", Ross Chambers comments on the impact of irony on the reader: "Frisant la provocation, l'ironie distancie donc le lecteur ; et le narrateur n'hésitera pas à épouser lui-même l'exposé des goûts rares et des opinions outrageuses des personnages, proclamant même une fois, avec un rare franc-parler, que Samuel "avait, selon moi, parfaitement raison". Ce revirement inattendu de l'attitude narrative est pour le moins déroutant." (181).

of the most extreme artifice. Ultimately, the irony is present throughout the whole passage as it ends with Théodore's assertion that having a female lover for him would be the guarantee of his manhood, just as the proof of a Roman's masculinity is symbolised by his "robe virile." Here again the virility of the Roman's dress is suspect because the word "robe" in the nineteenth century refers to the feminine clothing *par excellence*, and can hardly be imagined as the proof of a man's masculinity, especially in the mouth of a woman cross-dressing as a man.

The irony is just as tangible in another extract from Théodore's journal, when he wishes he could have been a woman, so that he could have experienced new pleasures: "J'ai rêvé de brûler des villes pour illuminer mes fêtes ; j'ai souhaité d'être femme pour connaître de nouvelles voluptés" (156). This being written by a woman who not only wished to become a man in order to experience new thrilling sensations, but who actually made her dream come true. Thus, by having recourse to irony, the narrator constantly teases the reader about the uncertainty of Théodore's gender.

In Barbey's novella "Le bonheur dans le crime," doctor Torty catches the clandestine lovers, Serlon and Hauteclair, fencing by moonlight, and describes this activity with irony:

Quand je débouchais du bois de sapins du château, blêmi par la lune, et dont une fenêtre était ouverte :
" – Tiens ! – fis-je, admirant la force des goûts et des habitudes, – voilà donc toujours leur manière de faire l'amour ! (155)

The irony comes from the fact that Serlon and Hauteclair are likely to make love in another way than by fencing with each other at night, but by giving this metaphor a literal meaning, Torty figures their sexuality as peculiar: the male-female complementarity is replaced by a rivalry between phallic partners.

As a literary figure, antinomy is found in any expression which catches the reader's attention by the problematic incompatibility, if not complete contradiction, of its terms. Whereas the oxymoron requires the direct association of opposite terms, antinomy expresses the notion of a paradox through the articulation of a sentence: the emphasis is not put on the poetic contrast of two words but rather, to quote Baudelaire's expression in *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, on the "peculiar logics" of a problematic meaning. Consequently, antinomy is often used to describe the supposed incompatibility of genders within a couple and/or a character. For instance, Gautier lets his heroine Madeleine de Maupin describe herself by the following antinomy: "Je pense que j'aurais très bien pu poser pour une statue de l'Incertitude personnifiée" (331). But how could the principle of incertitude be personified or for that matter, posed or fixed in a statue? The uncertainty of Madeleine's "real" sex, her "sexe à part," her gender confusion echo the antinomy of posing as a statue of incertitude personified. Indeed, if Madeleine, who identifies as a "sexe à part," were a statue, she could only be the statue of incertitude, a gender-confused incarnation of uncertainty.

Another example can be found in both Barbey's novella "Le rideau cramoisi" and in Gautier's novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, calling the reader's attention to an odd circulation of gender. Brassard mentions, talking about Alberte: "Honteux pourtant d'être moins homme que cette fille hardie" (70) and Madeleine states bluntly that "Beaucoup d'hommes sont plus femmes que moi" (293). The resemblance between these two antinomies is striking: they both puzzle the reader by the fact that there is supposed to be a clear, natural, unbridgeable gap between men and women, and yet they evoke a fluidity instead of an incompatibility between the two genders. What remains of sexual difference

if some men are more women than women themselves, and vice versa? It is interesting to note that if these antinomies are almost the same, one is uttered by a man, and the other by a woman, challenging from both sexes the frontier that is supposed to separate each gender into its own territory.

Antinomy relating to gender is recurrent in Romantic prose as the textual inscription of the incoherence of heteronormativity, of the model of sexual difference based on the complementarity of femininity and masculinity. In the end, Madeleine de Maupin escapes her lovers and readers because she refuses to be fixed in a specific identity, preferring to embrace a paradoxical one. The use of antinomy allows the authorial voice to play with the reader's approach to the text: literature is not life, and characters are not made of flesh, but are fictions. By purposely confusing the basic rules of logic, antinomy invites the reader to enjoy the text for what it is: an artifice. In this sense, Samuel Cramer, in Baudelaire's *La Fanfarlo*, is both hero and anti-hero, dandy and parody of the dandy. Towards the end of the novella, as Samuel literally falls in love with a courtesan and becomes a bourgeois, there are almost no more antinomies. In this ironic portrait of an artist who is only able to produce himself as a living masterpiece without a frame, Baudelaire uses antinomy to express Samuel's distinction as a brilliant impotent, defining his dandyism through paradox, strangeness and enigma ("moitié de genie," "l'homme des belles oeuvres ratées" [321]). The paradox of being an artist without an oeuvre, of living one's genius in one's life only, is a feature of dandyism.

I chose the adjective dilettante to qualify the specific authorial voice associated with stylistic dandyism not only because Baudelaire praised dilettantism as "la meilleure preuve des facultés indispensables en art" (497) in his tribute to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*,

but also because dilettantism is defined by a free-floating relation to the arts.¹¹ Liberated from the academic constraints of rigor and authority in his quest for aesthetic gratification, free to indulge whatever and as many tastes as he wishes, the dilettante is accused of being superficial and unproductive.¹² In his passion for art, the dilettante values caprice and is not “invested” in his tastes: these features link dilettantism and dandyism. I would argue that, as far as French Romanticism is concerned, a dilettante authorial voice defines a narrator who seems to be detached towards his own text.

By presenting the narrative as an artifice instead of focusing on the verisimilitude of the story, the narrator teases the reader, offering a deconstruction of the text within the text, proving that art should never be mistaken for nature because it relies only on the creative power of the artist.¹³ In *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Gautier’s narrator breaks the logic of the epistolary novel at the beginning of chapter 6 to engage the reader in the versatility of literary genres within one text:

En cet endroit, si le débonnaire lecteur veut bien nous le permettre, nous allons pour quelques temps abandonner à ses rêveries le digne personnage qui, jusqu’ici, a occupé la scène à lui tout seul et parlé pour son propre compte, et rentrer dans la forme ordinaire du roman, sans toutefois nous

¹¹ The word dilettante was originally introduced into the French language by Stendhal who defined it, in his *Vie de Rossini*, as the mechanism by which music probes and makes conscious, like Proust’s Vinteuil sonata, the memory of an unhappy love. See the preface to the *Notes d’un dilettante*: “Lorsque, songeant à quelque souvenir de notre propre vie, et agités encore en quelque sorte par le sentiment d’autrefois, nous venons à reconnaître tout à coup le portrait de ce sentiment dans quelque cantilène de notre connaissance, nous pouvons assurer qu’elle est belle. Il me semble qu’il arrive alors une sorte de vérification de la ressemblance entre ce que le chant exprime et ce que nous avons senti, qui nous fait voir et goûter plus en détail les moindres nuances de notre sentiment, et des nuances à nous-mêmes inconnues jusqu’à ce moment. C’est par ce mécanisme, si je ne me trompe, que la musique entretient et nourrit les rêveries de l’amour malheureux” (7-8).

¹² Interestingly, this echoes Barbey’s review of Staël, praising her style for being pure sensitiveness devoid of rigor: “La fixité, le solide établissement de l’esprit dans une idée première, l’impersonnalité, la vigueur objective, la rigueur dans la déduction, Mme de Staël ne les connaît pas !” (*Oeuvres critiques* 46).

¹³ The opposition between the text as an artifice and the novel as mirroring reality is theorized in D.A. Miller’s essay on *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style*: “Whereas Style-as-narration seems to come from nowhere but its own unconditioned freedom of mind, and to no purpose but to enjoy that freedom, style-as-character (no less than character itself, of which style, small s, would name only one among numerous other attributes) must be seen as the outcome of various social and psychological determinisms” (43).

interdire de prendre par la suite la forme dramatique, s'il en est besoin, et nous réservant le droit de puiser encore dans cette espèce de confession épistolaire que le susdit jeune homme adressait à son ami, persuadé que, si pénétrant et si plein de sagacité que nous soyons, nous devons assurément en savoir là-dessus moins long que lui-même. (161)

Here as well, the narrator acts ironically as if his character were not his creation, but had an existence and agency of his own. The story then takes the path of an investigation about the main character's enigmatic personality which will require the combination of different literary genres: epistolary confession, drama, and even "the ordinary form of the novel." After five chapters of an epistolary confession, the narrator intervenes in an unexpected way to suggest that the main character is not what the reader thinks he is precisely because he had the opportunity to speak for himself—actually, he should not be trusted, or at least, the reader should not associate confession with authenticity. Hence the change in literary genres and the ironic intervention of the narrator reframe the text not as a first-person confession but rather as an interpretative game about the construction and deconstruction of a text—echoing the construction and deconstruction of the narrator's sex which is thematized in the work.

The other way by which a dilettante authorial voice produces a dandyistic detachment is by letting the reader know about his or her presence throughout the narrative but without giving much indication about his or her relationship to the characters and without making clear whether the narrative should be understood literally or ironically. Sarcasm, compassion, or voyeurism: it is impossible for the reader to locate the emotional position of the authorial voice; just as it is impossible for the audience to decipher the gender of a dandy. For instance, in *La Fanfarlo*, this is how the authorial voice narrates the fact that Samuel gives his collection of poems to Madame de Cosmelly:

Le lendemain, il la trouva, la tête inclinée par une mélancolie gracieuse et presque étudiée, vers les fleurs de la plate-bande, et lui offrit son volume des *Orfraies*, recueil de sonnets, comme nous en avons tous fait et tous lu, dans le temps où nous avions le jugement si court et les cheveux si longs. (325)

The narrator intervenes directly by his ironic comment on Samuel's poetry: although Samuel likes to think of himself as a unique person and a brilliant artist, the narrator judges his poetry as clichéd, plain, and typical of an immature, pretentious writer. In the end, what strikes the narrator is not so much Samuel's delicate soul but rather the fact that he is the stereotype of the Romantic, effeminate male poet. But the narrator's sarcasm is specifically pointed at himself and to the reader, both of whom are likened to Samuel, thus complicating the point of view. Have we outgrown this puerile Romanticism or is our complacency a Samuel-like self-ignorance? The irony allows for no definitive answer.

The same ambiguity appears in "Le bonheur dans le crime." The originality of the novella is that there are two levels of narrative: the story of Serlon and Hauteclair is told by doctor Torty to an unnamed author who sits next to him in the Jardin des Plantes. Doctor Torty is then the official narrator chosen by the mysterious, anonymous other narrator to tell the infamous love story between two criminals. As doctor Torty wants to catch his fellow's attention in order to tell him the secret story of this couple, he teases him in the following way:

– Le médecin est le confesseur des temps modernes, – fit le docteur, avec un ton solennellement goguenard. – Il a remplacé le prêtre, monsieur, et il est obligé au secret de la confession comme le prêtre...
Il me regarda malicieusement, car il connaissait mon respect et mon amour pour les choses du catholicisme, dont il était l'ennemi. Il cligna l'œil. Il me crut attrapé. (113)

Here again, the reader hesitates between two interpretations: either doctor Torty and the authorial voice are courteous with each other but stand for opposite, if not rival, positions (the doctor, man of science, versus the Catholic believer, man of faith, competing for the access to knowledge through confession¹⁴), or Doctor Torty could be as fictional as his criminal lovers, a “false” narrator whose gentle teasing towards the authorial voice (“I stand for the new power”) would be subject to the irony of latter (“you think so but, actually, you are my puppet”). The last sentence of the quoted passage (“he thought he had caught me”) suggests indeed that Doctor Torty thinks he controls the authorial voice, but it is actually not at all sure: Doctor Torty is, after all, a character in the story. The wink sent from Torty to his unnamed fellow is the wink of the dilettante authorial voice to the anonymous reader, the wink of a dandy establishing the experience of reading as an ironic game between the author and the reader: reader, how far would you allow me to cheat you with my storytelling? In this sense, the wink can be understood as the metaphor for the ironic style at work in dandyism.

Another main feature of stylistic dandyism is extravagance. The etymology of the word extra-vagance (from the Latin verbe *vagare*: wandering) suggests a detour, a path away from the straight line, and a walk without a fixed destination. The promotion of extravagance in French Romanticism goes against the restrictions attached to the Classical *bienséance*, the observance of proper manners, and realistic probability. The dandy is extravagant not only because of his distinctive appearance, but also because of an unpredictable, and sometimes audacious, behaviour: Barbey narrates the anecdote concerning Brummell’s lack of respect for the upper hierarchy, his infamous remark–

¹⁴ Barbey’s vehement Catholicism reinforces the irony of the authorial voice about Torty’s position as the narrator of the story.

“Quel est ce gros homme ?” (90)—publicly uttered in Hyde Park about the King of England. Most importantly for our subject, extravagance also refers to the way a gender wanders outside of its limits, therefore disturbing the dialectics of masculinity and femininity: characters like Mademoiselle de Maupin or Hauteclair Stassin are embodiments of extravagance. The way they dress, act in public and love in private is always described as original and surprising.

Textually speaking, extravagance as part of a stylistic dandyism is manifested in a variety of ways. In the works under discussion here, I note three in particular: the use of foreign words, neologisms, and experimental punctuation and typography. Words like “spleen” and “dandy” were themselves adopted and used by French poets against the convention of the “purity” and perfection of French as a language. As Barbey states:

Comme tout ce qui est universel, humain, a son nom dans la langue de Voltaire ; ce qui ne l’est pas, on est obligé de l’y mettre, et voilà pourquoi le mot dandysme n’est pas français.
Il restera étranger comme la chose qu’il exprime. (39)

The French language has a word for everything universal and human, but not for the singular institution of dandyism. In the end, the word “dandysme” is used in French but remains voluntarily extraneous so that the word, like the dandy, is perceived as strange and foreign. Barbey indeed blends foreign words and fanciful neologisms into his language: for instance the verb “s’encapricer,” in his novella *Le cachet d’Onyx*¹⁵, or “puissanciellement” and “irrémuable” in *Les diaboliques*. Or consider this example from “Le rideau cramoisi”:

Ajusté des deux côtés par des milliers de fusils, de pistolets et de carabines, depuis la Bastille jusqu’à la rue de Richelieu, il n’avait pas été atteint, malgré la largeur d’une poitrine dont il était peut-être un peu trop fier, car

¹⁵ “Femme avant tout, avant d’être un cœur élevé et un esprit supérieur, elle s’encapriça d’un beau visage” (6).

le capitaine de Brassard *poitrinait* au feu, comme une belle femme, au bal, qui veut mettre sa gorge en valeur [...] (50)

If “poitrine” exists in French as a feminine noun, the verb “poitriner” is an invention of Barbey’s to describe Brassard’s chest in a feminine analogy. The neologism, italicised in order to call attention to its strangeness, creates an unexpected androgyny by blending the masculine body of the soldier on the battlefield with the feminine body of the beautiful woman at a ball: Brassard’s behavior is not described with masculine values of strength and bravery, but rather as the coquetry of a woman fully aware of her seduction. Instead of dominating the battlefield with the use of a phallic weapon, Brassard makes his way by offering his chest to the fire of the enemy.

In his two texts devoted to dandyism, Barbey regularly punctuates his prose by the use of foreign words such as “wit,” “fun,” “bombast” (*Du dandysme* 81, 99) and neologisms such as “oseur,” “insulairement,” and “inconsolabilité” (*Du dandysme* 70, 117, 125). The neologism “oseur,” which could be translated as a “darer,” is an apt description of the dandy and the style by which he is expressed.

A final example of extravagance can be found in an original use of punctuation. Romantic authors were notorious for arguing with their own publishers in order to have their original punctuation printed as such. Sand, in a letter to Charles Edmond,¹⁶ argues in favor of punctuation as a crucial element of an author’s style:

La ponctuation a sa philosophie comme le style ; je ne dis pas comme la langue ; le style est la langue bien comprise, la ponctuation est le style bien compris.

Il y a des règles absolues pour la langue et des règles absolues pour la ponctuation. Le style doit se plier aux exigences de la langue, mais la ponctuation doit se plier aux exigences du style. Je nie qu’elle relève immédiatement des règles grammaticales, je prétends qu’elle doit être plus élastique et n’avoir point de règle absolue. (75)

¹⁶ Quoted in Claude Demanuelle, in which the whole letter is transcribed.

By giving punctuation a stylistic function, Sand rejects the idea that it should depend only on the language and the rules of grammar. Stylistic dandyism confirms and illustrates Sand's idea of punctuation and, by extension, typography as style by applying it in new, original ways.

In his essay on George Brummell, for instance, Barbey commits a typographical extravagance by adding a footnote to another footnote:

Le dandysme n'était pas dans la perfection de ces gants qui prenaient le contour des ongles, comme la chair le prend, c'était qu'ils eussent été faits par quatre artistes spéciaux, trois pour la main et un pour le pouce. * J'ai si bonne envie d'être clair et d'être compris que je risquerai une chose ridicule. Je mettrai une note dans une note. Le prince de Kaunitz [...] (45)

The word "ridiculous" and the verb "dare," confirm the originality of this initiative. Barbey was also extravagant in his punctuation, for instance in "Le rideau cramoisi" when, describing the intensity of emotions between Alberte and Brassard, he ends his sentence with not one, but two exclamation points: "[...] des sensations que je ne crois pas avoir éprouvées jamais depuis avec des femmes plus aimées que cette Alberte, qui ne m'aimait peut-être pas, que je n'aimais peut-être pas !!" (85).

The growing use of dashes,—sometimes instead of parenthesis,—imported from England in the nineteenth century, is another example of an extravagant punctuation.¹⁷ For instance, in *La Fanfarlo*, Baudelaire has recourse to the dash in order to infuse the punctuation with irony:

Un des travers les plus naturels de Samuel était de se considérer comme l'égal de ceux qu'il avait su admirer : après une lecture passionnée d'un beau livre, sa conclusion involontaire était : voilà qui est assez beau pour être de moi ! – et de là à penser : c'est donc de moi, – il n'y a que l'espace d'un tiret. (322)

¹⁷ See Demanuelli. Balzac is assumed to be the main French author who started using dashes in French literature. (59)

All of a sudden, as the unexpected conclusion of the sentence, the space of the dash, far from being a neutral or insignificant sign, is the typographic incarnation of the irony with which the narrator describes Samuel as ridiculously vain in his artistic pretensions.

Another sign of the textual extravagance of stylistic dandyism lies in the (ab)use of suspension points and interjections. It allows Barbey, in *Les diaboliques*, to “punctuate” his text with a plethora of unfinished sentences. By adding a sense of mystery to a prose already haunted by doubt and secrecy, the suspension points and interjections obscure the meaning of the sentences they punctuate: “Oh !... mais une peur... une peur immense !” (90). As Dürrenmatt recalls in his work on Romantic punctuation, *Bien coupé mal cousu*, it took grammarians a long time before accepting suspension points as a proper mode of punctuation, precisely because of their unclear meaning:

De fait le signe n'est apparu qu'au XVII siècle dans les textes dramatiques pour lier une réplique interrompue à la suivante, venant ainsi combler le simple blanc jusque là en réintroduisant un semblant de continuité. Les grammairiens mettront longtemps à le considérer comme signe à part entière, avec de possibles valeurs expressives, valeurs qui tiennent à la puissance signifiante du silence, et particulièrement du silence impromptu. (37)

Suspension points are the *je ne sais quoi* by which undertones of silence, mystery or the unexpected are inscribed in the typography of the text. These traits accord well with the indescribability of the dandy theorized by Barbey (110), the dandy's reserved, laconic nature, his impassivity and restraint.

Finally, Barbey italicises liberally, inscribing in the written language the idea of an original, spoken *tone*. Susan Sontag, in her *Notes on Camp*,—dedicated to the quintessential dandy, Oscar Wilde,—mentions that there is a specific way of being camp:

it is the art of talking with quotation marks.¹⁸ Likewise, for Barbey, the art of writing in italics is the translation of the specific tone of the dandy in his way of telling a story. The fact that Barbey almost always uses italics for foreign words and neologisms reinforces the role of italics as a sort of “eyeliner” to highlight the textual extravagance of his prose.

In this chapter, I have tried to identify some stylistic features which reinforce in French Romantic texts the theme of heterosexual trouble. These features create a “textual androgyny” which translates the androgyny or gender confusion thematized in the works. As an extreme case of heterosexual trouble, dandyism also features traits of style which “perform” the dandy’s persona. Overall, it appears that if these works have a distinct role to play in the theory of gender, it has to do not only with their themes, but also with their style.

Given the relevance of the concept of heterosexual trouble to French Romantic literature, it may be useful, by way of comparison, to consider another national literature. As we saw in Staël’s *Delphine*, “Spanish” characters are staples of the French Romantic imaginary and they are involved in the questioning of heteronormativity. In the next chapter I will explore the status of heterosexual trouble within the Spanish Romantic novel itself. While not exhaustive, this approach will shed light on the transnational character of heterosexual trouble and its relevance to a wider European Romanticism.

¹⁸ Note 10: “Camp sees everything in quotation marks. It’s not a lamp, but a ‘lamp’”.

Chapter 4:

Heterosexual Trouble in the Spanish Romantic Novel

“Desde entonces no soy víctima, porque puedo ser verdugo.”
Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, *Dos mujeres*

As a literary movement, Spanish Romanticism tends to be understudied, often approached as a minor moment of the national literature, in comparison both with other European Romantic movements and with other Spanish nineteenth-century movements such as Realism. The most famous authors of this period, such as Cecilia Boehl (also known as Fernán Caballero), Leopoldo Alas (also known as Clarín), José María de Pereda, Emilia Pardo Bazán, and Benito Pérez Galdós, are rarely linked to Romanticism. Likewise, studies of European Romanticism tend to focus on Germany, England and France, whereas Spanish, Italian and Portuguese Romanticisms do not attract the same amount of attention.

Edmund L. King, in 1962, and Jean-Louis Picoche, in 1981, went as far as asking if there actually was such a thing as Spanish Romanticism: in the conclusion of their essays they acknowledged the specific existence of a Spanish Romantic literature, but only to confirm its lack of interest and its status as a secondary movement. They offered the following combination of factors to explain both the specificity and the lacklustre quality of Spanish Romanticism. First, due to the political reaction against Napoleon's occupation and followed by the conservative regime of Fernando VII, Romanticism happened too late in Spain, mainly after the 1830s, when most of the other significant

European Romantic movements had already created their masterpieces.¹ Second, Spanish Romanticism was not the expression of the identity of a nation in the making, but rather a cultural phenomenon from abroad imported into Spain by Spanish intellectuals living in exile all over Europe. For instance José María Blanco Crespo, also known as Blanco White, who ended up living in England and writing in English, and Juan Nicolás Böhl de Faber, who studied German Idealism in Germany, represent the efforts of a Spanish diaspora aimed at “importing” Romanticism into Spain from abroad in order to challenge the constraints of neoclassicism. Third, as Spanish Romantic writers learned about Romanticism through either French Romantic literature or English and German Romantic texts in French translation, their works have been dismissed as heavily influenced by texts in other languages.² A famous example of this foreign influence is given by Vicente Llorens in his analysis of a play, *Malek-Adhel*, by the duke de Rivas, directly inspired by Sophie Cottin’s novel *Mathilde ou Mémoires tirés de l’histoire des croisades*.³ Fourth, Spanish Romanticism is accused of having little influence abroad. Although the combination of these factors allows us to understand the context for a suspicious reaction to Spanish Romanticism, they are nonetheless problematic and should not eclipse the critical value of the literature at stake, regardless of when it was published (at the close of European Romanticism) and under which influences (French literature). The fact that

¹ Picoche writes that “El romanticismo español, pues, nació tarde y murió temprano. Era exterior, retórico e histórico, sin raíces profundas. Era una escuela, un movimiento pero no una actitud ante la vida. La verdadera generación romántica española será pues, la de 1898” (116).

² See José F. Montesinos: “España se halla en pleno romanticísimo... francés” (113). In reaction to the hypothesis of French influence over Spanish Romanticism, Ramón Gómez de la Serna, Carolina Coronado’s nephew, published a tribute to Spanish Romanticism in the context of the nationalist dictatorship of Franco: «No se busque en el romanticismo español una influencia directa de nadie. Fue el aprovechamiento de un amor de la libertad a la que siempre están dispuestos los espíritus españoles. Sería injusto – más bien parricida – el considerar a una literatura tan original como la española dependiendo de otras que son su posteridad. (22)

³ “La tragedia *Malek-Adhel*, de Rivas, se funda tan enteramente en la novela francesa que el autor atribuye a Madame Cottin todos los méritos que pueda tener su pieza, reservándose modestamente todos los defectos” (121-2).

Staël “imported” German Idealism into France when she published *De l’Allemagne* in 1810 likewise triggered a critical backlash against “foreign” influence. And Spanish literature from the “siglo de oro” was a source of inspiration for French Romantic authors.⁴ Just as French and German Romantics found in Shakespeare and Dante the excess and originality which were counterweights to Neoclassicism, they also found in Cervantes and in the *Romancers*—that they would indeed translate—enough literary inspiration to create a Spain of their own.⁵

While King and Picoche had recourse to a cultural context—the conservative politics of Fernando VII, the rejection of the French legacy—in order to justify the dismissal of Spanish Romantic texts, it is noticeable that all the Romantic authors quoted by them were men: Antonio García Gutiérrez (translator of Alexandre Dumas and author of *El trovador*), Mariano José de Larra (translator of French plays and author of *El doncel de don Enrique el Doliente*), José de Espronceda (often presented as a Spanish version of Byron), the Duke de Rivas (author of *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino*), and José Zorrilla. This eclipse of female writers would make sense, precisely, if there had not been women writers of importance in the Spanish Romantic movement, but the studies published by Susan Kirkpatrick in 1989 and Marina Mayoral in 1990 have shed light on the important number of female authors within Spanish Romanticism. They also showed that, far from being a coincidence, women’s contribution to Romanticism was a consequence of the fact that female authorship found in the liberalism associated with Romanticism a space for self-expression previously denied to them. Kirkpatrick analyses the significant contribution of women to Spanish Romanticism as the fact that Romantic aesthetics does

⁴ See Pierre Brunel.

⁵ See Rachel Jobin.

not promote imitation of past norms but rather encourages the creation of new models for modern times, including alternative experiences in the realm of gender and sexuality.

Moreover, as French literature was widely read in nineteenth-century Spain, the novels of women writers such as Staël and Sand provided explicit examples of a female authorship and of literature as a space for the expression of original, non-normative subjectivities:

Because French literature was the main conduit of European Romanticism into Spain (Byron and Goethe, for example, were generally read in French translation), the models of the female artist and subject offered in the work of Mme de Staël and George Sand were among the important factors that induced pioneering Spanish women writers to use Romantic discourse as their mode of expression. (Kirkpatrick 35)

Consequently, what Kirkpatrick calls the “female Romantic tradition” and interprets as the birth of modern female authorship in Spain, is the embrace of Romanticism by female readers and authors in order to challenge the assigned, patriarchal destiny of the “domestic angel.”⁶

The fact that women such as Staël and Sand had already used Romanticism in this way could only encourage even more Spanish women to partake of Romanticism as a literary space devoted to the expression of their subjectivities. In this chapter, in which female subjectivity is explored through the staging of heterosexual trouble, I will analyze novels written by three Spanish authors: Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s *Dos mujeres* (1843), Carolina Coronado’s *La Sigea*, (1849, 1853), and Rosalía de Castro’s *La Hija del Mar* (1859).⁷ In my analysis of a heterosexual trouble *à l’espagnole*, I will pay attention

⁶ See Montesinos: “Los nombres de esas colecciones indican cómo buscaban los editores el favor de mujeres: Bibliotecas de señoritas, Biblioteca de tocador, Museo de las hermosas. [...] La mujer, y la mujer joven, coayuda poderosamente al triunfo de un arte que se pretende joven” (128-9). Also see Llorens: “Si las mujeres se distinguieron como escritoras, su papel como lectora no fue menos importante” (246).

⁷ The choice of studying novels written by women writers is an effort to bring attention to neglected texts, but does not mean that only female writers would articulate heterosexual trouble. Texts written by male authors could also have been studied. For instance, the play *La Boda y el Duelo*, by Francisco Martínez de la Rosa, or the historical novel *Ramiro, Conde de Lucena*, by Rafael Húmara y Salamanca, which describes

to the dialectics of masculinity and femininity at stake in both the content (the critique of normative institutions of marriage, monogamy, motherhood) and the style (signs of textual androgyny, and to some extent, of stylistic dandyism). Although I will look for connections and influences between French and Spanish Romanticisms, I will argue, focusing on the texts themselves, that Spanish Romantic literature should not be considered a minor movement, but rather a significant, original one. As my subject is heterosexual trouble, I will not focus on marginal women suffering from masculine domination but rather on heterosexual couples struggling to live their love against the constraint of heteronormativity: heterosexual men are also committed to, or caught up in, the reinvention of love.

Considered both a Spanish and a Cuban writer, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda has been acclaimed for having written the first antislavery novel: *Sab*, in 1841, was also her first novel. Her second novel, *Dos mujeres*, is less famous than *Sab*, but more interesting when it comes to the issue of heterosexual trouble because it focuses on marriage as a dysfunctional institution for the expression of mutual love:

What Avellaneda disguised as an antislavery thesis in *Sab* she brings out as the explicit proposition of *Dos mujeres*: the moral and psychological critique of the institution of marriage and the restricting social codes of feminine behavior. (Kirkpatrick 161)

In her analysis of *Dos mujeres*, Kirkpatrick recognizes in Avellaneda's novel one of the most powerful examples of feminist fiction, not only depicting women's despair but also explaining and denouncing the logic of patriarchy in the context of early nineteenth-century Spain. At the end of her life, Avellaneda refused to include *Dos mujeres* in her

the impossibility of being happily married even when a shared love unites the most beautiful, caring woman with the most respected, courageous man. Ramiro, in spite of a flawless conjugal happiness, falls in love with an Arab princess: "Cuando se traspasaron los límites de la inocencia, es a veces imposible volver a su seno" (63).

complete works: its feminism was still outrageous and, just like Sand who ended up publishing a second, less subversive version of *Lélia*, Avellaneda no longer wished to be associated with “trouble.” Kirkpatrick, in *Las Románticas*, and Picon Garfield in *Poder y Sexualidad: El discurso de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*, have both given a feminist analysis of *Dos mujeres*. I intend my analysis to bring a new perspective by developing two points which were either absent from or only partially articulated in their studies: I will take into account the situation of the male character, Carlos, as being, in his own way, an unhappy victim of heteronormativity, and I will highlight the French influences by interpreting the novel as an original combination of four illustrious predecessors with a relation to heterosexual trouble: *Paul et Virginie*, *Delphine*, *Corinne ou l’Italie*, and *Lélia*.

The plot of *Dos mujeres* is simple and tragic: Carlos and Luisa are in love with each other and marry very young when Carlos returns to Seville after having studied in France. Carlos is sent to Madrid by his father for a service and falls unexpectedly in love with another woman, a young, smart, independent widow: Catalina. *Dos mujeres* is the story of a dilemma: a man is torn between his first love for his wife and his passionate love for a second woman. After having met with her rival, and finding herself pregnant, Catalina “solves” the dilemma by committing suicide and leaving the married couple Luisa and Carlos together but forever miserable. The “trouble” comes from the problematic juxtaposition of the two couples: Luisa and Carlos, as the legitimate couple, and Carlos and Catalina, as the adulterous one. Each couple, sharing the same man, paralyzes the other, and leaves all three characters equally unhappy. Heterosexual trouble in *Dos mujeres* is articulated through the critique and rejection of monogamy and the practice of early arranged marriages:

Carlos, amigo mío, no hay, no puede haber crimen para el corazón sino en la falsedad y en la perfidia: no puede ser virtud la hipocresía. Arrojemos su máscara cobarde. Si no hemos podido ser ángeles, sepamos al menos ser hombres. Amarnos es una desgracia, pero engañar sería una infamia. Tengo bastante amor para seguirte a donde quieras, a donde pueda vivir como tu esposa. (227)

In her critique of marriage, Catalina reverses the traditional rhetorical blame put on adultery: the infamy is actually on the side of cowardice and hypocrisy, on which the institution of marriage depends, whereas the genuine sincerity of shared passion between lovers cannot be judged as anything but pure and noble. Because social laws do not allow divorce and equality between wife and husband, then the laws of the heart have to be in contradiction with the institution of marriage, denounced as a life sentence and described by the metaphor of the mask. This mask forces a shared love to express itself clandestinely. In her rejection of hypocrisy, Catalina argues that the real couple is not certified by the stamp of social approval—marriage—but rather by the authenticity of a shared passion. Heterosexual trouble, in this case, comes from the opposition between a false, restrictive couple on the side of law and a forbidden, sincere couple on the side of passion. Carlos and Luisa are a socially accepted couple because their marriage was decided by their parents and because husband and wife act appropriately with respect to their gender. On the contrary, Carlos and Catalina cannot hope to be socially approved as a couple because the chains of marriage are not negotiable and because Catalina is too much of a *femme d'esprit* to be a proper housewife.

“Arrojemos su máscara cobarde:” Catalina is too much in love with Carlos and appalled by the hypocrisy of social laws not to decide to fight back and give herself a chance to live her passion. As Spain is accused of being a hopeless, backward country (“Los extranjeros hacen bien en llamar a nuestra España una segunda Turquía” [325]),

Catalina's project of resistance requires exile in another one.⁸ In her denunciation of marriage, in the bitterness of having lost innocence by understanding the sordid reality of such an institution, Catalina wants herself and Carlos to learn how to be men: "Si no hemos podido ser ángeles, sepamos al menos ser hombres." It is significant that, instead of choosing a feminine, or at least a neutral term, such as "humanos," Catalina phrases her project of resistance against a patriarchal institution from a masculine, same-sex perspective. While the institution of marriage is associated with weakness (cowardice, hypocrisy), the resistance against it is associated with masculinity, but with a constructed one, available for both male and female subjects. By defining her love with Carlos as based on a same-gender couple, Catalina introduces heterosexual trouble at the core of her reaction against the institution of marriage.

Ironically, this lesson is taught by a woman. The masculinity Catalina is aiming at is not so much a denial of femininity, as a rejection of the social constraints associated with it: by learning how to be a man, she reclaims an agency of her own. Also, by inviting her male lover to join her in learning how to be men together, Catalina complicates the heterosexual dynamics of this couple with a dose of homoeroticism. Indeed, Luisa, Carlos' wife, is depicted throughout the novel as an angel ("Cualquiera [...] hubiera comprendido que aquella alma todavía serena, había sido formada para amar: para amar con toda la pureza del ángel" [16]), and if Carlos' love for his wife is motivated by the quest for purity, his attraction for Catalina, on the contrary, is motivated by reciprocal strength and shared masculinity. Stylistically speaking, it is also an

⁸ Kirkpatrick: "The brilliant countess of *Dos mujeres* is a Corinne who can find no Italy to nourish her genius" (165).

illustration of textual androgyny since there is a deliberate blurring of genders inscribed in the prose.

Catalina is not the only one to make an explicit critique of marriage: by the end of the novel, the narrator wonders what kind of conclusion could be drawn from such a tragic story. The last thoughts are political:

Nada les revelo, sino que la suerte de la mujer es infeliz de todos modos. Que la indisolubilidad del mismo lazo con el cual pretenden nuestras leyes asegurarles un porvenir, se convierte, no pocas veces, en una cadena tanto más insufrible cuanto más inquebrantable. (327)

The metaphor of the chain (“cadena”), chosen by the author of an earlier antislavery novel, underlines the association between marriage and slavery; marriage deprives women of hope for a better destiny (it is “inquebrantable”). Here again, social laws are held responsible for women’s misery: the feminine condition is an unhappy one because the social contract is mostly unfair to them, forcing them to embrace their alienation as the only possible trajectory. However, as I will demonstrate, Catalina is mistaken in thinking that only women suffer from the institution of marriage and that their misery does not trigger the misery of men also eager to live their love against the norms of this institution.

The critique of marriage is also articulated through the concepts of time and space. At the beginning of the novel, Leonor, Luisa’s mother, argues with her brother Don Francisco, Carlos’ father, because she refuses the idea that it would be good for Carlos to be in Madrid, away from home, as a young bachelor discovering the joys of urban life all by himself. Don Francisco believes that his son should not get married until he has first had a taste of freedom and social “networking” in the capital (“Irá a Madrid, irá a tomar ese bañito de corte que sienta tan bien a un joven de su clase” [6]), whereas

Leonor thinks it is a dangerous waste of time (“No estaré tranquila hasta verlos volver del altar” [17]), associating big cities with sin and vanity. Because of her influence, Carlos does not go to Madrid and instead marries Luisa right away, at an early age, with the conviction that he is the happiest person in the world. Marriage sets the couple in one place, Seville, excluding mobility as a sinful temptation, and also inserts them into a linear chronology based on the idea that the first love must be the only one. Taking advantage of the gap between the temporality of Carlos and Luisa and the temporality of the authorial voice, the third chapter ends on a warning concerning the waning of feelings:

¿Y dónde está el hombre que, al amar por primera vez en su vida, cuando aún no ha visto y sentido que el amor tiene cansancio, que la felicidad tiene límites, no ha creído estrecha la tierra y breve la vida para el sentimiento que lo engrandece? ¿Dónde está aquel que no haya necesitado entonces del Dios paternal, que ofrece una vida eterna para un eterno amor?

Por eso ningún hombre es materialista a los veinte años. Sólo se deja de creer cuando se deja de amar. (37)

The narrator helps the reader understand that there are different levels of temporality in the narrative, and that the naivety of Carlos and Luisa (they have not yet lost their illusions) is associated with an idealist temporality, based on the transcendence of God who justifies and rewards the eternity of love. But the narrator is neither naïve nor God: s/he expresses a peculiar combination of compassion and irony (“Creían en todo: en la eternidad de la vida, en la eternidad del amor. ¡Oh! No sere yo ciertamente quien se burle de ninguna fe” [37]). Marriage, like God, rests on a lie: the fiction of an eternal love. The narrator in this case speaks from a position of knowing disillusionment.

Kirkpatrick and Picon Garfield have both insisted on the touching, unexpected sisterly feeling between Catalina and Luisa: in spite of their positions as rivals, they end

up feeling respect and compassion for each other.⁹ However, perhaps because they focused essentially on the female characters, they did not pay much attention to the position of Carlos, as if women could only be victims of heteronormativity, and men only agents of it. Throughout the novel Carlos has good intentions and sincere feelings, falling in love with Catalina against his will and suffering immensely from his tantalizing position between two women. Far from enjoying the fact that two women are in love with him (the fantasy of polygamy), Carlos suffers from the fact that he has to make a decision but is unable to take the responsibility of breaking either Catalina's or Luisa's heart:

Sufría horriblemente, y ninguna resolución podía tomar que le sacase de aquel insoportable estado de agonía. Con ninguna promesa podía consolar el corazón de Luisa, que veía destrozado. Entre las dos mujeres a quienes hacía igualmente desgraciadas, y de cuales la una tenía el derecho sagrado de esposa, y la otra, un derecho no menos respectable, animado de la más viva ternura por la una, de la más violenta pasión por la otra, y de la profunda piedad hacía las dos, desesperábase al no poder conciliar la felicidad de ambas, y no se hallaba con valor de sacrificar a ninguna. Lamentable era aquella posición, y sin duda, de los tres personajes de esta historia, no era Carlos por entonces el menos infeliz. (269)

The cruel irony of Carlos' position is that being loved by two women does not make him twice happy, but rather drives him to despair by making his lovers equally miserable. His pain is hardly bearable and, as the narrator says, he suffers as much as, if not much more than, Luisa and Catalina. It is undeniable that the Spanish society in *Dos mujeres* is both a description and a critique of masculine domination, but Carlos's fate underlines the no less significant fact that men also suffer from the consequences of this: far from enjoying

⁹ Picon Garfield: "Avellaneda se apropria del discurso hegemónico sobre la solidaridad y la fraternidad masculinas para rechazar la noción errónea sobre la incapacidad femenina de formar tales amistades" (140). Kirkpatrick: "The work's original title, *Dos hermanas*, emphasized the idea of sisterly solidarity between the two characters" (171).

the status of polygamy, Carlos is depicted by the narrator as devastated by his position between two female lovers.

Consequently, the title *Dos mujeres* is not meant to ignore or minimize the situation of the man caught between them, but rather to call attention to a choice that the only man of this love triangle cannot make. Heterosexual trouble goes beyond the exploitation of women by men within marriage; it addresses the miserable condition of both men and women in their attempt to express and live their love outside of the gender and sexual norms that constitute heterosexuality as normative.

Catalina confesses to Carlos that, once she became aware of the power game at stake in the oppression of women by men, she decided to use her wealth, beauty and wit to fight masculine domination and establish herself as a free, independent woman:

“Desde entonces el mundo me asesta tiros por la espalda, pero viene a verter rosas a mis pies: desde entonces no soy víctima, porque puedo ser verdugo” (138). In the dialectical game of power, Catalina, who, unlike Luisa, had long ceased to be an idealist, exploits her social position as a wealthy and seductive widow to treat men as disposable objects, protecting herself from being trapped again in the institution of marriage. Surprisingly, when Luisa confronts Carlos, he also “comes out” as a victim of the institution of marriage:

¡Carlos! ¿No me amas ya?
- ¡Siempre! – le dijo él –. Siempre serás mi hermana y la amiga de mi corazón. Siempre te amaré con toda la ternura de mi alma. Pero, ¿puedo hacerte feliz? ¿Puedo serlo yo mismo?... Tan imposible es ya como el devolverte tu libertad perdida. Los hombres nos han encadenado con vínculos eternos, y tú, pobre angel, serás víctima como yo de sus tiránicas y absurdas instituciones. (242)

In spite of the fact that he is a man, Carlos is as unhappy as Luisa is, and accuses men of having enslaved both of them (“libertad perdida”) in the name of marriage, qualified as a “despotic and absurd institution.” If Carlos did not care about Luisa’s emotions, he would use the superiority given to him within marriage and indulge his adultery without regret, but because he respects her and still loves her as a “sister,” he cannot cynically enjoy the privileged position granted to him by an institution which is the epitome of social injustice.

The title of the novel, *Dos mujeres*, should not obscure the fact that Carlos is also a crucial character in the critique of both the institution of marriage and the gender and social norms applied to men and women. As he is the one who actually uses the expression “dos mujeres” the title in fact refers to his point of view. At the same time, however, it suggests how heterosexual trouble will be articulated in the novel: through the impossibility of the heterosexual couple, due to the presence of *une femme de trop*.

In spite of the fact that Carlos’s appearance is highly masculine (“su hermosura era enteramente varonil” [31]), and that his behaviour is never described as feminine or effeminate, there is a scene in which he cries, and moves Catalina to tears because of the touching, unexpected vision of tears on such a masculine face:

Era la primera vez que veía llorar a Carlos. ¿Y qué mujer desconoce el poder del llanto de un hombre cuando es amado? Se dice que las lágrimas de la mujer son omnipotentes, pero cuánto más cierta es la omnipotencia del llanto del hombre... El llanto de la debilidad puede conmovir; en la debilidad, el llanto es natural, es fácil, es frecuente. Sin embargo, cuando una lágrima humedece un rostro varonil, cuando la fuerza y el orgullo pagan un momento de tributo a la sensibilidad y la ternura, entonces la emoción que experimenta es profunda, inexplicable. El sentimiento que hace llorar a un hombre es un sentimiento cuya grandeza intimida a la mujer que le contempla, y su orgullo se goza del poder que tiene para producirlo. (207)

Here femininity is associated with weakness (“debilidad”), sensitivity (“sensibilidad”) and tenderness (“ternura”), whereas masculinity is associated with virility (“varonil”), strength (“fuerza”), and pride (“orgullo”). A woman’s despair is touching, but because it is expected as the natural consequence of weakness (“es natural, es fácil, es frecuente”), it is less touching than a man’s. Male tears may be considered more touching because, by paying a “tribute to sensitivity and tenderness,” they perform a (con)fusion of the dialectics of femininity and masculinity. As he is crying in front of a woman, Carlos is not perceived as effeminate, but rather pays a tribute to femininity in his own person, on his own male face: it is the touching spectacle of femininity blossoming within—but not against—masculinity. And vice versa: the woman who is loved enough to cause male tears is entitled to feel the “masculine” emotions of pride and power (“su orgullo se goza del poder que tiene”). While femininity fuses with Carlos’ masculinity, masculinity fuses with Catalina’s femininity: this gender confusion is an explicit vision of heterosexual trouble and an ideal, if despairing, androgyny.

At the beginning of the novel, while Don Francisco and Leonor are arguing about Carlos’ possible “bañito de corte” in Madrid, Luisa is caught reading an eighteenth-century French text, which was often described, along with Rousseau’s *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, as a pre-romantic novel:

Luisa aprovecha el momento en que se ve sola para leer a hurtadillas, detrás de las cortinas de la cama de su madre, el libro *Pablo y Virginia*, que por pertenecer al antematizado gremio de las novella era, en el concepto de doña Leonor, una obra perjudicial a la juventud, nos tomaremos sin disgusto el trabajo de dar al lector una breve noticia de las personas que le hemos presentado. (9-10)

This passage is not without irony: although the narrator says s/he is going to spend some time introducing the characters of the story, they have been already introduced indirectly

by the mention of the novel that Luisa is reading in the meantime: *Paul et Virginie*. Indeed, the plot of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel of 1787 can be interpreted as a *mise en abyme* of the beginning of *Dos mujeres*, giving the reader much information about the characters and the tragic perspective of the story. *Paul et Virginie* is the fiction and the fantasy of raising two children as brother and sister, away from the corruption of society. Thus, Paul's mother and Virginie's mother run away from France and raise their children on the island of Réunion, alone and happy on their modest plantation in the midst of nature. Because Paul and Virginie have not been degraded by the evils of civilization, they grow up pure, chaste, and innocent: they love each other and plan to get married. In short, they stand for the fiction of immaculate idealism. The tragedy happens when Virginie is forced to spend time in France, summoned by her aunt who wants to give her a decent education and some financial support: it is the end of idealism, and the beginning of a tragic fate as Virginie will drown herself in a tempest on her way back to the island.¹⁰

Carlos and Luisa present a similar situation to this one: they are not biologically brother and sister, but are raised as such by Carlos' father and Luisa's mother, and discover that they love each other as they grow up. Although Carlos and Luisa are not raised outside of society, Leonor separates them as much as she can from the temptations of mundane life, turning the domestic sphere into a cocoon of purity and virtue for her two innocent children:

Luisa no tuvo amigas de su edad. Doña Leonor no gustaba de dar por compañeras a su hija “jóvenes del día”, tal era su expresión, que se educaban en los teatros y los bailes, y que a los trece años salían a la reja a “pelar la pava” con sus amantes; sostenía que en su tiempo era muy diferente, y terminaba por maldecir muy devotamente a la Francia y a los

¹⁰ See Vladimir Kapor.

franceses. Creía y probaba que de ella y de ellos había recibido España el contagio fatal de las malas costumbres. (12)

Leonor is proud to identify herself as a person from another time, confronting modernity by all means through the education of her daughter. However, although Carlos comes back from France still uncorrupted by civilisation, his departure for Madrid will bring a fatal blow to his idealist vision of love.

While Luisa shares Virginie's angelic nature, Catalina shares Corinne's and Delphine's status as a *femme d'esprit* who is blamed for her ability to think for herself and compete with men in debating serious matters: arts, politics, and philosophy. Like Staël's heroines, she is accused of being against nature because she strays from the domestic sphere, specifically blurring gender boundaries: "Yo detesto a esas *mujeres hombres* que de todo hablan, que de todo entienden, que de nadie necesitan..." (73). Such an offensive judgement comes from a young count who is said to be one of Catalina's suitors: he despises her for being intelligent, knowledgeable, and independent. Like Delphine, who is disparaged as against nature in spite of her beautiful femininity, Catalina is also praised for her beauty and seduction, but dismissed as a *mujer hombre* because her financial independence and her education make her a free spirit and an insult to the duties of her biological sex. The oxymoron *mujer hombre* aims at expressing and denouncing this deformity, this monstrous coexistence of opposite natures which is also the quintessential figure of heterosexual trouble, the androgyne.

Delphine, who once confessed about Léonce: "je jouis de me sentir inférieure à lui," (Vol. 1, 457) although she is in so many ways superior to him, shares with Catalina the paradoxical quest for a non-despotic superiority. This is how Catalina develops her expectations:

La mujer, por su debilidad busca y requiere un apoyo, y necesita, en el objeto que elija, una superioridad que le inspire confianza. Por grande que sea el talento de una mujer, y por elevado y aun altivo que sea su carácter, desea encontrar en su amante un talento que domine al suyo ; y si una mujer superior llega a amar verdaderamente a un hombre de menos luces, puede asegurarse que hay en este hombre un gran carácter que suple y compensa el defecto de talento, y que le da la superioridad de que carece por otro lado. [...] La mujer busca antes de todo admirar sin ser deslumbrada: quiere ser dominada sin tiranía. (121-2)

In this key passage for the articulation of heterosexual trouble, Catalina defines the specificity of her situation: she is a *femme d'esprit* who is in love with less intelligent man ("un hombre de menos luces"). Surprisingly, at least from a feminist point of view, instead of using her case as the proof that women can be as intelligent as, if not more than, men, she confesses that a woman in love with a man needs to feel him superior to her. This need is so strong that a superior woman would have to compensate her superiority by finding out something superior in the beloved man. In this case, Catalina seems to express an anxiety concerning the liberation of women: in spite of her independence and knowledge, she still believes that the heterosexual couple should rely on the woman's admiration for the superiority of her male lover. Is she speaking her mind in this passage, or is her confession the concession of one who cannot contemplate the possibility of a real equality between lovers in the heterosexual couple? Catalina's unexpected conservatism expresses her anxiety about her own liberation: heterosexual trouble expresses not only the will to reinvent love but also the fear of not being able to do it successfully. As a consequence, instead of dreaming of equality between men and women in love, Catalina calls for a male superiority "sin tiranía," a non-domineering superiority. This oxymoron demonstrates the contradiction between the desire to overcome masculine domination and the anxiety related to its unthinkable realisation.

Since Catalina is not an artist, but rather a *femme d'esprit*, she tends to be closer to Delphine than to Corinne. However, as Kirkpatrick has mentioned in her study of *Dos mujeres*, Avellaneda's novel has also a lot in common with Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (Kirkpatrick, 165). The main point in common is that Carlos, like Oswald, is torn between two opposing women: on the one hand, Luisa and Lucile stand for the decent, naive, submissive housewife, and on the other hand Catalina and Corinne represent the independent, gifted, and fascinating woman. Society in general and family in particular urge Carlos and Oswald to conform by marrying the first one, but in their hearts both men feel more attraction for the second. The sisterly feeling—which is literal—between Corinne and Lucile is echoed by Catalina and Luisa who share more compassion than rivalry. In both novels, the heroine dies, leaving the “official” couples with a life of unhappiness. These deaths trigger the haunting of the surviving heterosexual couple by the spectre of the beloved woman. The hope that these deaths can serve as a liberating, pioneering model is illustrated in *Corinne* by the education given to Oswald's daughter by Corinne herself, and in *Dos mujeres* by the possibility that Catalina's friend, Elvira, may tell her daughters the story of her beloved female friend: “Ignoramos si Elvira refirió, como lo había ofrecido a sus niñas, la historia de las dos mujeres. Y si así lo hizo, ¿qué impresión dejaría en el corazón de aquellas jóvenes? ¿Qué verdad les revelaría ?” (327). Elvira's daughters, like the readers of *Dos mujeres*, are also likely to be haunted by the example of Catalina's life.¹¹ Whereas Staël chose a title, *Corinne*, which focuses on the

¹¹ This female readership and its feminist empowerment is not just a fiction, but was noticed and praised by Rafael Húmara y Salamanca in the preface of his novel *Ramiro, Conde de Lucena*: “Así la virtuosa Cottin, haciéndose digna del reconocimiento de las almas sensibles, eleva el género ficticio a la esfera de la perfección; al mismo tiempo que la sabia Genlis y la sublime Staël, divinizando el amor, le revestían del majestuoso atavío de la virtud y le introducían hasta en los claustros más severos. Madres regalaron a sus hijas novellas, y las hijas les leían delante de sus madres; inspiraban a las castas doncellas confianza, firmeza y virtud, y a los jóvenes honor, valor y generosidad” (48).

fate of an unconventional woman, Avellaneda included two women in her title without naming Catalina and Luisa: this difference in the titles suggests that the title refocuses attention away from a heroine and onto the problematics of the couple: on one hand, Carlos's dilemma; on the other hand, the two women in their relation to each other.

Dos mujeres is also influenced by *Lélia*. Catalina shares Lélia's disillusionment towards men prior to meeting with Carlos, and she bluntly states to him her cynical vision of love as a battlefield:

¿Quiere usted saber lo que es para mí la sociedad? Lo que para vosotros, hombres, una cortesana. La buscaís, le prodigaís mentidos y pasajeros halagados ; le pagaís caro los suyos, efímeros y mentirosos como los vuestros, y la dejaís despreciándola. (139)

The nihilism of the tone, the reversal of the situation—she intends to treat men the same way they treat courtesans—and her vindication against masculine falseness, cannot fail to remind the reader of Lélia's anger against men after her disillusionment. Both Lélia and Catalina were abused and disillusioned in the same way: when they were still very young, they were married to a wealthy old man, and they ended up realizing that marriage was more a tedious social contract confirming masculine domination than what they had dreamed of:

A la edad de dieciséis años me sacó mi madre del colegio en que me había educado, para casarme con el conde de S. Se me habló del matrimonio como de un contrato por el cual una mujer daba su persona a un hombre, en cambio de una posición social que recibía de él, y esta posición que se me ofrecía era brillante. (126)

Catalina defines marriage without mentioning love, because a marriage does not require mutual affection; it is merely a “contract” by which a woman surrenders her life to a man (the expression “daba su persona a un hombre” associates the dynamics of the heterosexual couple with the reification of women) in order to receive from him a social

position. It is the articulation of the “traffic in women,” a concept of marriage which ignores feelings and privileges masculine power.¹² The same unhappy marriage happened to Lélia when she was young, and she never recovered from the trauma. Lélia’s and Catalina’s first experience of the heterosexual couple was a disaster, followed by a bitter awareness and a revolt against the sexual, gender, and social norms attached to heteronormativity. However, if Lélia decided never again to believe in love, Catalina fell in love with Carlos and tried to fight for her right to live her passion with him.

Dos mujeres offers an illustration of heterosexual trouble through the discontent raised by an impossible *ménage à trois*, leaving two women and a man in unhappiness. The critique of marriage as an oppressive institution and of social and gender norms for men and women is just as strong as it is in the French novels studied in chapter one: *Dos mujeres* was deeply influenced by them, and Catalina herself is a French character. Does this mean that heterosexual trouble is possible in Spanish literature only through its French connections? The following examination of Coronado’s *La Sigea* and Castro’s *La hija del mar* will provide some answers to this question.

La Sigea belongs to the Romantic tradition of the historical novel.¹³ It is based on the life of Luisa Sigea (1522-1560), an important Spanish humanist and poetess who spent many years at the service of Doña María in Portugal, and is remembered today as a female intellectual whose works are associated with the Renaissance. *La Sigea* is divided into two volumes, the first one published in 1849, and the second in 1853. In the *Advertencia* of the novel, Coronado insists on the discrepancy between the two:

¹² See Rubin.

¹³ Walter Scott, in England, and Alexandre Dumas, in France, established the historical novel as a popular genre. See György Lukács and Jérôme de Groot.

Cuatro años no son mucho vivir, cuando esos cuatro años se viven en la infancia: cuatro años no son mucho tampoco, cuando esos cuatro años forman la primera estación de la juventud; pero cuando nos acercamos al otoño de la vida, y la vida es de muger, esos cuatro años son un siglo. Yo he leído con sorpresa la primera parte de mi novela, sin poder reconocer a la autora de ella, y juzgándola como si el *yo* de entonces fuese enteramente distinto del *yo* de ahora. Mi deseo (lo confieso) hubiera sido destruir lo empezado y no darle conclusión; porque antes para escribir me inspiraba audacia el saber que solo el público indiferente había de leer mis escritos; pero ahora me acordaba la idea de que mas tarde haya de leerlos mi hija. (Vol. 1, 5-6).

This “confession” can literally be read as a warning and a repentance: the author regrets the audacity of the first volume because she wrote it without thinking that, in the future, not only “indifferent readers” but also her daughter would read it. However, nothing much is explained about what constitutes the audacity of the first volume, and the author allowed a new edition to appear along with the second volume without making the changes she claims she would have liked to make. I will argue that the audacity of the novel lies mainly in its depiction of heterosexual trouble and on the call for another dialectics of femininity and masculinity. I read this *advertencia* as a false concession made to readers who are far from indifferent to an audacity which is equally present in the first and the second volumes: by confessing her embarrassment, the author actually allows herself to justify the pursuit of her controversial novel about the need to invent a new politics of love in opposition to a culture of masculine domination. Just as it is expected that Elvira’s daughters will be inspired by the story of *Dos mujeres*, it is also expected that the author’s daughter will find in *La Sigea* a counter-example, an audacious alternative to the gender and sexual norms which deprive women of their agency.

Coronado’s novel has recourse to the life of a woman from the past in order to help construct the woman of the future. What Luisa Sigea tells Doña María at the end of

the second volume, justifying her own exile from the court, confirms that the “repentance” of the *advertencia* should not be read literally:

El amor está lleno de sacrificios. El amor, además, nivela los caracteres é iguala los derechos de ambos sexos, y el hombre no se conforma con ese nivel ni está satisfecho mas que con el dominio de la autoridad. Ignoro si en los siglos venideros llegarán las mugeres á conquistar el espíritu del hombre hasta identificarle con el suyo, pero en el siglo presente no es compañero, Doña María, es un dueño lo que nosotras debemos elegir. (Vol. 2, 168)

Although Luisa is bitter to the point of running away from her position as an artist and an intellectual woman working for an enlightened Princess of Portugal, she nonetheless articulates both the reason for her unhappiness (the heterosexual couple cannot satisfy women as long as it is based on masculine domination) and her hope for a radical change in the future: man should not be the master (“dueño”) of “his” woman, but rather her companion (“compañero”). This change will only happen if women “conquer” men’s spirit and make them believe that equality of mind matters more than inequality in the name of sexual difference.¹⁴ Luisa believes that the men of her times are not worth loving as long as they do not understand that love cannot be associated with masculine domination. She refuses the perspective of the heterosexual couple because she anticipates the trouble caused by the power struggle between the two sexes instead of their equality. Consequently, the love Luisa is waiting for—and was not able to find in her century—is one that unites both sexes and gives them the same rights: “El amor nivela los caracteres é iguala los derechos de ambos sexos.” As long as equality is not achieved, women have to make sacrifices which, in Luisa’s case, are the rejection of the

¹⁴ The reversal within the heterosexual couple from masculine domination to equality reminds us of Staël’s discussion of Rousseau in the first chapter: « Que devrait-on penser d’un époux assez orgueilleusement modeste pour aimer mieux rencontrer dans sa femme une obéissance aveugle qu’une symétrie éclairée ? » This statement contrasts with Catalina’s statement, previously quoted, about the necessity for a woman to admire the superiority of her beloved man.

heterosexual couple and a retreat from her life as an independent *femme d'esprit*. Luisa's distress does not come from the fact that she does not believe in love, but rather that she cannot find any man worthy of her idealist conception of it.¹⁵

La Sigea focuses mainly on Luisa's condition, but also addresses women's condition through two other cases: Doña María's situation, and the witch-hunting in the context of the Inquisition. The friendship between Luisa and Maria is based on the constitution of a female intellectual companionship at the court of Lisbon:

Discípula del doctor Agustino Suarez, y del venerable Obispo de Coimbra, era Doña María muy entendida en el conocimiento de la filosofía y de la sagrada escritura; pero ambicionaba poseer una vasta erudicion, y para dedicarse al estudio de las lenguas doctas habia hecho venir á su corte á la literata Luisa Sigea. (Vol. 1, 25)

This intellectual society implies a space in which women have the freedom to pursue both sacred and profane knowledge.¹⁶ Thus Luisa is erudite in many languages (Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese) and in Greek philosophy.¹⁷ In the novel, these intellectual women are credited for recognizing the talent of the poet Luís de Camões when his poetry was underestimated by his male peers.¹⁸ Because she is an independent woman of high erudition, a brilliant thinker who helps constitute a female circle of scholarship, Luisa is attacked by a rival, Juan Meurcio, who denounces her for having written a book on idolatry: Meurcio, who himself wrote this sacrilegious book,

¹⁵ Her distress offers a parallel with Lélia's loneliness and disappointment with men.

¹⁶ The Renaissance was known for scholarly and artistic women such as Vittoria Colonna, Marguerite de Navarre, and Elizabeth I of England.

¹⁷ When asked what she has written, Luisa answers: "Cartas en latin, en griego, en hebreo, en siriaco, en arábico, en español y en portugués. He compuesto un libro filosófico, esplicando la diferencia que existe entre la vida cortesana y la del campo, sacando consecuencias no muy lisonjeras para los reyes y los cortesanos. Para dar alguna doctrina á este libro, he copiado sentencias de Platon, de Aristóteles, de Jenofonte y de Plutarco, y he citado á los profetas, trasladando al latin el testo hebreo" (Vol. 1, 165).

¹⁸ "Las damas ilustradas de entonces, al frente de las cuales se hallaba la infanta Doña María, adivinaron mejor que el Rey el mérito de Camoens, y se apresuraron á distinguirlo, de manera que escitó bien pronto la rivalidad de todos los caballeros" (Vol. 1, 63-4).

claims it is the work of Luisa, obtains her disgrace by calumny, and tries to have her condemned by the Inquisition. The narrator explains why such a hateful man wanted to marry his rival:

Si analizamos el sentimiento que impulsaba á Juan Meurcio á tomar por esposa á la Sigea, no descubriremos tal vez el del amor, sino el de un empeño tiránico por esclavizar una inteligencia de muger que reconocia superiora la suya, y á la de muchos hombres estimados por poetas, y respetados por doctos. [...] Hay una secta de hombres implacables, que con su odio colectivo á todas las mugeres ilustres, antiguas y modernas, se han armado de la sátira, del desprecio y de la calumnia. A este secta pertenecia Juan Meurcio. (Vol 1, 125-6)

Juan Meurcio is described as one of these men (“este secta”) who cannot bear the idea of a woman being superior to himself: as a consequence of his envy and hatred, he plans to marry Luisa because the institution of marriage is the best way to exert masculine domination over her and remove a superior intelligence from the public sphere. As a contrast with the notion of love ideally theorized by Luisa as the unity and equality between two similar souls, Juan has recourse to marriage in order to “enslave” a woman whom he perceives as a threat and an insult to his own security as a man. Marriage, then, is not about love, but rather about domination: if women are weak, it is not because of their female nature (they can be intellectually superior, as Luisa is), but rather because of a power relationship inscribed in a social and legal institution. Juan illustrates in the most dramatic way the reason why Luisa associates the heterosexual couple with trouble: it is the assault of one sex by the other one, and the male attempt to tame independent women. The narrator, by contrasting Luisa’s intelligence and superiority with the negative portrayal of Juan—a scornful and jealous tyrant belonging to the sect of misogynist men,—leaves the reader in no doubt about her feminist allegiance.

If Luisa has to deal with Juan's calumny, her friend, the Infanta Doña María, is also challenged in her agency: she refuses to be married against her will. As a matter of fact, she was twice widowed before she even turned ten (Vol. 1, 43). María's case is a ludicrous illustration of how the institution of marriage is a traffic in women. Whereas Luisa does not marry because she cannot find a man who shares her vision of love, María does not marry because the structure of the heterosexual couple simply does not appeal to her: her indifference to heterosexuality shows how cultural—instead of natural—is the structure of the couple. In a discussion between María and Luisa about the revolting perspective of being married against one's will, Luisa tries to comfort María by telling her that a woman should not be judged as incomplete or improper because she would refuse to marry and to procreate:

Hay, princesa, una raza de mugeres fecundas de alma, estériles de cuerpo, cuya producción es un canto, una oración, una poesía, un perfume como el de aquellas flores que no dan semillas. No pidamos á estas mugeres amor para un esposo, porque solo darán un suspiro, una lágrima, y huirán. No las pidamos un hijo, porque son madres de todos los niños que han dado á luz las otras mugeres. No las pedimos posteridad de criaturas, sino posteridad de ideas, posteridad de virtudes.
A esa raza, señora, perteneceis vos. (Vol. 1, 55-6)

This is an audacious tribute to female sterility in the context of compulsory marriage and procreation. Luisa does not say that all women should abstain from breeding; however she recognizes that there is a special "race" of women for whom procreation is spiritual ("fecundas del alma"), and that their physical sterility should not be considered problematic because, instead of producing seeds ("semillas"), they produce ideas ("ideas") and virtues ("virtudes"). They thus consider themselves mothers of all the children produced by other women. This recalls the educative "motherhood" of Corinne and discussed in chapter 1.

However, *La Sigea*, is not only concerned about the feminist critique of masculine domination; it also addresses heterosexual trouble by focusing on the situation of a tormented man in love. This poet, respected and cherished by the women of the court, is Luis de Camoens, the most famous Portuguese poet. The fact that he inspires benevolent feelings through his poetry ends up producing a threatening rivalry in the male courtiers surrounding him:

Camoens había nacido para cantar la Luisiada. Pero por lo mismo que era un poeta de primer orden no halló gracia con los cortesanos. Los cortesanos no protegían sino a los que valían muy poco; proteger a los que valían mucho, hubiera sido una torpeza. [...] Preciso es confesar que las damas ilustradas de entonces, al frente de las cuales se hallaba la infanta Doña María, adivinaron mejor que el Rey el mérito de Camoens, y se apresuraron a distinguirlo, de manera que escitó bien pronto la rivalidad de todos los caballeros, y particularmente de aquellos que habían sido desairados por Catalina de Attaide, la venturosa dama a quien Camoens amó como Dante a Francisca. (63-4)

Camoens has a special position among men: he is a poet—the best of his time—whereas they are courtiers. He is interested in the beauty of love, and loves Catalina as Dante did Francesca,¹⁹ whereas the courtiers are interested in the circuits of power around the King and other influential figures at the court. The dualism poet/courtier echoes the other dualism woman/man: Camoens is not interested in power and his poetry is not rewarded by the King, but admired by women who anticipate his posterity. From the gender point of view, he is perceived as a non-aggressive man whose poetic vision of love gains him women's praise and courtiers' envy. Like Luisa, he is also the victim of a conspiracy which tries to ban him from the court and consequently from the woman he loves, Catalina de Attaide.

¹⁹ Dante was actually in love with Beatrice, whereas Francesca was a character in the *Inferno*.

Being forced to leave Catalina because of the Duke of Castanheira's plot against him, Camoens goes through an intense melancholia and confesses his despair: "Advierto con espanto que he perdido la energía del hombre sin adquirir la sensibilidad de la muger" (144). Camoens is thus neither "man" nor "woman." His friend, Luisa Sigea, tries to comfort him by referring to the essential suffering of genius: "Se que sois desgraciado, ¿pero qué derecho tiene el genio a la felicidad?" (147). Although Camoens is not a woman, his sensitivity and the gift of his genius are understood by women only; he is never described as enjoying the company of men, but is rather a victim of masculinity defined as the courtier and associated with rivalry and conspiracy. Camoens is a crucial character in *La Sigea* in order to understand heterosexual trouble because he challenges the strict separation between men and women, articulating the tragic fate of a man whose gender is not properly masculine and who is punished for expressing a non-domineering love towards Catalina.

Although there is no love story between Luisa and Camoens, the novel develops a growing friendship between them, based on trust and the mutual acknowledgment of talent between the two artists. In his farewell letter to Luisa, before going into exile, Camoens declares the following feelings: "Adios, vuelvo à deciros, Sigea, sois de todas las criaturas que he conocido la única que no me ha hecho sufrir" (147). The alliance of Camoens and Luisa, the special bond they share as they both have to face calumny from the same kind of man, illustrates the blurring of sexual difference operated by a man and a woman who are not in love with each other but offer each other assistance in order to resist their misfortunes. As Luisa strongly encourages Camoens to keep on writing poetry in spite of his exile, the narrator suggests the creative potential of such a friendship: the

baseness of courtiers will be forgotten, whereas Camoens' poetry will remain. The narrator also opens up a space dedicated to a heterosexual, sex-less couple whose special bond comes from a mutual resistance to heteronormativity.

As far as the prose is concerned, many elements of irony and the dilettante authorial voice indicate that *La Sigea*'s prose contains elements of the stylistic dandyism studied in the previous chapter. These highlight in their own way the heterosexual trouble at stake in the novel. At the beginning, the narrator mockingly warns the reader that, contrary to expectation, María and Luisa were erudite but not ugly women:

Dice una apreciable escritora inglesa que nada hay mas difícil de hallar que una literata que no sea *fea ni vieja*. Efectivamente, parece que las letras dan á los rostros femeniles el barniz de la fealdad y de la vejez; parece que la naturaleza se complace en castigar la ambicion de las mugeres *eruditas*, marchitando en flor sus encantos, y haciéndolas ridículas desde que se hacen *sábias*. La mayor parte de las celebridades inglesas llevaron peluca y anteojos desde los veinticinco años. Una francesa hubo que á los veinte años se quedó sin dientes y sin pestañas. Algunas, como Jorge Sand, se salvan por la transformacion del sexo pareciendo lindos muchachos. Muy pocas son las que pueden conservar el adjetivo de lindas mugeres.

Este privilegio lo tuvieron, no obstante, en el siglo XVI dos ilustres literatas: la Infanta Doña María y Luisa Sigea. (Vol. 1, 24)

Coronado plays here with the cliché of the ugly female writer: as it is supposed to be against nature for a woman to be a writer, then nature punishes them by turning them into unappealing women. However some women, like Sand, were smart enough to escape this punishment by cross-dressing as boys ("pareciendo lindos muchachos"): the irony here is that Sand cross-dressed not because she was ugly, but because it was a pragmatic way to increase her freedom. Coronado herself was known and praised for her physical beauty:

in this passage she derides the male fantasy that a woman has to be ugly as a fair compensation for the “miracle” of her erudition.²⁰

Playing on the cliché according to which female and male sensitivities are radically different, the narrator suggests in another passage that only his/her female readers can imagine a woman’s emotion:

Una de estas impresiones dominaba á Catalina de Attaide cuando se cumplió un mes de la ausencia de su amado si haber tenido nuevas de su arribo á las costas africanas. Si debia sufrir la desdichada con semejante silencio, vosotras enamoradas lectoras debeis imaginarlo, porque los lectores nunca lo imaginarán. (Vol. 2, 8)

The narrator challenges his/her male readers by telling them that they will never be able to imagine how it feels for a woman not to hear from her lover. But this too is ironic: if a woman can write novels when it is supposed to be a male preserve, then why should not a male reader be able to understand a female character? If men and women can be equal in their souls, then sexual difference should not prevent understanding and compassion between the sexes—which is what happens between Luisa and Camoens. Heterosexual trouble is thus turned back upon the reader, who can overcome it only through the gender-crossing experience of reading.

Rosalía de Castro was only twenty-two in 1859 when she published her first novel which, like most of her literary works—written either in Spanish or in Galician,—focuses on her beloved homeland: Galicia. *La hija del mar* is a novel whose characters are poor, hard-working people, mainly sailors and fisherwomen living in the surroundings of Mugía. The often tempestuous sea is, as suggested by the title, almost a character in itself: it spawns the female orphan, Esperanza, at the beginning of the narrative, and it “takes”

²⁰ In 1850, one year after Coronado had published the first volume of *La Sigea*, Federico Madrazo painted her portrait—now in the Prado museum—in which she appears stunningly beautiful.

her back at the end of the story when she commits suicide. Dedicated to Castro's husband, Manuel Murguía, the novel offers a striking depiction of domestic violence and masculine domination, in which one man, the sailor Alberto Anso, ends up destroying the lives of four women. He makes Teresa and Candela, the two women who loved him, utterly miserable by cheating on them and treating them with constant disrespect; he also traumatizes his daughter, Esperanza, by trying to rape her and killing her fiancé; and finally he ruins the existence of Angela by killing her fiancé, Daniel, who tried to protect Candela from his physical abuse. For each of these four women, it is the structure of the heterosexual couple which is radically altered by the behavior of a heterosexual man. In the prologue, Castro, aware of the prejudice against female writers, offers a critique of the idea that women should only be housewives instead of writing novels:

Bien pudiera, en verdad, citar aquí algunos textos de hombres célebres que, como el profundo Malebranche y nuestro sabio y venerado Feijoo, sostuvieron que la mujer era apta para el estudio de las ciencias, de las artes y de la literatura.

Posible me sería añadir que mujeres como madame Roland, cuyo genio fomentó y dirigió la Revolución francesa en sus días de gloria; madame de Staël, tan gran política como filósofa y poeta; Rosa Bonheur, la pintora de paisajes sin rival hasta ahora; " Jorge Sand ", la novelista profunda, la que está llamada a compartir la gloria de Balzac y Walter Scott; [...] y tantas otras cuyos nombres la Historia, no mucho más imparcial que los hombres, registra en sus páginas, protestaron eternamente contra la vulgar idea de que la mujer sólo sirve para las labores domésticas. [...]

El que tenga paciencia para llegar hasta el fin; el que haya seguida página por página este relato, concebido en un momento de tristeza y escrito al azar, sin tino y sin pretensiones de ninguna clase, arrójelo lejos de sí y olvide, entre otras cosas, que su autor es una mujer.

Porque todavía no les es permitido a las mujeres escribir lo que sienten y lo que saben. (5-6)

It is hard to imagine, in its tone and its content, a more "feminist" prologue: the author ironically confesses her sex only to ask the reader to forget it, since even in her times there is still the idea that a female writer is against nature and should be despised. In

order to reject such a prejudice, Castro refers to male philosophers (Malebranche and Feijoo) who theorized that women were also able to learn the sciences and the arts, and then names several famous women—including Staël and Sand—as historical illustrations of women’s ability to excel in these areas. Castro evokes these men and women to reject the idea that a woman should only be concerned with domestic chores (“la mujer sólo sirve para las labores domésticas”) and, consequently, should not allow herself to write what she feels and knows. The contrast between Coronado’s “advertencia” and Castro’s “prólogo” lies in the difference of the tone: Coronado had recourse to the rhetorical device of the antiphrasis (may the reader forgive the audacity of a text that I would not write as such today) in order to lessen the feminist impact of her novel, whereas Castro chooses to confront right away her male readers by telling them how wrong it is to believe that a woman should never be a writer.

This contemporary hostility to female intellectualism and sensibility is reflected in the novel as well. Teresa, a woman abandoned by her man and aggrieved by the death of her son, is introduced as a poetess who is denied her status because, as an inspired woman, she is considered a victim of madness:

Tal vez si hubiese nacido en otra épocas más remotas, se presentaría orgullo de su siglo, como Juana de Arco o Santa Teresa de Jesús: pero en estos tiempos en que el positivismo mata el genio y en que la poesía tiene que cubrirse de terciopelo para tener cabida en la sociedad, la pobre pescadora, sin más apoyo que la soledad que la rodeaba y más instrucción que la de su propio entendimiento, tenía que vagar por aquellas riberas, como un alma errante, o como un astro perdido entre sombras que no admiten claridad. (37)

Los campesinos que iban al molino o a labrar sus tierras y que me dirigían la palabra al pasar, murmuraban de mí al ver que no contestaba a sus preguntas, y me llamaban la loca... ¡La loca ! (42)

The narrator states that in other times, when materialist thought was not widespread enough to kill genius, Teresa could have been recognized and celebrated as an illustrious woman whose inspiration led to the creation of beautiful poetry (as in the case of Teresa de Jesús) or to prophecy and heroism (Joan of Arc). The worst consequence of the denial of female genius is that women themselves tend to ignore their own potential: the narrator is aware of Teresa's skills as a poetess, but Teresa herself is not.

Teresa era poeta, aunque sin saberlo; por eso sentía siempre, en el fondo de su alma, una terrible lucha que la martirizaba, aun en los instantes en que debía ser más dichosa. [...] Cuando Esperanza se ocultó a su mirada y pudo convencerse de que nadie podía oírla, empezó hablar en voz alta un lenguaje comprensible sólo para ella. [...] Aquello era un delirio salvaje, una fertilidad prodigiosa de aquella imaginación virgen, que, como los bosques de América era tal su savia y su vegetación, que no permitía pasar más del borde de sus orillas. (47-48)

The narrator describes Teresa's poetry as an experience beyond any literal meaning: the expressions "a language that only she herself could understand," a "wild delirium," a "prodigious fertility" and a "virgin imagination" associate Teresa's language with a violent, sexual, emotional experience internalised within herself. The metaphor of wild nature ("bosques de América"), not penetrated by men, suggests that her poetry has something untamed and uncharted, perhaps unchartable.

Instead of working on the paradoxes and ambiguities of each character's psychology, Castro preferred to write *La hija del mar* as a modern parable of masculine domination and fatal love, introducing every character as an allegory: Alberto stands for a masculinity seen as heartless and tyrannical, Teresa for the innocent, cursed woman who accepts to love an abusive man, and Esperanza for faith in a better future (her name means "hope"). Alberto exploits his nomadic profession as a sailor to carry on with two women do not know of each other's existence. Candela's and Teresa's distress comes

from the fact that Alberto brought more death than life into their existence: they both lost a child, and were abandoned by him without explanation. Neither was given the chance to experience the heterosexual couple without facing domestic violence and loss. At this point, Alberto's violence is succinctly described that the reader cannot even understand its possible reason—unless it is pure bestiality.

By killing two young men—Daniel and Fausto—who were in love with Angela and Esperanza, Alberto not only ruins his own relationships with his two women, but also devastates two other heterosexual couples. Contrary to Alberto, Daniel and Fausto are depicted as tender and respectful toward their future wives. Their murder by Alberto stands for the perpetuation of masculine domination against the attempts by a younger generation to reinvent love as an alternative to the heteronormative model lived by their parents. Thus, the reinvention of love does not oppose men and women in love, although the rejection of masculine domination is at stake, but rather a younger generation and an older one. The irony of Alberto's clandestine polygamy is that, although he tries to kill Candela's daughter by throwing her into the sea, she will be saved by other sailors and given to Teresa, the second woman. As in a Greek tragedy, when Alberto, after twelve years of absence, comes back to visit Teresa, he wants to rape her adopted daughter, Esperanza, without understanding that she is his abandoned daughter.

Because Esperanza is appalled by Alberto's violence and lack of respect for her mother, Teresa, she runs away from him and ends up going mad. Kirkpatrick, in her essay "Fantasy, Seduction, and the Woman Reader: Rosalía de Castro's Novels," considers *La hija del mar* a psychoanalytical rejection of the Oedipal complex: "Castro explores the possibility of a pre-Oedipal desire for reunion with the mother as an

alternative to subjection to the sexual law of the father” (79). Although it is true that Esperanza does not have any desire for Alberto—she does not know that he is her father, either—I would not interpret the love for her mother as pre-Oedipal because her true object of desire lies outside of kinship and if there is a desire for reunion, it is with Fausto, a sensitive, respectful lover of her own age.²¹ There is love between Esperanza and her mother, but it is not pre-Oedipal because Esperanza is not caught in an intra-familial female continuum as she experiences the greatest love with a boy outside of her family. Against Alberto, a “despótico señor, sultan engreido a quien ni el temor de las leyes ni el de Dios contenía,” she rejects the traditional politics of love inherited from her mother and embraces the perspective of love based on mutual tenderness and comprehension. Esperanza loves both her adopted and her unknown biological mother, but she does not take them as models: she is unwilling to love a brutal, unfaithful man (Alberto) when she can rely on the eternal devotion of her beloved Fausto. Once Fausto is killed by Alberto, there is no more hope of a heterosexual relationship for Esperanza, who loses her mind.

In the last part of *La hija del mar*, the punishment of the man who was the symbol of misery and oppression finally occurs: Candela and Angela are able to track and trap Alberto, who had become a nursing father taking care of his mad daughter. However, before the punishment happens, Alberto becomes a remorseful man. After so many years of cruel and selfish behavior, he has a painful ethical awakening, leading him to expiation:

Pero llegó un día, radiante como el sol y abrasador como el fuego, que cambiando de pronto sus sentimientos redujo a un punto solo sus ambiciones, sus deseos y sus esperanzas, y aquel día de tormenta para su alma era el día en que empezaba su expiación.

²¹ About Esperanza and Fausto’s love: “Caminaron unidos... En aquellos corazones se había formado ya un lazo indisoluble, eterno; aquellas dos almas ya no podrían separarse jamás” (64). It appears explicitly that the nature of their love is reciprocal and indissoluble.

La copa de la amargura se acercó por primera vez a sus labios, cubierta de flores para que fuera mas terrible el engaño, y al fin, despeñado de la alta cumbre, hasta donde le había alzado su voluntad imperiosa e indiferente, tuvo que arrastrarse dócil, suplicante, por la trillada del martirio que le esta reservada al hombre. (139)

The use of religious vocabulary (expiation, martyrdom) emphasizes the dramatic change in Alberto's personality: the switch could not be more complete from his past as a murderer, a rapist, a pirate and adulterous husband, to his present as a tormented penitent driven to madness by his actions on the path of redemption. In front of his daughter, Alberto ends up acting like a submissive and imploring nurse, behaving with tenderness and compassion.

Alberto's drastic change affects his masculinity: as this was associated with violence and abuse, the new Alberto is described as non-masculine. When he finds out that his daughter is likely to die, he breaks down with a strongly gendered reaction:

Ansot guardó silencio; torrentes de lágrimas abrasadoras inundaban sus ojos, y sollozaba como una débil mujer, y cansado y rendido de aquella lucha impotente y desesperada, de súplicas y blasfemias, se entregó de nuevo a esa dolorosa inacción del hombre que no quiere ni interrogar al porvenir ni levantar el velo que cubre su pasado, porque todo ello debía traerle penosas sensaciones. (143)

In this extract, Alberto reacts both like a woman and a man: first he sobs like a "weak" woman, with rivers of tears, and then tries to bear his burden with a "masculine" stillness. Gender confusion is the consequence of his expiation: femininity eventually shapes some of his expressions as he is ashamed of his past conduct as a man, and what remains of masculinity in him is not violence but rather a painful passivity. Alberto's final breakdown through gender confusion illustrates that even the most aggressive and misogynist men end up being devastated by the destructiveness of their behavior and are able to experience an alternative dialectics of femininity and masculinity.

In the chapter “Justicia de Dios,” the female revenge is as cruel and implacable as Alberto was in his behavior towards women:

Alberto no escuchó más; el peligro le libró del abatimiento en que había caído y quiso huir... pero era imposible...
Un mes más tarde, en la plaza de la ciudad de*** ahorcaban por pirata, asesino e incendiario, a Alberto Ansot. (179)

Alberto is finally found, identified and sentenced to death for his crimes.²² Candela and Angela, who appear only at the end of the novel when the narrator reveals the genealogy of Alberto’s crimes, turn themselves into instruments of divine justice, hunting Alberto and soliciting his death. Their planned revenge allows them to recover their agency and a sense of dignity. It is also the fantasized perspective of a female response to masculine oppression. As Catalina told Carlos in *Dos mujeres*: “Desde entonces no soy víctima, porque puedo ser verdugo.” However, contrasting with Candela’s and Angela’s revenge, Esperanza goes back to the sea and drowns herself in the last scene. Revenge or suicidal madness are the two outcomes left for women hurt by Alberto, leaving the reader with no hope concerning the possibility of reinventing love in such a tragic context.

To conclude, we have seen that the three Spanish Romantic novels analysed here dramatize heterosexual trouble: all articulate the consequences of a problematized heteronormativity. Just as French Romantic works call for new politics of love beyond sexual and gender norms, so *Dos mujeres*, *La Sigea* and *La hija del mar* create a space in which it is possible to think—and desire, if not realize,—the reinvention of love. The heterosexual couple, in each novel, is either dreaded as a trap or dysfunctional: it brings nothing but the collapse of love because of the constraints of the institution of marriage

²² The narrator called earlier for the advent of divine justice: “¡Oh Señor de justicia! ¡Brazo del débil y del pobre!, ¿por qué no te alzas contra el rico y el poderoso que así oprimen a la mujer, que la cargan de grillos, mucho más pesados que los de los calabozos, y que ni aun la dejan quejarse de su desgracia?” (83).

or the consequence of masculine domination through domestic violence, murder and calumny. Moreover, elements of textual androgyny and stylistic dandyism are present in these three novels, suggesting that Spanish Romanticism, in spite of its differences *vis-à-vis* French Romanticism, shares with this latter a concern with heterosexual trouble in theme and expression.

Chapter 5:

Decadence, or the Parody of Sexology

“The reading of French novels and lascivious companions taught me all the tricks of perverse erotics, and the latent impulse became a conscious perversity.”
Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, case 160

In the previous chapter, it was noted that Coronado, in *La Sigea*, attempts to rehabilitate the figure of the witch: witch-hunts were a way of denying women positions of knowledge and power. Luisa Sigea, for instance, is accused of being a witch by her male rival who uses this calumny to expel erudite women from the Portuguese court. By the second half of nineteenth century a modern discourse arises to take the place of the witch-hunt: the medical rhetoric of the new field of sexology.¹

“Le médecin est le confesseur des temps modernes,” states doctor Torty in “Le bonheur dans le crime,” making explicit a new distribution of power in the reception, phrasing and interpretation of language concerning emotions and desire.² However, as has been argued in chapter 3, if doctor Torty claims the position of the authorial voice in the name of his scientific superiority, Barbey d’Aurevilly doubles him with another narrator, a Catholic, who may ironically be the real, yet discreet, narrator of the immoral story of Serlon and Hauteclair. Barbey would have certainly shared Castro’s point of

¹ See Gladys Swain: “On comprend pourquoi la femme a pu être électivement une possédée. L’hystérie, avançais-je tout à l’heure très sommairement, ce serait en somme, par comparaison avec l’épilepsie, le versant naturel de la potentialité convulsive. En fait, on voit bien comment ce qui promet constitutivement la femme a la dépossession corporelle est aussi ce qui l’ouvre électivement à l’appropriation par les puissances naturelles, par le démon” (227-28).

² Foucault, in *La volonté de savoir*, addresses this historical transition between the priest and the doctor in the perspective of a new, modern will to address people’s intimacy and sexuality.

view in *La hija del mar* when she declares that “el positivismo mata el genio.” By linking genius and inspiration with a state of pathology, medical rhetoric provoked scepticism and anti-materialist criticism by many writers, who were appalled by “scientific” interpretations of their art.³ It is not a coincidence if authors like Baudelaire and Barbey, followed by Decadent writers, reacted with irony towards the new medical discourse which became authoritative in the understanding of sexuality and gender: as I shall argue, they offered a critique of sexology by means of parody.

In this chapter, I will address a new sort of heterosexual trouble, or more precisely I will extend the heterosexual trouble previously discussed by incorporating the impact of, and the reaction to, sexology. I will describe how the doctor-hysteric “couple” is a Decadent and parodic example of the heterosexual couple, one that brings out heterosexual trouble in the extreme. The analysis of Baudelaire’s *Mademoiselle Bistouri* (first published in *L’Epoque* in 1866 and then in 1869 in *Le spleen de Paris*), Lorrain’s *La dame aux lèvres rouges* (1888), and Rachilde’s *La jongleuse* (1900) will provide examples of the parody of medical discourse concerning gender and sexuality in Decadent texts.

Sexology took literature very seriously. Although medical texts are often conceived as the compilation and analysis of individual, mostly anonymous cases, sexological texts also refer regularly to literary texts. In the first chapter of the most famous sexological work of the time, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing mentions literary authors, including three French writers: Molière, Belot, and Dumas. This is an example of how doctors and writers are associated in his essay:

³ Lombroso published *Genio e follia* in 1864, linking genius with a mental illness that is not the divine inspiration of what was considered madness in ancient Greece, but rather an unhealthy disorder of the body and the mind.

Cases are known where men have married ugly women solely because their personal odours were exceedingly pleasing.

Binet makes it probable that the voice may also act as a fetich.

Belot, in his novel “Les baigneuses de Trouville” makes the same assertion. (14)

The hypothesis theorized by the sexologist Alfred Binet (1857-1911) is illustrated by Adolphe Belot in his 1875 novel: there is a complicity between the doctor and the writer, each confirming what the other asserts, in their separate fields. Literature, like the study of concrete, human cases, is used as relevant evidence to affirm the credence of a medical theory concerning sexuality. The diagnosis relies both on human patients and on fictional characters.

Krafft-Ebing is not alone in quoting authors of fiction in his medical treatise; it is actually a common trait of sexology. Binet opens his essay on fetishism, *Le fétichisme en amour* (1887), with the following statement:

MM. Charcot et Magnan ont publié les meilleures observations de fétichisme, et notre étude ne sera qu'un commentaire de ces observations auxquelles nous en avons joint de nouvelles; elles sont relatives à des dégénérés qui éprouvent une excitation génitale intense pendant la contemplation de certains objets inanimés qui laissent complètement indifférent un individu normal. Ces perversions sont assez répandues, car on en trouve la mention et parfois même l'analyse assez bien faite dans quelques romans contemporains. (31)

Binet finds in the novels of his time “mention and sometimes pretty accurate analysis” of the perversions he intends to address: here again, what doctors (Charcot, Magnan, and himself) observe is also illustrated in literature. Moreover their presence in literature is taken as proof of their *real* existence: “Ces perversions sont assez répandues, car on en trouve la mention...” Binet is impressed by the fact that non-scientific authors are also able to produce a realistic description of what he diagnoses as perversions. Like Krafft-Ebing, Binet is a reader of literature and he uses it for the development and the

confirmation of his own theory of fetishism: in his essay he quotes authors such as Dumas (*La maison du vent*), Barbey d'Aurevilly (*Une vieille maîtresse*)⁴ and Rousseau, who is the subject of a whole chapter.⁵

In fact, sexology persistently includes the mention and analysis of literature—modern or not—as an illustration and validation of medical theories about gender and sexuality.⁶ If there is a complicity between sexology and literature, in the way doctors use literature to justify their theories, could this complicity be reciprocal? Would a literary author have recourse to sexology?

The publication, in 1896, of *Roman d'un inverti-né*, is certainly the most overt example of the complicity between sexology and literature. Although the text is the anonymous confession of a young Italian aristocrat about homosexuality and was sent as a private document to Zola, it is nonetheless labelled a novel, and was published by the joint efforts of Zola and a pseudonymous doctor Laupts.⁷ The anonymous “invert” had originally sent his confession, written in French, to Zola, hoping that it would encourage and inspire the latter to publish a novel on the subject of homosexuality.⁸

Cette confession, qu'aucun directeur spirituel n'a jamais apprise de ma bouche, vous révélera une affreuse maladie de l'âme, un cas rare – sinon malheureusement unique – qui a été étudié par des savants psychologues,

⁴ “Le talisman par lequel une femme peut charmer n'est pas uniquement dans sa beauté physique, et les femmes le savent bien, car elles ont toujours su à merveille ce qu'il leur importe de savoir. Celle-ci, comme la *Rosalba* de Barbey d'Aurevilly, séduit par la pudeur raffinée qu'elle conserve ou plutôt qu'elle simule dans les plus grands transports de l'amour ; ses troubles, ses émotions, ses rougeurs virginales, qu'est-ce que tout cela, sinon des qualités psychiques ? Celle-là, comme la *Vellini* du même auteur, laide, ridée, jaune comme un citron, fascine son amant par la férocité de son amour haineux, toujours prêt à jouer du couteau” (90).

⁵ See Vernon A. Rosario: “Nineteenth century doctors sequentially diagnosed Rousseau with almost every sexual perversion save necrophilia” (154).

⁶ Freud will do likewise, making analyses of works from Sophocles to ETA Hoffman the basis of his psychoanalytic theory. See his *Writings on Art and Literature*. Also Sander, Birmele, Geller, and Greenberf.

⁷ Georges Saint-Paul had recourse to the pseudonym of Doctor Laupts for his collaboration with Zola.

⁸ See Rosario: “the Italian was startled to discover Laupts' volume in a bookstore window. He immediately wrote to Laupts that he was elated to find himself ‘printed in *living color*, although I would have much preferred to be reborn in the pages of a novel and not in a medical scientific treatise” (94).

mais qui jusqu'ici aucun romancier n'a osé mettre en scène dans une œuvre littéraire. (22)

In a direct echo of Barbey's "le médecin est le confesseur des temps modernes," the young Italian confirms that in the nineteenth century, priests are no longer the only receptacles of private sexual narratives. However, instead of seeking the assistance of doctors, the invert is looking for the assistance of art, requesting the *mise en scène* of his condition in literature. No cure is needed; the young invert's expectations are not medical, but aesthetic, glossing the "maladie de l'âme" with beauty and "staging" it, perhaps aesthetically, in a literary work. This initiative shows that the process of secularisation of the discourses on sexuality would not only benefit medical theories, but would also inspire contemporary literature. By the time he contacted Zola and sent him his confession, he was aware of the existence of an already important medical discourse on inversion (written by "savants psychologues"), but his highest expectation was to inspire a literary masterpiece written by the author he admires the most. Ironically, Zola will never write the requested novel, and in fact will give the precious document to a doctor so that he (the doctor) can write yet another medical treatise on sexual inversion. The anonymous Italian solicited the attention of "[un] oeil d'aigle et [un] coeur d'artiste," but he ended up stimulating the attention of a doctor interested in labelling and curing perversions.

In a series of exchanges between Zola and Laupps, both the writer and the doctor decide that the confession is a valuable, meaningful document and they agree to publish it as a contribution to the scientific understanding of a new perversion called sexual inversion. The reasons why Zola did not want to take the responsibility to write about inversion himself will not be addressed here but what matters is that he turned to a doctor

for the publication of this document (Rosario 90-95). Zola formulates thus the complicity between the writer and the doctor:

Je ne trouve aucun mal, au contraire, à ce que vous publiiez “le Roman d’un inverti,” et je suis très heureux que vous puissiez faire, à titre de savant, ce qu’un simple écrivain comme moi n’a point osé. [...] Le hasard a voulu, mon cher docteur, que, causant un soir ensemble, nous en vînmes à parler de ce mal humain et social des perversions sexuelles. Et je vous confiai le document qui dormait dans un de mes tiroirs, et voilà comme quoi il put enfin voir le jour, aux mains d’un médecin, d’un savant, qu’on n’accusera pas de chercher le scandale. J’espère bien que vous allez apporter ainsi une contribution décisive à la question des invertis-nés, mal connue et particulièrement grave. (11)

Zola relies on Lauppts’s status as a doctor, a man of science, to justify the publication of a document that could have inspired a novel he never “dared” to write. Although Zola excelled in the writing of novels based on the analysis of “cases” and scientific documents, which is precisely why he was chosen as the appropriate writer by the anonymous aristocrat, he here states that the study of sexual inversion would be even better articulated through the lens of science. Zola claims that the document and its analysis by a doctor would be read with proper attention, whereas a novel about inversion would have only stirred scandal. Zola proved in 1898, as he published his article “J’accuse” in favor of Dreyfus’ innocence and rehabilitation, that he feared neither scandal nor trial for a cause he had adopted. Is the false modesty a strategy to give greater veracity to this “roman?” Whatever the case, the collaboration between Zola and doctor Lauppts confirms the complicity between literature and sexology.

In his essay *The Erotic Imagination: French Histories of Perversity*, Rosario demonstrates “how physicians, patients, and novelists coaxed (and even coached) each other to reveal and consolidate the pleasures of imagination” (8). The triangle created by

the writer, the patient and the doctor structures the circulation of discourses on sexuality and translates it into either literary or medical rhetoric:

While “perverts” relied on literature for information and titillation, doctors added color to their medical tales by relying on popular novels. Novelists, in turn (especially Realists, Naturalists, and Decadents), utilized medical literature to inform their portrayals of a variety of “degenerate” and “psychopathic” characters. (10)

By not distinguishing between Realists, Naturalists, and Decadents, Rosario assumes that all of these authors contribute in the same way to the complicity between literature and sexology. However, while Naturalists and Decadents were both influenced by medical theories and included in their texts references to the rhetoric of sexology, they had a different relationship to sexology. The ideological debates that opposed Naturalists and Decadents in the second half of the nineteenth century corresponded to two visions of literature.⁹ From a naturalist perspective, literature has the mission to depict reality as a scientist conducts an experiment, determining the conditions in which certain phenomena arise. In *Le roman expérimental*, Zola famously refers to a scientific essay written by a doctor to define Naturalism:

L'évolution naturaliste qui emporte le siècle, pousse peu à peu toutes les manifestations de l'intelligence humaine dans une même voie scientifique. [...] Je n'aurai ici à faire qu'un travail d'adaptation, car la méthode expérimentale a été établie avec une force et une clarté merveilleuse par Claude Bernard, dans son *Introduction à l'étude de la médecine expérimentale*. [...] Le plus souvent, il me suffira de remplacer le mot “médecin” par le mot “romancier,” pour rendre ma pensée claire et lui apporter la rigueur d'une vérité scientifique. (1-2)

Zola calls for a literature determined by science and bases his conception of an experimental novel on a scientific methodology inspired by a physiologist. When he states that he would only have to replace the word “doctor” by the word “novelist” to

⁹ Huysmans' itinerary is emblematic, breaking from Naturalism because science could not account for everything, including sexuality and spirituality.

account for his theory of Naturalism, the fusion of literature and science is complete. Both are grounded in the same quest for objectivity and truth: “le romancier part à la recherche d’une vérité” (8).

The Decadent use of sexology was quite different. From a decadent perspective, literature is a depiction of beauty, and as beauty is understood as radically new, bizarre, and disturbing, its depiction is likely to go against standards of morals and decency.¹⁰ Instead of imitating reality, Decadence seeks to confuse it with artifice: to contaminate life with art.¹¹ Decadence is unconcerned with science in the Naturalist sense of scientific experimentation. In what follows, I shall attempt to identify and theorize the specific link between Decadent literature and sexology.

In her essay *Parody and Decadence*, Hannoosh argues, based on her studies of Laforgue’s *Moralité Légendaires*, that parody is an essential feature of Decadence, associating fin-de-siècle literature with early modernism. In this chapter, I would like to relate this theory to Decadent literature in its emphasis on perversion: specifically, this is a parody of sexology. Whereas Naturalism imitates a scientific approach to reality, Decadence seeks to transform this reality by the means of its critical distortion. As Hannoosh makes clear, parody is a peculiar kind of imitation:

[Parody] exposes the illusionary nature of literature, reveals its conventions and devices, and prevents the reader from taking it as true or real. Parody proposes a radical view of art as interpretation rather as imitation in the strict sense, as Rose has observed; it holds a mirror not up to life, in the traditional formula, but up to art, and the mirror is a distorting one. (23)

¹⁰ See Constable Liz, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsk. Also, Jean de Palacio.

¹¹ “It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors”, “all art is quite useless”: Wilde, preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

In what follows, I will attempt to show how the “imitation” of sexology in Decadent texts is likewise parodic, challenging and distorting notions of health, sexuality and sanity.

Heterosexual trouble in Decadent literature emerges in the distorting mirror of the parody of sexology.

Hannoosh defines parody as “the comical reworking and transformation of another text by distortion of its characteristic features” (10). In this case, the parody of sexology at work in Decadent literature is the comical reworking and transformation not so much of a specific text, as of the medical literature on perversions in general: it is not specifically Binet or Krafft-Ebing for instance, who is parodied, but rather the new field they stand for through its characteristic discourse. It is the corpus of sexological texts as a whole which is the subject of Decadent parody. Hannoosh defines three main features of parodic narrative:

Parody has a number of characteristic ways of signalling that it is a comic rewriting of another work. For the most part, these can be arranged into three groups: the comic element, imitation and transformation, and the analogy between the parody and the experience of the reader. (26)

Consequently, I will look for the presence and combination of these three features specific to parody in their relationship to sexology in the following Decadent texts:

Baudelaire’s *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, Lorrain’s *La dame aux lèvres rouges*, and Rachilde’s *La jongleuse*.¹²

Mademoiselle Bistouri, from the *Petits poèmes en prose*, fits particularly well the definition that Baudelaire gives of his collection in his dedication to Arsène Houssaye:

¹² The third feature, the analogy between the parody and the experience of the reader, allows us to distinguish parody from satire: whereas satire is mainly the critique of an object, parody goes beyond mere critique by offering itself as self-reflexive, inviting the reader to enjoy parody as a purposeful confusion between the fictional and the real and including itself in its critique of its target. See Hannoosh (26-28).

Mon cher ami, je vous envoie un petit ouvrage dont on ne pourrait pas dire, sans injustice, qu'il n'a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au contraire, y est à la fois tête et queue, alternativement et réciproquement. Considérez, je vous prie, quelles admirables commodités cette combinaison nous offre à tous, à vous, à moi et au lecteur. Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture ; car je ne suspends pas la volonté rétive de celui-ci au fil interminable d'une intrigue superflue. (161)

The reader is warned that he or she is likely to find nothing but surprise and mystery in these texts written without an obvious connection or order, yet is also invited to make sense of this apparent and puzzling lack of logic.¹³ The bewilderment is bound to happen since everything is both tail and head alternatively and reciprocally. I will argue that this confusion, in *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, comes from the fact that masculinity and femininity are, like head and tail, disturbingly combined. This strange combination includes the act of cutting, present both in the dedication and in the name of the main character. Will the reader, helped by the male narrator, make sense of Mademoiselle Bistouri's "singulière logique" (207)?

The title, meaning a surgeon's knife, refers to the main character of the story, a woman whose real name is not mentioned. She has a "very peculiar passion:" a fetishism¹⁴ for doctors and everything that is attached to them (for instance the lancet, the surgeon's gown covered with his patient's blood, pictures of medical students). References to the medical profession abound: in the title and name of the heroine, in the repetition of the word "médecin," in the lexical field of medicine ("hospital," "chirurgien,"

¹³ According to Georges Blin, in *Le sadisme de Baudelaire*, the puzzling absence of logic is what precisely defines the prose poem: "Le poème en prose n'admet pas qu'on le tire en avant par le jeu des polarités conclusives, ni qu'on le fixe progressivement au moyen de crampons logiques" (153).

¹⁴ The word fetishism is not used by Baudelaire in the story; it was not yet coined in its medical sense, but was already used in its anthropological sense by historians of religions. Magnan, Charcot, and Binet wrote on fetishism after Baudelaire died in 1867.

“internes,” “malade,” and “opération”) and in the presence of doctors’ portraits.¹⁵ She also tends to cruise men who she thinks are doctors in the streets, and takes them home to coddle them.¹⁶ This is what she does to the male narrator, “mistaking” him for a doctor.

The narrator, in spite of denying that he is a doctor, is identified as such by Mademoiselle Bistouri and is so bemused by her strange behavior that he accepts to go to her place in order to understand her psychology: “J’aime passionnément le mystère, parce que j’ai toujours l’espoir de le débrouiller. Je me laissai donc entraîner par cette compagne, ou plutôt par cette énigme inespérée” (206). Mademoiselle Bistouri, described as an “enigma” and a “freak,” strikes the narrator as a curious object rather than as a human being. As in sexology, the text concerns a case of perversion, which it attempts to describe and make intelligible. The question, then, is whether a scientific point of view can untangle what is introduced as a mystery. After all, if the narrator denies being a doctor, he nevertheless acts like one, and if Mademoiselle Bistouri declares that “she is not sick” (“bien que je ne sois pas malade” [207]), she still enjoys playing the patient: the comic denial of their performed identity as doctor and patient sets the stage for a parody of the relationship between the male doctor and his sick female patient. The fact that the fake doctor calls Mademoiselle Bistouri a “farcical creature” (“bouffonne créature”[206]) and that she calls him a farcical doctor (“médecin farceur” [206]) can only emphasize the fact that neither of them should be taken seriously and separately: they are to be considered a farcical couple, as a parody of the relationship between science and madness.

¹⁵ See Maria Scott: “lithographs and photographs stand in for doctors” (236).

¹⁶ Whether the coddle is simply maternal or also sexual is not clear, although there is a double-entendre about Mademoiselle Bistouri’s position as a prostitute and, according to Maria Scott, as a woman traumatized by a previous abortion (232-33).

By constituting Mademoiselle Bistouri as “a case” and by thinking that he can solve it, the narrator apes the role of a medical expert: this parodic doctor is actually an ordinary man. Leading his inquiry like a doctor, the narrator asks Mademoiselle Bistouri about the first symptoms of her perversion: “Peux-tu te souvenir de l’époque et de l’occasion où est née en toi cette passion si particulière?” But this question, which in a clinical context would be expected to trigger a narrative and its interpretation by the doctor, leaves Mademoiselle Bistouri rather sad and speechless: she does not play the game of confession. The parodic analyst fails. *Mademoiselle Bistouri* is both an imitation and a transformation of a typical sexological text: it imitates the structure of the medical scientific narrative by focusing on the study of a case and keeping anonymous the name of the patient, yet it transforms it by replacing the doctor with someone who is only mistaken for one and who is unable to understand or solve the neurosis of the patient. Indeed, by the end of the story, the narrator feels clueless about Mademoiselle Bistouri’s “peculiar logic” (207), ending up appealing to God:

Seigneur, ayez pitié des fous et des folles! Ô Créateur ! peut-il exister des monstres aux yeux de Celui-là seul qui sait pourquoi ils existent, comment ils *se sont faits* et comment ils auraient pu *ne pas se faire* ? (208)

Being unable to understand the madness of another human being, the man of reason turns to God. Out of humility, and maybe humiliation, the fictional doctor admits that the mystery of madness is impenetrable.¹⁷ The use of italics for the opposed options of how monsters are created but could have not been created highlights the narrator’s vertigo.

The parodic *aliéniste* ends up going mad himself.

¹⁷ Donald Aynesworth, in his essay “Humanity and Monstrosity in *Le spleen de Paris*: a Reading of ‘Mademoiselle Bistouri’,” argues that the narrator and the patient could actually be the two sides of the same coin: “One may read ‘Mademoiselle Bistouri’ as an elaboration of this passage and, accordingly, identify the woman herself as the man’s double. Each is, in effect, the other’s doctor. Equally inspired by a taste for horror, these ‘poets’ probe one another to the quick” (213).

This unexpected humility of the defeated doctor in his quest for medical knowledge leads to a confusion about the circulation of sanity and insanity between the male narrator and his female counterpart. Marina Van Zuylen, in her essay “Monomanie à deux: ‘Mademoiselle Bistouri’ et le dialogue de Baudelaire avec l’insensé,” argues that, far from confirming the frontier between reason and madness, the dialogue between the doctor and his patient ends up blurring the divide between the sane and the insane subject:

“Mademoiselle Bistouri” est l’exemple frappant d’une folie qui force l’autre à remettre en question sa définition du réel. [...] Mademoiselle Bistouri, double du narrateur, miroir de leur commune idée fixe, est une mise en abyme de son rapport à l’écriture. Comme lui, elle transforme le réel en irréel ; comme lui, ne supportant pas la banalité quotidienne, elle refait le monde. (130)

Here again, the mirror is a distorting one: it does not reflect the doctor’s sanity, but rather confuses it by the impact of Mademoiselle Bistouri’s insanity. Madness lies not in the escape from reality, but in the inability to do so. The narrator may not so much cure the patient, as actually learn from her a lesson about himself.¹⁸ By the end of the meeting, it is not the patient who is cured, but the doctor who is destabilized, turned into a “patient”. The parody comes from the replacement of difference (between doctor and patient, male and female, reason and madness) by the disturbing hypothesis of a double identity: tail and head at the same time, alternatively and reciprocally, as Baudelaire warned in the *dédicace*.¹⁹

Besides the imitation and transformation of a generic sexological essay, other comic elements in *Mademoiselle Bistouri* signal the parody at work in the text. The title,

¹⁸ See Van Zuylen: “C’est celui ou celle qui réussit à vivre le monde ne l’acceptant comme il est, sans le transformer, qui est malade. Le malade apparaît dès lors comme un être privilégié, un voyant, sens où l’entendent Nerval et Rimbaud. Un tel malade est capable, par l’énergie de sa vision, de créer un nouveau type de médecin.” (125)

¹⁹ See Barbara Johnson : “Cette dédicace, dans ses ambiguïtés, est donc moins une préface aux *Petits Poèmes en prose* qu’un moulin donquichotesque, un moulin qui finit par pulvériser toutes les définitions qu’on essaie d’en extraire” (28).

in itself, is already comic by its incongruity: the association of “mademoiselle” (associated with ingenuousness and innocence) with “bistouri” (associated with masculinity, blood, and cuts) is unexpected, if not grotesque. And yet, the incongruity becomes more important as the text articulates Mademoiselle Bistouri’s fetish: the “bistouri” as an inanimate object becomes a metonymy for male doctors, their tools and their clothing. The parody of the couple made of the male doctor and the female patient is reinforced by the gender confusion between the narrator and Mademoiselle Bistouri: as masculinity is attached to the doctor and femininity is attached to the patient, Mademoiselle Bistouri’s masculinity displaces the expected dialectics of gender between her and the fake doctor. The phallic side of the lancet is comical: its direct association with a “mademoiselle” suggests something both indecent and inappropriate. Jean-Louis Cornille, in his essay “Chirurgie et esthétique baudelairienne,” argues that part of the perceived monstrosity of Mademoiselle Bistouri comes from her gender identity: “Si tel médecin peut avoir l’air d’une ‘demoiselle’, Mademoiselle Bistouri peut bien apparaître masculine” (100). Another sign of her masculine behavior is the fact that she smokes a cigar, another phallic reference, at her place and in front of the narrator: “en allumant elle-même un cigare” (206). The confusion of the masculine and feminine, doctor and patient, provider and client in this peculiar couple becomes intense in an endless play of mirrors. When Mademoiselle Bistouri claims that she would like to receive doctors with their apron full of blood—“Elle dit cela d’un air fort candide, comme un homme sensible dirait à une comédienne qu’il aimerait: ‘Je veux vous voir vêtue du costume que vous portiez dans ce fameux rôle que vous avez créé’” (207-8),—she resembles in her whim Samuel, the dandy in *La Fanfarlo*, who demanded that la Fanfarlo dress in her theatrical

costume, and specifically that she remember her rouge. Mademoiselle Bistouri's masculinity echoes Samuel's femininity as two sides of the same irrational behavior, reinforcing gender confusion and the circulation of identities between the characters.

The confusion—and comedy—reaches its climax when the narrator finds himself obsessed with his own “idée fixe,” just as Mademoiselle Bistouri is obsessed with the idea that he is a doctor: “Mais, lui dis-je, suivant à mon tour, moi aussi, mon idée fixe, – pourquoi me crois-tu médecin ?” (207) The dialogue, which started as the voice of reason interrogating madness, turns out to be the misunderstanding between two equally obsessive ideas, blurring the distinction between reason and madness.

The parody leads directly to heterosexual trouble as the couple appears to be dysfunctional in terms of gender. The frontier between the narrator's position as the subject and her position as the object no longer makes sense: she may actually be performing a parody of him by using her lancet as the expression of his passion for penetrating the mystery. Both the man and the woman of this couple have a lancet with an obsessive will to penetrate, resulting in a heterosexual trouble in which the woman's unexpected masculinity prevents her penetration by her male partner. In *Narrative as Performance*, Marie Maclean has underlined the peculiar dialectics of masculinity and femininity at work in the Mademoiselle Bistouri's gender:

Instead of being a seller in the sexual market-place (at least within the framework of this story), she has assumed the usual masculine role of a buyer. Her guest has accepted the gift contract, he owes her for the fire, the wine, the cigar. Her hospitality (which may also have included her sexual favours, a question discreetly left unresolved) gives her certain intimate rights. (151)

Mademoiselle Bistouri is a monster not so much because of her “perversion”, as because she combines two genders and two voices, male and female. (156)

If, at the beginning of the poem, the reader, like the narrator, thinks that *Mademoiselle Bistouri* is nothing more than a prostitute hustling on the Parisian boulevards, her gender and sexuality are soon associated with the position of the masculine predator more than with that of the female victim.

As we have seen, the parody of sexology at work in *Mademoiselle Bistouri* informs the heterosexual trouble between the odd couple of the fictional doctor and the mad woman. The man is originally associated with reason; he means to solve the enigma of the woman, who is associated with madness. The dichotomy becomes increasingly blurred, and by the end of the story the man of science must turn helplessly to God; he has changed places with his female “patient.” The heterosexual trouble is articulated through the parody of the doctor-patient couple.

The parody of sexology in *Mademoiselle Bistouri* allows Baudelaire to make a critique of science and the categories it establishes: the impenetrability of the other reveals the limits of the scientific gaze, and *Mademoiselle Bistouri* forces her fake doctor to admit ignorance and defeat. As Margery A. Evans noted in her analysis of *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, Baudelaire offers an alternative vision to the objective, cold, investigating eye:

The combined and complex effect of the prose poems is flagrantly to undermine the contemporary Balzacian thesis that the artist may take the scientist’s methodology as a model for the penetration and analysis of external reality. [...] In the prose poems, eyes offer themselves not as texts to be read by the discerning (male) observer, as in Balzac’s novels, but as mirrors which return the onlooker’s own gaze, imprisoning him in the universe of his own thoughts: his “readings” are his own creations. (55-6)

Mademoiselle Bistouri's fetish mirrors the narrator's attempt to penetrate her, confronting the fake doctor with a comical and parodic imitation of his own attitude.²⁰ As the reader does not quite know who is the person being attended here,—is the “doctor” the prostitute's client or is the “prostitute” the doctor's patient?—we cannot help but wonder whether surgery is the parody of sex or whether it is actually the contrary. In either case, the parody of medical discourse figures a kind of heterosexual trouble, radically unresolved and even unstable, as the opposing categories (male/female, reason/madness, science/religion, power/impotence) enter a dizzying exchange of mirror images from which there is no escape.

The confused dialectics of masculinity and femininity achieved through the parody of sexology also structures Jean Lorrain's novella *La dame aux lèvres rouges* (1888) and Rachilde's *La jongleuse* (1900). In this work, Lorrain offers a narrative based on the study of a case of sexual perversion: “un curieux cas d'étude pathologique” (36). The novella can be read as a sort of detective story; the reader will have to untangle the mystery of a pathological case. As in *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, the title refers to the main character, a woman whose name remains secret and who will be known only as the “woman with the red lips.” The dialogue, however, is not between a fictional doctor and a fetishist female patient, but between two men (the narrator and an impressionist painter) about the enigmatic case of a perverse woman. Throughout the novella, the typical language of sexology is used (“névrosée,” “nymphomane à lésion cérébrale,” “hystérique”). The woman's perversion is double, and unveiled at two different moments of the story: at the beginning of the narrative, she is described as a woman from high

²⁰ See Sonya Stephens: “The narrator's obsession with understanding the monstrous other, with penetrating the mystery of her condition, ends in the frozen image of his own monstrosity” (145-6).

society who in her double life likes to have rough sex with hyper-masculine thugs from the underground; and at the end of the narrative, we learn that she likes to pay her lovers to become murderers, so that she can enjoy seeing their public beheading in the place de la Petite-Roquette. Both her nickname, “lécheuse de guillotine” (40), and the title of the novella refer to her taste for the blood of her beheaded lovers.

The painter Inotey, because of his acquaintance both with the police officer Méténier and with a lover of the woman with the red lips, Auguste, is well informed about her peculiar mores and wants to share this information with his other friend, the narrator. After disclosing the first aspect of her perversion, he addresses the case thus:

- De tous les vices antiques et modernes et rudement intéressants à feuilleter (il s’était mis à tisonner le feu), il y a de tout dans cette femme, de la goule, de la lamie, de la courtisane grecque, de la reine barbare, de la basse prostituée, de la grande dame de Rome, avec quelque chose de très particulier, de très empoignant, très de la corruption de cette fin de siècle, très baudelairien, si je puis dire, un piment de luxure un peu funèbre et de la résignation quasi chrétienne: c’est un sujet, un cas...
- De la Salpêtrière, hein, disons le mot. Encore une névrosée.
- Sans doute, cette femme est une malade, une obsédée, une hystérique. Mais son cas a cela de particulier qu’elle a conscience de sa honte et de sa maladie, mais la passion..., et quelle passion, est devenue chez elle un tel besoin physique accompagné d’appétences et de spasmes, comme celui de la soif et de la faim, que...
- Oui, une nymphomane ! (20-21)

Inotey, as an artist, delivers a wordy description, full of cultural and in particular literary references, but the narrator, who is not easily impressed by such rhetoric, interrupts him by a short sentence in which he diagnoses the woman quite simply as a neurotic. The reader is caught between two opposite versions: is the woman with red lips a complicated figure worthy of the western literary tradition—a Messalina of modern times—or is she just plain crazy? At each intervention, the language of sexology offers a comical gloss on the language of literature and myth. By alluding to the “Salpêtrière,” the narrator not only

resists the literary rhetoric of his friend but imposes his own, a direct reference to the place most associated with sexology: the hospital where, from 1882 to 1892, Charcot held public meetings during which he would hypnotize hysterical women.

The narrator challenges Inotey by rephrasing the latter's cultural references into a searing diagnosis. The expression "encore une névrosée" shows how common and unspectacular is the case of the woman with the red lips for the narrator. By making her a common case, easily recognizable as neurotic, the narrator uses sexological terminology in order to devoid this woman of her mystery and turn her into a cliché of her time. At the same time, the references to sexology are themselves clichés, describing what for the narrator are common stereotypes ("encore une névrosée"). The narrator's demystification of his friend's Romantic literary language ends up showing the banality of his own scientific language itself.

Inotey, by describing the woman with the red lips as Baudelairean, invites the reader to make a comparison with *Mademoiselle Bistouri* and to read Lorrain's novella as a parody of sexology. Pascal Noir, in his postface to Lorrain's novella, "La scène capitale," starts his analysis by a direct link between the two enigmatic women:

"En voilà un homme qui aime couper, tailler et rogner !", s'exclamait, réjouie, Mademoiselle Bistouri lisant Jean Lorrain et découvrant les appétences de sa consoeur, comme elle fascinée par l'acier effilé, cette "dame aux lèvres rouges" aux amours "très de la corruption de cette fin de siècle, très baudelairien[nes]," selon le narrateur, lui-même envoûté.
(47)

The woman with the red lips has indeed a lot in common with her Baudelairean model: she has a sexual attraction for the blood of her lovers, she is often mistaken as a prostitute ("Inscrite sur vos registres, mais alors c'est une..."[36]) and yet she is the buyer (she is "generous" and pays Auguste two or three louis anytime they meet [29]). Like

Mademoiselle Bistouri, she is “monstrous” and “enigmatic” (15), and she attracts the attention of the scientific, medical male gaze, which she defeats by resisting the assignation to any medical category. In the end, her case is not solved, her mystery remains and indeed is turned back upon the narrator. The monstrosity of the woman with red lips is associated with gender confusion and sexual perversion, which are evoked by lesbianism (“une goule,” “une amie trop intime de Mme de Montille”), by the use of masculine terms (“Quel policier elle aurait fait”), and through expressions of sordid depravity (“morne épave de muxure”).

The parody is palpable in the imitation and transformation of sexological terminology. This specific vocabulary is used outside of its original context, by two men who are not doctors and discuss the case of a woman who has never been their patient. Moreover, the terms “hysterical,” “nymphomaniac” and “neurotic” are applied before the description of the case is even completed. The brutal switch from cultural references to sexological diagnosis is comical: the woman with red lips goes from being the embodiment of fascination to the common case of a pathological woman worthy of la Salpêtrière. The exaggeration comes from the quick accumulation of three sexological perversions for the same woman: she is certainly neurotic, clearly hysterical, and obviously nymphomaniacal. As in *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, the narrator places himself in the position of an expert, uses the language of the sexologist, but never proves his ability to know what he is talking about. He ends up being himself suspected of using words that exaggerate and caricature the case more than they clarify it.

The use of Latin in the novella is also parodic: Latin was used in sexological treatises in order to describe erotic activities without shocking the reader.²¹ In Lorrain's novella, Latin is used to describe the main character's nymphomania, but instead of replacing the French translation, it comes as a supplement to it:

Cette femme est non seulement la rôdeuse équivoque qu'on rencontre la nuit au coin des rues suspectes, dans les lointains de Grenelle, autour des Abattoirs, dans les plus bas quartiers de Paris assassin, de Paris voleur, de Paris perdu, non seulement cette femme est le profil de vierge qu'on est parfois tout stupéfait de voir surgir du couloir à treillage d'un meublé de banlieue, la Messaline éhontée, brisée mais non rassasiée, *lassa, sed non satiata*, affamée de noces crapuleuses et d'amours hasardées. (41-2)

The expression *lassa, sed non satiata* is a reference to the Latin author Juvenal (although Lorrain makes an error, since the original expression in Latin is *lassata, sed non satiata*) who used it to describe Messalina's insatiable lust, and to a famous poem by Baudelaire, "Sed non satiate." But here, Lorrain does not use it euphemistically, as in a sexological treatise, but rather as a useless—or pedantic—translation of what is already meant in French. Instead of obscuring the indecent meaning it depicts, the use of Latin in Lorrain's prose makes more blatant the obscenity by providing a scientific, sexological "cover" while ensuring that the reader will understand.

In the last part of the novella, Inotey discloses the second aspect of woman's perversion because the narrator is still reluctant to see in her something other than a case of hysteria: "Et la femme ? Jusqu'ici, je vois une hystérique, une hystérique assez consciente même et assez prudente et ménagée dans ses imprudences... mais rien de plus"

²¹ See for instance this extract from *Psychopatia Sexualis*: "Z. was tall, of powerful frame, and in all respects of masculine appearance. Pelvis masculine, testicles well developed, penis remarkably large, *mons veneris* with abundant hair" (108). In his introduction to *Le roman d'un inverti-né*, Docteur Laupré translates into Latin some passages concerning homosexuality: "J'ai cru devoir mettre en latin certains passages ; ce n'était point nécessaire dans un ouvrage sur l'inversion ; mais je l'ai fait par égard pour les personnes, non habituées aux études médicales, sous les yeux desquelles pourrait tomber ce document" (19).

(36). Eventually, when the woman with the red lips is defined as a cruel creature, the narrator does not interrupt his friend and runs out of sexological categories. Finally, the case remains unsolved: “Et dire qu’il est, je ferais serment, une petite ville du Centre ou de l’Ouest, où cette femme est une honnête femme de province, fréquentant les églises et vivant en famille !” (43).

The parody of sexology is articulated through the slippage of the genre of the novella: what starts as the study of a pathological case turns out to become a detective story in which the woman with red lips is not the victim of a perversion but a powerful and mysterious witness who could save Auguste’s life, as the latter is accused of having murdered and robbed an old woman. The woman with red lips is his only alibi, as he was hired to gratify her sexually, and it is her decision to report to the police or not that he spent the night of the crime with her in a dirty Parisian brothel. Consequently, her medical case becomes distorted because the seriousness of the study and cure of a perversion turns into a thrilling game of lust and murder in which she is not the sick victim but rather the dangerous predator. Her skills are described in a surprising way by the police officer, Méténier, who gave her the nickname of “dame aux lèvres rouges” in order to protect her identity:

Oui, la dame aux lèvres rouges, elle est inscrite sous ce nom sur nos registres de police ; très connue de nos agents et... ce qu’elle nous donne souvent du fil à retordre car nous la protégeons ; elle a un instinct singulier, cette femme. Quel policier elle aurait fait, elle a le flair et l’odorat du crime... (36)

Méténier recognizes that the peculiarity of the woman with red lips is her perversion, but this perversion is somehow a positive one because it gives her the ability to “smell” a murder: he sees in her someone with a great potential for becoming a successful

policeman. The status of the woman with red lips is not that of the typical female patient, needing the help of male doctors; she is on the contrary the person whom Inotey has to beg to go to the police to save the life of a man. The heterosexual trouble, in this situation, comes from the gender confusion linked to this reversal of position: the woman with red lips has such an agency that she is always ahead of her male “interpreters” and indeed could easily “replace” the policeman who watches over her.

Another comic element added by Lorrain is that the café from which the woman with red lips likes to attend the beheadings of her ex-lovers is situated “4 rue de la Folie-Régnauld,” which constitutes another wink at her alleged madness. According to Adnie, a journalist known to Inotey who often attends the public beheadings, the woman with red lips is not a madwoman:

Pour les uns, c'est une maîtresse du condamné, pour les autres, c'est une amie trop intime de Mme de Montille, pour moi ce n'est qu'une curieuse, quelque grande ennuyée à la recherche d'un frisson nouveau, d'une sensation inconnue, lécheuse de guillotine par oisiveté, dépravation, que sais-je... (40)

This description allows the reader to find a way out between Inotey and the narrator's previous opposition: neither a modern Messalina nor a lunatic from the Salpêtrière, the woman with red lips is simply bored and eager to experiment new sensations—the cliché of the Decadent artist, in other words. In this way, instead of inscribing herself in the western cultural tradition of classic figures of depravity, she is more a modern figure of the Baudelairean type looking for disturbing sensations out of boredom.²²

Just as in *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, the heterosexual trouble in *La dame aux lèvres rouges* is articulated through the parody of sexology in which the men fail to understand

²² The expression “frisson nouveau” was used by Hugo on October 6, 1859, in a private letter, as a tribute to Baudelaire's poetry.

an allegedly perverse woman. If, in Baudelaire's text, the communication was a misunderstanding between a man and a woman, in Lorrain's, the only dialogue is between men: the woman who is the subject of the discussion is excluded from it; she can never speak for herself. Consequently, the two men become an unexpected and comical couple in their own right. There is a somewhat ironic contrast in the fact that the two men spend all their time talking about the woman whereas, in the meantime, she is busy acting and perhaps murdering other men in the city. Most important, she becomes the prototype of the Decadent artist, perhaps the one who provides the "très beau morceau de littérature" which is the story itself.

The last novel studied in this chapter, *La jongleuse*, will illustrate the parody of sexology in a more dramatic way. In it, a twenty-two year-old medical student, Léon Reille, falls in love with a thirty-five year-old widow, raised outside of France, in the colonies, Eliante Donalger: the title of Rachilde's novel, *La jongleuse*, refers to the fact that Eliante sometimes enjoys, when she hosts a party, to entertain her guests by juggling and dancing in a spectacular way. Her suicide, at the end of the novel, is no less spectacular: she juggles with knives, in front of Léon and her niece Marie, until she places her throat in the line of one of the fatal knives. Like Mademoiselle Bistouri and the woman with red lips, Eliante also likes sharp instruments, but now applied to herself. Her companion, Léon, actually has a knowledge of medicine whereas the narrators from Baudelaire and Lorrain's texts did not. In this sense, the pairing of Eliante and Léon is the most literal illustration of the heterosexual couple composed of a male doctor and a supposedly mad woman.

The whole novel is dedicated to the “case” of the juggler: is Eliante mad? Could she be cured? As a medical student, Léon stands for male reason meaning to cure female madness by his knowledge. He announces to Eliante that he will eventually solve her problem by making her sexually his:

Je vous veux, tout simplement. Je vous aurai, ça c’est sûr... aussi sûr que vous êtes une odieuse coquette... ou une folle. (20)

Je joue, moi, Madame, au milieu de la comédie de la vie, le rôle d’un pauvre garçon austère, ne sortant guère de chez lui que pour fréquenter les salles d’hôpitaux où il palpe toutes les malpropretés humaines capables d’étouffer l’idéal, ce qui le force à demeurer un bien ignoble matérialiste. (29)

Et je te défends, moi, médecin, d’emporter ton secret avec toi ! (89)

Léon’s project is double, combining sexual possession with medical knowledge: he wants to decipher Eliante’s secret in order to enjoy a “normal” sexual relationship with her.

Léon imitates the sexologist in studying a case of perversion, but whereas the sexologist has to remain distant from his patient, Léon on the contrary intends to penetrate her sexually, transgressing the neutrality between the male doctor and his female patient. As Eliante’s resistance does not weaken, Léon is convinced that instead of being outrageously coquettish, she is actually mad and needs his medical assistance. The choice of verbs used by Léon (“I want you,” “I will have you for sure,” “I forbid you”) indicate that, even he claims to have noble feelings for Eliante, he perceives his relationship with her as a battle in which he should triumph. Instead of separating his position as a lover and his identity as a doctor, Léon fuses both categories by claiming that the way to cure her madness is to let him penetrate her as a lover: for him the doctor is legitimated in his sexual penetration of the female patient.

What is, exactly, the problem with Eliante? She does not claim to have a problem, to be sick, to need a cure; she is just a bored person who expects to be entertained by a lowly materialist:

Oui, dit-il sérieusement, vous devez être souffrante, malade ou chagrine, buveuse d'éther, morphinomane, ou... le cœur... Vos veines bleues le long du poignet... sont presque violettes et... c'est exquis.
Pas si malade que ça. Je m'ennuie, voilà tout. Vous, vous êtes un étudiant en médecine. (14)

The parody of sexology, in this dialogue, is the reversal of the situation: it is not just the doctor who expects to learn and expand his knowledge from the discourse of his female patient, but the *blasé* woman who expects to be delighted from the different perspective of a male doctor. He is interested in her madness and she is interested in his medical status: the cruising seems to be mutual between the man and the woman, each one being teased by the difference of the other. Eliante, by bluntly assigning Léon to his status of medical student, makes him understand that his medical knowledge is a limitation:

“Allons donc ! Les dieux sont seuls, et quand ils se promènent, par hasard, sur la terre, ce sont des *cas pathologiques* ou des *baladins*, des *histrions*... qu'on méprise !” (115).

Léon's materialism is critiqued as blindness, as the impossibility to recognize the divine, labelling it as something pathological. Moreover, Léon's attempt to formulate a diagnosis concerning Eliante's illness ends up in an unexpected compliment about her blue veins, suggesting the rise of desire behind the tribute to beauty: “c'est exquis.” In sexological treatises, the descriptions of the patients are not supposed to arouse any intimate comments from the doctor. Léon, in his description of Eliante's veins, makes a switch from the observation of the color to the aesthetic excitement he feels: the switch is

emphasised by the series of suspension points punctuating his sentence.²³ It is surprising that the negative description of the sick body of a suffering woman amounts to the confession of a positive aesthetic emotion: by doing so, Léon suggests that he might be excited by the decadent body he is supposed to cure. And vice versa: Eliante might be excited by the perspective of bewildering a young doctor unable to cure/penetrate her.

Eliante does not want to have sex with men, including with Léon, whom she seems to love, because, unlike him, she dreams of an ideal love. Her perspective is the opposite of Léon's materialism:

- Non ! Non ! Vous ne me comprenez pas du tout... mais vous me plaisez assez pour que je vous explique. Je suis réellement amoureuse de tout ce qui est beau, bon, me paraît un absolu, la définition même de la volupté. Mais ce n'est pas le but, le plaisir, c'est une manière d'être. Moi, je suis toujours... *heureuse*. Je voulais vous mener ici pour vous prouver que je n'ai pas besoin de la caresse humaine pour arriver au spasme... Il me suffit d'être... – ne me serrez pas le bras ainsi—car je porte en moi le secret de toutes les sciences en ne sachant *qu'aimer*. J'ai le dégoût de l'union, qui détruit ma force, je n'y découvre aucune plénitude voluptueuse. [...] Je suis humiliée parce qu'un homme intelligent pense tout de suite à... coucher avec moi. Demain vous ne m'aimeriez plus, si vous m'aimez si peu que cela. (26-7)

By telling Léon that she carries within her the secret of all the sciences because of her knowledge of love, Eliante argues that the idealism of love is something that science will never manage to translate into rules, laws, or formulas. In her case, the idealism of love is guaranteed as long as the two lovers do not enjoy the natural, degrading vulgarity of sexual penetration.²⁴ For Eliante, heterosexual carnal love not only inspires disgust and

²³ In Krafft-Ebing's or Binet's treatises, for example, the descriptions of pathological cases do not lead to personal, aesthetic comments from the doctor.

²⁴ Schopenhauer, who was well read among the Decadents, theorized in *The World as Will and Representation* that the irrepressible pulse of the Will forces human beings to indulge in the bestiality of sex in order to maintain the cycle of procreation and destruction of lustful bodies. He also that it is possible, for human beings, to avoid the pulse of the Will by developing an exclusively aesthetic representation of the world, which seems to echo Eliante's statement "I am truly in love with everything that is beautiful, good, that seems absolute."

humiliation (“j’ai le dégoût de l’union”), but is the very trap by which love loses its ideal and becomes an ephemeral matter of glands. Against such a degrading pleasure, Eliante prefers to enjoy a sophisticated “volupté” that would provide her with pleasure, orgasm without any organic male organ involved. If she asked Léon to come to her house right from the first night they met, it is not, as Léon had expected (“Vous ne me comprenez pas du tout...”) in order to have sex, but rather in order to test his ability to understand and share her peculiar vision of love. When Eliante tells Léon that he does not understand her, she rejects not only the possibility of being cured by a doctor, but also the fact that she would need a cure: actually, it is Léon who needs to change his perspective in order to understand her.

Léon can only interpret Eliante’s case as pathological:

Toi, tu devrais bien lire dans certains auteurs sérieux, point destinés aux femmes, certains chapitres terrifiants concernant les religieuses... Médicalement, les personnes de ton sexe qui se permettent le luxe d’un physique *supernaturel*,—et il est clair que tu vis comme on jouirait,—finissent par des maladies dont la moins horrible est la *danse de Saint-Guy*... en attendant qu’elles fassent de la paralysie générale. (87)

Instead of understanding Eliante’s peculiar sexuality, Léon focuses his attention on the bad consequences associated with her “supernatural” pleasures. As he is only a medical student, he bases his authority on the books written by serious authors in which it is stated that avoiding sexual intercourse with men leads to a dreadful series of diseases. Léon acts a bit like a quack who makes medical threats in order to satisfy his sexual desire with his female patient.

As a way of escaping the disgust raised by the natural intercourse with a sexual partner of the opposite sex, Eliante enjoys masturbating with an inanimate object that she describes as both masculine and feminine:

Quand je dis: *sans sexe*, cela n'indique pas que je veuille châtrer personne. Mon urne tunisienne est tour à tour *une* urne ou *un* vase, car cela lui plaît ainsi. Elle n'est pas forcée de fournir une opinion, de prolonger sa satisfaction de me sentir la caresser ou de se creuser de joie lorsque je la contemple. Elle est chaste, et je la laisse chaste. Vous, je veux bien que vous soyez un homme. Allez voir les filles, mon ami ! (54)

Eliante's sexuality is as asexual as possible: not because frigidity is involved, but rather because the source of pleasure is inhuman and androgynous as an object described and used for its alternate gender, enhanced by the underlined words "*un* vase" and "*une* urne." Paradoxically, Eliante's sexuality is asexual in the sense that she reaches sexual satisfaction without having recourse to male genitals: the masculine partner is replaced by an androgynous object. However, if Léon is excluded from Eliante's sexual pleasures, his exclusion is only physical because he is invited to witness them:

Elle ne s'offrait point à l'homme; elle se donnait au vase d'albâtre, le personnage insensible de la pièce. [...] Elle eut un petit rôle de joie imperceptible, le souffle même du spasme.

Ou c'était la suprême, la splendide manifestation de l'amour, le Dieu vraiment descendu dans le temple, ou le spectateur avait devant lui la plus extraordinaire des comédiennes, une artiste dépassant la limite du possible en art.

Il fut ébloui, ravi, indigné.

- C'est scandaleux ! Là... devant moi... sans moi ? Non, c'est abominable !
(27)

Instead of enjoying a distant and neutral position towards his patient, Léon finds himself in the position of a doctor tantalized by his patient's performance and not allowed to surrender his growing temptation. The parody of sexology in this case concerns the grotesque transformation of the relationship between the male doctor and his female patient: the objective study of a case of perversion becomes the *mise en scène* of this so-called perversion—could it still be a genuine perversion if it is actually a performance?—in the blushing face of a horny, helpless, and uncomprehending doctor.

Eliante's exhibitionism forces Léon into the unexpected position of a voyeur: the heterosexual couple is linked in the circulation of pleasure by the display of orgasm, but also separated in the impossibility of the woman's penetration by the male partner. By becoming a voyeur, Léon stops acting like a doctor and drops the analysis of the case to be part of it: although he is not allowed to penetrate Eliante, his voyeurism is necessary (the words "ravi" and "indigné" indicate Léon's rapture and his indignation against his own rapture). In *Mademoiselle Bistouri*, both the narrator and the main character end up having an obsession, an *idée fixe*: in *La jongleuse*, both the medical student and the woman end up sharing a complementary perversion.

Just as the reader cannot be sure whether *Mademoiselle Bistouri* is really insane or is actually performing a sexual role, the reader of *La jongleuse* cannot understand exactly whether Eliante is really having an orgasm (described by the euphemism "splendid manifestation of love") or only simulating it in the most artistic way possible ("the most extraordinary actress"). Whereas in sexology there is no ambiguity about the fact that the subject suffers and that she is therefore a patient needing a treatment, here the ambiguity saturates Eliante's personality who could either be a mad woman or quite the contrary an amazingly brilliant performer; the "juggler" of the title.

Delighted and outraged by such an indecent scene of female masturbation that assigns him the position of a spectator, Léon can only interpret Eliante's attitude as a call for rape: "Je ne peux traduire votre résistance, Eliante, que par un désir de viol" (64). In the introduction to the English translation of *La jongleuse*, Melanie Hawthorne links Léon's violence with the author's personal hostility against doctors:

Rachilde's dislike of doctors is a recurrent theme in her work (and a further link to the theatre of Molière), but in *The Juggler* the problem

becomes specific. Léon not only invokes the threats used to maintain traditional sexual behavior (for example he claims in chapter 6 that Eliante will be afflicted with St. Vitus's dance and general paralysis), he believes her cure lies in acceptance of "normal" sexual relations. (xxiii)

If Rachilde's dislike of doctors is a significant contribution to the definition of Léon as an oppressive and stubborn man of science, the parody of sexology at work in Decadent texts in general can also account for Rachilde's critical resistance to sexological discourse on perverts and women.

The least we can say concerning Eliante and Léon is that they make a highly dysfunctional couple: here again, as in *Mademoiselle Bistouri* and *La dame aux lèvres rouges*, the trouble comes from the sexual and epistemological distance between a woman, whose sexuality is not devoted to heterosexual procreation, and is consequently perceived as a pathological case, and a man, who considers himself as a normal person and tries to make sense of the woman's alleged madness by a scientific approach. The trouble becomes more dramatic as the mystery, associated with femininity, is neither understood nor solved by the man, whose sexological discourse proves inadequate to the case. Léon's failure to cure, or rectify, Eliante's sexuality ends up in a growing misunderstanding and the suicide of the heroine in front of her lover.

An anecdote, or rather a Spanish story, is told by Eliante before she kills herself while juggling. This story, requested by Eliante's niece and Léon, articulates in an exotic context another case of mystery associated with heterosexual trouble:

Eh bien, il y avait une fois en Espagne, une religieuse brûlée de tous les feux de l'enfer et qui croyait cependant en Dieu. Cette nonne du diable était fort belle, une grande brune à la lèvre ombrée très légèrement de moustache. Elle s'ennuyait tellement qu'une nuit elle passa par-dessus les murs du couvent, elle était allée dans la chapelle pour se fabriquer un beau costume. Elle avait taillé un pourpoint dans une chasuble d'or, mis des chausses violettes et pris les dentelles de l'autel de la Vierge, puis aussi la

forte épée ornée de pierreries de saint Michel Archange. Elle courut le monde ainsi déguisée, bouleversa l'Espagne, enlevant les filles à leur mère et les femmes à leurs maris, sous le nom de... *Don Juan*. (176)

Through the story of this nun, Eliante unveils the life of a woman behind the myth of Don Juan. The infamous womaniser was actually a pious, yet devilish woman, who decided, out of boredom, to run away from her convent and entertain herself as a male libertine.²⁵ Don Juan's story should not be understood as a *mise en abyme* of Eliante's: both women transgress the rules of their times, but their transgressions do not follow the same trajectory (Eliante is not concerned with cross-dressing, masculinity, and sexuality with other women). However, this "coming out" of Don Juan as a woman, and the fact that the former nun was able to live many years as a successful man in his cross-dressing and erotic exploits, signifies that there have always been, and will always be, women whose gender and sexuality defy the rules of heteronormativity in the most unexpected ways. Don Juan is not just a man, his archetype is usually associated with the ultimate male seducer: no woman, even the most pious, can resist his assault. By revealing the fact that Don Juan was a woman, Eliante undermines the myth of the irresistible man. Don Juan's secret, like her own, puts masculinity in a state of crisis by staging femininity as a mystery beyond the reach of men. This is a tale about heterosexual trouble.

Eliante's "Spanish story" was not entirely invented by her; it is partly based on the real and infamous life of Catalina de Erauso, also known as *la monja Alférez*, who in the seventeenth century escaped her convent and enjoyed a life of combat, travel, and sexual exploits as a man under different masculine names.²⁶ However, how could this Don Juan not remind us of another heroine studied in the first chapter, Mademoiselle de

²⁵ The description of the woman also evokes the status of the witch, developed in the previous chapter around the discussion of *La Sigea*.

²⁶ See Erauso.

Maupin?²⁷ Gautier's heroine also decided, out of boredom, to leave her former identity and cruise the world as a *chevalier*, successfully passing as a man and enjoying many kinds of Romanesque adventures away from home. From *Mademoiselle de Maupin* to *La jongleuse*, from Romanticism to Decadence, heterosexual trouble has been updated as a parody of sexology but remains focused on the problematic confusion of the dialectics of femininity and masculinity.

²⁷ At the end of *Roman d'un inverti-né*, the anonymous Italian writes: "Je viens de lire *Mlle de Maupin* et en suis charmé tout à fait. Oh ! le beau livre et la belle corruption, si douce et si délicate !" (138)

Conclusion

“On disait au ministère, sans y mettre ombre de malice, que dans le ménage, c’était le mari qui portait les jupes et la femme les culottes.”
Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*

In this dissertation on the reinvention of love, I have sought to make a contribution to the understanding of gender and French Romantic literature through the concept of “heterosexual trouble.” This I defined as the unhappy fate of heterosexual couples in their attempt to live their love beyond the sexual and gender constraints that constitute heteronormativity as a political regime. By analyzing heterosexual trouble as both a recurrent topic and a style–textual androgyny–at work in French Romantic literature, I have argued that it operated as a heterotopia, a space dedicated to the subversion of normative gender and sexuality.

As I have shown, this attempt to subvert heteronormativity was articulated in different ways. In the first chapter, my analysis of novels by Staël, Sand and Gautier showed heterosexual trouble to be associated with issues of inversion or confusion of gender, love outside of marriage, problematic sexuality, and social disapproval. In the second chapter, devoted to the figure of the dandy in the works of Baudelaire and Barbey d’Aurevilly, I argued that the advent of the female dandy was an ironic reintroduction of heterosexual trouble into the field of dandyism which might otherwise have seemed to resolve it. In the third chapter, I analyzed the literary signature of heterosexual trouble by bringing into relief some of its stylistic features in what I called a textual androgyny. The

fourth chapter was an excursion into the land of Spanish Romantic literature, in which I demonstrated that the concept of heterosexual trouble was no monopoly of French Romanticism, but was also a relevant category in the analysis of works by Avellaneda, Coronado and Castro. The last chapter discussed heterosexual trouble in the fin-de-siècle, manifested in the parody of sexology applied to the couple of the male doctor and the female patient. Overall, the concept of heterosexual trouble has been pervasive throughout my exploration of the Romantic reinvention of love.

In most cases, the reinvention of love did not allow heterosexual couples to enjoy a happy, respectful relationship based on gender and sexual freedom. On the contrary, most of the couples went through a tumultuous relationship which ended in the most tragic way: death or separation. The verdict of shared unhappiness may compromise the will to challenge heteronormativity: if it is doomed to fail and makes couples miserable, we may ask what is the interest of struggling against sexual and gender norms? Confessions by Corinne, Lélia or Mademoiselle de Maupin establish clearly that, in their authors' view, the struggle against normative heterosexuality is worth the tragic end. Perhaps the failure of these attempts to love outside of marriage and parenthood only indicates that the reinvention of love suffers not only from an intimate crisis but also from the external pressure of social disapproval. However, the couple made up of Serlon and Hauteclair in "le Bonheur dans le crime" can be used as an original case study of a merry, queer heterosexual couple: the two dandies who killed an innocent woman, rejected marriage and children, and embarked on a mutual and long-term happiness, prove that the reinvention of love does not necessarily lead to a tragic dead-end.

The combination of heterosexual trouble and the reinvention of love gives content and relevance to the category of queer heterosexuality, by which I refer to the heterosexual characters whose practice of love drives them to resist heteronormativity. This opens the way for more research concerning French Romanticism and the reinvention of love: I would like to end by raising the potential of future investigations linked to the concept of heterosexual trouble. As I grounded my argument mainly on novels, short-stories and prose poems, a new approach would be to apply the concept of heterosexual trouble to other literary genres in French Romanticism: for instance, is heterosexual trouble also valid when it comes to theatre and poetry? One may think, for instance, of plays such as Vigny's *Chatterton*, Musset's *Lorenzaccio*, and Sand's *Cosima*. When it comes to poetry, the Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques*, Gautier's *Emaux et Camées*, and Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*, surface as potential sources for other illustrations of heterosexual trouble. Also, given the importance and the specificity of the historical novel, it would be interesting to research the possible illustration of heterosexual trouble in historical novels such as Vigny's *Cinq-Mars*, and Mérimée's *Chronique du règne de Charles IX*. As we saw, it is present in Coronado's *La Sigea*.

Even if the comparative study between French and Spanish Romantic literatures proved to be fruitful in terms of articulating heterosexual trouble above and below the Pyrenees, it remains to take into account other national Romanticisms with respect to their own illustration of the reinvention of love: Italian, Portuguese, German, and British Romantic literatures may offer significant differences and common points in the way they articulate heterosexual trouble, if they articulate it at all. A more inclusive, European

survey of Romantic literatures may lead to a more inclusive theory of heterosexual trouble as fundamentally rooted in the Romantic politics of love.¹

Finally, it remains to be seen whether the concept of heterosexual trouble is specifically framed as a nineteenth-century literary phenomenon, or if it was to inspire future French writers. Does the coming out of the closet of male (Carco, Gide, Cocteau, Genet) and female (Pougy, Vivien, Colette, Barney) homosexualities in French twentieth-century literature erase, reinforce or modify the expression of heterosexual trouble? The case of *A la recherche du temps perdu* may offer an interesting update on how the emergence of the topic of male and female homosexualities goes hand in hand with the analysis of heterosexual trouble. Throughout the *Recherche*, Proust depicts heterosexual couples such as Saint-Loup and Rachel, or Monsieur and Madame de Vaugoubert, who blend both heterosexual trouble and homosexual content based on the confusion of genders, sexual orientations, cultural tastes, and the dynamic of revelations, passing, and experimenting as years go by. A reading of Proust could help make sense of the relation between heterosexual trouble and a homosexual narrative:

On disait au ministère, sans y mettre ombre de malice, que dans le ménage, c'était le mari qui portait les jupes et la femme les culottes. Or il y avait plus de vérité là-dedans qu'on ne le croyait. Mme de Vaugoubert, c'était un homme. [...]

Des traces d'opprobre, d'ennui, d'indignation, ternissaient le visage régulier de Mme de Vaugoubert. Hélas, je sentais qu'elle me considérait avec intérêt et curiosité comme un de ces jeunes hommes qui plaisaient à M. de Vaugoubert et qu'elle aurait tant voulu être, maintenant que son mari vieillissant préférait la jeunesse. (1244-5)

Mme and M. de Vaugoubert present the “symptoms” of heterosexual trouble because of their gender inversion, establishing a reversal of the dialectics of masculinity and femininity in the

¹ Works by Mary Russell Mitford (*The Captive*), Goethe (*Les souffrances du jeune Werther*), Alexandre Herculano (*Eu e o Clero*), or Alessandro Manzoni (*I promessi sposi*), are just a few of possible texts to analyze in the perspective of further comparative studies.

couple. However, this heterosexual trouble does not seem problematic since it is perceived and recognized without surprise by the others. The passing of time has a dramatic impact in their relationship as, now, Mme de Vaugoubert's decrepit masculinity no longer attracts her husband, who turns his attention to the fresh masculinity of young men. There is then a double switch: a generational switch from old to young subjects, and a switch in the sexual orientation as M. de Vaugoubert's desire wanders from his wife to young men. This is how heterosexual trouble contains within it sexual practices and identities that exceed even queer heterosexuality: bisexuality, pederasty, and homosexuality.

In this sense, queer heterosexuality is queer not only because of its opposition to heteronormativity, but because it can operate as the matrix within which a whole range of queer practices and identities can be elaborated.

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