Morphologies of Becoming: Posthuman Dandies in Fin-de-Siècle France.

by

Marina E. Starik

B.A., University of Utah, 2003

M.A. University of Utah, 2005

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Kenneth P. Dietrich School of

Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2012

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

This dissertation was presented

by

Marina E. Starik

It was defended on

November 12, 2012

and approved by

Dr. Chloé Hogg, Assistant Professor, French and Italian

Dr. Todd Reeser, Professor, French and Italian

Dr. Philip Smith, Associate Professor, English

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Giuseppina Mecchia, Associate Professor, French and Italian

Morphologies of Becoming: Posthuman Dandies in Fin-de-Siècle France.

Marina E. Starik, M.A., Ph.D.

University of Pittsburgh, 2012

This dissertation provides a methodology for considering the dandy as a prototype of post-humanity in selected texts of *fin-de-siècle* French literature. While the enduring interest in the dandy continues to inspire numerous critical interventions, the present study's contribution is to envision the dandy as engaged in an aesthetic and economic project, rather than an ideological one. Although largely apolitical, paradoxically, the dandy is a keen social critic who, wittingly or not, pushes to transcend the borders between humanity and animality, history and myth, body and machine.

The main theoretical framework informing the thesis is Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of becoming. Mutation, mimicry, symbiosis, proximity, athleticism, assembly into packs and couples, and foregoing subjectivity are among the ways that "dandy-becomings" are manifested in the characters of Émile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Le Bonheur dans le crime*, Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*, Rachilde's *L'Animale*, Villiers de l'Ile-Adam's *L'Ève future*, Colette Peignot's *Écrits de Laure,* and Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps perdu*. As the title implies, this study equally engages with posthumanism – a multidisciplinary field bringing together Jean-François Lyotard, Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, and Neil Badmington, among others. Their differing views on embodiment are especially instrumental in clarifying another paradox within the dandy: as the posthumanists,

who split into those who argue for the complete virtualization of the body, and those who insist on its persistent physical presence, similarly, the dandy is torn between the drive toward imperceptibility, and a complete investment in the body as a signifying surface.

While taking into account the history of the French dandy as a cultural, intellectual, and literary phenomenon typically associated with Romanticism, the study of the dandy as "posthuman becoming" demonstrates that the figure remains relevant for a much longer period, as it projects itself well into the twentieth century. This analysis spans a period of sixty years, between 1867, the year of publication of *Thérèse Raquin*, and 1938, the year of Colette Peignot's death. However, as the conclusion suggests, the dandy continues to look for new expressions and reappears even today in both high and low culture.

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PREFACE

I thank my parents – my style icons and my biggest fans. This project materialized with the moral and technical support of my husband. My first reader, he is now more versed in Deleuze and Guattari than anyone outside academia I know.

I am greatly inspired and humbled by my stellar dissertation advisor Dr. Giuseppina Mecchia, her intellectual rigor and personal warmth. I thank her for her confidence in my project, for being an outstanding mentor, and a true role model as a thinker and an educator. I am equally indebted to my dissertation committee members Dr. Philip Smith, Dr. Todd Reeser, and Dr. Chloé Hogg for their invaluable feedback, guidance, and challenging questions, which helped me to better shape and hone my arguments.

Without the support of my friends and fellow graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh and elsewhere, the writing process would not have been as stimulating and rewarding. A special thanks to Shannon Duggan for editing my English as a Second Language.

I am grateful to my dear friends Viktoriya Baytser and Sasha Shekhter for putting up with my stress, and putting a roof over my head for two and a half months during the final stages of writing, which happened to coincide with a transition between Washington, D.C. and Geneva. Having had the opportunity to live in four cities during the past four years, I thank the staff of the libraries at the University of Pittsburgh, Université de Paris-X Nanterre, Harvard, George

Washington, and American Universities, for providing access to their resources. I also thank the staff of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., as well as the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the archives of the Musée Galliera, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and Bibliothèque Forney in Paris, for facilitating preliminary research.

In addition, I thank the University of Pittsburgh's Andrew Mellon Predoctoral Fellowship, and the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences Dean's Tuition Scholarship for uninterrupted financial support during the last three semesters of writing.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation aims at engaging the discourse on the dandy of selected works of French literature between 1867 and 1934 with the discussion of the concept of *becoming* (*devenir*) proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In *Mille Plateaux* (1980), becoming is not conceived as a similarity between entities or identities. It is, rather, an ongoing process where energies are exchanged between and "extracted" from discrete elements of things and beings, beyond the contours of a unit or a body:

> [T]ous les devenirs sont déjà moléculaires. C'est que devenir, ce n'est pas imiter quelque chose ou quelqu'un, ce n'est pas s'identifier à lui. Ce n'est pas non plus portionner des rapports formels. Aucune de ces deux figures d'analogie ne convient au devenir, ni l'imitation d'un sujet, ni la proportionalité d'une forme. Devenir, c'est à partir des formes qu'on a, du sujet qu'on est, des organes qu'on possède ou des fonctions qu'on remplit, extraire des particules, entre lesquelles on instaure des rapports de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, les plus proches de ce qu'on est en train de devenir, et par lesquels on devient.[1]

Somewhat unexpectedly, among a variety of examples used to elucidate this rather elusive concept is the Knight of Faith featured in *Fear and Trembling* (1843) by Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the Danish moral philosopher who was active precisely during the Romantic era, a period when literary dandyism flourished in France. Deleuze and Guattari describe this figure as "l'homme du devenir," who detaches himself from current definitions of the human through becoming "imperceptible", "indiscernable", or also "comme tout le monde". What could be

[1] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Devenir-intense, devenir-animal, devenir-imperceptible" *Capitalisme et*

perceived at first as a description of a conformist ("bourgeois, rien qu'un bourgeois"), is, in fact, an allusion to a challenging push ("Il y faut beaucoup d'ascèse, de sobriété, d'involution créatrice") toward a discreet "élégance anglaise" – a subtle reference to the country of historical origin of the dandy in an essay which never explicitly dwells on the subject of dandyism:

> Quel est le rapport entre l'imperceptible (anorganique), l'indiscernable (asignifiant) et l'impersonnel (asubjectif)? On dirait d'abord: être comme tout le monde. C'est ce que raconte Kierkegaard, dans son histoire du "chevalier de la foi", l'homme du devenir: on a beau l'observer, on ne remarque rien, un bourgeois, rien qu'un bourgeois. C'est ce que vivait Fitzgerald: à l'issue d'une vraie rupture, on arrive … vraiment à être comme tout le monde. Et ce n'est pas facile du tout, ne pas se faire remarquer. Être inconnu, même de sa concierge et de ses voisins. Si c'est tellement difficile, être "comme" tout le monde, c'est qu'il y a une affaire de devenir. Il y faut beaucoup d'ascèse, de sobriété, d'involution créatrice: une élégance anglaise, un tissu anglais, se confondre avec les murs, éliminer le trop-perçu, le trop-à-percevoir.[2]

As we will see, the problematic of *becoming* is also anticipated by another philosopher and a contemporary of the second, *fin-de-siècle* wave of dandyism in France, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). In 1878, in his book of aphorisms *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, Nietzsche sketches the project of surpassing present forms of human investment, which will later get formulated into the experimental figure of prophet-hermit that gives its title to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883), the artist-philosopher narrating his intellectual path in *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is,* written in 1888 and published posthumously in 1908, and finally the more-than-human being presented in the posthumous fragments describing the *Übermensch*. At this later stage, the choice of using *-mensch*, and not *–mann* in *Übermensch* on the part of Nietzsche is indicative of the desire to surpass the totality of human existence, in all of its dimensions. The dandy, like the *Übermensch,* needs to leave behind contemporary conditions,

[2] Deleuze and Guattari, 342.

including morality, nationality, class, and gender, as it is impossible to attribute the origins of the dandy to a single crisis within these conditions.

The dandy takes the Nietzschean precept of "becoming what one is" to the letter, and illustrates perfectly the concept of becoming elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari, while remaining light-handed, even superficial in his or her quest for radical reformation, collapsing the metaphoric distance between being (*être*) and appearing (*paraître*): "Devenir est un verbe ayant toute sa consistence; il ne se ramène pas, et ne nous amène pas à 'paraître', ni 'être', ni 'équivaloir', ni 'produire'."[3] The opposite of an engaged intellectual, if the dandy comments on the inadequacy of the social role of the subject, this is mostly an unintended consequence of being different, rather than a political strategy. One of the tasks of this study, therefore, is to track and analyze figurative language, which alerts us to the production of such dandy becomings in the characters of the works we are examining. This language can then be taken on by readers, who will seize in it elements of a political demand. However, such demand is not articulated by the dandy. When Zola's Thérèse Raquin is on a promenade with her husband, she is still a single dandy *flâneuse*, taking advantage of her male partner in order to get out of the house. When Proust's Charles Morel is called "mauvais patriote!"[4], this is not a comment on his political stance – he expresses none – but an observation on his dandy *deterritorialization*. Odette de Crécy as an aggressive social climber does not represent any group – she is devoid of any subversive agenda. All things considered, the dandy does not want to warrant allegiance to any of the categories that ground the subject in human society.

Daniel Salvatore Schiffer, in his book *Philosophie du dandysme* (2008), places the dandy precisely at the crossroads between Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. On the one hand, there is the

[3] Ibid., 292.
[4] Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Paris: Éditions de la Pléiade, 1987-9), III, 354.

Nietzschean "transdescendance" – going from a religious to an aesthetic ideal – and on the other, Kierkegaardian "transascendance" – proceeding from an aesthetic to a religious existence, following the path of Johannes, the protagonist of *The Seducer's Diary* (1843), a Don Juan and an aesthete whom John Updike compares to "a heartless Dr. Frankenstein in one of Romanticism's first masterpieces"[5] and whom Schiffer calls "l'archetype du dandy moderne."[6] The modernity of this dandy consists, among other things, in being outside contemporaneity, according to the narrator who introduces the diary: "He did not belong to the world of actuality, and yet he had very much to do with it. He continually ran lightly over it, but even when he most abandoned himself to it, he was beyond it."[7] At the same time, Deleuze and Guattari's chapter on becoming is not completely dehistoricized. In fact, as they turn to literature for examples, they ground their discourse in modernity and in the discursive materiality of works by Lautréamont, Kafka, Proust, and Joyce.

Schiffer further backs this claim by showing that the dandy straddles distinctions between other oppositions: the early Nietzschean divide between Dionysian and Apollonian esthetics, Baudelaire's poetics, constantly split between "Dieu" and "Satan," and Sartre's ambiguous denunciation of the conflict between a "spiritualisation du corps" and a "matérialisation de l'âme" presented in his *Baudelaire* (1946).[8] Oppositions simply melt in the paradoxical existence of the dandy, and as I examine the works in this study, I will show how this results in the most surprising paradox of all, that is the coexistence of the desire to become imperceptible and the flaunting of the material body associated with the physical presence of clothes, makeup,

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[5] John Updike, foreword to *The Seducer's Diary*, Søren Kierkegaard, Howard V. and Edna H. Hong, trans., (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), xiii.
[6] Daniel Salvatore Schiffer, *Philosophie du dandysme*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), 6.
[7] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Seducer's Diary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 7.
[8] Schiffer, 21.

accessories, and manners. While Schiffer stays away from analyzing literary characters, my study insists on the benefits of looking at the dandy as a book hero because literature, thanks to the capacity of figurative language to perpetually fictionalize and reinvent the image of the human body, helps push these paradoxical kinds of existence to their outmost fantastical limits.

The concept of becoming, to a certain extent, was essential to the birth of posthumanism – a multidisciplinary field within the humanities, with which I will be in a consistent dialog in my study. Posthumanism as such emerged toward the end of the twentieth century, alongside gender and postcolonial studies, in the works of scholars like Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, and Jean-François Lyotard, who led the way in the late 1980s and 1990s, and later on Neil Badmington and Cary Wolfe, who have kept the field alive in the 2000s. All readers of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Deleuze and Guattari,[9] they contribute to various views of the human body. Their work is essential to establish a clear lineage of thought, which in fact provides a solid basis for my argument that the dandy experience can in fact be carried over, in various forms, from the 1840s until today.

Lyotard's discussion on the "inhuman" in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (1988),[10] one of the earliest theoretical interventions on the subject, is inconceivable without Deleuze and Guattari, whose works he himself acknowledges as one of his most powerful interlocutors. In these essays, Lyotard questions the anthropocentrism stemming from the humanism of the Enlightenment and acting as the ethical and epistemological grounding of society. For him, and for those who follow in his wake, humanity is always already "inhuman," at once organic and mechanical:

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[9] This becomes clear when one consults the index of their publications on the subject.
[10] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1991).

> Technology wasn't invented by us humans. Rather the other way around. As anthropologists and biologists admit, even the simplest life forms, infusoria […] are already technological devices. Any material system is technological if it filters information useful to its survival […] A human being isn't different in nature from an object of this type [...] What's true is that this human being is omnivorous when dealing with information because it has a regulations system (codes and rules of processing) that's more differentiated and a storage capacity for its memory that's greater than those of other living things. Most of all: it's equipped with a symbolic system that's both arbitrary (in semantics and syntax), letting it be less dependent on an immediate environment […] A human, in short, is a living organization [...] It can grasp itself as a medium (as in medicine) or as an organ (as in goal-directed activity) or as an object (as in thought – I mean aesthetic as well as speculative thought). It can even abstract itself from itself and take into account only its rules of processing, as in logic and mathematics.[11]

Regulation, memory, omnivorism, absorption and processing of data, and finally abstraction are exactly the mechanisms of becoming that the dandy uses for autopoeietic purposes, while making them uncannily visible in other humans. Just a few years after Lyotard's pioneering text, Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, the editors of a volume entitled *Posthuman Bodies* (1995) will say something similar about the posthuman body, calling it "a technology, a screen, a projected image."[12] My textual readings will show that, like the prototypes of posthumanity described in this volume, the dandy, by pushing humanity to its limits, and the literary dandy being able to go even further, acts as a mirror and helps us to better see and reflect on the inorganic dimensions of the human body.

Within the field of posthumanism, some scholars tend to insist on the complete virtualization of the body, while others advocate for its material aspects. This difference in views could be summed up by Wolfe's critique of Hayles:

> Hayles's use of the term [posthumanism], in other words, tends to *oppose* embodiment and the posthuman, whereas the sense in which I am using the term here insists on exactly the opposite: posthumanism in my sense isn't posthuman at all – in the sense of being 'after' our embodiment has been transcended – but is

[11] Lyotard, 12-3.
[12] Judith Halberstam and Ira Livinston, eds., *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1995), 3.

> only posthuman*ist,* in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself, that Hayles rightly criticizes.[13]

As I engage with posthumanism, I find this tension between the two views particularly productive, as it echoes a similar tension within the becoming-dandy, caught up between abstraction and materiality.

To illustrate the intersection of my study with posthumanism, I would like to use two instances of posthuman morphologies, namely, Badmington's alien and Haraway's cyborg, as I see them connecting remarkably well to the character of the dandy. More often than not, both authors draw inspiration for their analyses from popular culture and film. Badmington's *Alien Chic: Posthumanism And the Other Within* (2004) traces a history of representations of aliens in science fiction film, from Don Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), to Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), and Brian de Palma's *Mission to Mars* (2000). Badmington is "interested in what aliens might reveal about how human beings see themselves and their others at the beginning of the twenty-first century."[14] His goal is not to completely dispense with humanism but critique it from within, using the Derridian strategy of deconstruction:

> I want to argue for a posthumanism that is not afraid to repeat humanism *in a certain way*, and with a view to the deconstruction of anthropocentric thought. If the pure outside is a myth, it is, I think, nonetheless possible to 'lodg[e] oneself within traditional conceptuality in order to destroy it', to reveal the internal instabilities, the fatal contradictions, that expose how humanism is forever rewriting itself as posthumanism.[15]

Like the alien and the dandy, the cyborg also presents the paradoxical stance of being an outsider who operates from within, and thus comments on society's "internal instabilities." While the

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[13] Cary Wolfe. *What is posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xv.
[14] Neil Badmington, *Alien Chic: Posthumanism And the Other Within* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), 11.
[15] Ibid., 116-7.

reference to the dandy as a machine becomes clear in my second chapter, animality – the focus of chapter one – is often inseparable from the inorganic and mechanical elements present in the same text. In Zola's eponymous novel, Thérèse Raquin is both feline and statuesque. In Rachilde's *L'Animale* (1893), Laure Lordès's birth is presented at once as miraculous ("enfant angélique"), organic ("un végétal"), and mechanical. Her parents, stingy bourgeois previously compared to machines, can only beget a monster: "La mécanique pour l'argent invente la mécanique pour de l'amour, et peut-il naître des êtres sains d'une mécanique? [...] Ils fabriquèrent un enfant angélique, un végétal."[16]

The animal and the machine are often found side by side in posthumanist discourse, and in the art, popular culture, and science fiction that inspire it. The artwork by Lynn Randolph titled "A Return to Alien Roots" (1990) on the cover of Haraway's book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* helps to make that connection – and the link to the dandy – more visible.[17] It depicts a woman with a white tiger pelt for headdress, the limbs of the animal draping over her shoulders and arms. The paws of the tiger and the motherboard pattern of the woman's dress lead the eye to her fingers, which are resting on a computer keyboard, as she looks straight at the viewer/monitor. Appropriately, inside the book, Haraway speaks of a "leaky distinction […] between animal-human (organism) and machine."[18] With its "leakages" and "couplings", her cyborg resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's experiments in becoming:

> […] a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction […] The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed. Far

[16] Rachilde *L'Animale*, (Paris: Mercure de France, 1993), 33.
[17] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* New York: Routledge, 1990.
[18] Ibid., 152.

> from signaling a walling off of people from other living beings, cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleasurable tight coupling [….][19]

In fact, already in nineteenth-century *fin-de-siècle*, science fiction becomes one of the possible outlets for the dandy, as Villiers de l'Isle Adam's 1886 novel *L'Ève future* will illustrate in my second chapter: this is not surprising if it is true that, as Lyotard suggests, "[t]he postmodern is always implied in the modern[…]"[20] The American critic Marie Lathers in *The Aesthetics of Artifice: Villiers's L'Ève future,* follows this same logic when she links Haraway's cyborg to Villiers's android, Hadaly:

> Haraway's cyborg is a perfectly modern being who represents the breakdown of three traditional boundaries: that between the human and the animal; that between the organism and the machine; and that between the physical and the non-physical. In this new world order, Haraway continues, simulation replaces representation and replication takes the place of reproduction. This is the world order that such authors as Villiers romanticized and predicted. As Hadaly the 'hybrid' slips freely across these borders and boundaries, she reveals the origins of this slippage in the nineteenth century's preoccupation with reproduction (of children), replication (of artworks) and the mechanics of the female body.[21]

In the epilogue to her book, Marie Lathers makes a connection between a passage in Villiers and Ridley Scott's 1982 *Blade Runner* – a film already mentioned in Haraway's essay. In both scenes, the human, the animal, and the machine converge. In Villiers, Hadaly looks like a woman, but her artificiality is made visible by her impassible acceptance of an animal – a bird sitting on her shoulder. The bird, it turns out, is also an automaton. Fast forward to *Blade Runner*, and "[t]he dialogue has been simplified, the species of bird changed, but the scene is uncannily familiar as the modern couple – male human and female android – meet."[22] What Lathers does not emphasize is that the scene is in fact a confrontation between two generations of

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[19] Ibid., 149-52.
[20] Lyotard, 25.
[21] Marie Lathers, *The Aesthetics of Artifice: Villiers's* 'L'Eve future' (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 24.
[22] Ibid., 139.

dandies: Hadaly is a thoroughly modern, even futuristic dandy, while her lover Lord Ewald, depicted as a classic nineteenth-century dandy, is left behind, looking completely disoriented and out of place in this posthuman setup.

Once we adopt the lens of posthumanity to read the dandy's aesthetic figure, many of its different characteristics and patterns can be discussed as a consistent morphology that is highly compelling, just like the strategies that sustain their functioning: mimicry and cover-up, proximity (Deleuze and Guattari's *voisinage*)[23], and mutation, are the processes behind the main *topoi* of dandy becomings, such as animality, the fantastic (the vampire, the ghost), the myth (the androgyne and the centaur), athleticism, and finally, the machine. While remaining true to its traditionally solitary image, and retaining unique characteristics within these constellations, the dandy figure forms relationships of several kinds: some form alliances and double up in couples, like Thérèse and Laurent in Zola; others form cliques, like the little band of girls in Balbec, or predatory packs, like Albertine, Andrée and Morel in Proust. Some stay together for years, like Odette and Swann, while others collide and break up quickly, like Laure Lordès and Lion the cat in Rachilde. Some connections are symbiotic, like those between Hauteclaire and Serlon in Barbey, and Maldoror and the shark in Lautréamont, while others are parasitic, like the ones tying Morel to Charlus in Proust. As I explore these relationships, I distinguish between dynamic dandy becomings and exhausted historical dandy copies. The younger, modern dandies, projected into the twentieth century, eventually overtake their oldfashioned lovers and protectors. Such is the relationship in Villiers's *L'Ève future* between Hadaly who is modern, and Lord Ewald who belongs in the nineteenth century. The bonds between Proust's Odette and Swann, and between Morel and Charlus follow a similar pattern. In addition to considering alliances

[23] Deleuze and Guattari, 334.

among dandies, I theorize the role of the public in shaping, maintaining and challenging the image of the dandy. For this reason, I discuss such characters as Madame Raquin and Camille Raquin in Zola, Dr. Torty in Barbey, and Colette Peignot's partners, to name a few. A creature of appearance, the dandy needs others in order to realize his or her vocation.

To contextualize my own formulation with regard to the existing scholarship on the dandy, it is important to point out that during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, critics across humanities eagerly engaged with this character, attesting at once to the persistent elusiveness and continued relevance of this figure. While I recognize the importance of sociohistorical configurations, my perspective is different in that I am interested in the dandy's abstraction from the determinations that they impose. Extensive coverage of all the studies on the dandy is impossible and even unnecessary, but several relevant critical trends can be singled out from an immensely rich corpus. I will bring attention to the dandy as seen through the lens of social history, psychoanalysis, women's and gender studies, and most recently, race and postcolonial studies.

Ellen Moers's comprehensive survey *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (1960) is still an important place to start. Other historians and biographers have taken on the task of contributing to a social and intellectual history of the dandy, concentrating either on a distinct persona,[24] an author,[25] a time period or a nation[26] but an updated biography of the dandy matching the scale of Moers's work still remains to be written. Moers's study concerns England and France, covering the biographies of such iconic figures as Beau Brummell, Edward Bulwer, Benjamin Disraeli, Count d'Orsay, Lord Henry Seymour, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Honoré de Balzac,

[24] Arnould De Liedekerke, *Talon rouge, Barbey d'Aurevilly, le dandy absolu* (Paris: La petite vermillion, 1993).
[25] François Simone, *Le Dandysme de Marcel Proust: De Brummell au Baron de Charlus* (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1956.)
[26] John C. Prévost, *Le Dandysme en France (1817-39),* (Geneva: Droz, 1957).

Eugène Sue, Charles Baudelaire, Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde and Max Beerbohm, among others, while grounding their distinctive roles in socio-historical context. The author differentiates between the historical and literary dandy and provides invaluable insight on mutual influences between English and French dandyisms, while expounding on their unique particularities. Moers' study, however, is limited to the male figure, and ends with the decadent dandies of the 1880-90s:

> We are today legatees of the Victorian ambivalence. In our dissatisfaction with utopia we marvel at the *possibility* of ignoring progress, despising community and adoring self. We are tired of rubbing shoulders with humanity. But the dandy, who made a success (however despicable and trivial) of absolute selfishness, is now merely a nostalgic catchword in the poet's lexicon.[27]

Ending her project with a wistful sketch of Max Beerbohm standing as a lone *démodé*, a living anachronism in the midst of the twentieth century, Moers concludes by saying that the dandy has been replaced by "commercialism: the tragic spectacle of literature and personality thrown open on the market place, the great experiment of selling talent by advertising, publicity and showmanship."[28] Two years later, Roland Barthes, also the author of the influential *Système de la mode* (1967), will echo Moers's assertion by proclaiming in his essay "Le dandysme et la mode" that:

> [l]a mode masculine n'en épuise pas moins la variation des détails, sans cependant rien toucher, depuis de longues années, au type fondamental du vêtement: elle prive donc le dandysme à la fois de ses limites et de son aliment principal: c'est bien la Mode qui a tué le dandysme.[29]

However, once we consider the dandy as a figure of posthumanity, we can say that despite Moers's and Barthes's early assessments, the dandy has indeed survived into the twentieth

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[27] Moers, 14.
[28] Moers, 292.
[29] Roland Barthes, "Le dandysme et la mode", *Œuvres complètes* Vol.1 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), 966.

century. Tellingly, critical interest on the topic has not dwindled either, as the following generations kept looking for new embodiments of the dandy figure, and old and new disciplines kept suggesting alternative approaches to it.

In 1962, in the same year that Barthes published his essay on the death of the dandy, Françoise Dolto, known mostly for her psychoanalytic – a discipline both old and new – work on childhood development, surprised her readership by writing a short essay at the request of Georges Mathieu, the editor of the *United States Lines Paris Review*, for a special issue on the dandy. In this essay, Dolto presents the dandy as an admirable, fierce yet vulnerable being whose ability to control self and surroundings is constantly undermined by the limits imposed by the unconscious drives. This unconscious energy, rather than the individual self, is what interests Dolto the most, according to Muriel Djéribi-Valentin:

> Ce qui l'intéresse du dandy, ce ne sont pas ses intentions conscientes ni la mise en acte des stratégies de séduction dont il affirmerait une totale maîtrise, mais c'est la forme fugace d'un désir qui se cherche, livré définitivement à l'errance parce qu'il n'a pu s'enraciner dans une scène primitive satisfaisante.[30]

Removed in time from the historical past, Dolto's dandy is always contemporary, since for her "ce fils orphélin" traces his origins to a personal, not a socio-political trauma.[31] Sexually, the dandy, "il est d'aucun [sexe],"[32] and therefore inclusive of male and female bodies, as long as there is the right singular "intensity" "emanating" from them. Extreme speed ("On a beau courir après le dandy, on ne le trouve jamais, il est toujours plus loin"[33], "Flèche inexorable […] Aucune cible terrestre ne saurait l'arrêter")[34] and athleticism ("Tel le punching-ball du boxeur, il

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[30] Muriel Djéribi-Valentin, Preface to Françoise Dolto, *Le dandy, solitaire et singulier* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987), 11.
[31] Dolto, 20.
[32] Ibid., 29.
[33] Ibid., 41.
[34] Ibid., 21.

[le miroir] est son entraîneur infatiguable")[35] – qualities that will come up with many protagonists in my study – bring this image even closer to the dynamics of dehumanization.

Psychoanalysis is also at the core of the approach taken by Deborah Houk, but this time, it is applied to a specific literary and historical context in her essay "Self-Construction and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth-Century French Dandyism."[36] The literary dandy, in the works selected by Houk, treats the history of France as if it were his own family history.[37] Self-fashioning, from this perspective, is seen as a reaction to the castrating effects of the French Revolution on the aristocracy:

> In effect, the new configuration of classes which arose from the dust of the French Revolution represents an emasculation of the upper class, so that the dandy's elaborate production of himself as different – not bourgeois – marks an attempt to capitalize on his defining loss and redeploy it for creative purposes. Viewed in the context of his loss of power in the public sphere, the dandy's project of constructing his self as an impenetrable outer shell represents a defensive reaction to a very real social threat.[38]

In addition, as a Romantic, the dandy feels the need to replace the void left by the crisis of faith associated with the period, turning inward – via the essential mirror – in his search of an object of reverence: "Rather than worshipping a deity, the dandy gave himself to "une espèce de culte de soi-même[.]"[39] The mirror stage, as described by Houk, is extremely relevant to my project because it helps to show that the dandy, as a child, may never have been able to become human to begin with:

> Divided and decentered, the Lacanian subject must face the horrifying reality of his constituting alienation; or, as in the case of the dandy, the subject can attempt

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[35] Ibid., 19.
[36] Deborah Houk, "Self-Construction and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth-Century French Dandyism" *French Forum*; 1997 January 22(1): 59-73.
[37] Accroding to Stan Hawkings, Julia Kristeva sees effeminacy not as an adversity but as an aesthetic strategy of the dandy who, similarly to the punk, embraces it, in order to rebel against masculinity of the father. *The British Pop Dandy: Masculinity, Popular Music and Culture* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 178.
[38] Houk, 61.
[39] Ibid., 65-6.

> to obscure the discontinuities within (and the ensuring feelings of vulnerability) by projecting a seamless exterior persona.[40]

Seen from the point of view of psychoanalysis, the dandy fails at resolving the turmoil of the mirror stage. As a result, the self is not adequately shaped, and the subject is not allowed in the realm of the symbolic and human society. But if we take a different orientation on the same processes, that is, Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalytics of becoming, the sabotaged mirror stage is rather an opportunity to seamlessly forgo both the symbolic order and humanity with one and the same commanding move.

Deborah Houk's assessment, aside from its strong psychoanalytic position, also represents another essential critical trend, which has taken its full shape in the 1990s and in the 2000s, and that approaches the dandy from the point of view of several cultural studies perspectives, such as gender, ethnic, and postcolonial studies. The gesture of inviting new configurations is crucial to my own study, which equally strives to integrate a diverse array of dandy embodiments, and helps me to articulate a call for a new way of looking at the dandy. Gender studies, in particular, play an essential role to our understanding that a human being is inevitably defined by referring to one of the two opposite male/female forms of identification. The dandy, radically moving towards inhumanity, tries in fact to disregard gender and other forms of reified designation.

Among many gender studies-inflected readings of the dandy, I will start by citing an article by Miranda Gill, "The Myth of the Female Dandy," (2007) dedicated to the *lionnes* – the historical and literary female dandies of the Restoration and the July Monarchy in France.[41] Her analysis focuses on popular literary sketches about social types and temperaments called

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[40] Ibid., 62.
[41] Miranda Gill. "The Myth of the Female Dandy" *French Studies*. 61.2 (2007): 167-181.

psychologies, as well as Barbey d'Aurevilly's story "Le dessous des cartes" of *Les diaboliques*, in which the expression *femme dandy* is actually used in the description of the protagonist, Countess Tremblay de Stasseville. Similarly, Jessica R. Feldman in her book *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (1993) calls the dandy a figure of displacement, literally referring to the French dandyism as an import from England, but also projecting the notion to describe the dandy's general resistance to any form of delimitation, geographical or otherwise. Starting with the assertion that "[t]here simply is no essential time, place, or figure of dandyism,"[42] Feldman proceeds to discuss the ways in which the dandy "challenges the very concept of two separate genders"[43] from the nineteenth-century fiction of Gautier, Baudelaire and Barbey, all the way into the American high modernism of Willa Cather, Wallace Stevens and Vladimir Nabokov. Lastly, the most recent work in this category is Stan Hawkings's *The British Pop Dandy: Masculinity, Popular Music and Culture* (2009), which goes back to the birthplace of the historical dandy to reflect on the British staged masculinity of such stars as, among many others, Sid Vicious, the member of the punk group *Sex Pistols*, the glam rocker David Bowie, and Jarvis Cocker, the frontman of the Brit Pop band *Pulp* and a Parisian by adoption. The insights contained in these studies are essential to my analysis, but I contend that only a further push toward complete de-humanization can account for the dandy's absolute becoming.

A good example of a volume with a broader cultural studies spectrum is *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse and Art and Culture* (2001) edited by Susan Fillin-Yeh, whose intent is to

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[42] Jessica R. Feldman, *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 5.
[43] Ibid., 11.

"refurbish" "[t]he conventional notion of the dandy as a Western European man-about-town"[44] both in contemporary culture, and in the past, by promoting "inclusive dandyism"[45] and inviting ideas on "new dandies from other places" in terms of geography, ethnicity, and class.

To answer the question "Why study dandies?", Fillin-Yeh, in the introduction entitled "New Strategies for a Theory of Dandies" opening the volume, replies:

> Certainly because new ones continue to flourish. Dandies' resistance to norms has found many outlets in the twentieth century; contemporary life and events have invoked (and provoked) dandyism […] But many dandies, including historical ones, have remained invisible.[46]

Aside from essays on women dandies, such as Rhonda K. Garelick's "The Layered Look: Coco Chanel and Contagious Celebrity" and Jennifer Blessing's "Claude Cahun, Dandy Provocateuse," this anthology brings together papers on Native American (Robert Moore's "'Indian Dandies: Sartorial Finesse and Self-Presentation along the Columbia River, 1790-1855"), Black (Richard J. Powell's "Sartor Africanus"), and even the Soviet dandies known as *stiliagi* (Mark Allen Svede's "Twiggy and Trotsky: Or, What the Soviet Dandy Will Be Wearing This Next Five-Year Plan"). The latest additions to this new approach are the study *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (2009) by Monica L. Miller, and the photobook *Gentlemen on Bacongo: The Dandies of Sub-Saharan Africa* by Daniele Tamagni (2009).

From the perspective of my study, if there is one aspect that is often overemphasized in these socio-historical analyses, it is the militant character of a dandy figuration whose

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[44] Susan Fillin-Yeh, "New Strategies for a Theory of Dandies" *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*, Susan Fillin-Yeh, ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 3.
[45] Ibid., 6.
[46] Fillin-Yeh, 3.

"[c]onstructed selfhood" is inseparable from "cultural identity"[47] and whose "[a]ppearance can be a political act [.]"[48] My view of the dandy differs from this kind of assessment, in that the notion of self or identity, despite singularity, tends to become irrelevant for dandy becomings. The dandy is rarely subversive on purpose. After all, any reader of Proust knows that Odette de Crécy equally highjacks appropriate normative and non-normative sexual, gender and class identifications in order to pursue her own trajectory. Aesthetic desire, rather than socio-political motive, is what drives the process of becoming-dandy.

Finally, there are several critics and thinkers who talk about the dandy from the point of view of less easily categorized theoretical perspectives. Some have been interested in and voiced their position on the subject, including Jean-Paul Sartre in *Baudelaire*, Albert Camus in *L'homme révolté*, and Antoine Compagnon in *Les Anti-Modernes: de Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes* (2005), this was often done in passing, on the margins of a discussion on other topics. In fact, Schiffer's *Philosophie du dandysme* intends to address this limited attention to the dandy as a philosophical concept. When introducing his project, he expresses regret that scholarship on the dandy has been mostly limited to the domain of literary criticism: "Que le dandysme fût considéré, depuis sa naissance, au début du XIX^{e} siècle, comme un sujet littéraire, plus que philosophique, c'est là ce qui ressort, à l'évidence, des rares études consacrées à cette thématique."[49] As I stated earlier, I insist on the importance and relevance of studying the literary dandy as an early figure of posthumanism, while backing my readings with Schiffer's concept of the "aesthetics of disappearance," which resonates clearly with Deleuze and Guattari's definition

[47] Ibid., 22-3.
[48] Fillin-Yeh, 2.
[49] Schiffer, 1.

of becoming – "une manière esthétiquement sublimée, certes toute paradoxale puisqu'elle s'apparente en ce cas à un suicide d'ordre symbolique, de faire disparaître l'être lui-même [.]"[50]

In light of the fact that my project addresses French literary history, it is very important to consider the specifically French aspect of the dandy. The origins of the dandy as a historical and cultural phenomenon are traditionally traced to the Regency period, in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England. In France, as Moers explains, the dandy appears for the first time after Napoleon's defeat and the return of the Bourbon dynasty to power: "[T]he English dandies took Paris much as Wellington has taken Waterloo."[51] Davina L. Eisenberg describes the implications of that import in France in her essay *The Figure of the Dandy in Barbey d'Aurevilly's* "Le bonheur dans le crime":

> Between 1815-30, a cultural wave of anglomania, an enthusiasm for all things English, swept over France […] The notion of "the dandy" crossed the English Channel into France at this moment as another English import and was first limited to elegant dressing, affected airs and the frequentation of fashionable cafés.[52]

But soon the French dandy migrates from the streets and cafés of Paris into the realm of criticism, journalism, and literature. As Moers attests, this migration into the printed medium helped the French dandy endure various social changes and political regimes, and even influence some new incarnations of the English dandy toward the end of the nineteenth century:

> The fact that aspiring French dandies drew many of their attitudes *from books* left its mark on the history of dandyism in France. By the mid-century French dandyism would be an essentially literary doctrine, a pose for the intellectual in revolt. Ironically, the Victorian crusade to do away with everything belonging to the Regency would force dandyism to go underground at home for half a century; but in France the imported dandy tradition – subtler, slighter, less social than

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[50] Ibid., 210.
[51] Moers, 108.
[52] Davina L. Eisenberg, *The Figure of the Dandy in Barbey d'Aurevilly's* "Le bonheur dans le crime", (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 9.

> intellectual – would be unbroken. And the dandyism that came to the fore in England in the 'nineties was largely influenced by French ideas.[53]

My own focus on literary dandies, with the partial exception of Colette Peignot, whose personal dandyism will be studied alongside her literary persona, is a tribute to the history of the French dandyism and its stress on the intellectual aspects of the phenomenon. Villiers's Lord Ewald of *L'Ève future* as a nineteenth-century English dandy, and Proust's Odette as an anglophile are only two of many novel heroes in French literature who preserve the memory of this mutual cultural influence.

According to John C. Prévost in his survey *Le Dandysme en France (1817-39)* (1957), literary dandyism in France began in earnest in 1832:

> Quelques auteurs firent de la littérature un moyen d'étaler leur fatuité. Avant 1830, ce furent Stendhal, Mérimée et Balzac qui s'engagèrent dans cette voie. L'impertinence des *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie*, parus en 1830, et de *La Table de nuit*, parue en 1832, poussa enfin la critique à parler de dandysme littéraire.[54]

The prototypes of the dandy in French literature, however, emerge as early as the post-revolutionary and preromantic title protagonists in such works as Chateaubriand's *René* (1802), Madame de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807), and Benjamin Constant's *Adophe* (1816).[55] The dandy characters will then multiply in the full Romanticism of the 1820-1840s. As Ellen Moers puts it:

> There was no specifically dandy literature in France in the 'thirties and 'forties […] But more descriptions, analyses, and criticisms of the dandies were published in this period in France than in all the society novels of the Regency […] They

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[53] Moers, 123.
[54] Prévost, 164.
[55] Domna Stanton in *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the* Honnête Homme *and the* Dandy *in Seventeenth and Nineteenth Century French Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), argues for filiation between the seventeenth-century *honnête homme* and the nineteenth-century dandy. While it is true that both the *honnête homme* and the dandy are concerned with vestment, the former is not implicated in the processes of becoming, but is rather a negotiated social figure. The *raison d'etre* for the *honnête homme* is to be a proper social subject ("honnête" meaning "proper" in this context) by being at the court, the army, and so on.

> crowded into the novels, the poems, the songs, the letters, the sketches, the plays and the journals of the greatest and least of authors.[56]

Balzac, among others, was one of the authors of this generation. Besides his analysis of the dandy in *Le traité de la vie élégante* (1830), he sketched a host of dandy figures in *La Comédie Humaine*, such as Henry de Marsay and Paquita Valdes in *La fille aux yeux d'or* (1835), Eugène de Rastignac appearing for the first time in *Le Père Goriot* (1834-5), and Lucien de Rubempré and Esther Van Gobseck in *Splendeurs et Misères des courtisanes* (1838-47). Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir* (1830), Georges Sand's *Indiana* (1832), Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) and its famous preface, and Alfred de Musset's *Confession d'un enfant du siècle* (1836), as well as Eugène Sue's *Arthur* (1839), *Le Marquis de Létorière* (1840), and *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-3) equally provide various figurations of the dandy in this period.

The full deployment of the dandy as reinvention of self and questioning of humanity is particularly relevant in French Romanticism because of a strong correlation with the increasing discomfort brought about by the crumbling of the foundations of the traditional world order that gave the human a moral, religious, and social grounding. In fact, these literary figures are contemporary with Kierkegaard's concern for ethics, aesthetics, and religion that his Romantic seducer Johannes – a dandy in his own right – illustrates. The ethical dimension of the Romantic dandy, via the mediation of the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, allows us to retrace this trend well into the twentieth century, and to see in Albert Camus the next contributor to the discussion of the dandy as a philosophical persona. For Camus, who can also be considered as a Romantic dandy projected into post-World War II France, Romanticism "défie d'abord la loi morale et divine.

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[56] Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), 125.

Voilà pourquoi son image la plus originale n'est pas, d'abord, le révolutionnaire mais, logiquement, le dandy."[57]

However, between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Balzac and Proust, the period between Romanticism and Decadence is remarkable due to contributions by two theorists and practitioners of dandyism, Barbey d'Aurevilly, whose treatise *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell* (1845) is one of the earliest analytical interventions on the subject by a French author, and Charles Baudelaire, with *Le peintre de la vie moderne* (1863). These analytical works, accompanied by fiction (Baudelaire's *Fanfarlo* [1847] and Barbey's *Les Diaboliques* [1850-73]), are invaluable dandy theories that bridge the Romantics and the Decadents as two aesthetic epicenters of French literary dandyism. What is particularly relevant about Baudelaire's essay to a study that seeks to redefine the dandy is that he is perhaps the first to move beyond historical context, identifying prototypes in as early as Antiquity, and as far as the New World,[58] and seeing the dandy, according to Moers, as a "permanent but also immediate essence to be superimposed on his conception of the artist."[59] Furthermore, as I also point out in my second chapter, Baudelaire's praise of makeup in "Éloge du maquillage"[60] will help me to articulate the inorganic, artificial qualities of the dandy. While both Baudelaire's literary and critical corpuses are relevant to my project, I engage mainly with the latter, as the dandy characters in his works of fiction and poetry have already been addressed by previous scholars.[61]

For Moers, Decadence is the "last chapter of the dandy's history. For the dandy was to go down to defeat at the hands not of decadence but of vulgarity. The *fin de siècle* made him over

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[57] Albert Camus *L'homme révolté*, (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1951), 58.
[58] Charles Baudelaire, "Le dandy" *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, *Au-delà du romantisme: Écrits sur l'art*, (Paris: GF Flammarion,1998), 235.
[59] Moers, 274.
[60] Ibid., 337-9.
[61] Deborah Houk, "Self-Construction and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth-Century French Dandyism" *French Forum*; 1997 January; 22(1): 59-73.

for a mass audience."[62] From the perspective of this study, Decadence, or "romantisme noir,"[63] does indeed provide the context for the next, but definitely not the last, forceful intervention of the dandy in French literature and culture. In fact, like Romanticism, Decadence further "rejected the realist goal of mimetic portrayal of society [,]"[64] and projected its literary protagonists into in-human, immoral and artificial becomings, as demonstrated by the works of J.K. Huysmans (*À rebours* [1884]), Guy de Maupassant (*Bel Ami* [1885]), Octave Mirbeau (*Le jardin des supplices* [1889] and *Sébastien Roch* [1890]), among others.

In this study, which aims at establishing the movement toward posthuman becomings most apt to project the dandy in the twentieth century, with Proust providing the crucial aesthetic link "entre deux siècles"[65], and between Decadence and Modernism, I will extend my analyses of the literary dandy to 1934, the year of Colette Peignot's death. Going further still, Albert Camus already gives a hint that the dandy might have survived not only the two world wars, but even the end of the twentieth century. As I posit in my conclusion, this is the field of research that remains to be addressed.

This is why I start and end my project with texts published at later dates (1867-1930s) than those traditionally associated with the dandy in French literature. I intend to prove that the dandy as an aesthetic figure survives and surpasses the Romantic dandy, bringing us into the present. My selection is also dictated in part by a desire to present a different take on the dandy, a controversial character who is both admired and reviled, and sometimes within the same work. Given the limits of this study, I choose only a sample of literary dandies, but one could talk about several other contemporaries of the authors in my study. While it is impossible to list in a

[62] Moers, 283.
[63] Schiffer, 14.
[64] Diana Holmes, *Rachilde: Decadence, Gender, and the Woman Writer*, New York, Oxford: Berg, 2001, 39.
[65] Antoine Compagnon, *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989).

meaningful way all of these possible projects, I will only mention the works that I deem relevant in terms of painting dandy characters whose humanity is repeatedly questioned. For Zola's and Lautréamont's period, this would be Gustave Flaubert, with his *Madame Bovary* (1856), *Salammbô* (1862), and *La tentation de Saint Antoine* (1849-74). From Rachilde's generation, these could include Paul Bourget's *Le Disciple* (1889) and Jean Lorrain's *Monsieur de Phocas* (1901). For Proust, possible relevant contemporaries could be Rachilde's protégé Alfred Jarry with *Ubu Roi* (1896) and *Le Surmâle* (1901), André Gide's *L'immoraliste* (1902) and *Les caves du Vatican* (1914), Raymond Roussel's *Locus Solus* (1914), and Colette's *Claudine* series (1900-220). Finally, from Colette Peignot's generation, Jean Cocteau's *Les enfants terribles* (1929), Georges Bataille's *L'histoire de l'œil* (1928), Antonin Artaud's *Héliogabale, ou l'Anarchiste couronné* (1934), and Drieu La Rochelle's *Gilles* (1939) could provide characters relevant to this study.

My corpus includes both obvious and more unexpected choices within the current critical treatment of the dandy. In the first two chapters, I present two different, yet complementary ways of becoming a dandy. For that reason, several authors are presented in both chapters. Chapter one concentrates on renditions of the dandy and the links to animality, the myth and the fantastic in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* (1867), Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869), Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Le bonheur dans le crime" (1870), Rachilde's *L'Animale* (1893), and Colette Peignot's *Écrits de Laure* (1934). Chapter two focuses instead on the mechanical aspects of the dandy in Lautréamont, Colette Peignot and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. I highlight the role of vestment, accessories, and props as ways to extend the body beyond its human contours.

I start by challenging Zola's (1840 – 1902) traditional association with naturalism by looking at the title heroine and her partner in crime, Thérèse Raquin and Laurent, and their

animal and supernatural dandyisms. With Thérèse and Laurent, I also open the discussion on the symbiotic dandy couple, which I continue in my study of another criminal dandy duo, Hauteclaire and Serlon, in "Le Bonheur dans le crime" by Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808 – 1889). The protagonists' animality is further highlighted by their extraordinary athleticism, and the association with the mythical hybrid centaur – a recurring image in the works selected for this dissertation, but also an important romanticized figure for the historical French dandy.[66] Like Zola and Barbey, Lautréamont (1846 -1870) in *Les Chants de Maldoror*, depicts a dandy, Maldoror, who embodies crime and the Baudelairean "mal", but the iconoclastic style of the poem pushes the image of cruelty and dehumanization to its limits. Albert Camus, significantly, was the first to link Maldoror's inhumanity to the Romantic dandy:

> [C]e héros a tous les prestiges du dandy métaphysique : 'Figure plus qu'humaine, triste comme l'univers, belle comme le suicide.' Aussi bien, comme le révolté romantique, désespérant de la justice divine, Maldoror prendra le parti du mal […] Il [Lautréamont] n'a pas voulu ériger une image spectaculaire du rebelle ou du dandy en face de la création, mais confondre l'homme et le monde dans le même anéantissement. Il s'est attaqué à la frontière même qui sépare l'homme de l'univers. La liberté totale, celle du crime en particulier, suppose la destruction des frontières humaines.[67]

Literally crossing all kinds of borders, Maldoror is an amphibian – comfortable both in Paris and in the ocean. Adding to the repertoire of mythical hybrid creatures, he is a Romantic vampire and a decadent androgyne.

While Rachilde (1860-1953) outlives all the authors in my temporal framework, I choose only a sample of her work, taken from her most prolific period, the years between 1880-1889, which represents her enduring commitment to Decadent aesthetics.[68] While *Monsieur Vénus*

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[66] Moers, 117.
[67] Camus, 92-3.
[68] Holmes writes that "[t]he majority of her novels and stories were set in contemporary France, and written in the darkly erotic vein she had begun with *Monsieur de la Nouveauté* and becomes famous for with *Monsieur Vénus*."

(1884) is the novel, which defined her style, earned her the nickname 'Mademoiselle Baudelaire',[69] and brought her celebrity, it is also a novel about a female dandy. I chose *L'Animale* because its heroine Laure Lordès, unlike *Monsieur Vénus*'s Raoule Vénérande, is not a cross-dresser but a hidden-in-plain-view, ultrafeminine and less obvious dandy. Together with Fillin-Yeh's statement that "[i]f the masquerade paradigm is useful for a discussion of all dandies whose power is performative, coming to a full expression socially as a form of dialogue, it is particularly serviceable as a tool for recognizing female dandies when their dandy's attire is not the male suit,"[70] my analysis of *l'Animale* helps me later on, as I identify Proust's Odette de Crécy, also an ultra-feminine seductress, as a dandy.

Villiers (1838 – 1889) might be the only author who has been explored in both the posthuman[71] and dandy[72] vein, but never in the same project. My contribution is to argue for recognition as dandies of a "pack" of four female characters – the superficial *bourgeoise* Alicia Clary, the *femme fatale* Evelyn Habal, the artist Sowana, and the android Hadaly. Like Sowana, the youngest author in my study, Colette Peignot (1903-1938), is simultaneously an artist and a work of art - the dandy. Her case is unique in that one person becomes two dandies – one in real life and the other in fiction. Her personal dandyism, resulting in part from her exceptional drive to overcome tuberculosis, complements her fictionalized persona, Laure. Through medical procedures and athleticism, Peignot's body undergoes a physical transformation, but at the same

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After the World War I, "[i]f the energy and will to write were undiminished, she was uncomfortably aware that her days as the scandalously avant-garde 'werewolf" were over, and to those who had taken over that role she appeared to be part of the Establishment," 61.

[69] Ibid., 42.

[70] Fillin-Yeh, 17.

[71] Marie Lathers, *The Aesthetics of Artifice: Villiers's* 'L'Eve future' (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[72] Rhonda Garelick, *Rising Star, Dandyism, Gender, and the Performance in the Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

time, unlike any other dandy in this study, her ultimate accessory in becoming Laure is poetic language.

Finally, chapter three, devoted entirely to Proust (1971-1922), serves a dual purpose. First, by studying the characters of Odette de Crécy, and a younger generation represented by an ultimate becoming "pack" consisting of Albertine, Andrée, and Morel, I would like to update the existing Proustian scholarship on the dandy, which up to this point, has been limited to such nineteenth-century configurations as Baron de Charlus and Charles Swann.[73] Secondly, Proust's unique position "entre deux siècles," while bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, decadence and modernism, the horse-drawn carriage Victoria of Balzac's era and the airplane, invites another uncanny convergence – the dandy as a synthesis between the animal, human, and the machine. In my conclusion, on the other hand, I dispel the impression that Proust would be the end point for this figure. In fact, I contend that the dandy as posthuman not only goes beyond the chronological scope of my project, but is still alive today.

[73] Simone François, *Le Dandysme de Marcel Proust: De Brummell au Baron de Charlus* (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1956).

2.0 MUTATING BODIES: ANIMALITY, MYTHOLOGY, AND THE SUPERNATURAL

In this chapter, I propose a study of the dandy through the lens of dehumanization in Émile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* (1867), Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869), Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Le bonheur dans le crime" (1870), Rachilde's *L'Animale* (1893), and Colette Peignot's *Écrits de Laure* (1934). What these works have in common are protagonists who trespass, cross a boundary of sorts – from human to animal, from law-abiding citizen to criminal, from reality to myth. I intend to show that this enigmatic literary figure, by testing the limits of humanity and the body, by contradicting the norm, exposes the inadequacies of the social role of the subject.

The concept of becoming-animal, although essential, is only a starting point for a much larger process of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari say this themselves, and their reflection will allow me to extend the discussion on the becoming-animal to other *topoi* of the dandy's dehumanization common to these texts:

> Le devenir-animal n'est qu'un cas parmi d'autres. Nous nous trouvons pris dans des segments de devenir, entre lesquels nous pouvons établir une espèce d'ordre ou de progression apparente: devenir-femme, devenir-enfant; devenir-animal, végétal ou minéral; devenirs moléculaires de toutes sortes, devenirs-particules. Des fibres mènent des uns aux autres, transforment les uns dans les autres, en traversant les portes et les seuils.[74]

[74] Deleuze and Guattari, 333.

While keeping in mind a variety of instances of such transgressions and crossings of various thresholds, this chapter will focus specifically on the images of animality, violence, criminality, and athleticism as dehumanizing devices. Special attention will be drawn to instances of dandy couples, in *Thérèse Raquin* and "Le Bonheur Dans le Crime" in particular. This is how we will come to know a hydra-like, two-headed spirit and will analyze the power dynamics of this interpersonal subjectivity. Whether created by a male writer, a female author, or the product of self-writing such as "the Laure" created by Colette Peignot, the female character has to show why she is extraordinary by integrating the male accomplice into her process of becoming and thus exposing social inadequacy of gender.

2.1 ÉMILE ZOLA'S *THÉRÈSE RAQUIN* (1867)

Émile Zola famously states in the preface to the second edition of *Thérèse Raquin,* published in 1868, that the novel is a naturalist, scientific dissection of drives and that the protagonists are "brutes humaines, rien de plus."[75] In past decades, critics, including Naomi Schor, Charles Bernheimer, Susan Harrow, and Elizabeth Knutson, when praising Zola's literary talent and relevance to today's readers, point to numerous productive psychological and narrative contradictions in the novel that attest to a more complex view of human nature. In the 1980-90s, gender and sexuality scholars engaged with Zola's work in a variety of ways. Naomi Schor in "Mother's Day: Zola's Women,"[76] discusses Zola's androgynous and masculine women protagonists. Hannah Thompson briefly discusses *Thérèse Raquin* in her study of *Les Rougon-Macquart*

[75] Émile Zola, *Thérèse Raquin* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 1967), 8.
[76] Naomi Schor, "Mother's Day: Zola's Women" *Critical Essays on Emile Zola*. Ed. D. Baguley (Boston: Hall, 1986), 130-42.

cycle, "Questions of Sexuality and Gender."[77] The *topoi* of the *femme fatale* and the vampire are the focuses of projects by Patricia Flanagan Behrendt[78] and Robert Tracy.[79] Susan Harrow focuses on Zola's interest in physiology, not so much for the possibility of scientific truth but for the possibility of poetic richness of the "body as a signifying surface."[80] For her, the aesthetic of dehumanization – not only the fantastic and animal imagery of the novel but equally abstraction and deviation from narrative advancement, the intermittently reliable narrator – all help to see Zola as a protomodernist writer. But at the same time, Zola's *Thérèse Raquin,* with its emphasis on the body, gore, and ghosts, is a product of its own time, born at the moment of popularity of the roman noir. According to François-Xavier Eygun, "Le XIXe siècle regorge d'écrivains du fantastique, et ce mouvement, né en grande partie avec la mode du roman noir ou gothique au XVIIIe se poursuivra au XXe, sous d'autres formes, ou dans un fantastique renouvelé."[81] Elizabeth Knutson focuses precisely on Zola's aptitude for rendering the supernatural:

> The mythical and imaginative dimension of Zola's work – the recurring images, themes and symbols pervading the Rougon-Macquart series – is well-known. Becker, Gourdin-Servenière, and Lavielle have suggested that in *Thérèse Raquin*, the fantastic dimension is more interesting and compelling than the naturalist intention […] In short, the text is both a psychological study and a horror tale.[82]

Knutson[83] questions *Thérèse Raquin*'s naturalism by looking at the figure of the vampire (Camille's bite on Lauren's neck and later on, Thérèse's desire to kiss and bite Laurent's

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[77] Hannah Thompson, "Questions of Sexuality and Gender" *The Cambridge Companion to Émile Zola* ed. Brian Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 55-6.
[78] Patricia Flanagan Behrendt. "Dangerous Wounds: Vampirism as Social Metaphor in Zola's Therese Raquin." *European Studies Journal* 2.2 (1985): 32-40.
[79] Tracy, Robert. "Loving You All Ways: Vamps, Vampires, Necrophiles and Necrofilles in Nineteenth-Century Fiction." *Sex and Death in Victorian Literature*. Ed. Regina Barreca. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990. 32-59.
[80] Susan Harrow, "Thérèse Raquin: Animal Passion and the Brutality of Reading", *The Cambridge Companion to Émile Zola* ed. Brian Nelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 55-6.110.
[81] François-Xavier Eygun, *Barbey d'Aurevilly et le fantastique* (Peter Lang: New York, 1997), 1.
[82] Elizabeth M. Knutson, "The natural and the supernatural in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*" *Symposium* 55:3 (2001): 141.
[83] Ibid.,140-54.

wound), the living dead (Camille's ghost and Thérèse, drugged up by Mme Raquin, buried alive in the boutique), and the doll.

Recently, several critics have addressed internal tensions in Zola's naturalism as a literary genre. Questioning seemingly irreconcilable differences between naturalism and decadence is the goal of Charles Bernheimer's book *Decadent Subjects*: *The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the* Fin de Siècle *in Europe,*[84] where he posits that Zola's naturalism is imbued with elements of decadent aesthetic, while being influential on decadent writers such as Huysmans and Octave Mirbeau, because of an ambiguous relationship to self, nature, and the human body. David F. Bell in his article "*Thérèse Raquin*: Scientific Realism in Zola's Laboratory," discusses the links between science and literature.[85] Informed by Bell's analysis, Susan Harrow goes further by showing that Zola's writing resists his promise to conduct a scientific study of pathology, as his imaginative fiction prevents him from sticking to his own naturalist tenets.

If Zola is a scientist, he is a gothic scientist, a new Dr. Frankenstein who creates monsters. The most fascinating and sinister creatures to come out of his laboratory are Thérèse and Laurent – predecessors of a whole lineage to follow, including Renée Saccard and Maxime Rougon of *La Curée* (1872), Nana Coupeau of *Nana* (1880), and Étienne Lantier and Chaval of *Germinal* (1885). A consistent, violent energy and a fantastic ability to adapt and mutate across social and physical borders encoded in the DNA of all of these characters helps them construct a series of new selves.

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[84] Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects*: *The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the* Fin de Siècle *in Europe,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
[85] David F. Bell, "Thérèse Raquin: Scientific Realism in Zola's Laboratory" *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* Fall-Winter 24 (1-2): 122-32, 1995-6.

While all of the interventions mentioned above provide invaluable insight into separate elements of an image of the dandy in Zola, what is not being discussed is a systematic view of an ideal image of the dandy as a dehumanized subject. For the purpose of this study, I will divide the discussion of the dandy in *Thérèse Raquin* into two parts. In chapter one, I address the animal and fantastical aspects. In chapter two, I investigate its mechanical elements. I equally intend to explore the dynamics of a dandy couple to show that Thérèse is a stronger, more extraordinary dandy than her partner Laurent. Once the two get into each other's orbit, the former absorbs the latter into her singularity.

2.1.1 The Making of Thérèse

At a first glance, there is nothing about Thérèse's appearance, or social or financial standing that would qualify her as a dandy. Born in Oran, Algeria, out of an affair between "une femme indigène d'une grande beauté,"[86] and a French officer, she is brought up in a provincial bourgeois milieu by Madame Raquin, the father's sister. Married to her egotistic cousin and childhood playmate Camille, she earns her living by working at a *mercerie* owned by the Raquin family, selling components of a dress before they become one. As a result, Thérèse's relationship to appearance, while being central to the plot, is full of tensions. Even though the haberdashery boutique belongs to her overbearing mother-in-law, Thérèse, whose name is spelled in red letters on the storefront, "owns" it, defining its image and making the initial contact with the clientele. The first description of Thérèse looking out the boutique's window contains no reference to what she is wearing. Rather, it is a protomodernist, verging on abstract, collage of traits and parts

[86] Zola, 23.

pieced together ("Au front bas et sec s'attachait un nez long", "tenait au cou par une ligne souple") in one long sequence, not adding up to a solid body image. Susan Harrow considers Zola ahead of his time as he uses formalist, twentieth-century techniques to convey the singularity of Thérèse's appearance:

> As the external world recedes, writing fills up with images of corporeal dissolution, and the body is abstracted in a swirl of colours. These visions of formlessness and dehumanization take to a new pitch of intensity the pessimism and the nausea evoked so powerfully in the novel's opening chapter. At the same time, they betoken the visions of dystopia and alienation articulated in twentieth-century literature and art.[87]

Her head, detached from an invisible body, is seen in profile – only half the portrait, with a hole-like eye piercing through it ("le profil troué d'un œil noir").[88] The body blends in, becoming one of the items on display, floating in the dark frame of the shopping window. Thérèse appears to be more of a ghost or a mannequin than a human being. Her humanity is further questioned because her gender is not clearly marked. Once the female gender is introduced in the first sentence with "jeune femme," it is dispensed with for the rest of the paragraph. In the last sentence, it is difficult to tell what is being described, a human being or a thing. Grammatically, "il était là" refers to Thérèse's profile. Rhetorically, it brings to the fore the inanimate quality of "il" as "it" of that lifeless-looking ("pâle", "immobile") body, tellingly framed by two bonnets with rustmarks on them:

> […] on distinguait, derrière les bonnets de l'autre vitrine, un profil pâle et grave de jeune femme. Ce profil sortait vaguement des ténèbres qui régnaient dans la boutique. Au front bas et sec s'attachait un nez long, étroit, effilé; les lèvres étaient deux minces traits d'un rose pâle, et le menton, court et nerveux, tenait au cou par une ligne souple et grasse. On ne voyait pas le corps, qui se perdait dans l'ombre; le profil seul apparaissait, d'une blancheur mate, troué d'un œil noir largement ouvert, et comme écrasé sous une épaisse chevelure sombre. Il était là, pendant des

[87] Harrow, 105-20.
[88] Zola,18.

> heures, immobile et paisible, entre deux bonnets sur lesquels les tringles humides avaient laissé des bandes de rouille.[89]

The rust stains on the bonnets echo the undoneness in the description of Thérèse's physical appearance. At the same time, the merchandise items are humanized, showing both the signs of death ("lamentablement pendu"), and lethargic life ("dormaient sans doute en cet endroit depuis cinq ou six ans"). Things and beings alike are neglected and abused in the Raquin household:

> Chaque objet, jauni et fripé, était lamentablement pendu à un crochet de fil de fer. […] De l'autre côté, dans une vitrine plus étroite, […] des boutons noirs cousus sur des cartes blanches; des boîtes de toutes les couleurs et de toutes les dimensions, des résilles à perles d'acier étalées sur des ronds de papier bleuâtre, des faisceaux d'aiguilles à tricoter, des modèles de tapisserie, des bobines de ruban, un entassement d'objets ternes et fanés qui dormaient sans doute en cet endroit depuis cinq ou six ans. Toutes les teintes avaient tourné au gris sale, dans cette armoire que la poussière et l'humidité pourrissaient.[90]

This description, like Thérèse's portrait, by exposing the defective, *décousu* state of component parts, negates any possibility of cohesion (ultimately, they would have come alive as part of a garment) or body. The colors and textures used to describe the merchandise could equally be used in a description of decaying flesh: "pourrissaient", "loques", "bleuâtre", "jauni et fripé", "ternes", "fanés", "boutons noirs", "poussière", "humidité", "gris sale". Thérèse, surrounded by decay, through mimicry, becomes the living dead herself. The window box containing Thérèse's profile is her coffin, and so is the armoire containing the dusty buttons and mouldy ribbons she is selling. Elizabeth M. Knutson highlights the gothic genre elements apparent in the opening scene of the story:

> In the novel's first pages the description of the dark Passage du Pont-Neuf serves to explain […] the somber mood of the heroine but also firmly inscribes the novel in the gothic rather than realist context. Shadows, drafts, and darkness in the

[89] Ibid., 18.
[90] Ibid., 17-8.

> narrow passage evoke specters, death, and the tomblike confinement that is the dominant spatial metaphor of gothic literature.[91]

Early on, in order to cope with abuse while growing up, Therese learns to play dead to a large extent by controlling and modifying her own body, and by hiding her emotions. As a child, Thérèse, much healthier and more physically fit ("Elle était d'une santé de fer")[92] than her cousin Camille, was forced to take the same medications as him. Even though it may seem that Thérèse selflessly confounds her own body with that of the sickly Camille, in actuality, she is functioning in a dormant mode ("elle restait accroupie"), waiting for the right moment to escape:

> Elle était d'une santé de fer, et elle fut soignée comme une enfant chétive, partageant les médicaments que prenait son cousin […] Pendant des heures, elle restait accroupie devant le feu, pensive, regardant les flammes de face, sans baisser les paupières.[93]

This state helped her preserve her extraordinary strength, taught her discipline and the ability to push her body to its limits, "La vie cloîtrée qu'elle menait, le régime débilitant auquel elle était soumise ne purent affaiblir son corps maigre et robuste."[94] She is so strong in fact that she is capable of picking up Camille and carrying him after he collapses of exhaustion. The practice of ascesis, from the ancient Greek *askēsis* – training or exercise – chisels Thérèse's body while disciplining her emotions. Thérèse "possedait un sang-froid suprême, une apparente tranquillité qui cachait des emportements terribles."[95]

A side-effect of this superhuman transformation is that Thérèse becomes less attractive or remarkable, taking on the same unhealthy skin tones as Camille Raquin and his mother: "sa face prit seulement des teintes pâles, légèrement jaunâtres, et elle devint presque laide à l'ombre."[96]

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[91] Knutson, 141.
[92] Zola, 23.
[93] Ibid., 24.
[94] Ibid., 24.
[95] Ibid., 24.
[96] Ibid., 24.

While Thérèse complains about becoming ugly to Laurent, animal mimicry seems to be at work once again. By blending in with the Raquin clan, by becoming less present, she is saving energy. As it has already been pointed out in the introduction, Deleuze and Guattari describe a similar process and effort ("Et ce n'est pas facile du tout, ne pas se faire remarquer") of becoming imperceptible in the bourgeois setting:

> Quel est le rapport entre l'imperceptible (anorganique), l'indiscernable (asignifiant et l'impersonnel (asubjectif)? On dirait d'abord: être comme tout le monde. C'est ce que raconte Kierkegaard, dans son histoire du "chevalier de la foi", l'homme du devenir: on a beau l'observer, on ne remarque rien, un bourgeois, rien qu'un bourgeois [..,] à l'issue d'une vraie rupture, on arrive […] vraiment à être comme tout le monde. Et ce n'est pas facile du tout, ne pas se faire remarquer […] Si c'est tellement difficile, être "comme" tout le monde, c'est qu'il y a une affaire de devenir. Il y faut beaucoup d'ascèse, de sobriété, d'involution créatrice: une élégance anglaise, un tissu anglais, se confondre avec les murs[.][97]

While Thérèse passes for one of the Raquin, the emphasis is on "comme" in "comme tout le monde" – a reminder of a masterfully camouflaged otherness, not sameness. The last two sentences in the quote above resonate with what John Carl Flügel describes as "The Great Masculine Renunciation"[98] in late eighteenth-century Britain – a historical shift from lavish to understated male attire that undoubtedly contributed to the image of the dandy ever since.

2.1.2 Channeling the Family Cat

Proximity and *voisinage*, as opposed to imitation, are the terms used by Deleuze and Guattari to characterize becoming:

> C'est que devenir, ce n'est pas imiter quelque chose ou quelqu'un, ce n'est pas s'identifier à lui […] Ce principe de proximité ou d'approximation est tout à fait

[97] Ibid., 342.
[98] John Carl Flügel, "The Great Masculine Renunciation" ed. Daniel Leonhard Purdy, The Rise of Fashion: A Reader (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 103-8.

> perticulier, et ne réintroduit aucune analogie. Il indique le plus rigoureusement possible une zone de voisinage ou de co-présence d'une particule [.][99]

For Deleuze and Guattari, the becoming-animal does not stand for anything. It is a direct, non-representational affect, "Ils ne voient pas la réalité d'un devenir-animal, comment il est l'affect en lui-même, la pulsion en personne, et ne représente rien."[100] Within the setting of a closed environment that is the Raquin dwelling, Thérèse is the closest to the family cat François. Her collusion with the feline is seen in her stealth and immobility, "elle prit l'habitude […] de marcher sans faire de bruit, de rester muette et immobile sur une chaise, les yeux ouverts et vides de regards."[101] Thérèse instills fear into Camille with her cat behavior, "Un jour, il poussa sa cousine et la fit tomber; la jeune fille se releva d'un bond, avec une sauvagerie de bête, et, la face ardente, les yeux rouges, elle se précipita sur lui, les deux bras levés. Camille se laissa glisser à terre. Il avait peur."[102] The narrator himself is marked by admiration for Thérèse's agility, "Et lorsqu'elle levait un bras, lorsqu'elle avançait un pied, on sentait en elle des souplesses felines, des muscles courts et puissants, toute une énergie, toute une passion qui dormaient dans sa chair assoupie."[103] The emphasis here is not on the comparison or representation but on real animal energy emanating ("on sentait") from Thérèse. As if to verify its authenticity, the image of the family cat François, "le chat tigré," is there to echo her behavior, "François, gardant une immobilité de pierre, la contemplait toujours; ses yeux seuls paraissaient vivants."[104]

An outsider to the Raquin family, Thérèse tries to fit in its Oedipal bourgeois framework not because she subscribes to it but because she needs to survive. Adopted, she has been born to an Algerian mother who is not part of a larger family – colonialist France. On the one hand, the

[99] Deleuze and Guattari, 334.
[100] Ibid., 317.
[101] Zola, 24.
[102] Ibid., 26.
[103] Ibid., 24.
[104] Ibid., 58.

cat is a sign of camouflage and of that irreducible, feral, and mythical place. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the domestic cat is an Oedipal animal,[105] when they wonder "[…] y aurait-il des animaux *œ*dipiens, avec qui on peut 'faire Œdipe,' faire famille, mon petit chien, mon petit chat, et puis d'autres animaux qui nous entraîneraient au contraire dans un devenir irresistible?"[106] It cannot be the becoming animal that "ne consiste pas à faire l'animal ou à l'imiter, il est évident aussi que l'homme ne devient pas 'réellement' animal, pas plus que l'animal ne devient 'réellement' autre chose."[107] The dandy can, however, be both – playing familial roles, pretending to enter the symbolic order, while being completely wild and oblivious to the boundaries of self. Thérèse is always already different: coming from an exotic place, she will never be truly French and thus human in the eyes of society. Provided with the right opportunity, she breaks the law but never runs completely wild. Thérèse's animal swagger, while showing supreme control of the body, is equally a way of exclusion. It is the characteristic dandy's distinction from a real, stable, fixed, molar body. Elegance is the trace of an act of disappearance.

2.1.3 Abjection and the Sacred

One of the few descriptions of clothes in the novel is Thérèse's wedding night attire, painted in two succinct, disciplined sentences, "Vêtue d'un jupon et d'une camisole bordés de

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[105] Possession, a sense of belonging, being brought into the fold, "psychoanalisability" are all implied by the Oedipal aspect of some domestic animals: "Il faudrait même distinguer trois sortes d'animaux: les animaux individués familiers familiaux, sentimentaux, les animaux *œdipiens, de petite histoire "mon" chat, "mon" chien; ceux-là nous invitent à régresser, nous entraînent dans une contemplation narcissique, et la psychanalyse ne comprend que ces animaux-là, pour mieux découvrir sous eux l'image d'un papa, d'une maman, d'un jeune frère."* Deleuze and Guattari, 294.
[105] Ibid., 291.
[106] Ibid., 285-6.
[107] Ibid., 291.

dentelle, elle était d'une blancheur crue sous l'ardente clarté du foyer. Sa camisole glissait, et un bout d'épaule passait, rose, à demi caché par une mèche noire de cheveux."[108] The promiscuity of the camisole slipping down Thérèse's shoulder and the strategic use of the adjective *cru* breaks down the image of innocence that the white of the wedding gown and undergarments are expected to convey. *Cru*, carrying such meanings as "raw", "uncooked", "brutal", and "frank" in French, does not work in favor of an image of Thérèse as a pure young bride either, especially given the fact that this is her second marriage, to her lover and partner in cold-blooded crime against her first husband. This is the same Thérèse who, in the eyes of Mme Raquin, Camille's mother, was his "ange gardien."[109]

This paradoxical combination of the profane (low, dirty) and the sacred (high, clean) in Thérèse keeps manifesting itself in many other incidents. Right after the murder, Thérèse feels liberated, innocent, clean again, not needing either Laurent or Camille: "Elle se croyait petite fille, vierge sous les rideaux blancs; […] sa peau fraîche et calme n'avait pas un frisson de désir."[110] Quickly, her marriage with Laurent starts falling apart, and she spends more and more time on the streets of Paris. In the following scene, she is being spied on by Laurent, who suspects that she might be having an affair. As she walks onto the street, she lifts her skirt with a long train that is supposed to be dragged ("traînée" meaning "prostitute") on the ground. While trying to keep the train from getting dirty, she shows her legs – a shameless gesture, made even more provocative by the swaying of the hips:

> Elle était vêtue d'étoffes claires, et, pour la première fois, il [Laurent] remarqua qu'elle s'habillait comme une fille, avec une robe à longue traîne; elle se dandinait sur le trottoir d'une façon provocante, regardant les hommes, relevant si

[108] Zola,147.
[109] Ibid., 25.
[110] Ibid., 109.

> haut le devant de sa jupe, en la prenant à poignée, qu'elle montrait tout le devant de ses jambes, ses bottines lacées et ses bas blancs.[111]

Sexuality, associated in the novel with animal drives, moral decay, and crime, seems to be the opposite of ascesis and self-control. The impression of degradation, however, is quickly annulled by Thérèse's control and cleanliness – her dress is made of "étoffes claires," her stockings are white and her boots are laced-up. Later in the novel, Thérèse does become unclean, forgetting her human body in dirt, "Elle fut prise d'une paresse désespérée qui la retint au logis, en jupon malpropre, dépeignée, la figure et les mains sales. Elle s'oublia dans la crasse."[112] Julia Kristeva's concept of *souillure* put forward in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* should be useful here in support of a suggestion that dehumanization through squalor is just as extreme as complete ascesis. *Souillure* describes a meeting of these extremes, between the low, the filth of *saleté*, and the high, the sacred, the sublime – also the main themes in Colette Peignot's writings to be addressed later in this chapter. Simon Liberati, in the foreword to Barbey d'Aurevilly's *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell,* also observes a paradox inherent in the "code de la déchéance" – the fall is equally a redemption:

> La folie, la chute, la faillite sont des formes d'ennoblissement qui manquent actuellement autant que les champs de bataille. On ne se ruine plus non plus au jeu et on ne sait même plus non plus trop bien tomber très bas [...] Il y a un code de la déchéance. Et les élégants déchoient mieux que les autres, n'en déplaise aux envieux qui même jusque là les poursuivent. Sebastian Melmoth à Berneval, ses manchettes sales et les dents affreusement gâtées dont médit Gide sauvent Oscar Wilde, mieux de le *De Profundis*.[113]

For Thérèse, as for Oscar Wilde, debasement is a spectacular form of martyrdom where letting go of discipline takes just as much effort as discipline itself.

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[111] Ibid., 232-3.
[112] Ibid., 238.
[113] Simon Liberati, "Brummell en Normandie" in *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell* (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris Max Chaleil, 2008), 7.

2.1.4 Thérèse and Laurent, the Symbiotic Couple

Thérèse exercises significant influence over Laurent who, not unlike Camille, is quite terrified of her, "Thérèse plaisantait comme un enfant, elle mimait le chat, elle allongeait les mains en façon de griffes, elle donnait à ses épaules des ondulations felines […] Laurent se sentait froid aux os. Il trouva ridicule la plaisanterie de Thérèse […] En réalité, il avait peur. Sa maîtresse ne le possédait pas encore entièrement."[114] Eventually, however, Laurent will be possessed, by both Camille and Thérèse. The act of crime serving as a catalyst event, coupled with the contagious power of Thérèse's energy radiating around her, results in a radical transformation in Laurent. Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille Plateaux* use the term *contagion* to describe the ways of expanding typical of becoming processes. In the novel, Thérèse, the dandy with the highest velocity and the mastermind of the crime, pulls Laurent into her orbit, triggering his transformation from a lazy country bumpkin into a creative neurasthenic *beau*:

> Avant de connaître Thérèse, Laurent avait la lourdeur, le calme prudent, la vie sanguine d'un fils de paysan. Il dormait, mangeait, buvait en brute [...] A peine, au fond de sa chair alourdie, sentait-il parfois des chatouillements. C'étaient ces chatouillements que Thérèse avait développés en horribles secousses. Elle avait fait pousser dans ce grand corps, gras et mou, un système nerveux d'une sensibilité étonnante [...] Alors eut lieu en lui un étrange travail; les nerfs se développèrent, l'emportèrent sur l'élément sanguine, et ce fait seul modifia sa nature.[115]

The shift is described as awakening of self, a humanization. Laurent goes from a semicatatonic state where "il dormait, mangeait, buvait en brute," to completely modifying "sa nature." This work is done mainly by Thérèse ("C'étaient ces chatouillements que Thérèse avait développés en

[114] Zola, 58.
[115] Ibid., 159.

horribles secousses"), and Laurent's humanization is short-circuited and rerouted into becoming a dandy.

While Françoise Dolto seems to be denying the possibility of a dandy movement when she quotes an abstract artist Georges Mathieu saying that "il n'y a pas de dandysme mais des dandys,"[116] it may not necessarily mean that dandies cannot form alliances, where one individual is still more exceptional than the other. Thérèse is that extraordinary being – enigmatic, exotic, strong – to whom Laurent is drawn and with whom he forms a symbiotic relationship (however shortlived) – another term employed by Deleuze and Guattari in regards to the process of becoming, "Si l'évolution comporte de véritables devenirs, c'est dans le vaste domaine des symbioses qui met en jeu des êtres d'échelles et de règnes."[117] By definition, symbiosis implies exchange and mutual usefulness, "La nature et les circonstances semblaient avoir fait cette femme pour cet homme, et les avoir poussés l'un vers l'autre. A eux deux […] ils faisaient un couple puissamment lié. Ils se complétaient, se protégeaient mutuellement."[118] It is true that there would be no transformation in Thérèse herself, had Laurent not stepped his foot inside the Raquin family boutique.

2.1.5 Laurent, the Host of a Living Wound

As it has been already noted, mutation, like falling, is a major leitmotif of the novel. Camille is an obstacle to Thérèse's freedom, and Laurent helps her eliminate it. Laurent himself loses a part of his body when Camille, before dying, puts up a fight and bites a chunk of flesh out

[116] Dolto, 9.
[117] Deleuze and Guattari, 291.
[118] Zola, 61.

of his assailant's neck. The bite mark on Laurent's skin changes in color and appears to be alive ("mordait la chair", "les dents […] entraient dans la peau"), acting on its own or on behalf of Camille, at pivotal moments in the story. In the following excerpt, for instance, it starts to bother Laurent during his wedding with Thérèse:

> Et Laurent, à chaque movement de son cou, éprouvait une cuisson ardente qui lui mordait la chair; son faux col coupait et pinçait la morsure de Camille. Pendant que le maire lui lisait le code, pendant que le prêtre lui parlait de Dieu, à toutes les minutes de cette longue journée, il avait senti les dents du noyé qui lui entraient dans la peau. Il s'imaginait par moments qu'un filet de sang lui coulait sur la poitrine et allait tacher de rouge la blancheur de son gilet.[119]

The undead Camille acting up inside Laurent's body is certainly a metaphor for Laurent's guilt. Yet, a literal reading turns the novel into a horror story, and the marriage ceremony into a failed act of exorcism. To come back to Kristeva's concept of *souillure*, it is one of the institutions of Christianity used to curb, or shape ("*border*") the subject into a socially and individually adequate self. Camille's cadaver, the *souillure* in the novel, is the result of a premeditated murder, a broken taboo, which, for Kristeva, is abject since it questions the agreed-upon social structure:

> Ce n'est donc pas l'absence de propreté ou de santé qui rend abject, mais ce qui perturbe une identité, un système, un ordre. Ce qui ne respecte pas les limites, les places, les règles. L'entre-deux, l'ambigu, le mixte. Le traître, le menteur, le criminel à bonne conscience, le violeur sans vergogne, le tueur qui prétend sauver [...] Tout crime, parce qu'il signale la fragilité de la loi, est abject, mais le crime prémédité, le meurtre sournois, la vengeance hypocrite le sont plus encore parce qu'ils redoublent cette exhibition de la fragilité légale.[120]

The dandy-criminal manifests a deep involvement with the abject. Far from being a revolutionary, the dandy, oftentimes without realizing it, questions the status quo *as a body*, through a socially inadequate, misshaped "non-être" self. Laurent is not fully humanized

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[119] Ibid., 144.
[120] Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1980), 11-2.

because of the presence of Camille. He is not curbed by the *souillure*, but overwhelmed, engulfed by it. In fact, he starts identifying himself completely with Camille:

> Le cadavre, qui hantait déjà la maison, y fut introduit ouvertement. Il s'assit sur les sièges, se mit devant la table, s'étendit dans le lit, se servit des meubles, des objets qui traînaient. Laurent ne pouvait toucher une fourchette, une brosse, n'importe quoi, sans que Thérèse lui fît sentir que Camille avait touché cela avant lui. Sans cesse heurté contre l'homme qu'il avait tué, le meurtrier finit par éprouver une sensation bizarre qui faillit le rendre fou; il s'imagina, à force d'être comparé à Camille, de se servir des objets dont Camille s'était servi, qu'il était Camille, qu'il s'identifiait avec sa victime.[121]

Thérèse now seems to be Camille's accomplice and messenger ("sans que Thérèse lui fît sentir que Camille avait touché cela avant lui"). Revolted by the sight of the wound and desperate to shake off Camille's image, she tries to erase it with bites and violent kisses:

> Thérèse chercha des lèvres la morsure de Camille sur le cou gonflé et roidi de Laurent, et elle y colla sa bouche avec emportement. Là était la plaie vive; cette blessure guérie, les meurtriers dormiraient en paix. La jeune femme comprenait cela, elle tentait de cautériser le mal sous le feu des ses caresses. Mais elle se brûla les lèvres, et Laurent la repoussa violemment […] Thérèse, affolée, revint, voulut baiser encore la cicatrice, elle éprouvait une volupté âcre à poser sa bouche sur cette peau où s'étaient enfoncées les dents de Camille. Un instant, elle eut la pensée de mordre son mari à cet endroit, d'arracher un large morceau de chair, de faire une nouvelle blessure, plus profonde, qui emporterait les marques de l'ancienne.[122]

At the same time, Thérèse is strangely drawn to it ("Thérèse affolée, revint, voulut baiser encore la cicatrice"): By teaming up with Camille, Thérèse herself becomes undead, a vampire who gets excited at the sight of blood ("une volupté âcre", "mordre son mari", "faire une nouvelle blessure").

While the dead Camille is not a dandy, the literal presence of his body, to use Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, constitutes a "*block*" pivotal to Laurent's transformation. With Camille as an implant, Laurent is a "molecular," not molar, assemblage of several selves. For

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[121] Ibid., 221.
[122] Zola, 167.

Françoise Dolto, one is never certain whether the dandy is present in flesh: "Il existe quelque part, mais de temps en temps il habite ce corps, et de temps en temps ce corps n'est qu'une boule d'angoisse."[123] Laurent, by shifting, or being shifted, to inhabit the limits of the human body, has started his transformation into a dandy.

2.1.6 Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

Reflective surfaces are essential in order for the dandy to initiate and sustain the process of self-creation. Françoise Dolto points out the importance of the mirror for the formation of the dandy: "[t]elle la barre pour la danseuse, le miroir est pour le future dandy le maître intransigeant de ses écarts. Tel le punching-ball du boxeur, il est son entraîneur infatigable."[124] The living wound inhabiting Laurent can only be seen with the help of a mirror, as it is located on the side of his neck. In the following passage, the mirror and the scar are the main actors ("la chair se montrait"):

> Il rabattit le col de sa chemise et regarda la plaie dans un méchant miroir de quinze sous accroché au mur. Cette plaie faisait un trou rouge, large comme une pièce de deux sous; la peau avait été arrachée, la chair se montrait, rosâtre, avec des taches noires; […] Sur le cou blanc, la morsure paraissait d'un brun sourd et puissant; […] Laurent, le dos courbé, le cou tendu, regardait, et le miroir verdâtre donnait à sa face une grimace atroce.[125]

Laurent is just a terrified, humiliated ("le dos courbé, le cou tendu") bystander. By looking at the neck and not looking himself in the eyes, he loses control over his own body. The mirror does

[123] Dolto, 26.
[124] Ibid., 19.
[125] Zola, 95.

not reflect, but actually gives him a grimaced expression, "le miroir verdâtre donnait à sa face une grimace atroce."[126]

Clearly, then, the reason the scar changes in color is twofold: firstly, it signifies an implanted parasitic organism ("les dents du noyé avaient enfoncé une bête qui le dévorait") using him as a host; secondly, Laurent himself is mutating, becoming one big nervous scar ("il s'imaginait que cette cicatrice lui couvrait le corps"):

> Sa souffrance la plus aiguë, souffrance physique et morale, lui venait de la morsure que Camille lui avait faite au cou. A certains moments, il s'imaginait que cette cicatrice lui couvrait le corps [...] Il ne pouvait se mettre devant le miroir, sans voir s'accomplir le phénomène qu'il avait si souvent remarqué et qui l'épouvantait toujours: […] le sang montait à son cou, empourprait la plaie, qui se mettait à lui ronger la peau. Cette sorte de blessure vivant sur lui, l'effrayait et le torturait. Il finissait par croire que les dents du noyé avaient enfoncé là une bête qui le dévorait. Le morceau de son cou où se trouvait la cicatrice ne lui semblait plus appartenir à son corps[…][127]

At first, Laurent's dandyism is not obvious precisely because it is unexpected, left in plain view as a caricature. Laurent has always been an idle, narcissistic young man, obsessed with easy money and leisure, "Le résultat de ses réflexions était toujours que le suprême bonheur consiste à ne rien faire. Alors il se rappelait qu'il avait noyé Camille pour épouser Thérèse et ne plus rien faire ensuite."[128] But as it has been mentioned, the murder and Thérèse's influence bring about the transformation. The narration changes its tone regarding Laurent from scornful to surprised, as the depiction of Laurent is no longer a caricature. Having gotten rid of Camille's body, and having lost weight, this unflappable, fat-necked "buck" turns into a neurotic, slender, athletic "beau." At first, it appears that he himself is not aware of the change – another character is introduced to point it out. During one of Laurent's now regular *flâneries* along the Seine, he

[126] Ibid., 93.
[127] Ibid., 228.
[128] Ibid., 128.

runs into an old friend, his painting schoolmate, who is amazed at the transformation in his appearance, "Comment, c'est toi! s'écria le peintre. Ah! Mon pauvre Laurent, je ne t'aurais jamais reconnu. Tu as maigri."[129] Not only did Laurent lose weight, but he also became more refined and elegant:

> Son ami le regardait d'un air étonné qui le troublait et l'inquiétait. La vérité était que le peintre ne retrouvait pas dans le mari de Thérèse le garçon épais et commun qu'il avait connu autrefois. Il lui semblait que Laurent prenait des allures distinguées; le visage s'était aminci et avait des pâleurs de bon goût, le corps entier se tenait plus digne et plus souple. – Mais tu deviens joli garçon, ne put s'empêcher de s'écrier l'artiste, tu as une tenue d'ambassadeur. C'est du dernier chic.[130]

Zola comes quite close to giving a description of Laurent as a historical nineteenth century dandy, without ever using the word once, but there is an entire array of words that seem to be borrowed from Balzac or Barbey d'Aurevilly: "allures distinguées", "des pâleurs de bon gout", "le corps […] digne et souple", "du dernier chic".

The same friend is surprised to discover that Laurent is not at all the second-rate painter that he used to be. Now, he is capable of finesse and artistic sensibility. What the friend discovers in his studio is a series of nervously sketched out portraits, and there is something disturbing about the repetition of features in these portraits – women, men, animals, old and young – all resembling the face of Camille. Dehumanization for Laurent happens equally through art, as this grotesque, pop art-like fashion of flaunting and obsessively repeating of the content – Camille's face – on canvas is a way of erasing a mental image "gravée profondément en lui" [131] and desperately trying to replace it with another. An artistic technique term, "gravé," is used once again to convey self-creation and creativity, "Il resta immobile, pendant cinq grandes

[129] Ibid., 182.
[130] Ibid., 182-3.
[131] Ibid., 185.

minutes, perdu dans une contemplation inconsciente, gravant malgré lui au fond de sa mémoire toutes les lignes horribles, toutes les couleurs sales du tableau qu'il avait sous les yeux."[132]

2.1.7 Marriage as Camouflage

Although marriage is not something the dandy usually does, oftentimes it is a social necessity for women dandies. There are several examples of literary dandy alliances arranged through this institution, Thérèse and Laurent being one of them. By participating in this bourgeois institution, the couple, consciously or not, approach it critically, exposing its workings and failures. An example of another criminal dandy couple will be considered in detail in the analysis of Barbey d'Aurevilly's novella "Le Bonheur dans le crime," published in 1871, and appearing three years later as part of *Les Diaboliques* cycle. As the title suggests, the protagonists of the story, Hauteclaire Stassin and the count of Savigny, like Thérèse and Laurent, are outside the social norm. Hauteclaire, likened to a panther at the Jardin des Plantes, uses transformation and ruse to be together with the married Savigny. Once the legitimate wife of Savigny is killed, Stassin and Savigny form a happy couple. In contrast, Laurent and Thérèse make up a highly dysfunctional family where the needs and the wants are triangulated through the figure of Camille even after his death.

Thérèse, trying to be normal, human, takes on different roles in a bourgeois household, as if they were costumes or masks, "Thérèse, immobile, paisible comme les autres, regardait ces joies bourgeoises, ces affaissements souriants. Et, au fond d'elle, il y avait des rires sauvages;

[132] Ibid., 100.

tout son être raillait, tandis que son visage gardait une rigidité froide."[133] Her wildness opposes domesticity, and inevitably, she fails at all of the roles. When carrying a child, she becomes terrified, imagining the embryo swimming inside her like Camille's body floating in the Seine, just like Laurent is terrified of Camille's bite taking over. The child is miscarried as a result of a fight between the two. Thérèse's self-destruction as a mother and a member of a family, as the dandy, like Deleuze and Guattari's becoming, resists filiation: "Enfin, devenir n'est pas une évolution, du moins une évolution par descendance et filiation."[134] As the images of the murdered husband and the unborn child become indistinguishable, and Thérèse commits symbolic suicide as a mother by provoking a miscarriage, the family structure collapses too. Only a "fausse couche" is possible, or, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, "[le] devenir ne produit pas autre chose."[135]

The family is childless and yet, it is full of abused and abusive children – Camille is portrayed as a frail, selfish, spoiled mama's boy. Thérèse is an orphan, who, in return for being abused as a child, becomes a cold adult who does everything out of spite and refuses to grow up. The further Laurent's and Thérèse's marriage deteriorates, the more the senile Mme Raquin is compared to a neglected child. At first, caring for her is a way for the couple to forget the murder and fight boredom, "Ils la considéraient comme une distraction qui les tirait de leurs mauvais rêves. Depuis qu'elle était infirme, il fallait la soigner ainsi qu'un enfant."[136] Having lost the ability to speak and move, she is forced to watch "her parents" fight. The fact that she keeps calling Laurent and Thérèse her "children" despite being abused, underscores further the dysfunctional nature of this family unit:

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[133] Ibid., 62.
[134] Deleuze and Guattari, 291.
[135] Ibid., 291.
[136] Zola, 189-90.

> Ni Thérèse, ni Laurent n'osaient céder à la pensée de pitié qui leur venait parfois, d'enfermer la paralytique dans sa chambre, lorsqu'ils se disputaient, et de lui éviter ainsi le récit du crime. Ils redoutaient de s'assommer l'un l'autre, s'ils n'avaient plus entre eux ce cadavre à demi vivant. Leur pitié cédait devant leur lâcheté, ils imposaient à madame Raquin des souffrances indicibles, parce qu'ils avaient besoin de sa présence pour se protéger contre leurs hallucinations.[137]

Eventually, she regresses mentally into a state of complete infantilism, "Elle était redevenue enfant, elle passait des journées sans ennui, à regarder devant elle, à songer au passé. Elle finit même par goûter des charmes à rester bien sage dans son fauteuil, comme une petite fille."[138]

2.1.8 The Dandy as an Aquatic Creature

Thérèse and Laurent's complex relationship to society and its institutions extends to their interaction with the urban space. Both are *flâneurs*, even though Thérèse, while married to Camille, would rather stay hidden in "l'ombre humide" of her store than endure the embarrassement of strolling along the Champs-Élysées with her gawker of a husband:

> La jeune femme aurait préféré rester dans l'ombre humide de la boutique; elle se fatiguait, elle s'ennuyait au bras de son mari qui la traînait sur les trottoirs, en s'arrêtant aux boutiques, avec des étonnements, des réflexions, des silences d'imbécile.[139]

Images of humidity and water are inseparable from the Seine, an important thematic and narrative axis of the novel. Introduced before all the other characters in the first sentence of the story, it is a protagonist as much as it is a background. The narrow shopping arcade where the Raquin family owns their *mercerie* connects to the rue de Seine; the images of mold and rust, spurred by humidity, flood the opening pages of the novel.[140] A habitat, water seems to be in

[137] Ibid., 208.
[138] Ibid., 193.
[139] Ibid., 76.
[140] Ibid., 15-8.

Thérèse's blood, defining her. Gaston Bachelard in his book *L'eau et les rêves* presents water as a site of self-creation and transformation:

> Fort de cette connaissance d'une profondeur dans un élément matériel, le lecteur comprendra enfin que l'eau est aussi un *type de destin,* non plus seulement le vain destin des images fuyantes, le vain destin d'un rêve qui ne s'achève pas, mais un destin essentiel qui métamorphose sans cesse la substance de l'être.[141]

For Bachelard, these transformative qualities of water are due, in part, to the fact that it is both a nourishing and a hostile environment ("Un duel de méchanceté commence entre l'homme et les flots").[142] In the following description of Thérèse as a young girl she imagines the Seine to be her playmate and an adversary, and she takes on the challenge of becoming as fit and powerful as the river:

> Quand elle vit le jardin, la rivière blanche, les vastes coteaux verts qui montaient à l'horizon, il lui prit une envie sauvage de courir et de crier; Quand elle était seule, dans l'herbe, au bord de l'eau, elle se couchait à plat ventre comme une bête, les yeux noirs et agrandis, le corps tordu, près de bondir. Et elle restait là pendant des heures, ne pensant à rien [...] Elle faisait des rêves fous; elle regardait avec défi la rivière qui grondait, elle s'imaginait que l'eau allait se jeter sur elle et l'attaquer; alors elle se roidissait, elle se préparait à la défense, elle se questionnait avec colère pour savoir comment elle pourrait vaincre les flots.[143]

Thérèse is a paradox: a cat ("couchait à plat ventre", "le corps tordu", "près de bondir"), she loves water and is an excellent swimmer. Thérèse Raquin is an urban *requin*, a female shark, preferring the river to the street. The chapter about Camille's drowning further emphasizes the singular affection Thérèse has for the Seine, "Saint-Ouen, avec ses îles vertes, lui rappelait Vernon; elle y sentait se réveiller toutes les amitiés sauvages qu'elle avait eues pour la Seine, étant jeune fille."[144]

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[141] Gaston Bachelard, *L'eau et les rêves: Essai sur l'imagination de la matière* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1964), 8.
[142] Ibid., 21.
[143] Zola, 24-5.
[144] Ibid., 77.

The more Laurent, the main perpetrator of the drowning and Therese's main accomplice, interacts with Therese, the more he is drawn to the river, a place where he feels quite at home as well: "Laurent était devenu un nageur intrépide, un rameur infatigable."[145] Mezmerized by the Seine, Laurent sees it as a mirror, a thoroughfare, a partner in crime, and its sinister witness, capable of indefinitely multiplying the victim ("de longues trainées de noyés"):

> Il lui arriva, à plusieurs reprises, de ne pas vouloir rentrer, de passer des nuits entières à marcher au milieu des rues désertes. Une fois, il resta jusqu'au matin sous un pont, par une pluie sur le quai, il regarda, pendant près de six heures, couler l'eau sale dans l'ombre blanchâtre; par moments, des terreurs l'aplatissaient contre la terre humide: il lui semblait voir, sous l'arche du pont, passer de longues trainées de noyés qui descendaient au fil du courant.[146]

While alive, Camille, fittingly, is utterly afraid of water, just as he is afraid of Thérèse and Laurent: "La vérité était que le commis avait une peur horrible de l'eau."[147] But his ghost is an aquatic creature, avenging himself by driving his murderers to another kind of drowning – in alcohol and poison, which Laurent and Thérèse do together. As this inquiry into the dynamics of the dandy couple in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* shows, there is a paradoxical tension between a strong will and individuality on the one hand, and a movement towards a mythical creature's drive towards self-effacement, or Deleuze and Guattari's *devenir-imperceptible*, on the other. In the following section, Lautréamont's Maldoror will be considered as a different aquatic creature and a more radical configuration of the dandy.

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[145] Ibid., 83.
[146] Ibid., 126.
[147] Ibid., 82-3.

2.2 LAUTREAMONT, *LES CHANTS DE MALDOROR* (1869)

2.2.1 Au Reste, Que m'Importe d'Où Je Viens?

While Zola provides details on the protagonists' past and their "family history", making it possible to reconstruct the path taken by Thérèse and Laurent to their respective dandyisms, Lautréamont creates a muddled trajectory for his Maldoror, trying to evade any such enquiry because time does not appear to matter to this fabulous creature. The tense of Malrodor's operation is present, continuous, non-linear, and nearly non-narrative. There is no real narrative in the memory but in the fictionalized present of his imagination. From page one, the reader is abruptly submerged into a series of synchronic snapshots or cross-sections of what Maldoror always already is. However, despite the text's resistance, several clues about Maldoror's origins and upbringing could be extrapolated, with caution, as he is a highly unreliable narrator-protagonist, ambivalent about his own humanity, and eager to deny any connection to a family structure. He believes ("d'après ce qu'on m'a dit") to have been born from human parents – a statement that is immediately canceled by "Au reste, que m'importe d'où je viens?" What he does wish is to have had a shark and a tiger as his progenitors:

> Je suis fils de l'homme et de la femme, d'après ce qu'on m'a dit. Ça m'étonne […] je croyais être davantage! Au reste, que m'importe d'où je viens? Moi, si cela avait pu dépendre de ma volonté, j'aurais voulu être plutôt le fils de la femelle du requin, dont la faim est amie des tempêtes, et du tigre, à la cruauté reconnue; je ne serais pas si méchant.[148]

The account of a violent Caine-Abel-like sibling rivalry also ends with a similar disownment of humanity:

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[148] Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 30.

> [...] deux jumeaux, mon frère et moi, parurent à la lumière. Raison de plus pour s'aimer. Il n'en fut pas ainsi que je parle. Parce que j'étais le plus beau des deux, et le plus intelligent, mon frère me prit en haine, et ne se donna la peine de cacher ses sentiments: [...] Alors mon frère ne connut plus de bornes à sa fureur, et me perdit, dans le cœur de nos parents communs, par les calomnies les plus invraisemblables. J'ai vécu, pendant quinze ans, dans un cachot, avec des larves et de l'eau fangeuse pour toute nourriture [...] O mon frère, je t'ai pardonné, toi la cause première de tous mes maux! J'ai fait beaucoup de réflexions, dans ma prison éternelle. Quelle devint ma haine générale contre l'humanité, tu le devines.[149]

Like family, schooling – another source of childhood trauma, if not for Maldoror, then for a boy with whom he clearly identifies – is compared to imprisonment through the use of the word "cachot", which evokes the dark and confined space of a boarding school. Surrounded by larvae and filth, Maldoror himself leads a dormant life before becoming an imagined, fabulous flying creature, as the trauma of education-prison stops short of dehumanizing the pupil ("la demeure de l'abrutissement"). Lyotard in his collection of essays *The Inhuman* underscores the experience of education as inhuman, along the lines of Lautréamont's "abrutissement": "All education is inhuman because it does not happen without constraint and terror."[150] Both school and twin rivalry, however traumatic, are the catalysts prompting Maldoror to think ("J'ai fait beaucoup de réflexions") and to meditate on himself. The theme of twins as a mirror reflection of self further highlights the enlightenment stage ("parurent à la lumière"). The consequence of this awakening ("parce qu'il ne veut pas dormir") is aggression towards the past, the desire to escape, explode ("éclater"), and disappear:

> Quand un élève interne, dans un lycée, est gouverné, pendant des années, qui sont des siècles, du matin jusqu'au soir et du soir jusqu'au lendemain, par un paria de la civilization, qui a constamment les yeux sur lui, il sent les flots tumultueux d'une haine vivace, monter, comme une épaisse fumée, à son cerveau, qui lui paraît près d'éclater. Depuis le moment où on l'a jeté dans la prison, jusqu'à celui, qui s'approche, où il en sortira, une fièvre intense lui jaunit la face, rapproche ses

[149] Ibid., 22.
[150] Lyotard, 4.

> sourcils, et lui creuse les yeux. La nuit, il réfléchit, parce qu'il ne veut pas dormir. Le jour, sa pensée s'élance au-dessus des murailles de la demeure de l'abrutissement, jusqu'au moment où il s'échappe, ou qu'on le rejette, comme un pestiféré, de ce cloître éternel.[151]

Instead of becoming sources of neuroses and melancholia, all these obstacles can spur a complete erasure of the past's contents and redirection of self through fiction. If Bachelard's argument in *L'eau et les rêves* is applicable to Maldoror, he is more than human precisely because he is capable of imagining and constructing his own reality, "L'imagination n'est pas, comme le suggère l'étymologie, la faculté de former des images de la réalité; elle est la faculté de former des images qui dépassent la réalité, qui *chantent* la réalité. Elle est une faculté de surhumanité."[152] *Abrutissement*, or forgetting one's humanity, does not take place, as it is interrupted once again by a moment of awakening similar to Laurent's experience in *Thérèse Raquin* – a Lacanian mirror stage-like reflection on oneself ("il réfléchit").

The mirror, along with other reflective surfaces, is ubiquitous in the story. It both obstructs the view and helps reconstruct Maldoror's trajectory. Seawater is capable of giving a glimpse into Maldoror's soul ("Mer hypocrite, image de mon cœur").[153] At the same time, the word *semblable*, used obsessively, when not carrying sarcastic undertones, may indicate instances of discovery of a true equal, a mirror image of Maldoror ("portrait vivant"). Such is the case of the encounter with the female shark:

> Alors, d'un commun accord, entre deux eaux, ils glissèrent l'un vers l'autre, avec une admiration mutuelle, la femelle de requin écartant l'eau de ses nageoires, Maldoror battant l'onde avec ses bras; et retinrent leur souffle, dans une vénération profonde, chacun désireux de contempler, pour la première fois, son portrait vivant.[154]

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[151] Ibid., 48.
[152] Bachelard, *L'eau et les rêves*, 23.
[153] Lautréamont, 180.
[154] Ibid., 111.

The mirror helps Malrodor construct his own image ("je jette un long regard [...] et je me trouve beau!):[155]

> O miroirs d'argent, incrustés dans les panneaux des vestibules, combien de services ne m'avez-vous pas rendus par votre pouvoir réflecteur! […] spéctateur impassible des monstruosités acquises ou naturelles, qui décorent les aponévroses et l'intellect de celui qui parle, je jette un long regard de satisfaction sur la dualité qui me compose [...] et je me trouve beau![156]

What that mirror shows is that the dandy in Maldoror is the result of both the innate predisposition ("par la fatalité de ma naissance"), experiences ("le fait de ma propre faute "), as well as unconscious and conscious acts ("monstruosités acquises ou naturelles"). For Françoise Dolto, it is quite possible to be a dandy and not even know it, emanating a dandy energy, which only others can detect and interpret, "Je crois que le dandy ne sait pas qu'il est dandy. C'est un signifiant relationnel qui vient de la fascination qu'il produit sur les gens de son temps."[157] Words like "émission" and "émanation" – of intelligence or aesthetic values – are used repeatedly by Françoise Dolto as she tries to describe her vision of the dandy.[158] Deleuze and Guattari also speak of "émission des particules" when outlining the concept of becoming.[159] Even though Maldoror is aware of his own distinction, his dandyism operates to a large extent by emission – a series of experiences of forgetting of self and passing through other dandy particles and beings.

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[155] Ibid., 246.
[156] Ibid., 246.
[157] Dolto., 45.
[158] Ibid., 43-4.
[159] Deleuze and Guattari, 341.

2.2.2 Buck, Beau, or Both?

Death, darkness, and melancholy are common impressions that readers of *Les Chants de Maldoror* are often left with. It is also true that the main character Maldoror is often described as an anthropomorphized devil and he himself admits to his own cruelty:

> Il cacha son caractère tant qu'il put, pendant un grand nombre d'années; mais, à la fin, à cause de cette concentration qui ne lui était pas naturelle, chaque jour le sang lui montait à la tête; jusqu'à ce que, ne pouvant plus supporter une pareille vie, il se jeta résolûment dans la carrière du mal [...] atmosphère douce! [...] Il n'était pas menteur, il avouait la vérité et disait qu'il était cruel.[160]

However, despite its gory content, *Les Chants de Maldoror* is full of lucidity[161] and vital, productive forces. Gaston Bachelard in his book *Lautréamont* juxtaposes Franz Kafka and Lautréamont to show that, their mutual interest in metamorphosis aside, the latter's writing is actually life-asserting, based on action and acceleration, and not lack or dying down, "Chez Kafka, l'être est ainsi dans son extrême misère [...], il semble que les métamorphoses de Kafka soient sous le mauvais signe. Elles expliquent mieux, par antithèse, la dynamogénie qu'un lecteur alerté reçoit à la lecture des *Chants de Maldoror*."[162] I argue that on the contrary, Kafka has created characters, such as the protagonists of "A Hunger Artist" (1922) and "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk" (1924), who share Maldoror's determination and energy, and who see themselves as an aesthetic project. Furthermore, I would like to show that Maldoror allows for both readings – a resilient, muscular "buck," and a violent, self-destructive vampirical "beau." This way, an important tension, already addressed in the analysis of *Thérèse Raquin*,

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[160] Lautréamont, 19.
[161] Maurice Blanchot and Julien Gracq. "Lautréamont ou l'espérance d'une tête" *Sur Lautréamont*. Bruxelles: Editions Complexe), 1987.
[162] Gaston Bachelard, *Lautréamont* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1939), 19-20.

can be highlighted, namely, a contradictory relation to self, and a vision of becoming as simultaneously an act of destruction and a productive force.

The challenge of reading *Les Chants de Maldoror* continues to produce numerous studies of its formal elements. Inquiries by Martin Thut,[163] Henry A. Grubbs,[164] Patricia Lawlor,[165] among others, are such examples.[166] One of the seminal thematic analyses useful to this study is Gaston Bachelard's collection of essays *Lautréamont* (1939), a psychological reading of the poem with particular focus on metamorphosis and animality. Other popular *topoi* addressed are the poem's topography,[167] violence,[168] and narcissism.[169] Cecile Lindsay[170] exposes tensions between the postmodern image of the body and a modern vision of self.

Regardless of whether the dandy's becoming is about dying or surviving, about damnation or redemption, the process of configuration of self is always a highly artificial, virtual, and oftentimes violent act. The desire for disembodiment is what keeps the story and Maldoror moving. It is not just a matter of a metaphorical trying on of new bodies and habits as one would try on a suit. The transformation happens at a literal level, cutting across bodily contours and identities:

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[163] Martin, Thut, *Le simulacre de l'énonciation: stratégies persuasives dans Les chants de Maldoror de Lautréamont* (New York: P. Lang, 1989).
[164] Henry A. Grubbs, "The Division into Strophes in the Chants De Maldoror" *Modern Language Notes*, 68 (3) (March 1953), 154-7.
[165] Patricia M. Lawlor, *Le fonctionnement de la métaphore dans les Chants de Maldoror* (University, Miss.: Romance Monographs, 1984).
[166] Patricia M. Lawlor, "Figuring (Out) Maldoror: 'Nous ne sommes plus dans la narration': Rhetoric and Narration in the Chants de Maldoror" *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 16 (3-4) (Spring-Summer1988): 372-8.
[167] Fortunato Zocchi, "Le paysage dans 'Les Chants de Maldoror'" *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, 3 (May - June, 1974), 419-37.
[168] Simone Luise Artuk, *Une descente aux enfers : images de la mort et de la destruction dans 'Les Chants de Maldoror' de Lautréamont* (Bern;New York: P. Lang), 1995.
[169] Paul Zweig, *Lautréamont: The Violent Narcissus* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press),1972.
[170] Cecile Lindsay, "Tearing the Body: Modern Self and Postmodern Corporality in *Les Chants de Maldoror*" *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 22 (1-2) (Fall-Winter 1993-1994): 150-71.

> L'homme ne devient pas loup, ni vampire, comme s'il changeait d'espèce molaire; mais le vampire et le loup-garou sont des devenirs de l'homme, c'est-à-dire des voisinages entre molécules composées, des rapports de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, entre particules émises. Bien sûr, il y a des loups-garous, des vampires, nous le disons avec tout notre cœur, mais n'y recherchez pas la ressemblance ou l'analogie avec l'animal, puisque c'est le devenir-animal en acte, c'est la production de l'animal moléculaire (tandis que l'animal 'réel' est pris dans sa forme et sa subjectivité molaires).[171]

The gruesome sado-masochistic scene of the flaying of a young man by Maldoror, related by what appears to be one of Maldoror's hair shafts, comments quite literally on the process of becoming. Such an unusual choice of a narrator sets in motion tensions between two pairs of masters and servants, Maldoror-the hair and Maldoror-the adolescent he tortures. In the first case, the distance is felt because the hair is talking while spying on his master from a distance. In the second pair, flaying is a metaphor for convergence, either through sex, or through some other attempt to "get under someone's skin" – to irritate, but also to understand and become one with someone. What comes out from under that skin is a pensive, graceful new dandy:

> N'ayant pas la force de me lever sur ma racine brûlante, je ne pus voir ce qu'ils firent. Ce que je sais, c'est qu'à peine le jeune homme fut à portée de sa main, que des lambeaux de chair tombèrent aux pieds du lit et vinrent se placer à mes côtés. Ils me racontaient tout bas que les griffes de mon maître les avaient détachés des épaules de l'adolescent. Celui-ci, au bout de quelques heures, pendant lesquelles il avait lutté contre une force plus grande, se leva du lit et se retira majestueusement.[172]

The metamorphosis is violent, and so is the symbolic process of shedding one's skin – the largest organ that visibly outlines the contours of one's body. After a sado-masochistic transformation that takes several hours, Maldoror is absent from the narrative, living vicariously, invisibly through the new becoming-dandy of the adolescent boy.

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[171] Deleuze and Guattari, 337.
[172] Lautréamont, 144.

Even though it is often claimed that the dandy's desire is cerebral,[173] the trope of sex as acts of reconnaissance and convergence among kindred spirits is widely employed in the poem. The most quoted scene in the *Chants* is a sexual encounter with a female shark. At the literal level, the narrator hesitates between seeing this union as the detached, "chaste" act of an animal that does not remember its body, or instead as an acutely human, shameful and conscious event, "[...] ils se réunirent dans un accouplement long, chaste et hideux!"[174] Maldoror will never stop going through metamorphoses, alternating between, passing through animal and human states:

> Objet de mes vœux, je n'appartenais plus à l'humanité! […] Il était enfin venu, le jour où je fus un pourceau! [...] Au milieu d'efforts surnaturels, pour continuer mon chemin, ce fut alors que je me réveillai, et que je sentis que je redevenais homme.[175]

The dandy in the mode of the Body without Organs (Corps sans Organes) can recognize connections that might not be obvious to others. Deleuze and Guattari affirm that the same "plane of consistency" can bring together the unlikeliest of bedfellows:

> Le plan de consistance, ce serait l'ensemble de tous les CsO, pure multiplicité d'immanence, dont un morceau peut être chinois, un autre américain, un autre médiéval, un autre petit-pervers, mais dans un mouvement de déterritorialisation généralisée où chacun prend et fait ce qu'il peut, d'après ses goûts qu'il aurait réussi à abstraire d'un Moi, d'après une politique ou une stratégie qu'on aurait réussi à abstraire de telle ou telle formation, d'après tel procédé qui serait abstrait de son origine.[176]

The incongruity of co-existing sexual choices ("un morceau peut être chinois, un autre américain, un autre médiéval, un autre petit-pervers") is part of the dandy's reality. He or she cannot practice "safe," normative sex as it makes the goal of abstraction ("déterritorialisation")

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[173] Deborah Houk in her psychoanalytic study of the dandy in Baudelaire and Rachilde "Self-Construction and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth-Century French Dandyism" describes the dandy's desire as "cerebrally-based eroticism." *French Forum*, 22 (1) (January1997): 59-73.
[174] Lautréamont, 111.
[175] Ibid., 176-7.
[176] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *"Comment se faire un Corps sans Organes?" Mille Plateux* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 195.

from human determination ("abstraire d'un Moi") impossible. In Maldoror's case, through the sado-masochistic sex with the shark, he enters a contract aimed at forgetting humanity. By dehumanizing the sexual act, which is part of being human, he is able to completely redirect the hurt of the trauma of the past ("abstr[ation] de son origine") into the building of an energetic and athletic figure.

2.2.3 Amphibian Accomplices

Animality is a rich metaphorical and metamorphic source for making sense of Maldoror as a dandy. *Les Chants* is an abundant menagerie of animals and creatures, real, metaphorical, and fantastic. In Gaston Bachelard's words, "L'homme apparaît alors comme une somme de possibilités vitales, comme un suranimal, il a toute l'animalité à sa disposition. Soumis à ses fonctions spécifiques d'agression, l'animal n'est qu'un assassin spécialisé."[177] Maldoror, like the animals "at his disposal," is drawn in abstract terms ("mal dessinées"), "produced" by the author and by himself: "Les formes animales y sont mal dessinées. En fait, elles ne sont pas *reproduites;* elles sont vraiment *produites.* Elles sont induites par les actions."[178] Actions and vigor prevail over symbols and metaphors. According to Bachelard, the takeover is achieved to a large extent by animal forces at work, one hundred eighty-five kinds of animals.[179] Even within that much variety, it is possible to single out the aquatic creatures, the shark, the squid, and the pelican in particular, as they resonate the most with Maldoror's dandy metamorphoses. The shark, for instance, emerges in the story when the hero is at his loneliest:

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[177] Ibid., 24.
[178] Ibid., 14.
[179] Ibid., 26.

> Je cherchais une âme qui me ressemblât, et je ne pouvais pas la trouver. Je fouillais tous les recoins de la terre; ma persévérance était inutile. Cependant, je ne pouvais pas rester seul. Il fallait quelqu'un qui approuvât mon caractère; il fallait quelqu'un qui eût les mêmes idées que moi.[180]

Here, the stress is not on erotic desire but on wanting to find someone who resembles him, intellectually or aesthetically ("quelqu'un qui eût les mêmes idées que moi"). What seems to be a bestiality scene is less a comment on Maldoror's sexuality than a comment on a strong feeling of relief upon finally finding that kindred spirit. Deleuze and Guattari warn against conflation of becoming animal and bestiality:

> Il n'y a pas besoin de bestialisme pour ça, bien que le bestialisme puisse y apparaître […] trop simple, donc détournée, devenue trop bête. Il ne s'agit pas de "faire" le chien, comme un vieux monsieur sur la carte postale; il ne s'agit pas tellement de faire l'amour avec des bêtes.[181]

The union of Maldoror and the shark is chaste yet unsightly precisely because erotic language is used to talk about a different kind of desire:

> […] ayant pour lit d'hyménée la vague écumeuse, emportés par un courant, sur eux-mêmes, vers les profondeurs inconnus de l'abîme, ils se réunirent dans un accouplement long, chaste et hideux! [...] Enfin, je venais de trouver quelqu'un qui me ressemblât! [...] Désormais, je n'étais plus seul dans la vie! [...] Elle avait les mêmes idées que moi! [...] J'étais en face de mon premier amour![182]

Like the dandy accomplices in *Thérèse Raquin*, both the shark and Maldoror are excellent swimmers*, flâneurs* of the sea, "Mais, quel est encore ce tumulte des eaux, là-bas, à l'horizon? On dirait une trombe qui s'approche. Quels corps de rame!"[183] Bachelard in *L'eau et les rêves*, emphasizes an image of water as a hostile and violent environment, which makes movement and survival an athletic challenge:

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[180] Lautréamont, 103.
[181] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Comment se faire un Corps sans Organes? " 341-2.
[182] Lautréamont, 111.
[183] Ibid., 110.

> Nous montrerons donc la volonté d'attaque qui anime l'homme nageant, puis la revanche du flot. Nous retrouverons ainsi cette imagination musculaire dont nous avons signalé l'action dans la métapoétique énergétique de Lautréamont.[184]

Surviving in water is therefore a more considerable, heroic feat, for "[d]ans l'eau, la victoire est plus rare, plus dangereuse, plus méritoire que dans le vent. Le nageur conquiert un élément plus étranger à sa nature. Le jeune nageur est un héros précoce."[185] Maldoror's goal is to become as naturally comfortable in water as a shark whose body has a sharp, aerodynamic shape ("corps de rame") that cuts through water. Consisting of equally sharp parts – the teeth, the fins, the tail, and the skin covered in denticles, it solicits both admiration for its royal grace and fear, to the point of disgust ("requin de l'abjection individuelle").[186] A vehicle for Maldoror's creativity and cruelty, an extension of his own body, it is a cold-blooded animal, a pure energy, needing constant movement in order to stay alive.

Together with the shark, cephalopods are Mardoror's equally remarkable companions:

> O poulpe, au regard de soie! toi, dont l'âme est inséparable de la mienne; toi, le plus beau des habitants du globe terrestre, et qui commandes à un sérail de quatre cents ventouses; toi, en qui siégent noblement, comme dans leur résidence naturelle, par un commun accord, d'un lien indestructible, la douce vertu communicative et les grâces divines, pourquoi n'es-tu pas avec moi, ton ventre de mercure contre ma poitrine d'aluminium, assis tous les deux sur quelque rocher du rivage, pour contempler ce spectacle que j'adore![187]

Like Maldoror, Lautréamont's octopus is highly aware of its body, able to see his body parts as if they were severed or autonomous ("toi, […] qui commandes à un sérail de quatre cents ventouses"). For Maldoror, the octopus's grace is in its mimicry: the mercury-like pliability, the ability to transform into other creatures, make bodily contours liquid – thus a perfect visualization of the dandy's transformatinve abilities. The octopus not only is an animal of

[184] Bachelard, *L'eau et les rêves*, 21-2.
[185] Ibid., 218-9.
[186] Lautréamont, 149.
[187] Ibid., 31.

extreme intelligence, but is also the perfect escape artist, throwing ink into the eyes of the onlooker, removing himself from the surroundings while leaving an unforgettable impression. In the following scene, as Maldoror appears before the "Créateur," he is the octopus, threatening to attach his own four hundred suction cups to God's underarm and make him scream with pain: "Quel ne fut pas son étonnement, quand il vit Maldoror, changé en poulpe, avancer contre son corps ses huit pattes monstrueuses, dont chacune, lanière solide, aurait pu embrasser facilement la circonférence d'une planète."[188] The fact that human tongue and the arms of an octopus, covered in dozens of tiny mouths-suction cups, are both examples of muscular hydrostats – organs of manipulation – brings locomotion and language together. The hyperbolic language in the passage above acts as that confusing ink that covers Maldoror's tracks while throwing the reader off. Maldoror as an octopus astonishes, makes himself bigger, creating a body of artificial excess through restless movement and the display of exaggerated language.

The hyperbole and artifice of Lautréamont's octopus is all the more validated by the fact that his description borders on the fantastic. He is a winged creature, comfortable both in the ocean and in the sky, "Quelquefois, dans une nuit d'orage, pendant que des légions de poulpes ailés, ressemblant de loin à des corbeaux, planent au-dessus des nuages, ils se dirigent d'une rame raide vers les cités des humains, avec la mission de les avertir de changer de conduite."[189] These ominous monsters form legions whose purpose is to comment on and influence human behavior, and yet, they are solitary, not socially engaged ("Les légions solitaires de poulpes, devenues mornes à l'aspect de ces fulgurations sourdes et inexprimables").[190] This paradox of a *flâneur* – being in a crowd while remaining completely alone – is both Baudelairian and

[188] Ibid., 116.
[189] Ibid., 114.
[190] Ibid., 114.

Poesque. The melacholy impression of the scene is further emphasized by a Romantic comparison of the octopus to a raven.

Karen Humphreys in her article "Barbey, Baudelaire, and the 'Imprévu': Strategies in Literary Dandyism" points out that "Without being overtly masochistic, the dandy is his own hangman."[191] The martyr side of Malrodor is seen in his third aquatic ally, the pelican:

> "[L]e sauvage pélican se résout à donner sa poitrine à dévorer à ses petits, n'ayant pour témoin que celui qui sut créer un pareil amour."[192] […] Le pélican, dont le généreux pardon m'avait causé beaucoup d'impression, parce que je ne le trouvais pas naturel, reprenant sur son tertre l'impassibilité majestueuse d'un phare, comme pour avertir les navigateurs humains de faire attention à son exemple, et de préserver leur sort de l'amour des magiciennes sombres, regardait toujours devant lui.[193]

The figure, a clear reference to Christ's sacrifice and Eucharist*,* highlights not so much the subversive dimension of the dandy-Christ association, as it brings out such aspects as self-discipline, erasing of the body ("se résout à donner sa poitrine à dévorer à ses petits"), clairvoyance ("un phare", "pour avertir les navigateurs humains"), and self-imposed solitude ("l'impassibilité majestueuse"), also evident in the image of the shark and the octopus. Further investigation into the links between sainthood and dandyism will also be the focus of the section on Colette Peignot.

The illusive and solitary nature of these aquatic beings represents what could be qualified as the dandy's predicament – an unrealized potential to bring about change. Daniel Salvatore Schiffer in *Philosophie du dandysme* cites Jean-Paul Sartre who in his essay *Baudelaire*[194] makes a crucial distinction between a rebel (*révolté*) and a revolutionary. While Sartre reproaches

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[191] Karen Humphreys, "Barbey, Baudelaire, and the 'Imprévu': Strategies in Literary Dandyism" *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), 72.
[192] Lautréamont, 47-8.
[193] Ibid., 199.
[194] Schiffer, 200.

Baudelaire for the *mauvaise conscience* and lack of social involvement as a poet, the essay's observations could be extended to the dandy. The dandy is not a true subversive figure because he or she chooses aesthetic distinction over political opposition, self-involvement over social engagement. Seen from the vantage point of becoming, this "lack" of action is not a failure but a way of being. The dandy is not so much against nature or society but beside them, not invested in being a leader or aware enough of the politics or the power of subversion to be a rebel.

2.2.4 The Vampire and the Androgyne

While even the descriptions of real animals in *Les Chants* brink on the fantastic – the winged octopus and the pelican with his disproportionate, hyperbolic beak, there are also a number of decidedly fantastical elements in Maldoror and his entourage. One of the most relevant creatures to comment on Malrodor's dehumanization is the vampire. A fashionable literary character at the time of Lautréamont with such authors as Byron, Mary Shelley, Victor Hugo, Eugène Sue, and E.T.A. Hoffmann, among others, his presence in *Les Chants* is both a satire and a serious matter. Even though the narrator plainly calls Maldoror a vampire, Maldoror himself refuses that name, "[...] c'est à tort que l'on me suppose vampire, puisqu'on appelle ainsi des morts qui sortent de leur tombeau; or, moi, je suis un vivant."[195] Perhaps, as a true dandy, he will not admit he is one. While it is not clear whether or not Maldoror is undead, he definitely possesses vampiristic qualities. He is endowed with thirst for blood, suction cups, and there is an

[195] Lautréamont, 209.

entire army of other blood-sucking animals reinforcing the impression, such as the bat, the flea, and the leech. Finally, he has the ability to time travel and move at dizzying speeds.[196]

Together with the figure of the vampire, another mythical figure, the androgyne, is worth mentioning here, as it equally comments on Maldoror's nonhumanity. According to Bachelard, who uses the example of the octopus, vampirical creatures or those who rely on suction are androgynous: "La jouissance sexuelle prime d'ailleurs la joie alimentaire […] Les fantômes de la succion sont toujours androgynes."[197] What accounts for androgyny is, perhaps, the anonymity of the mouth as a suction cup. Both associations with androgyny – biological hermaphrodism, and gender identity fashioned through appearance and behavior – are addressed. The story of the hermaphrodite – also a popular figure in Gothic and Romantic literatures – spans several pages in the second Chant. The description of hermaphrodite's body corresponds to mixed gender markers usually sent by the dandy's outer appearance:

> Ses traits expriment l'énergie la plus virile, en même temps que la grâce d'une vierge céleste. Rien ne paraît naturel en lui, pas même les muscles de son corps, qui se fraient un passage à travers les contours harmonieux de formes féminines. Il a le bras recourbé sur le front, l'autre main appuyée contre la poitrine, comme pour comprimer les battements d'un cœur fermé à toutes les confidences, et chargé du pesant fardeau d'un secret éternel.[198]

Biology and artifice seem to blend ("[R]ien ne paraît naturel en lui"). This androgyny is also useful for the discussion of becoming as it conflates different bodies to a point where its physical presence seems diaphanous, fragile, and almost irrelevant. Aligned on the "beau" part of the dandy spectrum, both the vampire and the androgyne are foils for Malrodor's "buck" vitality. But even Maldoror has an androgynous streak to him. The ease with which Maldoror goes from being an active to a passive vampire is obvious in this description of a bat:

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[196] Ibid., 231.
[197] Bachelard, *Lautréamont*, 42.
[198] Lautréamont, 75.

> Je te remercie, ô rhinolophe, de m'avoir reveillé avec le mouvement de tes ailes, toi dont le nez est surmonté d'une crête en forme de fer à cheval [...] Les uns disent que tu arrivais vers moi pour me sucer un peu de sang qui se trouve dans mon corps: pourquoi cette hypothèse n'est-elle pas la réalité.[199]

Maldoror – the octopus, the pelican, the shark, the vampire, the androgyne – is a loner looking for a *semblable,* a true "dandy solitaire et singulier," as Françoise Dolto puts it. But literary examples of relationships with other dandies are far too numerous to be ignored. The following analysis will deal specifically with the dynamics of emitting, receiving and processing signals within a dandy couple in Barbey d'Aurevilly's novella "Le Bonheur dans le crime" published only two years after Lautréamont's poem. The dandy tandem in the next section is comprised of Hauteclaire Stassin and the count Serlon de Savigny – a story written by one of the first theorists of dandyism, and a famous dandy himself.

2.3 BARBEY D'AUREVILLY, PARTNERS IN CRIME: THE DANDY COUPLE IN *LE BONHEUR DANS LE CRIME* (1871)

2.3.1 "Panthère Contre Panthère!"

Barbey d'Aurevilly's spectacular persona, one of the first French theorists of dandyism and the author of *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummel* (1845), continues to draw attention, with the latest biography, Michel Lécureur's *Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly: Le Sagittaire*, published in 2008. Regarding his literary work, several studies focus on the figure of the dandy narrator. For instance, in an article "Barbey, Baudelaire, and the 'Imprévu': Strategies in Literary

[199] Ibid., 40.

Dandyism"(1999),[200] Karen Humphreys comments on the use of irony as an important element of the dandy poetics. In The figure of the dandy in Barbey d'Aurevilly's 'Le bonheur dans le crime,' (1996) Davina L. Eisenberg discusses vestment and the sexuality of dandy protagonists in dialog with d'Aurevilly's treatise *Du Dandysme*. Another study on the gender of the dandy is by Susanne Rossbach, "Dandyism in the Literary Works of Barkey d'Aurevilly: Ideology, Gender, and Narration" (1999).[201]

Similarly to *Thérèse Raquin* and *Maldoror*, animal imagery permeates "Le bonheur dans le crime" (1871). As with these texts, dehumanization in Aurevillian works coinsides with the presence of strong dandy figures. The opening scene of the novella is set at the famous menagerie of the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. While strolling, the narrator and his acquaintance doctor Torty stumble upon an odd couple who happen to be the doctor's former patients. Both tall, slender, and aloof, the countess, formerly known as Hauteclaire de Stassin, and the count of Savigny stop in front of the cage with a panther. A confrontation between the woman who is compared to a cat, and the cat who is compared to a human, ensues: "Voici l'équilibre rétabli entre les espèces!"[202]

> Panthère contre le panthère! – fit le docteur […] Noire, souple, d'articulation aussi puissante, aussi royale d'attitude, – dans son espèce, d'une beauté égale, et d'un charme encore plus inquiétant, – la femme, l'inconnue, était comme une panthère humaine, dressée devant la panthère animale qu'elle éclipsait.[203]

First, Hauteclare, a "panthère humaine," wins a staring contest, and then proceeds to take off her purple glove and slap the animal with it. The dandy's stare is a powerful image, a mirror-like

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[200] Karen Humphreys, "Barbey, Baudelaire, and the 'Imprévu': Strategies in Literary Dandyism" *Modern Language Studies*, Spring, 1999; 29 (1) 61-80.
[201] Susanne Rossbach, "Dandyism in the Literary Works of Barbey d'Aurevilly: Ideology, Gender, and Narration", *Modern Language Studies*; Spring 1999; 29 (1): 81-102.
[202] Barbey, 125.
[203] Ibid., 126.

reflection, symbolic of the split within the same person. In the following quote, it is hard to tell Hauteclaire and the animal apart:

> Quant à ses yeux, je n'en pouvais juger, fixes qu'ils étaient sur la panthère laquelle, sans doute, en recevait une impression magnétique et désagréable, car, immobile déjà elle sembla s'enfoncer de plus en plus dans cette immobilité rigide, à mesure que la femme, venue pour la voir, la regardait.[204]

As the panther is ascribed human characteristics, her royal gait and contempt for the gawkers, "de dédain impassible et royal,"[205] is emphasized. It is known from the beginning that the feline will die from consumption, like a young girl, "comme une jeune fille, de la poitrine."[206] The grammatical gender of the word "panther" in French aside, it is not clear whether the animal is male or female. This omission on the part of the author – whether conscious or not – fits as a comment on Hauteclaire's own conflation of gender markers, evident in the comparison of the train of her dress to the tail of a male peacock: "[…] la femme étalant sa traîne noire dans la poussière du jardin, comme un paon, dédaigneux jusque de son plumage."[207]

The public gawks both at the panther and Hauteclare because both are exotically different. In fact, the theme of exoticism in the story, through the use of hyperbole and comparison, is used often to convey the dandy's superiority and distinction. In the far away lands, the narrator muses, everything is more intense, extreme: "A Java, les fleurs ont plus d'éclat et plus de parfum, les fruits ont plus de gout, les animaux plus de beauté et plus de force que dans aucun autre pays de la terre."[208] For that reason, perhaps, Barbey d'Aurevilly employs to a great extent animals exotic to a European eye, such the Javanese panther, the snake, and the peacock.

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[204] Ibid., 126.
[205] Ibid., 124-5.
[206] Ibid., 124.
[207] Ibid., 128.
[208] Ibid., 124.

It is remarkable that these animals are hunted for their decorative skin and feathers. Barbey's meticulous attention to fashion is anything but superficial, producing language that fuses skin and fabric, *être* and *paraître*, humanity and animality. The following description of the panther borrows heavily from the jargon of fashion and shopping, "étalée", "élégantes pattes", "émeraude", "échantillion", "production", "la fourrure de velours noir".[209] The unforgettable Hauteclaire's eyes are compared to finely cut black diamonds,[210] the panther's fur is likened to velvet, while Hauteclaire's glove repeats the contours of her forearm like the second skin, "Aussi, défaisant sans mot dire les douze boutons du gant violet qui moulait son magnifique avant-bras, elle ôta ce gant."[211]

2.3.2 The Sparring Partners

Contrary to Davina Eisenberg's vision of Hauteclaire as a "merely Serlon's feminine side rather than a protagonist in her own right,"[212] I argue that she is the strongest dandy – literally and figuratively – of the story. Hauteclaire's constitution – muscles and height – rivals that of Serlon's: "Elle était grande comme lui. Sa tête atteignait presque à la sienne. Et, comme elle était aussit tout en noir, elle faisait penser à la grande Isis noire du Musée Egyptien, par l'ampleur de ses formes, la fierté mystérieuse et la force."[213] Brought up by her father, a retired military man, similarly to Rachilde's Laure Lourdès, she is a late, miraculous child. Everything is unusual and bigger than life about her. Her beauty is as extraordinary as her strength. In fact, there is enough "material" for two children: "c'est quand au lieu d'un enfant, un vieillard [Hauteclaire's father]

[209] Ibid., 124.
[210] Ibid., 127.
[211] Ibid., 127.
[212] Eisenberg, 58.
[213] Barbey, 126.

d'un coup, en fait deux! *La Pointe-au-corps* n'eut pas cet orgueil paternal de deux jumeaux; mais il est vrai de dire qu'il y avait de quoi tailler deux enfants dans le sien. Sa fille […] était un merveilleux enfant pour la force et la beauté."[214] The name Hauteclaire, connoting distinction, is the name of Olivier's sword from *Chanson de Roland*. Hauteclaire is also likened to the Christian warrior "Saint-Georges femelle" – a comment on her fearless confrontation with the panther. Intensive physical exercise, combined with genes, made her look older and bigger than her peers. Like Maldoror, she is a superb athlete, and a "buck":

> […] c'était un marmot solide que cette fillette, avec des attaches et des articulations d'acier fin, il la développa d'une si étrange manière, qu'à dix ans, elle semblait en avoir déjà quinze, et qu'elle faisait admirablement sa partie avec son père et les plus forts tireurs de la ville de V…[215]

Although both Hauteclaire and Serlon are in extraordinary physical shape, she has more body, strength and presence, "Chose étrange! dans le rapprochement de ce beau couple, c'était la femme qui avait des muscles, et l'homme qui avait les nerfs."[216] In fact, they meet because the young Serlon is eager to meet the gifted fencer Hauteclaire, "ce miracle," who eventually becomes his instructor. Undoubtedly, Serlon, described as a restless ("piaffant") stallion rather than a human being is "certainement un des plus brillants et des plus piaffants jeunes gens," but he still needs Hauteclaire to become a dandy. It is clear from the description of their initial fencing encounter that at the hands of his teacher, the count will be as pliable as his sword: "Mais il ne fut point le Tancrède de la situation, le comte de Savigny ! Mlle Hauteclaire Stassin plia à plusieurs reprises son épée en faucille sur le cœur du beau Serlon."[217]

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[214] Ibid., 133.
[215] Ibid., 134.
[216] Ibid., 126.
[217] Ibid., 137.

Hauteclaire's power to transform applies to beings and things alike. Her ability to turn her sword into a bullet is nothing short of magical, "Elle avait, entre autres, un dégagé de quarte en tierce qui ressemblait à de la magie. Ce n'était plus là une épée qui vous frappait, c'était une balle!"[218] As with a medieval hero, she is admired for her valor and is quite a local celebrity: "Tous, ils ne pouvaient pas s'empêcher de penser à cette fille, qu'ils avaient admirée et qui, en disparaissant, avait mis en deuil cette ville d'épée dont elle était la grande artiste, la *diva* spéciale, le rayon."[219] The diva status makes her more than human. *Le rayon*, she shines and is abstracted from her own body, becoming more than the body.

Hauteclaire and the count may be in love, but his marriage is already arranged, with another woman, Délphine de Cantor. The lovers resort to murder in order to eliminate the obstacle. Like Thérèse Raquin, Hauteclaire uses her supreme strategic and physical energies to destructive ends. As Davina Eisenberg states, "according to Gérard Peylet, 'pour Barbey d'Aurevilly, le dandy idéal, c'est la Femme héroïque', who hides her passion beneath an impassive mask and who lives marginally, in opposition to and provoking her social milieu."[220] The hero, paradoxically, becomes an anti-heroine. As a woman, Hauteclaire has to be deeply extraordinary, more radical in her behavior in order to become a dandy. Like Thérèse Raquin, she has to be more radical, more extraordinary than the male figure, be it a partner or a father :

> Une femme qui fait ce que fait un homme, le ferait-elle beaucoup moins bien, aura toujours sur l'homme, en France, un avantage marqué. Or, Mlle Hauteclaire Stassin, pour ce qu'elle faisait, le faisait beaucoup mieux. Elle était devenue beaucoup plus forte que son père.[221]

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[218] Ibid., 138.
[219] Ibid., 141.
[220] Eisenberg, 76.
[221] Barbey, 136.

As Hauteclaire sets out to reclaim her lover, darker, more sinister tones dominate the descriptions of her. Her disappearance from the town as Hauteclaire is described as paranormal: "Elle avait disparu de la plus radicale manière. Elle avait fait […] ce qu'on peut très bien appeler un trou dans le vent. Le vent souffla, et ne la rendit pas."[222] A cat-woman, a shapeshifter, Hauteclaire is also an excellent actress. As Hauteclaire disappears, an enigmatic Eulalie, bearing striking resemblance to Hauteclaire, infiltrates the house of the count as a servant of his wife Délphine de Cantor. The donning of the name of a saint, which means "gifted with beautiful and sweet speech," is paired with a deceptively humble dress of a *grisette* – a nod to Hauteclaire's mother's not-so-noble origins. Now, any comparison to a mythical diety or a heroine takes on a diabolical tone. The irony is especially obvious when the humble grisette is compared to the Ancient Greek goddess Pallas de Velletry, the helmet-wearing, patroness of war, wisdom, and weaving.[223] With her simple coiffe resembling a "casque", military headgear, "Son déguisement […] était complet. Elle portait le costume des grisettes de la ville de V…, et leur coiffe qui ressemble à un casque[…]."[224]

Eventually, the count Serlon and Eulalie-Hauteclaire kill the wife by slowly poisoning her. Eulalie disappears, and Hauteclaire resurfaces in Paris as the count's new partner. Here, they are equally deemed an anomaly, as a married couple in love:

> [V]ous n'avez jamais entendu parler du comte et de la comtesse Serlon de Savigny comme d'un modèle fabuleux d'amour conjugal? – Ma foi, non, – dis-je, –On parle peu d'amour conjugal dans le monde où je vais, docteur.[225]

While the couple's lifestyle may seem domestic, it is never quite domesticated: while strolling at the Jardin des Plantes is a common bourgeois pastime, "dueling" with a panther is not. At home,

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[222] Ibid., 140.
[223] Ibid., 137.
[224] Ibid., 149
[225] Ibid., 128.

Hauteclaire does not gives up needlepoint – a seemingly innocuous woman's activity, which in fact is both the reminder of Hauteclaire's conniving *grisette* years and a symbol of her dangerous side as a fencer.[226]

Unlike Zola's Thérèse Raquin and Laurent, the couple in "Le bonheur dans le crime" miraculously get away with murder. In addition to being good actors and strategists, they seduce the narrator and the reader. The admiration and infatuation of the public within the story is equally conveyed. Even though Hauteclaire and de Savigny are criminals scorned by the inhabitants of the town V…, the metamorphosis leaves the town in a state of wistful reverie: "Maintenant, elle lève son voile, et leur montre hardiment le visage de servante qui a su se faire épouser, et elles rentrent indignées, mais rêveuses[...]."[227]

Whereas Hauteclaire is represented as a feral animal, the one of an inferior social status, the count is a tamer cat. With the same-color earring studs as the eyes of the panther, with cat's whiskers, he looks like a pirate or a smug circus performer. In the eyes of the crowd, without this "ridiculous" detail, he would be as invisible as Brummell's dandy:

> 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 *irrémarquable*, dans la tenue de cet homme qui n'attirait l'attention que par lui-même.[228]

While Hauteclaire displays the extravagant male peacock's tail-looking train, gender reversal does not take place, "nous restâmes à le voir filer, ce maître-couple, – la femme étalant sa traîne noire dans la poussière du jardin, comme un paon, dédaigneux jusque de son plumage."[229] They both belong to the same species, the dandy, "le concubinage continuerait

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[226] Ibid., 157.
[227] Ibid., 171.
[228] Ibid., 125-6.
[229] Ibid., 128.

d'aller son train entre ces deux fiers animaux, qui avaient, au premier coup d'oeil, reconnu qu'ils étaient de la meme espèce et qui avaient osé l'adultère sous les yeux mêmes de la comptesse."[230] The second Hauteclaire and the count spot one another, they never leave each other's sight and are always together, "Où l'un va, l'autre l'accompagne."[231] They even end up by dressing alike, giving an impression of being one body inside the same outfit. Hauteclaire is "Lacée dans ce gilet d'armes de peau de chamois qui lui faisait comme une cuirasse, et les jambes moulées par ces chausses en soie qui en prenaient si juste un contour musclé. Savigny portait à peu près le même costume."[232]

Like Lautréamont's Maldoror, these two are not nostalgic, dainty *beaus*. They are resilient, physically fit, and happy, "Ils n'avaient ni au front, ni nulle part, de mélancholie,"[233] even if their happiness is built on someone's misfortune, death, or crime. As a couple, Serlon and Hauteclaire are cruel and immoral. The flowery language seems to be mocking the very convention of romantic love:

> Il a fallu ces deux êtres, immuablement beaux, malgré le temps, immuablement heureux malgré leur crime, puissants, passionnés, absorbés en eux, passant aussi superbement dans la vie que dans le jardin, semblables à deux de ces Anges d'autel qui s'enlèvent, unis dans l'ombre d'or de leurs quatre ailes![234]

Here, the cliché of two lovers becoming one takes on a new meaning when both partners are dandies who cannot function without the other as they are engaged in a competitive fight more than an affair. There is equally something unusual about sexual relations in that they are always mediated through and eventually completely replaced by a sport. Fencing as a choice of physical activity is curious too, as the ultimate goal of it is to avoid contact. If the contact does occur, the

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[230] Ibid., 166.
[231] Ibid., 171.
[232] Ibid., 156.
[233] Ibid., 125.
[234] Ibid., 164.

toucher is symbolic, as it is done through another mediator, the tip of the sword. The doctor, spying on the couple's midnight fencing tryst, acknowledges that the couple invented their own way of making love, "Tiens! Fis-je, admirant la force des goûts et des habitudes, - voilà donc toujours leurs manière de faire l'amour!"[235] In fact, Hauteclaire is a "promiscous" player, having had multipile fencing partners prior to meeting de Savigny. As a result, this energy-consuming union with almost no touch, bears no children, "Le feu, – qui dévore, – consume et ne produit pas."[236] In this context, words like "penetration" and "entering" lose their sexual innuendos. In the following example, the two dandies looking at each another are actually looking at themselves in the mirror, becoming abstract, introspective, less present. Through ecstatic experience, the two walk on clouds like Greek gods, and disappear altogether:

> Ils passèrent auprès de nous, le docteur et moi, mais leurs visages tournés l'un vers l'autre, se serrant flanc contre flanc, comme s'ils avaient voulu se pénétrer, entrer, lui dans elle, elle dans lui, et ne faire qu'un seul corps à eux deux, en ne regardant rien qu'eux-mêmes. C'étaient […] des créatures supérieures, qui n'apercevaient pas même à leurs orteils la terre sur laquelle ils marchaient, et qui traversaient le monde dans leur nuage, comme, dans Homère, les Immortels![237]

This fusion of two selves into one, the levitation and eventual vanishing, are a literal realization of what Daniel Salvatore Schiffer describes as the dandy's aesthetics of disappearance. On a symbolic level, for the dandy, where there is artifice or *paraître*, there is abstraction, *disparaître*:

> Car cette paroxystique mise en valeur du corps, cette sorte d'emphase artificielle des traits du visage et cette épidermique volonté de privilégier la culture au detriment de la nature – bref, ce culte du parâitre, plus encore que du moi –, n'est-ce pas là aussi et surtout, au fond, une manière esthétiquement sublimée, certes toute paradoxale puisqu'elle s'apparente en ce cas à un suicide d'ordre symbolique, de faire disparaître l'être lui-même – 'être-pour-la-mort.'[238]

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[235] Ibid., 155.
[236] Ibid., 171.
[237] Ibid., 127.
[238] Schiffer, 210.

This "suicide d'ordre symbolique" has no negative connotation, as this act of vanishing is a gateway into a different dimension, a new reality entirely constructed by the dandy.

2.3.3 The Dandy Doctor's Gaze

Despite Barbey's lifelong antipathy for Zola's work,[239] the two shared a vivid interest in pathology and physiology. The most obvious result of that interest in Barbey's writing is the recurring figure of the doctor. In the story of Hauteclaire and Serlon, Dr. Torty, also one of the narrators, is a gifted man of science and a die-hard cynic. Given the authority of an examiner's eye to make aesthetic and philosophical observations beyond medicine, he is the one who recognizes the protagonists in the Jardin des Plantes in the opening scene of the novella. He himself is a dandy, with a strong "dandy radar." He is introduced as an "other man," standing out of the crowd because of his painstakingly composed outfit, just like the couple in front of the panther's cage:

> C'était un autre homme: Il avait, avec ses gants de daim, ses bottes à forte semelle et à gros talons qu'il faisait retentir sous son pas très ferme, quelque chose d'alerte et de cavalier, et cavalier est bien le mot, car il était resté (combien d'années sur trente!), le *charivari* boutonné sur la cuisse, et à cheval, dans des chemins à casser en deux des Centaures, – et on devinait bien tout cela à la manière dont il cambrait encore son large buste, vissé sur des reins qui n'avaient pas bougé, et qui se balançait sur de fortes jambes sans rhumatismes, arquées comme celles d'un ancien postillon.[240]

What is known from Torty's past is that he underwent a transformation of sorts, from an Oedipal to a wild animal. The doctor, tamed by his provincial bourgeois lifestyle, moves to Paris upon retirement where he goes wild, unleashed – a case in a way reminiscent of Thérèse Raquin's: "et

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[239] Michel Lécureur, *Barbey d'Aurevilly, Le Sagittaire* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 405.
[240] Barbey, 123.

déjà sur l'âge et fou d'indépendance, comme un animal qui a toujours marché sur son bridon et qui finit par le casser, il était venu s'engloutir dans Paris, – là même, dans le voisinage du Jardin des Plantes. " [241] Like Hauteclaire, he comes from a bourgeois background but aspires for upward mobility. The combination of hard-earned reputation, awareness of his indispensability, talent and charm are the reasons for being excused for his eccentric behavior in the eyes of high Parisian society:

> [I]l ne se gênait pas, le docteur […] Il avait la plaisanterie légèrement sacrilège […] – par un cynisme qui descend toutes choses et tutoierait des duchesses et des dames d'honneur d'impératrice et les appellerait "mes petites mères", ni plus ni moins que des marchandes de poisson.[242]

Using the doctor as a foil, the otherwise anonymous and invisible narrator gains a robust body and a voyeuristic gaze, as dandies are noted for their "œil pénétrant" – and experience. Tarty is not like other doctors who sport "ni de tenue ni d'allure."[243] In addition to his attitude, the doctor equally shares the protagonists' investment in fitness. Like many dandies – historical and literary – he is excellent at horseback riding. Hauteclaire herself is a rider as a female Saint George and an amazon.[244] The image of Torty as a cavalier[245] upholds the image of the dandy-centaur – a hybrid being, neither human nor animal – as a recurring *topos* in many texts in this project, including Rachilde's female characters, Lautréamont's Maldoror, and Colette Peignot's eponymous poem. Ellen Moers in *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* argues that French

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[241] Ibid., 123.
[242] Ibid., 122.
[243] Ibid., 121.
[244] Ibid., 134-5.
[245] The image of the Sagittarius – a skillful and witty archer and a cavalier, comes up in association with Barbey d'Aurevilly. In his letters to Léon Bloy, Barbey calls himself "le sagittaire," "Moi, je lui écrirai demain et d'encre rouge, brûlante, pour lui recommender l'article et paraître le 25… Le Sagittaire lui décochera une flèche de longeur, je vous en réponds! comptez sur moi." (*Lettres de J. Barbey d'Aurevilly à Léon Bloy* (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1903), 225). Michel Lécureur's 2008 biography is entitled *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Le Sagittaire* (Paris: Fayard, 2008). Pierre Glaudes when discussing Barbey's talent as a polemist in *Ésthétique de Barbey d'Aurevilly* (Paris: Éditions Classiques Garnier, 2009), describes him as "ce sagittaire [qui] ne lance pas ses traits au gré de ses foucades. En visant tel homme, il vise en général sa doctrine" (34).

dandies took an English pastime of equestrianism too seriously, and that the figure of the centaur they conjured up as a result is a testament to this misappropriation:

> Most fashionable was the horse. Worshipping the animal as 'le sacré roi de la création', the anglomaniac dandy likes to fancy himself a centaur. It was more than fashionable, it was essential to ride a horse, drive a horse, own a horse, bet on a horse or, at the least (often at the most), talk horse all day and all night long. This attitude was the most foolish and the most colourful mistake in the history of anglomania: confusing the urbane dandy and the horsey buck. For Brummell and Pelham horses had been incidentals, hunting and racing vulgarly energetic; but the French dandy at least pretended that racing, driving and Jockey-Clubbing were his primary interests.[246]

Whatever the history of this figure, it is now part of the French dandyism – in everyday life, theory,[247] and literature, and Barbey's Torty is only one of many such examples.

Finally, by choosing a dandy-doctor as the narrator who accesses the family history of the characters, while attesting to their healthy athleticism, Barbey d'Aurevilly succeeded at creating productive tensions in the portrayal of relationships between pathology and norm, crime and heroism, and immorality and moralism. As one of the storytellers, the doctor is equally Hauteclaire and Serlon's creator – a figure that will be addressed in depth in chapter two.

2.4 RACHILDE, *L'ANIMALE* (1893)

Rachilde scholars inform their readings of the bodies[248], fashion[249], sexuality,[250] and psychology characteristics of her novels by psychoanalysis[251], feminist[252] [253] [254], gender,[255]

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[246] Moers, 117.
[247] "Pour la vie élégante, il n'y a d'être complet que le centaure, l'homme en tilbury." – states Honoré de Balzac in *Traité de la vie élégante,* (Paris: Librairie A. Michalon, 10, rue de Vaugirard: 1908), 16.
[248] Janet L. Beizer, *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1994.
[249] Janell Watson, *Literature and Material Culture From Balzac to Proust: The Collection and Consumption of Curiosities* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press), 1999.

and queer theories. While many critics identify Rachilde as a Decadent[256] writer *par excellence*, Asti Hustvedt, the editor of the volume *The Decadent Reader: Fiction, Fantasy, and Perversion From Fin-de-Siècle France* (1998), argues for protopostmodern elements in her work. *Monsieur Vénus*, remains her most visible work, while *L'Animale* tends to be mentioned only briefly. Deborah Houk dedicates her psychoanalyticaly inflected gender study[257] to the dandy in Baudelaire's "La Fanfarlo" and Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus*, the latter being her most studied novel. Houk's conclusion is that the male-female role reversal is not backed up by physical sex change, thus rendering the female dandy project a failure and an inaccurate mirror image of maleness and of male dandyism: "[i]n a moment of truth, the materiality of Raoule's female body breaks through the illusion, killing the role reversal that had been so successful up to that point."[258] I would like to posit that seen from the point of view of Deleuze and Guattari's becoming, where the molar body does not matter, both Raoule Vénérande of *Monsieur Vénus* and Laure Lordès of *L'Animale* succeed in their project of becoming a dandy.

L'Animale is a story of Laure Lordès, a young woman who is brought up in a fictional provincial town of Estérac in the South of France. A latercomer "miracle" child of a notary and

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[250] Lisa Downing, *Desiring the dead: necrophilia and nineteenth-century French literature* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre), 2003.
[251] Renée A. Kingcaid, *Neurosis and narrative: the decadent short fiction of Proust, Lorrain, and Rachilde* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press), 1992.
[252] Diana Holmes and Carrie Tarr, ed., *A "Belle Epoque"?: Women in French Society and Culture, 1890-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books), 2006.
[253] Erika Fülöp and Adrienne Angelo, ed., *Cherchez la femme: Women and Values in the Francophone World* (Newcastle upon Tyne : Cambridge Scholars), 2011.
[254] Melanie C. Hawthorne, *Rachilde and French Women's Authorship: From Fecadence to Modernism* (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press), 2001.
[255] Alison Finch, "Rachilde and the Horror of Gender Confusion," *Women's Writing in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2000.
[256] Regina Bollhalder Mayer, *Eros décadent : sexe et identité chez Rachilde* (Paris : H. Champion), 2002.
[257] Deborah Houk, "Self-Construction and Sexual Identity in Nineteenth-Century French Dandyism" *French Forum*; 1997 January; 22(1): 59-73.
[258] Houk, 72.

his wife, she is precocious like Hauteclaire[259] and feral like Thérèse Raquin, running wild and spoiled, not unlike Rachilde herself who, according to Diana Holmes, "was to identify ardently with the myth of the werewolf: the wild, heretical and outlawed creature feared by conventional folk chimed nicely with her self-image as a daring outsider."[260] Already at the age of ten, Laure suffers from a "maladie de langueur." After losing her virginity at thirteen to a peasant, she goes on to seduce her father's assistant and then the young priest. She does not show emotional attachment to her parents, and is described as an otherworldly creature meant to astonish: "Il semblait que l'enfant fût, elle aussi, une sorte d'angélique destinée à étonner la ville."[261] Just as Nana, Laure destroys men on her path. When her parents decide to marry her off to a young clerk Henri Alban, the father's assistant Lucien Séchard reveals that he and Laure have been involved. Shortly after, in a jealous despair, Séchard commits suicide. As the scandal shakes the town, the wedding is called off, and Laure is disowned by her parents and chased from the bucolic paradise. She heads for Paris, where she finds her groom-to-be and convinces him to become her lover. Not getting enough attention, she adopts a male kitten and names him Lion. Lion increasingly manifests human qualities, while Laure is gradually turning into a feline:

> Le petit chat, toujours se frottant contre son humanité complaisante, prenait des allures d'enfant, devenait humain, tandis que la jeune fille, plus bestiale à se frotter contre cette fourrure de bête, devenait féline, éprouvait des besoins de griffer, de hurler ses peines dans un miaulement de passion et d'angoisse.[262]

One night, when Henri is asleep, Laure goes for a walk on the roof where she encounters a pack of feral cats. Eventually, Henri gives up his hope of securing his social standing through

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[259] Diana Holmes's description of Rachilde as a child, save her frail physique, is reminiscent of Hauteclaire's athleticism: "Thus, although she was a small and not particularly sturdy child, she fought valiantly with the local boys, learnt to ride well and to fence, wore trousers apart from on special occasions." *Rachilde: Decadence, Gender and the Woman Writer* (New York, Oxford: Berg), 2001), 14.
[260] Ibid., 10.
[261] Rachilde *L'Animale*, (Paris: Mercure de France, 1993), 29-30.
[262] Ibid.,175.

marriage with Laure, abandoning the young woman whose odd behavior he finds increasingly disturbing. Laure goes into a somnambular state, starting to walk on all four, meow, and chase mice. While she is sick, Lion comforts her, but runs away when the food supply runs dry. Having regained consciousness, Laure decides to turn to prostitution but, incapable of going through with it, falls in love with the first client who promises to elope with her to Africa. The last scene of the novel is at once gory and highly erotic. As soon as the new lover steps out, Lion comes back, emaciated and covered in wounds and scabs. In a jealous rage, he attacks his mistress and disfigures her. In a violent embrace, forming a lump where the two bodies are indistinguishable from each other, they fall down the roof.

2.4.1 "Friandise d'Amour"

Laure is born to a couple who could not conceive for a long time. However, the possibility of an angelic birth of a "Dieudonnée" daughter is dispelled by the narrator, who expresses little sympathy towards Laure's parents. Instead, the connection is made between excess, depravity, and alchemy. In order to conceive, the parents forget humanity represented by proper bourgeois behavior. Laure is a monster child resulting from her parents' indecent experiments in the kitchen,[263] the garden, and the bedroom:

> Ils conçurent un ange des ténèbres. Sait-on comment s'y prennent des bourgeois naïfs pour arriver à ce but honteux de procréer un être qui persistait à ne pas venir? Il doit exister une luxure effroyable; la luxure froide. Et Laure Lordès, l'angélique suave, était sans doute sortie de cette luxure-là. Des details d'apparence insignifiante font des monstres.[264]

[263]Ibid., 33.
[264] Ibid., 32.

The family kitchen is compared to a chemistry lab, the oven to a "grande machine,"[265] and Laure to an exquisite confection ("une friandise d'amour"):

> Née sous les angéliques, peut-être dans l'éclair de passion que la hauteur fabuleuse, la beauté inattendue, presque malsaine de ces plantes avait procuré à ses parents, conçue un jour d'orgeuil, elle charriait dans ses veines (vertes sur sa peau blanche) des ferments terribles. Confite, elle serait une friandise d'amour; à peine éclose, elle avait les hypocrisies des fleurs poussées tristement et qui détériorent des murs plus solides que des rocs. Nulle innocence ne pouvait, du reste, égaler la sienne, puisqu'elle était née avec le germe du mal.[266]

Compared to growing plants, "fleurs poussées" (literally, pushing forward), despite her seeming fragility, Laure is capable of breaking down any obstacle.

Just as the obsessed scientist Edison creates his woman robot Hadaly in Villiers de l'Ile Adam's *L'Eve future* (to be addressed in Chapter two), Laure is created by the sorcerers, Monsieur and Madame Lordès. In the following description, nature and artifice are jumbled together, as the child is likened to an embroidered mushroom: " L'enfant n'était pas seulement avancée, elle était pourrie, d'une jolie pourriture de champignon blanc et brodé."[267] The analogy with Edison stops here, however, as Laure's creators are not represented as compassionate idealists but robot-like creatures themselves. The father is described as a sedentary, indifferent human calculator:

> Que peut-il naître d'un homme toujours assis ? d'un homme dont le cerveau ne voyage pas, dont les yeux ne sont occupés, sous un abat-jour vert, qu'à chercher les moyens d'augmenter une somme ? La mécanique pour l'argent invente la mécanique l'amour, et peut-il naître des êtres sains d'une méchanique?[268]

Technique, not passion, is highlighted in the description of the way the Lordès are trying to concieve Laure: "Il faut imaginer un homme crachant dans ses mains en disant : *Allons-y !* une

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[265] Ibid., 33.
[266] Ibid., 31.
[267] Ibid., 31.
[268] Ibid., 32.

femme récitant des litanies en esquissant des poses libertines […] Ils fabriquèrent un enfant angélique, un végétal."[269]

2.4.2 Fashion and Fetishes

At a first glance, Laure does not seem to be intrigued with vestment. Her seemingly conservative approach to fashion is a strategic foil for her unchecked animal lust. At the same time, restraint is combined with singularity and self-effacement, with elements of psychological warfare – tactics designed to confuse and baffle the opponent. In the following instance, the mother of Laure's lover Lucien Séchard accuses her of driving her son to suicide. The mother's hate contrasts with the narrator's admiration for Laure's audacious amazon garb:

> Droite sur le seuil de la sacristie, *la gueuse* était là, très pale, la queue de ses cheveux ramenée en collier à son cou, prête à s'étrangler elle-même pour ne pas choir vivante dans cette boue mêlée de décomposition humaine. Laure était vêtue d'un singulier costume; elle portait une jupe de drap trop longue pour elle, une espèce de corsage d'amazone boutonné de tout petits boutons, et sa toque se voilait d'une merveilleuse broderie sur tulle blanc.[270]

But at the same time, this self-restraint serves the purpose of overaccentuating her femininity and eccentricity, which, in her mind, might increase her sex appeal:

> Coiffée d'une toque de loutre l'hiver, l'été d'une toque de plumes de paon, elle n'avait jamais d'autres chapeaux. Ce n'était pas par économie: elle trouvait que ce genre de coiffure faisait valoir la longueur de ses yeux et lui laissait la tête libre pour le jour où elle désirerait la frotter à la tête d'un voisin. […] Tête de fauve ou tête d'oiseau, elle ne se préoccupait pas des modes.[271]

Old-fashioned does not equal prude, but quite the opposite – the effect of not looking like everybody else makes her stand out and even appear naked:

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[269] Ibid., 33.
[270] Ibid., 127-8.
[271] Ibid., 63-4.

> Elle était originale, […] mais elle se souciat peu de sa toilette, portait d'anciennes modes collantes qu'on ne portait plus, qui vous la dessinaient nue au milieu de cent femmes habillées de draperies compliquées.[272]

Trying to shock her fiancé, she claims that her naked flesh is her dress, which never goes out of style: "Je n'ai qu'une robe, elle est toujours neuve, répondit Laure. Et sa moue hautaine ajouta: Cette robe-là, c'est ma peau, tu n'as pas l'air pressé de la voir, hein?"[273]

When Laure's family turns away from her, she is forced to go into hiding. Ironically, she finds shelter in the sacristy of a church, a place representing Catholicism as the very institution, which instigated that social disownment. This is the parish where the young priest Armand de Bréville, one of Laure's admirers, is based. As she prepares for her escape to Paris, she is forced to assemble her wardrobe by refashioning articles of religious vestment into a travel outfit:

> […] elle demanda du fil, des aiguilles, des ciseaux à l'abbé. Elle se prépara son costume de voyage, et il fut convenu qu'elle le taillerait dans des soutanes. Elle eut la coquetterie de l'agrémenter avec une écharpe de soie noire tout neuve, et son chapeau, une toque prise dans le bonnet d'une barrette, était un miracle de patience; elle l'enveloppa d'une violette de tulle blanc, ganta des gants violets, se mira au milieu d'une vitrine qui défendait les saints Evangiles, et se trouva charmante.[274]

If there is excess of interest in Laure's appearance, it is generated by the narrator and the supporting characters of the novel, as much as by Laure herself. Laure may be aware of the power she possesses but she is not fully aware of her dandyism, as it is created through the gaze of others. On the part of the narrator, there is a fixation on several articles of clothing, materials, and colors that highlight Laure's artificial animality. When describing her outfits, attention is mostly drawn to a pair of purple gloves, a toque and a voilette – a lacy veil attached to her hat.

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[272] Ibid., 106.
[273] Ibid., 109-10.
[274] Ibid., 137.

The toque – a brimless, tall hat trimmed with otter fur or decorated with peacock feathers, is the headdress of her choice.[275] Fur and feathers, natural originally yet styled into something else, through artifice, adorn the skin and the hair of a woman who is also characterized as *toquée* i.e. "insane."[276] These materials, in addition to putting emphasis on Laure's eccentricity, bring out her humanity by contrast and her animality by metonymy.

2.4.3 The Hair

The main fetish of the novel remains Laure's "miraculous" hair. A natural accoutrement, it is nonetheless always made artificial by being arranged into a heavy, wily braid. It grows like a plant ("Elle était réservée, d'une pâleur de corolle, poussait des cheveux immenses, des cheveux noirs, luisants"[277]) and wriggles like a snake, making Laure's head look like that of the mythical Hydra:

> Tout frêle, toute pâlotte, avec ses yeux noirs cernés, ses cheveux roulant en une seule tresse dans son dos comme une énorme couleuvre, elle marchait sur la pointe du pied, regardait par les trous des serrures, se glissait, en toussant, dans la cuisine quand un homme causait avec la bonne, et vous magnétisait de caresses froides jusqu'à ce qu'elle eût obtenu ce qu'elle désirait.[278]

Due to constant emphasis on Laure's immense hair, it seems to take on the qualities of animal fur. The braid is also repeatedly likened to an unruly tail on an animal, taking on a life of its own: "Ses lourds cheveux, tressés en une natte énorme, roulaient de gauche à droite sur ses épaules, comme doués d'une puissance qui leur était propre, battant ses flancs ou accrochant des

[275] Ibid., 63.
[276] Ibid., 143.
[277] Ibid., 30.
[278] Ibid., 30.

personnes au passage."[279] In the following instance, the narrator does not even conceal the fetish through comparison. Laure's hair becomes the dog's tail:

> Souvent, elle se glissait à quatre pattes derrière un fauteuil ou dans un coin de la cour; là, elle croquait, mastiquait, flairait, goûtait en imitant les petits chiens qui dévorent, l'oeil sournois et la queue entre les jambes, n'aimant les gêneurs. Nulle poésie ne sortait de cette fillette autre que celle de la brute: les jolis mouvements ou la drôlerie de l'attitude.[280]

Out of control, it oftentimes threatens Laure's life, "La queue de ses cheveux ramenée en collier à son cou, prête à s'étrangler elle-même."[281] The words *croupe* and *flancs* which are usually used in reference to an animal, are common in the description of Laure's body: "Laure, d'un geste febrile, repoussa ses lourds cheveux qui lui battaient toujours les flancs, comme la queue d'une bête en folie",[282] "[...] sa belle natte serpentant sur sa croupe, lui faisait un vis-à-vis diabolique."[283] The word *queue*, which connotes the tail, the train of a dress, and the phallus, mashes up all kinds of natural and artificial markers. To a large extent, Laure's hair is responsible for creating an image of an extraordinary being – a sinister and powerful Aurevillian *diabolique,* a lion with a mane/tail of her "chevelure infernale": "Sur le plafond de l'atelier, elle disparut en une trappe, s'engloutissant dans un truc de féerie, cette fée du mal, cette capricieuse mauvaise ange portant une robe de feu et suivie de la sombre traîne satanique d'une chevelure infernale."[284]

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[279] Ibid., 63.
[280] Ibid., 37.
[281] Ibid., 122.
[282] Ibid., 91.
[283] Ibid., 198.
[284] Ibid., 179.

2.4.4 Lions and *Lionnes*

Laure, having realized her own singularity, is looking for a soul mate, "elle se demandait s'il y avait beaucoup de creatures comme elle, éveillées près des dormeurs."[285] She finds him in a cat Lion with whom she forms a spectacular couple. At a first glance, just as in the case of Lautréamont's Maldoror and the shark, their mutual attraction could be described as bestiality but at the same time, both are always already extraordinary animals. Taken literally, Lion and Laure's relationship is a dangerous mix of mother-child tenderness and erotic desire. However, similarly to Maldoror's case, bestiality here is so hyperbolic that it can only stay at a literal level. As Édith Silve further points out in the preface to the Mercure de France edition of the novel, this desire is experienced between two cats, not a human and an animal:

> L'auteur de la *Psychopatia sexualis*, Krafft Ebing, aurait sans doute rangé certains agissements de l'héroïne dans la catégorie de la 'zoophilie', qui comprend précisément la "béstialité" et la "zoophilie érotique" [...] Rachilde fera astucieusement assumer l'acte par les chats. Et nous ne dirons rien de l'énorme tresse fétiche qui roule sans cesse sur les épaules de l'héroïne, tresse voluptueuse aux mouvements débridés.[286]

There is another, socio-historical dimention to Laure's animality, as she is referred to as *lionne* – an expression evoking the historical fashionable figures "of the July Monarchy, hence the dandy's direct successors," according to Miranda Gill's article "The Myth of the Female Dandy."[287] Just as Rachilde's writing stresses Laure's eccentricity, Délphine de Girardin, a journalist and an author of the popular *Lettres Parisiennes* (1857) insists that only those who emanate the exotic yet understated extraordinariness, deserve the name of *lions* or *lionnes*:

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[285] Ibid., 17.
[286] Ibid., 13.
[287] Miranda Gill, "The Myth of the Female Dandy" *French Studies*, 41 (2) (2007): 167-81.

> Moralement, qu'est ce qu'un lion? Définition: un lion moral est une bête curieuse. Or, par le mot bête curieuse on n'entend pas un animal indiscret qui veut tout voir, mais un animal extraordinaire que tout le monde veut voir. Ainsi le lion du Jardin des Plantes, dont personne ne se soucie, n'est pas un lion. Malgré ses prétentions légitimes à cette dénomination, malgré sa longue crinière, malgré ses ongles, malgré ses dents, ce roi des déserts n'est pas un lion; le cheval chinois, au contraire, malgré ses jambes courtes, son allure plaisante, sa robe si laide, le cheval chinois est un lion, parce que tout le monde accourt pour le voir au Cirque des Champs Élysées. Il en est de même dans nos salons. Le lion d'un raoût n'est pas le jeune élégant dont la tournure est la plus extravagante, dont les manières sont les plus étudiées, dont les manières sont les plus prétentieuses; c'est quelquefois un homme très-simple, qui n'a pas le moindre ridicule à faire valoir, mais que tout le monde veut connaître. [288]

Laure and Lion form a dandy couple whose description meets Girardin's requirements for simplicity and subtle complexity, "Ces deux simples créatures, si naturallement compliquées, s'entendaient à merveille, et ressentaient les mêmes impatiences, les mêmes joies."[289] Undoubtedly, however, Laure is a much stronger dandy than Lion. Incapable of settling for a monogamous union, as soon as the passion is gone, Laure is ready to move on.

2.4.5 The Insatiable *Flâneuse*

Laure is driven by temptations of all sorts, gustatory and erotic: "Souvent, elle se glissait à quatre pattes derrière un fauteuil ou dans un coin de la cour; là, elle croquait, mastiquait, flairait, goûtait en imitant les petits chiens qui dévorent, l'oeil sournois et la queue entre les jambes."[290] Insatiability pushes Laure to flirt with the idea of prostitution, as she hopes to channel her energy into a series of anonymous attempts to have a semblance of a relationship. Repeatedly called "la bête de luxe," following in the footsteps of Zola's mythical "mangeuse

[288] Délphine de Girardin, *Vicomte de Launay: Lettres Parisiennes* (Paris: Librairies Michel Lévy Frères, 1857), 194.
[289] Rachilde, 235.
[290] Ibid., 37.

d'hommes,"[291] Nana, and anticipating Proust's Odette de Crécy, Laure embodies excess and pure erotic velocity: "Il lui faudrait se créer de nouvelles resources, mais les bêtes de luxe ne travaillent pas, et Laure songea en frissonnant à ce seul métier permis aux jolies femelles, à la prostitution."[292] Laure's lust is made so explicit it borders on the fantastic.

Taken metaphorically, Laure's insatiable sexual desire stands for the dandy's curiosity, idealism, and the need for constant self-reconfiguration. For Françoise Dolto, the dandy is pure desire, satisfaction deferred *ad infinitum*. The dandy " n'a aucune puissance, il garde son doute [...] Le dandy n'est jamais satisfait. [...] Ça lui permet de survivre, mais il va toujours plus loin et ailleurs, il cherche toujours autre chose."[293] Literally speaking too, like Maldoror and Thérèse Raquin, Laure is always in motion. She roams the countryside, then moves to Paris to compete with other *bêtes flâneuses* of the capital. When Paris is not enough, she is ready to flee to Africa. *Flânerie* is key not only because it makes an obvious reference to the historical dandy but also because it illustrates a life of perpetual movement for the sake of that movement: "Cela s'accomplissait gracieusement, avec l'air hypocrite d'une jolie bête lustrée, qui flâne pour [...] le plaisir de flâner."[294] Laure the *flâneuse* is an anomaly in nineteenth-century France where *flânerie* is a predominantly male act. In her essay "The Invisible *Flâneuse*. Women and the Literature of Modernity," Janet Wolff points out that "[t]he dandy, the *flâneur*, the hero, the stranger – all figures invoked to epitomize the experience of modern life – are invariably male figures […] Women could not stroll alone in the city."[295] All these restrictions do not concern Laure whose status of a pariah puts her outside the symbolic order of society, allowing for

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[291] Roland Barthes, "La Mangeuse d'hommes" *Guide du livre* 20 (juin 1955); 20 (6): 226-8.
[292] Ibid., 233.
[293] Dolto, 29.
[294] Rachilde, 135.
[295] Janet Wolff, "The Invisible *Flâneuse*: Women and the Literature of Modernity," *Theory Culture Society* 2 (1985): 41.

mobility and invisibilty. For her *flâneries*, instead of the streets of Paris, this fallen woman prefers the roofs of Paris, transforming herself into a cat, a spider ("elle se fit l'effet d'une colossale araignée au milieu de sa toile"),[296] or a ghost ("mais Laure fuyait déjà, s'élançait sur le filet de fer tendu au-dessus de la cour intérieure, traversait les toitures, légère, aérienne, tout comme une *vraie vision*."[297])

Laure's odd relationship to space is echoed by her relationship to people. Her animal and fantastic qualities make her incapable of any conscious human attachment ("Possédait-elle un cœur?") to any being in particular, only an abstract desire for its own sake:

> Non, elle n'aimait pas plus Armand que Lucien, elle courait aux victoires sur les hommes, poussée par une force irrésistible; ostensoir de chair tout épanoui, elle portait l'amour en elle comme un Dieu et demeurait inerte sous ses rayonnements. Une chose lui manquait encore, les joies du cœur [...] Possédait-elle un cœur? "[298]

Starting a family is not on her mind either when trying to attract men: "L'inassouvie rêvait d'enflammer le chaste époux à son contact, de lui dicter des conditions, et ce n'était pas précisément la bonne maternité que lui promettaient ses hanches roulant sous la jupe tendue, ses seins pointant droit vers les mâles."[299] Instead, the kitten Lion becomes her foster demonic child of her imagination, who will grow up to fall in love with and kill his mother:

> Pourtant heroïque, cette femme coupable avait décidé de ne point trahir son amant malgré la froideur qu'il lui témoignait. Non, elle se révoltait à l'idée de le tromper! Elle résistait de toutes ses forces aux tentations, et si le démon criait de colère, au fond d'elle, rugissait dans ses entrailles d'inassouvie, elle rapporterait tous ces loisirs de caresses sur le microscopique nourrisson, l'enfant de son cerveau.[300]

The last scene of the book relating Laure's gruesome death following an erotically charged fight with her "son" Lion exemplifies a meeting of two beings at a moment when the

[296] Rachilde, 176.
[297] Ibid., 176.
[298] Ibid., 97.
[299] Ibid., 113.
[300] Ibid., 144-5.

wavelengths of hesitation between humanity and animality coincide. This passionate and seemingly suicidal confrontation of nature and artifice bearing similarities to the violent clashes between Thérèse Raquin and her "buck" lover Laurent, between Maldoror and the shark, as well as between Hauteclaire and the panther, show that the becoming dandy is unstoppable even by death itself.

2.5 COLETTE PEIGNOT, *ECRITS DE LAURE* (1934)

"Enigmatic" and "mystic" are the words used often by critics who mention Colette Peignot. Her literary legacy is limited to one posthumous collection of texts, *Écrits de Laure* (1934), and its popularity is largely overshadowed by the celebrity and success of her friends Pierre Klossowski, Michel de Leiris, and her lover Georges Bataille – the main editors of her work. In many instances, her name comes up in passing in critical enquiries on these authors, as it is the case in Michael Taussiq's essay "What Color is the Sacred?"[301] Her legacy is almost aphocryphal, interpolated by other's people's texts. Bernard Henri-Lévy dedicates an essay, "La Belle et Légendaire Colette Peignot," to her silence as a conscious poetic choice but still places her in line with other women partners of famous intellectuals of the time, such as Gala Dali, Nusch Éluard, and Simone Breton. Lévy goes on to admit that for him, the portrayal of Peignot's enigmatic persona that resurfaces in many of her contemporaries' accounts is as much worthy of attention as her literary contributions.[302] In light of Lévy's comment, in addition to the fact that

[301] Michael Taussiq, "What Color is the Sacred?" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Autumn 2006): 28-51.

[302] Bernard-Henri Lévy, "La belle et légendaire Colette Peignot", *Les aventures de la liberté: Une histoire subjective des intellectuels*, (Paris: Bernard Grasset,1991), 234.

correspondence comprises a considerable part of the *Écrits,* the segment on Colette Peignot will combine both the reflections on her personal dandyism and its manifestations in her and her contemporaries' writing. Laure's dandyism, while being created by Colette Peignot, is also a result of a legend created by her generation. Françoise Dolto's quote, already mentioned in the context of Maldoror, is equally relevant in the case of Laure, whose mythical persona "vient de la fascination qu'il produit sur les gens de son temps."[303]

In the few works dedicated specifically to Colette Peignot, themes of the sacred, sexuality, and gender are the most explored. Such is the case of Richard D.E. Burton's book *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1909.*[304] Emily Apter mentions Colette Peignot in her essay on Luce Irigaray, female suffering and Catholic mysticism.[305] Sweedler, in his article "Autohagiography: The *Ecrits de Laure*," qualifies Laure as a "patron saint of the avant-garde" whose "self-invention constitutes a self-sanctification."[306] One of the most relevant to this study is the essay "Laure's War: Selfhood and Sacrifice in Colette Peignot"[307] by Sean Connolly, where he addresses the themes of revolution, suffering, queerness, and becoming but does not extend her inquiries to the issue of Laure as an aesthetic project.

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[303] Dolto, 45.
[304] Richard D.E. Burton, *Holy Tears, Holy Blood: Women, Catholicism, and the Culture of Suffering in France, 1840-1970. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).*
[305] Emily S. Apter, "Story of I: Luce Irigaray's Theoretical Masochism"
NWSA Journal, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring, 1990): 186-198.
[306] Milo Sweedler, "Autohagiography: The *Ecrits de Laure*," *Dalhousie French Studies* 71 (Summer 2005): 65.
[307] Sean Connolly, "Laure's War: Selfhood and Sacrifice in Colette Peignot." *French Forum*, Volume 35, Number 1, (Winter 2010): 17-38.

2.5.1 "Affreusement et magnifiquement seule"

Similarly to Malrodor and Laure Lourdès, Peignot and her narrative persona Laure are loners. What first comes across as loneliness due to the limitations set by her family, "J'étais sans amis. Tous étaient réprouvés par ma mère comme 'trop fortunés' ou 'pas assez pieux'," is quickly reworked into solitude.[308] Already as a young girl, Laure turns inward in order to reimagine herself ("je me racontais sans fin des histoires et surtout celle d'avant ma naissance"). She prefers playing by herself and with herself:

> J'étais sans amis [...] Seule, la chambre de débarras demeurait immuable dans son air confiné et sa lumière de vitrail. Je m'y réfugiais et là, à cheval sur une vieille malle de moleskine ou accroupie sur un petit banc à rempailler, je me racontais sans fin des histoires et surtout celle d'avant ma naissance, du temps où j'habitais le ciel. Ou bien, je contemplais avec ferveur un doux Jésus blanc et un Joseph blond, images bleues, roses, dorées, étoilées empaquetées dans la soie, nouées de faveurs. Ou bien, je lavais ma poupée et partais à la recherche de mon propre corps que l'on m'ordonnait d'ignorer. Curiosité d'un enfant vers son ventre au moment même où il sait que Dieu voit partout et le suit dans ce grenier.[309]

What starts off as rebellion against a taboo ("partais à la recherche de mon propre corps que l'on m'ordonnait d'ignorer") becomes a habit, indicated by the repetitive action of the imperfect tense in the quote above.

As Peignot gets older, she does react against and become more critical of her well-off bourgeois environment. Jérôme Peignot, Peignot's nephew and the editor of her writings, describes her relationship with the family as suffocating: "À Dammarie où, les beaux jours, des gens vides tourniquent sur le tennis du parc et où s'étale ce luxe qui la tue doucement, d'autant

[308] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," *Écrits de Laure* (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert, 1979), 59.
[309] Ibid., 59-60.

mieux qu'elle sait en goûter."[310] Colette Peignot's memories of school years are reminiscent of those of Maldoror's, as neither her professors, her schoolmates, nor the clergy are spared,

> J'avais repris mes études mais par une sorte de fatalité, il m'était impossible de supporter professeurs et élèves […] Décidément je les déteste *tous*. Je me sens affreusement et magnifiquement seule. J'avais dix-sept ans.[311]

Hoping to change the surroundings, Peignot starts her search for *voisinage* – a term used by Deleuze and Guattari, already mentioned in the context of Thérèse Raquin's proximity to the family cat François, which is also in line with Maldoror's quest for a kindred spirit, the *semblable*. Peignot joins the circle of like-minded intellectuals frequented by the decadent writer and aesthete Drieu La Rochelle and her future partner Georges Bataille: "En outre, elle vit davantage dans un milieu d'intellectuels qui n'est pas celui dans lequel évolue son frère. Du dandy qu'est Drieu La Rochelle, ami de Jacques Laporte que Laure rencontra chez lui, à Bourénine et, surtout, à Georges Bataille, il y a un monde."[312]

These moments of entering the *zone de voisinage* with other like-minded loners are punctuated by bouts of contempt and withdrawal. At one point in her life, Peignot identifies her solitude with that of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, as evidenced by the following reflection:

> Voici venir le Temps du Mépris, mais prends garde que ce soit un mépris sans haine, sans hostilité même, un mépris très simple, très calme, très sûr de soi et sans retour à allures sardoniques ou hystériques, sans fausse gaieté, sans amère tristesse […] But: détruire l'esprit chrétien et ses équivalences, comme instinct de mort, identification avec la mort, sacrifice, poussière, édulcoration. Goût de la répulsion, à être répugnant, ressembler à la poussière. […] Le sens d'une vie, découvert par Nietzsche.[313]

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[310] Jérôme Peignot, "Ma mère diagonale," *Écrits de Laure* (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert, 1979), 14.
[311] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 73-4.
[312] Jérôme Peignot, "Ma mère diagonale," 14.
[313] Laure, "Le Sacré", *Écrits de Laure* (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert,1979), 122.

Peignot is very particular about her selection criteria for *voisinage* – only those who can resonate on a deep, molecular level ("sent[ir] […] ce qui vous touche au plus profond") make it into her orbit:

> Éviter les contacts avec tout être en lequel on ne sent aucune résonance possible à l'égard de ce qui vous touche au plus profond et envers lequel on a des obligations de 'gentillesse', de politesse.

But Laure never stays true to one group, and the combined energies forming a *voisinage* are as quickly pulverized ("répulsion", "répugnant") as they are made. Laure does not deny that her snobbery and tendency to set herself apart come with her social standing and lessons on visual signs of social inequality. But at the same time, just like "clean" behavior of "gentillesse, de politesse," access to hygiene of the privileged, the asepsis of the color white become unbearable, while filth – *saleté* – paradoxically, becomes desired, and sacred:

> Ce mot *travail* [...] Henriette essaya de me l'expliquer par le degré de saleté que comportaient ces différents états [...] Voilà donc à quoi aboutissaeint le catéchisme rigoureux de ma mère – devoirs des supérieurs envers leurs inférieurs – et ces fameux airs de bonté qui étouffent tous les germes de sympathie humaine large et spontanée.[314]

Laure's contempt for her mother's cleanliness is reminiscent of Thérèse Raquin's scandalous, systematic disregard for cleanliness towards the end of the novel, coinciding with her rebellion against the petty bourgeois mother figure, Madame Raquin, and the apparent clean image of a family business of selling white lace and undergarments. The dirt is there to simultaneously *épater la bourgeoisie* and hide from it by camouflage, become imperceptible.

When solitude turns back into loneliness, yearning for connection is noticeable in Peignot's work, as her nephew editor asks, "'La question était là: est-il possible de

[314] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 63.

communiquer?' Partout dans ces papiers, je retrouvais cette phrase."[315] For a dandy who writes, poetic language and the challenge it presents to communication become symptomatic and emblematic of becoming.

2.5.2 Becoming Laure Through Writing

Shaping Coletter Peignot into Laure is accomplished through self-writing – a painful but necessary process on the path to abstraction. Hyperbolic violence seen in recurrent images of self-loathing, self-effacement, splitting, and self-mutilation adds to a martyr image of the poet. Poetry itself is considered by Laure as self-rape, with a Christ-like figure alluding to the poet's and the dandy's public exposure:

> L'oeuvre poétique est sacrée en ce qu'elle est création d'un événement topique, 'communication' ressentie comme *la nudité*. – Elle est viol de soi-même, dénudation, communication à d'autres de ce qui est raison de vivre, or cette raison de 'vivre se déplace.'[316]

At the same time, Laure, once within the text, responds with equal aggression to it. She screams, "je commençai à jeter de grands cris sur des papiers. Ces lignes résument mon inertie: Serai-je jamais capable d'imprimer un trait de volonté *dans le réel!*"[317] She also causes mutation by violating the conventions of poetry. The rules of French grammar and style are challenged through persistent disregard for punctuation, as this fragment from the poem "8" illustrates:

> je rampe le long de ses countours
>
> je vogue dans ses méandres
>
> je saute hors du cercle

[315] Jérôme Peignot, "Ma mère diagonale," 39.
[316] Laure, "Le Sacré," 89.
[317] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 72.

et retombe dans l'autre

je reste étranglée au milieu

mon visage est là

figé anguille dauphin ver de terre.[318]

Jérôme Peignot comments on the curious texture of Laure's writing style as both violence ("une demarche à l'envers") and surrender ("noyée"),

> Laure faisait fi de la ponctuation (elle n'usait que de tirets), du moins les barres de ses letters créaient-elles un rythme. Cette fois, à la tension de son graphisme a fait place la ligne sinueuse d'une écriture de noyée. Les choses ici se sont même distendues à ce point qu'à lui seul un mot s'étale parfois sur tout la largeur du papier. Laure démontre là que le comble de l'écriture est une démarche à l'envers de l'écriture.[319]

At the level of content, Laure shares one narrative peculiarity with Lautréamont, namely, a disorienting depiction of topography. "Histoire d'une petite fille," actually dedicated to Lautréamont, is without a doubt inspired by the techniques and structures of *Les Chants de Maldoror*. Neither author grounds their narrative in one space, which makes any concrete geographic landmark tied to the city of Paris appear out of nowhere. Any mention of specific locations, like rue de Vaugirard,[320] heightens the startling effect. Lautréamont's influence is also felt in the abundance of marine life, such as the squid – the perfect escape artist – in Laure's work. Paris itself becomes an octopus, with its streets made of giant tentacles.

> J'ai longtemps erré traversant la ville de part en part, de fond en comble. Je la connais bien, ce n'est pas une ville mais une pieuvre. Toutes les rues parallèles et de biais convergent vers un centre liquide et boursouflé. Les tentacules de la bête portent chacune une seule lignée de maisons à deux façades: l'une à petits carreaux, l'autre à lourds rideaux. C'est là que j'ai ententdu, de la bouche de Vérax, la bonne nouvelle de Notre-Dame-de-Cléry, là que j'ai vu le beau regard de Violette injecté de l'encre la plus noire, là enfin que Justus et Bételgeuse,

[318] Laure, "Le Sacré," 93.
[319] Jérôme Peignot, "Ma mère diagonale," 34.
[320] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 74.

> Vérax et La Chevelure et toutes les filles à noms d'étoiles furent absorbés par le puissant courant de portes magnétisés […] De sourds déclenchements animent tour à tour des éclairs de soufre et d'acétylène, auréolent de mercure les corps automatiques. Ils se voient mauves et puis verts […] Au jour, le poulpe ensablé ne laisse pas trace de ses étirements et de ses convulsions.[321]

The pervading hue of this episode is blackish purple, a combination that resurfaces in works by Proust, Rachilde, Zola and Lautréamont — the color of squid ink, of the eyes of a woman named Violette, but also of the writer's ink. For Laure as a writer and a dandy, the practice of describing the act of *flânerie* is a way of being in and becoming a Paris-octopus, rewriting it from within, on a molecular level ("de fond en comble") with her own ink, and ultimately disappearing in it.

Inertia, slowing down and immobilization of the dandy shell is a foil strategy to violence, whether it comes from within or without. A similar tactic of playing dead has already been discussed in Zola's depiction of Thérèse Raquin, sitting motionless in the frame of her boutique's shopping window. The following passage provides an equally striking example of Laure's becoming imperceptible:

> De l'occident à l'orient, de pays en pays, de ville en ville je marchais entre les tombes […] Me sentant quelque peu monstre, je ne reconnaissais plus les humains que pourtant j'aimais bien. Enfin, je me pétrifiai lentement jusqu'à devenir un parfait accessoire de décor.[322]

After moving quickly through space, she slows down and ceases to be human ("Me sentant quelque peu monstre") – forgetting humanity yet, strangely, still resonating with it ("que pourtant j'aimais bien").

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[321] Ibid., 56-7.
[322] Ibid., 56.

2.5.3 Laure, the Fallen Angel

Among various nonhuman incarnations of Laure, the most striking and constistent one is the gothic undead being and the Christian martyr or angel. According to Sean Connolly, Laure's attention to corporality and eroticism shows the body on the brink of vanishing and trespassing:

> Crime in Laure's poetry traverses a threshold therefore between self-realization and self-undoing for which the body serves as frequent and appropriate metaphor. The body not only traces the corporeal limit between life and death, but the juridical limit of the legal and illegal.[323]

One of Laure's signature techniques is "plagiarizing herself" or reusing her own texts and fragments by inserting them in a new context. What was once considered written, left behind, dead, is revisited, resuscitated, made undead under a new, surprising guise. Milo Sweedler calls Laure the living dead due to her frail health undermined by tuberculosis, "Je n'habitais pas la vie mais la mort. Aussi loin que je me souvienne les cadavres se dressaient tout droit devant moi: – 'Tu as beau te détourner, te cacher, renier… tu es bien de la famille et tu seras des nôtres ce soir'."[324] Likening Laure to St. Augustine, Sweedler adds that with her work published posthumously, true life for her starts after death, "*The Histoire d'une petite fille* is a ghost story of sorts" […] Laure came onto the literary scene as a dead person. Her literary life postdates her empirical life. First comes death, then comes life."[325]

The otherworldliness of someone who has seen death, the transparence of a ghost ("transparence qui errait sur son visage") is emphasized in the very appearance of Colette Peignot as documented by Jérôme Peignot:

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[323] Connolly, 28.
[324] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 56.
[325] Sweedler, 73.

> C'est de la beauté de ses poèmes que pour moi, Laure tenait cette transparence qui errait sur son visage. Au pouvoir à la fois brûlant et glacé de ses yeux répondait la violence de sa poésie. L'instant de la beauté de Laure est éternel. [326]

Once again, the violent power of her gaze ("à la fois brûlant") co-exists with immobility ("glacé"). Earlier, Jérôme Peignot quotes Laure's friend Michel Leiris who describes her statuesque, angelic allure. As her namesake, Rachilde's protagonist in *L'Animale* Laure Lordès, Laure-Colette Peignot is a miracle child, an "ange des ténèbres" who, due to tuberculosis, is no stranger to near-death experiences and who makes of contingency her aesthetic choice:

> une créature qui, depuis des années entretenait avec l'Ange de la mort des rapports si familiers qu'elle semblait lui avoir emprunté un peu de son impénétrabilité de marbre, n'avait été que la machinale mais tendre reproduction d'un geste plus ancien, accompli du temps qu'elle était encore à peu près en santé […] elle était entre la glace et le feu par sa rigueur et sa passion, son dégoût de la vie, son messianisme social et son incapacité de subir une contrainte.[327]

Laure is presented here in a series of frozen poses mediated through art ("representation d'un geste plus ancien" and mysticism ("son messianisme social").

Images of exaltation are inseparable from images of the fall in Laure's writing.[328] In "Libertinage: étapes de Laure,"[329] *pudeur* and *impudeur* are set side by side. Angels fall, and prostitutes are admired ("Combien j'aime mieux une vraie putain.")[330] Explicit words like *pute*, *maquereau, cul, queue, chiottes*, and detailed descriptions of sexual intercourse such as the description one finds in the text entitled "Laure," are all used in caricaturistic abundance. The tension between upward and downward movements is achieved in part by repetition and contrast in register. The series of colloquial expressions *aux chiottes* appears particularly profane when

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[326] Jérôme Peignot, "Ma mère diagonale," 32.
[327] Ibid., 29.
[328] Laure, "Le Sacré," 94.
[329] Laure, "Libertinage: étapes de Laure", *Écrits de Laure,* (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert,1979), 112-4.
[330] Laure, "Le Sacré", 121.

placed next to images referring to higher matters, such as *idéalisme*, *sommets*, *montagne,* and *grands sentiments*:

Aux chiottes

Aux chiottes les sommets

L'idéalisme, les gens qui s'en vont sur une

haute montagne et sont écrasés par cette montagne

Aux chiottes

Aux chiottes

les grands sentimens

les passions pesantes

At the same time, the numbing effect of repetition makes the text chaste, diminishing the potential power of taboo meanings. The lack of modesty is actually criticized, "Le manque de réserve, de pudeur morale me choque à tout instant depuis que du fait de certaines réactions nerveuses (physiques), ne sais plus retenir ni cacher."[331] Ventriloquism and fixation on the belly ("ventre déboutonné," "du coeur au ventre"[332]) is telling in that it demonstrates the tension between *pudeur* and promiscuity. It is a mirror-like, unsettling doubling of self, experienced at a moment when one becomes suddenly aware of one's own voice. For Julia Kristeva, the abject and the sublime are inseparable in that neither has an object.[333] Ventriloquism illustrates this relationship: the *ventre* as an image of the bodily core, the meeting point of the abject and the sublime, the center of alimentary, reproductive and erotic drives, confonts the *logos* – reason, as it attempts to describe, control and perpetuate these desires. Together with the image of the belly,

[331] Ibid., 120-1.
[332] Laure, "Libertinage: étapes de Laure", 114.
[333] Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: Essai sur l'abjection*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), 19.

such images as clown's faces and makeup imply another point of convergeance of modesty and vulgarity – artificial distance created by the overdetermined surface of a mask.

2.5.4 The Erotics of Vision

Similarly to Rachilde's character Laure Lordès, Laure's protagonist in "Histoire d'une petite fille" is subjected to erotic temptations and fantasies:

> A cette époque aussi, je voyais la nuit venir avec une sombre terreur chaque jour accrue. Je savais que durant des heures j'allais lutter et qu'après avoir résisté à la tentation puis m'y être livrée sans frein […] à une débauche d'imagination.[334]

While the dandy's erotics is always mediated, the difference between the two is that for Laure Lordès, the "débauche" equals detachment of a pure erotic, affect-free excess, and for Colette Peignot's Laure, it is negotiated through poetic language. Distancing, not closeness, *paraître*, not *être*, are privileged in relationships of other dandies in this chapter, whether based on physical violence (Maldoror, Thérèse Raquin, and Laurent), or physical activity. In Hauteclaire and Serlon's case it is fencing, a contact sport where ironically, no contact actually happens.

In "Histoire d'une petite fille," a passage describes the narrator's sensuous childhood memories of plants and animals in the countryside. The same processes of disapperance through becoming plant ("J'allais disparaître et m'évanoir entre le mur et le lierre") and animal ("Là, je devenais arraignée, faucheux, millepattes, hérisson"), bring Laure close to the other becomings in this chapter:

> Il y eut la compagne. J'appris à connaître les fleurs d'ombre et fleurs d'eau, héliotropes et millepertius, nénuphars et toutes sortes de roseaux. Je sus qu'il y avait des oiseaux du soir et de la nuit, chauves-souris, hiboux, chouettes, chats-huants tombés du nid et noyés dans un seau hantèrent mes rêves. Un saule

[334] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 69.

> pleureur refermait sur moi ses feuilles lisses, une grotte m'acceuillait dans sa fraîcheur humide avec un jeune chat aveugle caché dans ma robe et glissant sur ma poitrine. J'allais disparaître et m'évanouir entre le mur et le lierre. Là, je devenais araignée, faucheux, millepattes, hérisson, tout ce qu'on veut et peut-être même bête à bon Dieu.[335]

The mood of the passage is somber ("les fleurs d'ombre"), and brooding, teeming with nocturnal predators ("hiboux", "chouettes", "chats-huants"), vampires ("chauves-souris), and images of death ("tombés du nid", "noyés dans un seau"). Sean Connolly goes as far as to align Laure's style with what Charles Bernheimer called "decadent naturalism" – a term originally used to refer to Zola, among others:

> In Laure's oeuvre, this "movement" from life to death (and back) is frequently associated with nature, which signifies less a bucolic Rousseauian serenity than a kind of violent Spinozian cycle between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. This cycle, in turn, is not unlike the macabre qualities of nature found in later French literary history of the 19th and 20th centuries. What Charles Bernheimer has called the "decadent naturalism" of the 19th century illustrates this trend, which finds some of its modernist residues in French surrealism and its dispossessed figures, including Laure… In this vein, the imagery of forests, trees, flowers, mountains, prairies, and beasts in Laure frequently signifies a morbid transformation both fearsome and fascinating. Such transformation testifies to a kind of "natural force" of becoming between life and death that precludes self-identity.[336]

Laure's becoming is interrupted abruptly, albeit temporarity, with one brisk sentence, when the father is introduced in the narrative, "Dominant tout cela, mon père, de ses yeux clairs, heureux et si bleus, me montrait la nature."[337] With his clear, rational gaze, the father personifies a completely different relation to nature, one of the symbolic order, which excludes becomings. As he teaches his daughter to make sense of nature, the narrator switches to the emphasis on vision, indicated by the verb *montrer*.

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[335] Ibid., 63.
[336] Connolly, 25.
[337] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 63.

Whether the dandy learns to pierce and dissect with the gaze from the father figure or not, the erotics of vision is undoubtedly the dandy's trademark. Showing and gazing instead of touching and penetration are predominant modes of erotic exchange described in Laure's "Fragments et plans de texts érotiques."[338] The two-page text is filled with references to vision: "Ils se croisent un soir au coin d'une rue et, tous deux se retournant pour voir l'autre 'au moins de dos', se retrouvent face à face", "Un coup d'oeil échangé: l'homme commandait qu'elle vînt à lui, elle implorait d'accourir", "son sexe maintenant brillait dans la nuit", "à la vision de son sexe agité il s'éloignait à reculons, afin qu'elle ne perdît pas de vue son sexe monstrueux […]. Elle monta le lendemain sur l'autel pour montrer son cul à tous les fidèles et le prêtre."[339] The expression "un coup d'œil" stands out in its literal violence, as a blow. Slapping is effectively mentioned in the text: "Elle s'approcha: alors, lui, de sa main libre, la gifla en l'envoyant rouler sur le pavé de la chaussée."[340]

Other violent acts, such as spitting, walking the other on the leash, or rolling in dirt, reinforce metonymically the distancing and sado-masochistic nature of the gaze. Humiliation, debasement, and demise often go hand in hand with the dandy's aloofness. The etymology of the word "decadence" points to decay, literally, the fall, from Latin *cadere*.[341] Paired with the image of vision as the highest form of self-control, the violent acts of self-debasement and self-effacement comment on the dandy's becoming imperceptible. Salvatore Schiffer's discussion on the aesthetics of disappearance and the fall that traverses the dandy philosophy has been already pointed out in the analysis of Barbey d'Aurevilly's "Le bonheur dans le crime" and its protagonists' erotics. By borrowing Eugène Crépet's words, Schiffer imagines the dandies as a

[338] The eye becomes an erotic fetish object in Georges Bataille's novel *Histoire de l'œil* (1928).
[339] Laure, "Fragments et plans de textes érotiques", 108.
[340] Ibid., 108.
[341] Kristeva, 10.

"'club de suicidés' et la vie de chacun de ses members n'est que l'exercise d'un *suicide* permanent."[342] Colette Peignot's writing is filled with references to suicide. Her biographer Élisabeth Barillé underscores that same tension between idealism and perversion in the very title of her book, *Laure: la sainte de l'abîme*. Hesitating between the two, she belongs to neither side, she disappears. During her affair with a doctor-turned-writer, Eduard Trautner, while in Berlin, she describes her erotic experiences and experimentations as a split, where she is able to distance, remove herself from her other self, in order to become a voyeur of her own body engaged in abusive acts. She cannot be reached, and is nowhere to be found:

> Je me jetais sur un lit comme on se jette à la mer. La sexualité était comme séparée de mon être reel, j'avais inventé un enfer, un climat où tout était aussi loin que possible de ce que j'avais pu prévoir pour mon propre compte. Plus personne au monde ne pouvait me joindre, me chercher, me trouver.[343]

The distance between oneself and the character played is both sado-masochistic and theatrical, "Colette ne tente pas seulement le plus insensé des 'jeux de rôles'. Il s'agit aussi d'un voyage au bout de soi."[344] While the word "suicide" bears negative connotations, in the case of Laure and other becoming dandies considered in this chapter, this is a completely different, productive kind of disappearance – one where a new form of life, outside the body, begins only after death.

Chapter two will transition from the organic – human, animal, and the monstruous – to the inorganic – the machine; from fantasy, gothic horror, and naturalist decadence, to science fiction. Such thematic separation is dictated by my view of the machine as a more ideal visualization of the dandy as it executes more precisely a complete refusal of emotion, while continuing to be in motion. More often than not, the same text will belong to more than one genre and will manifest the presence of both the animal and the machine in the same dandy

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[342] Schiffer, 212.
[343] Georges Bataille, "Vie de Laure", *Écrits de Laure*, (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert,1979), 280.
[344] Élisabeth Barillé, *Laure: la sainte de l'abîme,* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 146.

character. This is one of the reasons why, together with introducing a new text, Auguste Villiers de l'Ile Adam's *L'Éve Future*, the next chapter revisits Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* and Colette Peignot's *Écrits de Laure*. In addition to the workings of the dandy couple, I will pay special attention to the tension between the dandy as a self-creation and the recurring figure of the creator, inventor or mentor.

3.0 THE MECHANICAL DANDY: ANDROIDS, GADGETS, PROPS

In his essay "Biographie de la machine," Jean Brun suggests that the machine should not be set in opposition to but rather considered as a continuation of the organic:

> [L]e règne de la machine est celui qui s'ajoute au règne minéral, au règne végétal et au règne animal traditionnels. Dans l'élaboration de ce règne d'un type nouveau, l'Imagination et le Désir se sont unis dans un prométhéisme ontologique dont l'homme attend une délivrance de son être.[345]

As if thinking of Lautréamont's Maldoror, equipped with knives, fins and other prosthetics ("les machines constituent des exo-squelettes et des exo-musculatures"), Brun continues to suggest that the machine is foremost the result of a myth or a dream, which in turn inspires invention:

> Les machines ne sont pas le résultat d'une tactique de la vie, au sens biologique du terme, préoccupée de satisfaire les besoins élémentaires de l'organisme humain: elles sont les réalisations concrètes d'une stratégie de l'existence qui tente de donner corps à ses désirs afin d'ouvrir le champ même de son essence. En ce sens, les machines constituent des exo-squelettes et des exo-musculatures grâce auxquels l'homme cherche à posséder la réalité tout entière, à transformer le réel en création permanente et à faire surgir un être d'une espèce nouvelle.[346]

Brun's romantic view of the machine and its creator seems to be conflating the difference between the scientist, the artist, and God. While the dandy is neither of the three completely, what is shared is the larger than human persona. What Guillaume Apollinaire, quoted by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Inhuman* (1988), says about artists, may as well be said about the dandy,

[345] Jean Brun, "Biographie de la machine" *Les Études philosophiques: L'Imaginaire et la Machine* (1)(Jan-March), 1985: 3-16.
[346] Ibid., 4.

as envisioned by the present study, "More than anything, artists are men who want to become inhuman."[347] The dandy is particularly interested in the use of body accessories – be it animal, vegetal or mechanic – as long as they help him or her to keep such permanent self-creation process going. The highest degree of artifice represented by the machine, however, makes it the closest, out of the three categories, to the dandy's project of dehumanization.

In the context of late nineteenth-century France, art, artifice, and the machine are inseparable and indispensable when defining modernity. Charles Baudelaire famously draws attention to this collusion in *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (1863). As Felicia Miller Frank remarks:

> In examining Baudelaire's preference for the 'painted woman' in terms of the dandyist posture of hostility to nature and taste for the artificial, we have seen how Baudelaire's 'Eloge du maquillage' criticizes the eighteenth-century moral conception of nature as the source and type of artistic beauty, to relocate art in the realm of artifice […] Likewise, I have presented the filiation of the Baudelairian preference for the inorganic (things cold, mineral, and metallic) as elements of modernity and the aesthetic of artificiality [...] The prestige of Baudelaire's aesthetic gives expression to what may be thought of as an antinaturalistic thread that emerges in romanticism and becomes progressively pronounced in later aesthetic ideas.[348]

The protagonist of the first work to be treated in this chapter, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's Edison of *L'Ève future* (1886), mentions contemporary interest in the subject of artificial humanity, possibly referring to discussions[349] in *La vie moderne, Journal-Revue Hebdomadaire des Hommes et des Choses du jour*,[350] a biweekly magazine published since 1859 and devoted to "Littérature, Beaux Arts, Théâtres, Biographie, Critique, Science, Industries," where one of the editions of *L'Ève future* was published:

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[347] Lyotard, 2.
[348] Frank, 194.
[349] Alain Raitt, "Notes" in Villiers de l'Isle-Adam *L'Eve future*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 419.
[350] The front page of the November 30, 1859 issue can be viewed at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k124268g/f8.image>.

> Maintenant, ajouta l'électricien, nous allons […] examiner, d'une façon sérieuse, l'organisme de la créature nouvelle, électro-humaine, – de cette ÉVE FUTURE, enfin, qui, aidée de la GÉNÉRATION ARTIFICIELLE (déjà tout à fait en vogue depuis ces derniers temps), me paraît devoir combler les vœux secrets de notre espèce, avant un siècle, – au moins chez les peuples initiateurs.[351]

In order to better articulate various relationships between the human and the machine in Villiers's *L'Ève Future*, Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869), and Colette Peignot's *Écrits de Laure* (1934), I will engage in this chapter, in addition to Deleuze and Guattari's concepts highlighted in *Mille Plateaux*, with several ideas stemming from posthuman theory. As an academic field, posthuman theory emerged in the United States and Europe in conjunction with or following other poststructuralist branches, including post-colonial, gender, queer, and women's studies. Jean-François Lyotard's *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*[352] (1988, translated into English in 1991), is one of the first interventions on the subject, in which he questions the centrality of human self within social organization. Lyotard equally establishes a link between artifice, the sublime, and modernity, as Felicia Miller Frank notes in *The Mechanical Song: Women, Voice, and the Artificial in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative*:

> Positing a continuation of the aesthetic of the sublime through romantic art to the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, Lyotard argues for a link between the inhuman or the indeterminate and the sublime, and for the sublime as the mode of aesthetic experience that characterizes modernity in art.[353]

Contemporary to Lyotard's study is Donna Haraway's seminal essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," published in 1985 and later included in a collection, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The*

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[351] Villiers de l'Isle-Adam *L'Ève future*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 175.
[352] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1991).
[353] Felicia Miller Frank, *The Mechanical Song: Women, Voice, and the Artificial in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 1995), 6.

Reinvention of Nature,[354] in which the figure of the cyborg helps her imagine a world without gender.[355] Following Haraway, Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, the editors of *Posthuman bodies*[356], as well as N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*[357] argue for the disembodiment of the posthuman, which will later be contested by several second-generation Posthumanists, such as Neil Badminton[358], Bruce Clarke[359], and Cary Wolfe[360]. While the main premise of Posthuman theory as a critique of "man" as the center of ethical values is not directly relevant to the present study, the tension between two generations of Posthumanists regarding their take on embodiment is. The dandy, while not interested in being ethically adequate, is similarly caught up in a paradox where the physical body is both essential for autopoiesis, and an obstacle to the project of making one's humanity irrelevant, imperceptible, and abstract. While Posthumanist theory developed at the end of the twentieth century, literature and culture one hundred years earlier already show interest in a thoroughly modern idea of artifice.

The technical innovations of the nineteenth century, including new materials and new artifacts, give raise to a new aesthetic taste and new literary genres. While the dandies never lose touch with tradition, they survive into the modern age, but always with a twist, as it will become clear from the treatment of the three texts in this chapter. While still paying attention to dandy couples and clusters, I will also show the ways in which each case is unique in terms of the

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[354] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge), 1990.
[355] Ibid., 150-1.
[356] Judith Halberstam and Ira Livinston, ed., *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1995).
[357] N. Katherine Hayles*, How we became posthuman: virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[358] Neil Badmington, *Alien Chic: Posthumanism And the Other Within* (London, New York: Routledge: 2004).
[359] Bruce Clarke, *Posthuman metamorphosis: narrative and systems* (New York : Fordham University Press, 2008), 3.
[360] Cary Wolfe, *What is posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

relationship to the figure of the creator. In my reading of Villiers's *L'Ève future*, I will consider the android Hadaly as a group project. Then, in Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror*, I analyze Maldoror's relation to the figure of Créateur, and finally consider the case of Colette Peignot's *Écrits de Laure,* where the creator and the creature coincide.

3.1 VILLIERS DE L'ISLE-ADAM, *L'EVE FUTURE* (1886)

The latter part of the nineteenth century is marked by a shift in the vision of the woman from the Romantic association with nature to the *fin-de-siècle* association with artifice. This hesitation is due in part to what Felicia Miller Frank describes as the anxiety brought about by the industrial revolution:

> The image of the artificial woman that emerges in French writing may be seen in part as reflecting the influence of German romantic imagery, or perhaps more accurately, as expressing some of the same uneasy responses to the technological transformations taking place during the period. At the same time, this image fuses with the motif of the fatal woman that Praz argues to be a major *topos* of romantic erotic pathology in his chapter "La Belle Dame sans Merci" in *The Romantic Agony*. Praz shows that while the romantic imagery of the first decades of the period was dominated largely by passive, suffering women and their cruel persecutors, latter-day sons of "the Divine Marquis," a shift took place that reversed these roles toward the middle of the century […] If these women are cast as feral, demonic, or vampiristic, demanding the submission of hapless young lovers to their insatiable and bloody passions, they also are called cold, statue-like in their pallor and cruel indifference[.][361]

Villiers's *L'Eve future*, while being rooted in the Decadent aesthetic, is considered one of the first ventures in the modern genre of science fiction. His novel is unequivocally modern, yet it mixes a fairytale-like décor with the latest achievements in technology, and the artificial flora

[361] Frank, 138.

and fauna inspired by the World Fair in 1878. There is room for both the artifice of Baudelaire's made-up woman of "Éloge du maquillage" and the animality of the *femme fatale* within the same characters (Miss Alicia Clary and Evelyn Habal). Influenced equally by E.T.A. Hoffmann's original story, *The Sandman* (1816), and its hugely popular ballet rendition *Coppélia* (1870) by Léo Delibes, the novel also echoes the angelic voice detached from the body in Gérard de Nerval's *Sylvie* (1853),[362] as well as Charles Cros's *La Machine à changer le caractère des femmes* (1875). Among Hadaly's "maternal ancestors,"[363] Marie Lathers mentions Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and the creature's female partner, the characters in Balzac's *Sarrasine* (1830) and *Chef d'oeuvre inconnu* (1832), as well as Théophile Gautier's mummy in *Le pied de momie* (1840). Villiers's Edison compares his Hadaly, the Future Eve of the novel, to the characters of another E.T.A. Hoffmann's story, "Councillor Krespel" (1818), as well as Edgar Poe's short story "Ligeia" (1838).[364] Among those who were directly inspired by Villiers, we find none other than Jules Verne with *Le Château des Carpathes* (1893) and Thea von Harbou, Fritz Lang's partner and author of the script for his *Metropolis* (1927). The machines in Alfred Jarry's *Le Surmâle* (1902), Raymond Roussel's *Locus Solus* (1914), and (1916) might never have been created had it not been for *L'Eve future*.

Much critical attention has been generated by the characters of *L'Ève future,* particularly in gender and cultural scholarship. The fascinating treatment of the new dandy as a key figure of modernity might be one of the reasons behind this interest. Deborah Conyngham's *Le Silence Eloquent* (1975) – one of the first extensive analyses of the novel*,* paves the way to a host of feminist and gender readings, including Marie-Hélène-Huet's chapter in *Monstrous Imagination*

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[362] Ibid., 2.
[363] Lathers, 14-5.
[364] Villiers de l'Isle-Adam *L'Eve future*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 125.

(1993), Felicia Miller Frank's *The Mechanical Song: Women, Voice, and the Artificial in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative* (1995), Marie Lathers's *The Aesthetics of Artifice: Villiers's* 'L'Eve future' (1996), and a section in Rhonda Garelick's *The Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the Fin de Siècle* (1999). While the latter study is the closest to the subject of my project, Garelick emphasizes the issue of gender by concentrating mostly on the relationship between the male dandies Edison and Ewald, and the women they are trying to either change (Alicia) or create (Hadaly, Sowana), not recognizing these women as dandies and allowing them to be only reflections or extensions of their "other sel[ves]."[365]

In *L'Eve Future*, Villiers tells the story of the American inventor Thomas Alva Edison and his friend, an exalted English Lord Ewald, who turns to Edison for help when he falls in love with a beautiful albeit shallow actress – "une Déesse bourgeoise"[366] – Miss Alicia Clary. Lord Ewald's despair, caused by the jarring contrast between the appearance and the inner world of this woman, is so powerful that he contemplates suicide. Edison has a solution: create an "Andréide" – an artificial woman that looks identical to Miss Clary, yet whose beauty is matched by wit and sophistication, an amalgam of the spirits of several women communicated by a system of phonographs.

Driven by a mix of the inventor's vanity and altruism, Edison sees in Lord Ewald's situation a reminder of another friend of his, Edward Anderson, who committed suicide after having abandoned his wife Mrs. Anderson (who will later become Edison's assistant Sowana) and their children. Anderson leaves them for Evelyn Habal, a manipulative dancer who lured him with her savvy use of cosmetics and accoutrement. On the one hand, creating a truly artificial

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[365] Rhonda K. Garelick, *The Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press: 1998), 84.
[366] Villiers, 86.

woman is a way for Edison to protect men from being duped by women who find it easier than ever to alter their appearance with the advent of medicine and of the fashion and cosmetic industries. On the other hand, explicit references to the story of Faust[367] in the prologue and several epigraphs, as well as the intertextual parallels in the storyline, allow us to liken Edison to a dashing Mephistopheles/Maldoror who rushes to solve Dr.Faust-Ewald's problem. While Edison is not as violent in his manipulations of the human body as Maldoror, his surgical and other interventions resemble some of the acts of violence perpetrated by the inquisitive dagger of Lautréamont's hero. As soon as the pact between Edison and Ewald (the second book is called "Le Pacte") is concluded, Edison gets to work, and an eerie simulacrum of Alicia, named Hadaly,[368] comes to life. Ewald is taken with her immediately. The couple set out for Scotland, but Hadaly, traveling in a coffin-like box in the cargo section of the boat, tragically perishes in a shipwreck, survived by her inconsolable lover.

3.1.1 Hadaly as a Collective Science Project

In *The Mechanical Song: Women, Voice, and the Artificial in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative L'Eve future,* Felicia Miller Frank considers *L'Ève future* a pivotal text, in which an artificial woman becomes inseparable from modernity:

> For while the *topos* of the female automaton likewise long precedes Villiers's text, only in the late nineteenth century does it become associated with the idea of the modern and the new modes of representation and artistic reproduction suddenly made both possible and problematic.[369]

[367] Villiers relies on Gérard de Nerval's translation of Goethe's *Faust* (1828).
[368] The name Hadaly means "ideal" in Persian.
[369] Frank, 120.

But the story of Edison and his relationship to the android Hadaly also marks a shift in narrative genres and in its depiction of the figure of the creator. With Edison's quip "Et le fantastique a fait son temps!",[370] fantasy, while not completely left behind, transitions into science fiction, just as Edison shifts from the late Baroque alchemist of Goethe's *Faust* (1808), through the Gothic mad scientist in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), into a contemporary engineer, a real inventor and a celebrity. Garelick identifies Edison as a fictional character created by Villiers not as a true decadent dandy. The inventor is a new dandy "whose life was completely at odds with dandyist aesthetics: one of the founders of mass culture, and an American at that."[371]

Even more interestingly, Edison is not alone in his lab – his project is inspired, set in motion and accomplished (whether knowingly or not) by a diverse group of men, women and technologies. An impressive host of professionals – from dentists and optometrists to an army of fashion industry specialists charged with making the efforts of science esthetically presentable contribute to the fashioning of Hadaly:

> …Hadaly s'exile de cette atmosphère presque surnaturelle où la fiction de son entité se réalise, il est indispensable, n'est-il pas vrai, que cette sorte de Walkyrie de la Science revête, pour demeurer parmi nous, les modes, les usages, l'aspect, enfin, des femmes, et les vêtements du siècle qui passe. "C'est pourquoi, pendant les dites séances, des couturiers, gantières, lingères, corsetières, et bottières, – (je vous donnerai l'étoffe minérale des semelles isolatrices et de leurs talons) – prendront le double exact de toute la toilette de Miss Alicia Clary, laquelle, sans même s'en apercevoir, cédera la sienne à sa belle ombre, dès que celle-ci sera tout à fait venue au monde.[372]

One of the most visible of Edison's assistants and enablers is also his client – Lord Ewald, whose appearance and behavior paint a highly stylized, even comical, portrait of the

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[370] Villiers, 276.
[371] Garelick, 80.
[372] Villiers, 142-3.

nineteenth-century English dandy – mixing finesse ("de legers favoris") and fitness ("les régates de Cambridge"), discipline ("la main sévèrement gantée"), and useless yet important accessories ("un cigare éteint").

> Il était vêtu avec une si profonde élégance qu'il eût été impossible de dire en quoi elle consistait. Les lignes de sa personne laissaient deviner des muscles d'une exceptionnelle solidité, tels que les exercices et les régates de Cambridge ou d'Oxford savent les rendre. Son visage un peu froid, mais d'un tour gracieux et sympathique, s'éclairait d'un sourire empreint de cette sorte de tristesse élevée qui décèle l'aristocratie d'un caractère. Ses traits, bien que d'une régularité grecque, attestaient par la qualité de leur finesse une énergie de décision souveraine. De très fins et massés cheveux, une moustache et de légers favoris, d'un blond d'or fluide, ombraient la matité de neige de son teint juvénile. Ses grands yeux noblement calmes, d'un bleu pâle, sous de presque droits sourcils, se fixaient sur son interlocuteur. – À sa main sévèrement gantée de noir, il tenait un cigare éteint.[373]

Furthermore, this description suggests a lifeless body, either dead or mechanic: the rigor mortis of Ewald's solid muscles, the snow-like blond hair, the marble-cold, regular features of an Ancient Greek statue, the mournful black of the gloves, and finally, the anemic, lifeless cigar ("éteint" in French means both "extinct", "switched off" and "dead") – all point towards his own inability to feel anymore. Shunning physical contact, Ewald wishes Alicia were dead too, but non-degradable, like a statue or a mechanism. Veering towards the inorganic in his own body, this dandy already anticipates the machine's emergence, "Contempler morte Miss Alicia serait mon désir, si la mort n'entrainait pas le triste effacement des traits humains!"[374]

Before Ewald even sets foot in Edison's lab, the scientist has long been hard at work – creating a dummy, waiting for an opportunity to turn it into someone's ideal woman ("Hadaly, invisible, debout, cachée derrière les quatre grands objectifs, attend son incarnation").[375] Throughout the process, Sowana – an often overlooked co-creator of Hadaly, formerly Mrs.

[373] Ibid., 68.
[374] Ibid., 102.
[375] Ibid., 248.

Anderson – is there to help Edison. She is the widow of Edward Anderson, the friend of Edison who, similarly to Ewald, fell victim to the *paraître* of another woman, Evelyn Habal. Traumatized by her husband's affair and his subsequent suicide, Mrs. Anderson falls into a catatonic state, going without food for months. Edison decides to take care of the woman who under his hypnosis, starts differentiating between her waking mode as Mrs. Anderson ("femme très simple, si digne, si intelligente, même, – mais, de vues, après tout, fort limités")[376] and her lethargic Sowana mode ("voici qu'au soufflé de ce sommeil il s'en révèle une tout autre, multiple et inconnue!")[377]. While Edison calls himself "une sorte de Dormeur éveillé,"[378] Sowana is literally somnambulant. Her character, while only briefly mentioned at the beginning and the end of the novel, echoes and frames Hadaly's trajectory: like the android, she is first guided by Edison, but eventually takes the initiative to leave her own body, and migrate her soul into Hadaly's shell. Thus for Sowana, the Hadaly project is very much a self-creation project. Similarly to Colette Peignot and Thérèse Raquin, who use sexuality and animality respectively, Sowana employs her creative talent (In Edison's words "le plus original, mais le plus grand sculpteur de l'Union!"[379]) to transform herself from simple bourgeoise into artist:

> Selon toute convenance, mon premier appariteur est aussi une femme, une grande statuaire inconnue, qui, demain même, dans mon laboratoire, commencera l'œuvre. Votre bien-aimée n'aura pas, en son indispensable nudité, d'autre transpositrice que cette actrice profonde qui n'idéalise pas, mais décalque, et pour se saisir de la forme mathématique du corps de votre vivante, débutera par prendre, très vite, sous mes yeux vigilants et glacés, – avec des instruments de la plus souveraine précision, – les taille hauteur, largeur, mesures strictes des pieds et des mains, du visage et de ses traits, des jambes et des bras, ainsi que le poids exact du corps de votre jeune amie.[380]

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[376] Ibid., 334.
[377] Ibid., 334.
[378] Ibid., 70.
[379] Ibid., 279.
[380] Ibid., 247.

By measuring and studying Alicia's body, she also prepares to sculpt that of Hadaly's, not so much to follow Edison's project but to hijack it in order to become Hadaly. The meeting of the creator and creation[381] in Sowana is made visible thanks to the recurring image of the mirror – the dandy's "entraîneur infatigable,"[382] which figures strongly in the description of the Hadaly-Sowana becoming. For Halberstam and Livingston, "[t]he posthuman body is a technology, a screen, a projected image[,]"[383] in other words, a reflective surface. Although portrayed as a ghostly shadow, a voice separated from the body, Sowana blends with Hadaly by looking in the reflection, "Oh! vous me l'avez bien enseignée, votre belle Hadaly, et je l'ai si bien étudiée que j'en réponds… comme de mon reflet dans une glace!"[384] The problem is that Sowana's "vision" of Hadaly is tactile, as she creates with her eyes closed, adding more mystery to her own and Hadaly's embodiment.

3.1.2 Body Lost and Found

Villiers's rendition of the posthuman is full of glitches and contradictions. At first, it seems to correspond to an earlier conception of disembodiment presented by N. Katherine Hayles. In the passage below, Edison seems to suggest that all bodies are virtual: "Et, matière pour matière, puisque nous venons de nous rappeler que la chair, n'étant jamais la même, n'existe, à peu près, qu'en imaginaire, chair pour chair, celle de la Science est plus… sérieuse… que l'autre."[385] As a result, Hadaly as an android, is more real and truer than its original, precisely because it is more artificial, imagined: "Vous pouvez reproduire l'IDENTITÉ d'une

[381] Lathers, 23.
[382] Dolto, 19.
[383] Halberstam and Livingston, 3.
[384] Villiers, 48.
[385] Ibid., 130.

femme? Vous, né d'une femme? – Mille fois plus identique à elle-même… qu'elle-même!"[386] Paradoxically, science, instead of promoting progress and humanity, blurs the line between the machine and the human: "Milord, répondit gravement Edison, je vous le jure: prenez garde qu'en la juxtaposant à son modèle et en les écoutant toutes deux, ce ne soit la vivante que vous semble la poupée."[387]

At first, many things are unclear about the process of Hadaly's creation and the way her body is depicted. The ideal, which Hadaly would stand for, as opposed to the real woman, Alicia, is first called a shadow: "C'est cette *ombre* seule que vous aimez: c'est pour elle que vous aimez: c'est pour elle que vous voulez mourir. C'est elle *seule* que vous reconnaissez, absolument, comme RÉELLE!"[388] The last book in the novel is entitled "... Et l'ombre fut!" By mocking the Bible, Villiers positions Edison as a rival to God and an evil genius, another Maldoror. The chapter relating Ewald's first encounter with Hadaly is called "Apparition." She is, at least at the beginning, "une entité magneto-électrique. C'est un Être de limbes, une possibilité."[389] Hadaly is a projected, delayed in time ("l'Ève future"), photocopy of an original.

The mystique surrounding Hadaly's face is manifold as well. The mystery is materialized through the trope of the veil – an accessory that is both transparent and opaque, which Hadaly-in-the-making does not takes off, only showing her metallic arms ("bras d'argent") until she is ready to look identical to Alicia:

> Pendant le moment de silence qui suivit cette mise en demeure suprême, la blanche Andréide reparut, écartant les draperies brillantes et noires, et demeura,

[386] Ibid., 126.
[387] Ibid., 126.
[388] Ibid., 130.
[389] Ibid., 117.

> sous son voile de deuil, immobile, et comme attentive, ses bras d'argent croisés sur son sein[390].

On the other hand, the veil is the dandy's protection from the terror of the flesh under the skin, which might be too real, too flayed ("la chair … seule") to bear :

> Remarquez-vous une chose bien plus extraordinaire, mon cher lord: c'est que vous ne m'ayez pas questionné *sur* la nature du visage actuel de l'Andréide? Lord Ewald tressaillit. "Puisqu'il est voilé, dit-il, j'ai pensé qu'il serait peu discret de m'en enquérir […] – Oui, répondit Edison ; vous remarquez, n'est-ce pas, mon cher lord, qu'il ne s'agit pas encore ici de l'Épiderme, qui est la chose capitale ! mais de la chair…seule.[391]

As Edison launches into a lengthy explanation on how he is going to go about creating his Andréide, math, science, and pseudoscientific jargon become yet another veil-like layer of confusion. Several chapter titles in the Book Five of the novel read as a list of body parts, functions and faculties to be considered in the process: "La demarche" (III), "L'éternel feminin" (IV), "L'équilibre" (V), "Saisissement" (VI), "La carnation" (VII), "La bouche de rose et les dents de perle" (IX), "Effluves corporels" (X), "Les yeux de l'esprit" (XII), "Les yeux physiques" (XIII), "La chevelure" (XIV), "L'épiderme" (XV). Concentrating on each individual aspect, the narration takes attention away from the body as a whole, cutting across it, fragmenting it. The fact that Hadaly's "soul" is communicated by a "messaging" system, an anticipation of digital organization, is a comment on that degree of separation.

In addition to the image of the veil, the mirror is another device highlighting Hadaly's complex relation to embodiment. Women in the story engage in a play of mutual reflections making it difficult to visualize them as separate bodies. First, Lord Eward stages a confrontation between Alicia with her statue copy, Venus Victrix on display at the Louvre. Alicia immediately

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[390] Ibid., 285.
[391] Ibid., 245.

recognizes herself in the work of art: "Tiens, MOI!"[392] Hadaly in turn sees herself in the projection of Alicia's photograph: "'Voici la forme où tu seras incarnée', dit Edison, en se tournant vers Hadaly Et celle-ci fit un pas vers l'image radieuse qu'elle parut contempler un instant sous la nuit de son voile."[393] Finally, as it has been mentioned earlier, Sowana perceives herself as Hadaly's reflection.

Explaining how Hadaly will come into being, Edison asserts, "Il s'agit, simplement, d'une … *transsubstantiation*."[394] But Marie Lathers insists that the process is not so much a matter of mysticism and *magie blanche,* as it is a mechanical reproduction of a form (body and *parure*) already created by Alicia, a new technique, " … Alicia does not literally transmute into Hadaly; rather, her form is copied onto the android's metallic skeleton. The central technique employed in this cloning of the real woman is photosculpture, a process that combines the reproductive potentials of the ancient art of sculpture and the novel technique of photography."[395] Donning Alicia's cloned body like armor,[396] Hadaly transforms this exquisite shell. The result is the abstracted self of the perfect dandy, "l'identité idéalisée":

> Il lui prit la main; c'était la main d'Alicia! Il respira le cou, le sein oppressé de la vision: c'était bien Alicia! Il regarda les yeux. . . c'étaient bien les yeux. . . . seulement le regard était sublime! La toilette, l'allure . . . – larmes sur ses joues liliales, – c'était bien elle encore . . . . mais transfigurée! devenue enfin, digne de sa beauté même: l'identité idéalisée.[397]

Yet, while Hadaly's body is covered in veil, it is not completely lost. Bruce Clarke critiques N. Katherine Hayles's "organic disembodiment," which he calls

> […]a cautionary trope maintaining an investment in the modern humanist, discursive-dialectical subject. As an ad hoc assemblage of heterogeneous

[392] Ibid., 100.
[393] Ibid., 116.
[394] Ibid., 108.
[395] Lathers, 48.
[396] Villiers, 248.
[397] Ibid., 307.

> subjectivities aligned to 'materialities' of equivocal instantiation, the viability of this posthuman 'amalgam' is not clear, but it is probably not intended to be viable. Instead, by means of it, 'embodiment' is polemicized and the posthuman rendered as a vitiated informatics having 'lost its body'.[398]

In Hadaly's case, the body is both lost and found. The very "polemicized" narrative flaunts every detail and material constituting her body becomes real, if not hyper-real. Hadaly, then, exposes the dandy's paradox: reliance on the visible surface (*paraître*) in constant tension with the desire to become imperceptible.

3.1.3 Illusion Mensongère vs. Fidèle Illusion

The depiction and perception of Hadaly's body is further complicated by a cameo within the novel, bearing striking resemblance to Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Spectacles* (1844). Explaining the reason behind his decision to create "the new and improved" mechanical woman, Edison relates to Ewald the story of Miss Evelyn Habal – a dancer who seduced and caused the demise of Edison's friend Edward Anderson. Habal's charm lies in her mastering of the art of *paraître*, which for the dandy collapses with *être*. The tension between the vampirical, Romantic-era *femme fatale* Habal ("vanity" in Hebrew) and the futurist being Hadaly is especially noticeable in the use of the word "illusion" as it denotes appearance pushed to its extreme. While in the case of Habal, it conveys hypocrisy and trickery ("Il *fallait* que tous fussent dupes d'une illusion – poussée sans doute à quelque degree d'apparence insolite!")[399], in the case of Hadaly, it is linked to the triumph of science and ideal: "je viens offrir aux humains de ces temps évolus et nouveaux […] de préférer désormais à la mensongère, médiocre et

[398] Clarke, 3.
[399] Villiers, 188.

toujours changeante Réalité, une positive, prestigieuse et toujours fidèle Illusion."[400] While Edison sees in Habal "de la pure animalité,"[401] he is also the one who mechanizes her by showing her dancing on film[402] (she is dead at the time Ewald visits Edison), and exposes the workings of her carefully assembled appearance, which would have not been possible without the same triumph of science, and the latest advances in cosmetic, medical, prosthetic (orthopedic, dental, etc.), and pharmaceutical industries, as the long list of her "beauty secrets" in the chapter "Exhumation" reveals.

Evelyn's autopoietic qualities lead Rhonda K. Garelick to make an important parallel between Evelyn ("Qu'est-ce que cette sorcière?") and Edison ("le sorcier de Menlo Park"),[403] calling her "something of a female dandy" as she points out that "[l]ike Alicia, Evelyn displays a division of form and content, interior and exterior. And yet, she is quite conscious of this distinction – in a sense, she is her own Edison."[404] While spared the sight of Hadaly's face before she is presentable, Ewald is unceremoniously confronted with the "real" Evelyn – an aging toothless woman who is far from the youthful persona she constructs on stage, Ewald, not unlike the protagonist in Oscar Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1890), turns away in horror. The terrifying image, like Wilde's portrait, is a mirror reflection. Thus, one dandy faces another dandy's mechanics, which are supposed to be hidden from view.

What Garelick does not recognize is that just like Habal, Alicia, another epitome of *paraître* in the novel, might also be more complex than she appears as presented by Ewald and Edison. After all, it is her appearance, together with the contours of the body, allure and *parure,*

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[400] Ibid., 167.
[401] Ibid., 189.
[402] Garelick, 90.
[403] Villiers, 267.
[404] Garelick, 88.

which Edison has meticulously copied, and for which he takes full credit. This living woman is also a dandy, but what the men create and desire is a double that would push the dehumanization to its limit while faking the realization of "perfect" humanity. Anticipating Marcel Proust's character Odette de Crécy to be studied in the next chapter, Alicia is an ambitious *bourgeoise* whose partner (not unlike Odette's husband Charles Swann) sees a disturbing discrepancy between her lovely body and the disappointing banality of her mind:

> Son rêve serait de paraître, à tout le monde, une 'femme d'esprit!' à cause des dehors 'brillants', des avantages que, trouve-t-elle, cela donne. Cette fantastique bourgeoise aimerait ce masque comme une toilette, comme un passe-temps agréable, mais, cependant peu *sérieux*.[405]

Repeatedly compared to the ancient marble sculpture of Venus Victrix, Alicia bridges the inanimate quality of the stone with the inanimate quality of the machine, according to Felicia Miller Frank:

> The icy absence of the statue or dead woman is related to Baudelaire's project of dandyism (a dandy is, after all, chilled out, a cool guy) and evokes the atmosphere of stasis and death […] One can, in fact, think of the image of the woman as cold statue as a late expression of the literary theme of the automaton.[406]

Indeed, Alicia is the product of her time (as she claims, "il faut être de son siècle"),[407] just like Edison and Hadaly. Her voice, like Hadaly's, seems to be mechanically generated: "Monsieur, répondit la belle jeune femme – avec une intonation de patronne de magasin, mais, aussi, avec un timbre de voix d'une limpidité idéale, pareil à des grêlons d'or heurtant un sonore disque de cristal[.]"[408] The narrator seems to be torn between admiring the inorganic aspect of her voice, yet showing disdain for its vulgar human stiffness. This disconcerting effect is heightened by the perfect surface, abstracted from any interiority ("purement extérieur"):

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[405] Villiers, 91.
[406] Frank, 132.
[407] Villiers 274.
[408] Ibid., 271.

> Pour conclure, ce qui déconcerte en elle, c'est le fait de cette presque surhumaine beauté recouvrant de son divin voile ce caractère de modération plate, cet esprit de vulgarisme, cette exclusive et folle considération pour ce que l'Or, la Foi, l'Amour et l'Art ont de purement extérieur, c'est-à-dire de vain et d'illusoire[.][409]

Donna Haraway, in "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," critiques normative separation between depth and surface similar to the one set forth by Villiers's Edison and Ewald:

> [T]he dichotomies may be expressed […][as] transitions from the comfortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks I have called the informatics of domination: Reproduction/replication, representation/simulation, depth, integrity/surface, boundary.[410]

Alicia as a dandy aligns herself with Haraway's cyborg as she stands for this astonishing and unsettling surface, preferring automatic, Hadaly-like replication and simulation over reproduction and representation. What Marie Lathers says, in her reading of Villiers through Haraway's lens, can also be applied to the becoming of the dandy, whatever its apparent gender:

> Haraway's cyborg is a perfectly modern being who represents the breakdown of three traditional boundaries: that between the human and the animal; that between the organism and the machine; and that between the physical and the non-physical […] This is the world order that such authors as Villiers romanticized and predicted. As Hadaly the 'hybrid' slips freely across these borders and boundaries, she reveals the origins of this slippage in the nineteenth century's preoccupation with reproduction (of children), replication (of artworks) and the mechanics of the female body.[411]

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[409] Ibid., 96.
[410] Haraway, 161.
[411] Lathers, 24.

3.1.4 Hadaly-Sowana's Declaration of Independence

A composite of various bodies, minds, and modes ("J'ai tant de femmes en moi qu'aucun harem ne pourrait les contenir"),[412] Hadaly is real and fictional, physical or virtual. Even though Edison qualifies Hadaly as an android, the Eve of the future, he is still at a loss of words when trying to describe her, resorting to a more familiar Romantic and decadent vocabulary and its reliance on mythology. At various points, Hadaly is compared to a valkyrie[413], a sphinx (Androsphynge),[414] a hermaphrodite, and an angel:

> Vous voyez: *c'est un ange!* ajouta-t-il avec son même ton grave, – si, comme l'enseigne notre Théologie, les anges ne sont que feu et lumière! – N'est-ce pas le Baron Swedenborg qui se permit, même, d'ajouter qu'ils sont "hermaphrodites et stériles"?[415]

While it is difficult to say what Hadaly is, as the story draws to its denouement, it becomes evident what Hadaly is not – a docile robot following the instructions of its creator. Even though it is implied that Hadaly's fate is solely in the hands of Lord Ewald, who is supposed to "complete" her ("Le reste, l'Idéal, vous le fournirez vous-même"),[416] something happens in the process of creation that escapes logic and scientific calculation. In the following exchange, Ewald and Edison's reaction to Hadaly's unscripted request to help a struggling young widow with two children (obviously implying Mrs Anderson-Sowana) is that of utter puzzlement:

> – Que signifie ceci? demanda Lord Ewald à Edison.
> – Mais, je n'en sais trop rien, moi! dit Edison. Écoutons-la, mon cher lord; souvent elle me fait de ses surprises à moi-même.[417]

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[412] Villiers, 317.
[413] Ibid., 142.
[414] Ibid., 307.
[415] Ibid., 236.
[416] Ibid., 252.
[417] Ibid., 243.

One question after another arises in Edison's mind about his own invention: "D'*où* parlait-elle? *Où* entendait-elle? *Qui* se trouvait-elle devenue? Qu'est-ce que ce fluide incontestable, qui confère, pareil au légendaire anneau de Gygès, l'ubiquité, l'invisibilité, la transfiguration intellectuelle? A qui avions-nous affaire, enfin?[418] The machine becomes superhuman, "outre-Humain," as Edison states in the last pages of the novel, "Un être d'outre-Humanité s'est suggéré en cette nouvelle œuvre d'art où se centralise, irrévocable, un mystère inimaginé jusqu'à nous."[419] Superhuman, hyper-real, Hadaly, as Lathers suggests, she is a modern original created from a copy:

> The greatest paradox of *L'Eve future* is perhaps just this: from a copy, an original is produced. And this is indeed the newly discovered reproductive power of technology […] Hadaly, however, although she is a copy, will attain a certain aura – the aura of modernity [.][420]

But Hadaly's originality and modernity are not only Edison's achievements but Sowana's achievements because she decides to take over the project as the android's trainer and puppeteer ("l'inquiétante songeuse […] tenait le clavier d'induction dont les touches l'électrisaient doucement et entretenaient un courant entre elle et l'Andréide").[421] Eventually, she permanently leaves her physical body and inhabits that of Hadaly. Sowana's physical body is not described until the moment her soul leaves it to animate Hadaly. What is left behind is a shell whose depiction is faithful to a Gothic/Decadent dandy aesthetic:

> Étendue, toute vêtue de deuil, – et, sans doute, endormie sur un vaste canapé de velours rouge posé sur des disques de verre, une svelte femme, encore jeune, bien que sa belle chevelure noire se brillantât d'argent autour des tempes, apparut. Le visage, aux traits sévères et charmants, d'un ovale pur, exprimait une sorte de tranquilité surnaturelle.[422]

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[418] Ibid., 336.
[419] Ibid., 343.
[420] Lathers, 67-8.
[421] Villiers, 337.
[422] Ibid., 345.

The black of Mrs Anderson-Sowana's mourning attire and hair, the slimness of her figure, and the stern and calm features of her face make her portrait mirror that of Lord Ewald's, analyzed earlier. What brings this description back to science fiction is the metallic silver streaks in her hair, the color of Hadaly's inner armature. Three paragraphs further, the description of Sowana's death aligns with the dandy's ultimate act – leaving the world of humans: "Edison s'aperçut, au bout d'une heure d'anxiété et d'efforts de volition devenus stériles, que celle qui semblait dormir avait définitivement quitté le monde des humains."[423] Commenting on the blurring of science fiction and modernity with the mysticism of Romantic fantasy in Villiers, Frank suggests that this hesitation between the genres is symptomatic of an era in transition with its anxieties about the imminent advent of the machine:

> Villiers's phonograph-woman, the artificially incarnated bearer of a disembodied voice, recapitulates the romantic themes of the work of art as artifice and that of the sexless angelic singer and unites them in a female figure at once totalizing Wagnerian artwork and uneasy metafiguration of the coming age of the work of art as mechanical reproduction.[424]

Sowana does not think twice about leaving her body and disappearing into Hadaly, who herself is never truly alive:

> La nature change, mais non l'Andréide. Nous autres, nous vivons, nous mourrons, – que sais-je! L'Andréide ne connaît ni la vie, ni la maladie, ni la mort. Elle est au-dessus de toutes les imperfections et de toutes les servitudes! Elle garde la beauté du rêve. C'est une *inspiratrice*. Elle parle et chante comme un génie – mieux même, car elle résume, en sa magique parole, les pensées de plusieurs génies. – Jamais son coeur ne change; elle n'en a pas. [425]

Insofar as the dandy is successful in becoming the machine, the inhuman, death ceases to become a concern for someone who is engaged in a paradoxical relationship to the body, as the next section on Lautréamont's Maldoror will also illustrate.

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[423] Ibid., 346.
[424] Frank, 5.
[425] Villiers, 253.

3.2 LAUTREAMONT, *LES CHANTS DE MALDOROR* (1869)

In the collection of essays entitled *Sur Lautréamont,* Maurice Blanchot speaks of Lautréamont's desire for complete disassociation from the current embodiment of humanity:

> Il s'est donné le jour? Il s'est bien plutôt donné au jour, et c'est ce mouvement extrême qui explique l'apparent reniement des *Poésies* et son étrange fin et sa disparition […] Cette fidélité au jour, Lautréamont, à mesure qu'il écrit la "Préface à un livre futur", découvre à quelle rupture elle le conduit: non pas à un reniement portant sur le sens des mots ou sur les mots seuls, mais à une négation véritable, à une disparition complète, au sacrifice de toute sa personne pour rejoindre, glorifier et assurer le froid mouvement de la raison impersonnelle[…] dans la perspective d'une métamorphose où se brisaient les limites de sa personne et des servitudes de la réalité humaine.[426]

Maldoror, the hero of Lautréamont's poem *Les Chants de Maldoror*, displays the same aspirations. Alongside the supernatural and the animal as outlets for Maldoror's inhumanity, there is a strong presence of images conveying it through material and mechanical aspects.

3.2.1 Maldoror the Superhero

Despite the extremely fragmented storyline broken into multiple episodes, the exaggerated details and descriptions of particular scenes in *Les Chants* are drawn with almost microscopic, easy to visualize precision. While in Villiers, science fiction is the main genre allowing for the discussion of the inorganic dandy, in Lautréamont, the structure of the poem, divided in six cantos resembling separate vignettes, Maldoror's extraordinary abilities that rival those of the powerful figure called *Créateur*, plus the gift to dash through time and space – all lend themselves well to the aesthetics of the modern comic book. A genre usually associated

[426] Maurice Blanchot, *Sur Lautréamont* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1987), 59-60.

with and popularized in the twentieth century, the *bande dessinée* established itself in the mid-nineteenth century. With the advent of the mechanical presses, caricature (Charles Philipon's quasi-monopoly on political satire during the July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe,[427] as well as the work of Honoré Daumier and "the caricaturist-turned-photographer […] Nadar"[428] being just three examples), publicity and journalism entered everyday life. Baudelaire, who knew Nadar and Daumier personally, also took interest in the visual power of caricature, his "silent partner in poetic creation,"[429] and a major source of inspiration for the aesthetic of distortion in his poetry, as Ainslie Armstrong Mclees posits in her study *Baudelaire's 'argot plastique': Poetic Caricature and Modernism*.

Alongside the nascent genre of comic series, there were Balzac and Ponson du Terrail. Balzac is profoundly modern in that his *La Comédie Humaine* is a writing mechanism embracing and depending on "the age of mechanical reproduction" without which the whole genre of the serial *roman feuilleton* would be impossible. Many of Balzac's dandies are "machines" – in *Illusions Perdues* (1837-43), for instance, Lucien de Rubempré is linked to the mechanical aspects and commercialization of literary production and journalism, which are at the center of the book. What is more, the Balzacian dandy is a money earning "machine" via extravagant lifestyle and sex (this is true especially of Rubempré, but also of all the dandies – De Trailles, De Marsay – who overspend and prostitute themselves for money both as lovers of bored noblewomen or, if they are particularly lucky, as husbands to rich or titled heiresses). Another type of Balzac's dandies, Rastignac, Ferragus, and Vautrin, hails from the tradition of the

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[427] Joel E. Vessels, *Drawing France: French Comics and the Republic* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 19.
[428] Ibid., 20.
[429] Ainslie Armstrong McLees, *Baudelaire's "argot plastique": Poetic Caricature and Modernism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press:1989), 144.

fantastic with their extraordinary, outlaw/superhero qualities reminiscent of Ponson du Terrail's adventurer Rocambole who, in turn, is mentioned in Lautréamont's poem. In the following passage, the narrator is positioned as a zealous fashion magazine reader following the escapades of Maldoror, as if he were a celebrity or a superhero:

> Magnétisant les florissantes capitales, avec un fluide pernicieux, il les amène dans un état léthargique où elles sont incapables de se surveiller comme il le faudrait. État d'autant plus dangereux qu'il n'est pas soupçonné. Aujourd'hui il est à Madrid; demain il sera à Saint-Pétersbourg; hier il se trouvait à Pékin. Mais, affirmer exactement l'endroit actuel que remplissent de terreur les exploits de ce poétique Rocambole, est un travail au-dessus des forces possibles de mon épaisse ratiocination. Ce bandit est, peut-être, à sept cents lieues de ce pays; peut-être, il est à quelques pas de vous.[430]

By the time of the publication of *Les Chants* between 1868 and 1869, Rocambole had already become popular thanks to his prolific author who published the novel in installments in *feuilleton* magazines between 1857-70. In fact, so popular was he that the word *rocambolesque* soon became a common word for "incredible", "fantastic", and "fabulous" in French and English.

Maldoror, like Rocambole, possesses an acute sense of the contemporary. He is a trend-setter: like the leader crane of a flock in the following episode, he flies ahead, showing the way while simultaneously showing contempt for the followers:

> [P]rudemment, la première, (car, c'est elle qui a le privilège de montrer les plumes de sa queue aux autres grues inférieures en intelligence) […], elle vire avec flexibilité la pointe de la figure géométrique [...], manœuvrant avec des ailes qui ne paraissent pas plus grandes que celles d'un moineau, parce qu'elle n'est pas bête, elle prend ainsi un autre chemin philosophique et plus sûr.[431]

In another example, the same idea of eluding all surveillance is conveyed through an extended metaphor of a police chase after a charismatic and ever changing criminal:

> Il savait que la police […] le recherchait avec persévérance, depuis nombre d'années, et qu'une véritable armée d'agents et d'espions était continuellement à

[430] Lautréamont, 231.
[431] Ibid., 18.

> ses trousses. Sans, cependant, parvenir à le rencontrer. Tant son habileté renversante déroutait, avec un suprême chic, les ruses les plus indiscutables au point de vue de leur succès […] Il avait une faculté spéciale pour prendre des formes méconnaissables aux yeux exercés. Déguisements supérieurs, si je parle en artiste! Accoutrements d'un effet réellement médiocre, quand le songe à la morale. Par ce point, il touchait presqu'au génie. N'avez-vous pas remarqué la gracilité d'un joli grillon, aux mouvements alertes, dans les égouts de Paris? Il n'y a que celui-là: c'était Maldoror![432]

Maldoror's elusive, chameleon genius is defined in terms of aesthetics and style, "suprême chic", "déguisement supérieurs", "une faculté spéciale pour prendre des formes méconnaissables", combined with an utter disregard for ethics. Appearing under a new guise every time and accumulating new artificial layers is a matter of survival and his mode of being. The inability of the police to recognize him is also the inability to recognize originality. The time lag translates into a physically felt tension, an irreparable distance between the dandy as superhero and the simple humans.

Sarcasm and irony are equally the superhero's tools of distancing. Similarly to Villiers's enchantress Evelyn Habal, Maldoror is his own creator and creature. This exceptional position makes him feel that he has the right to judge the intelligence of the *Créateur* and his creatures. Maldoror's vision is unique in that only one of his eyes is always open, making it less of an organic human faculty and more of a mechanical device, such as a blowtorch or the lens of a camera:

> Maniant les ironies terribles, d'une main ferme et froide, je t'avertis que mon cœur en contiendra suffisamment, pour m'attaquer à toi, jusqu'à la fin de mon existence. Je frapperai ta carcasse creuse; mais si fort que je me charge d'en faire sortir les parcelles restantes d'intelligence que tu n'as pas voulu donner à l'homme, parce que tu aurais été jaloux de le faire égal à toi, et que tu avais effrontément cachés dans tes boyaux, rusé bandit, comme si tu ne savais pas qu'un jour où l'autre je les aurais découvertes de mon œil toujours ouvert, les aurais enlevées, les aurais partagées avec mes semblables. [433]

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[432] Ibid., 231.
[433] Ibid., 63-4.

In most instances, the word *semblable* juxtaposes Maldoror to the world of humans, instead of highlighting the likeness it should purvey: "Je parvins, par la ruse, à recouvrer ma liberté! Dégoûté des habitants du continent, qui quoiqu'ils s'intitulassent mes semblables, ne paraissaient pas jusqu'ici me ressembler en rien."[434] Here, he is seen *going* down into the world of mortals: "On m'a vu descendre dans la vallée, pendant que la peau de ma poitrine était immobile et calme, comme le couvercle d'une tombe!"[435] And sometimes, he is not moving at all, but feels empowered to tell the rest to move away. This is the attitude of a superhero:

> Vous, qui me regardez, éloignez-vous de moi, car mon haleine exhale un soufflé empoisonné. Nul n'a encore vu les rides vertes de mon front; ni les os en saillie de ma figure maigre, pareils aux arêtes de quelque grand poisson, ou aux rochers couvrant les rivages de la mer, ou aux abruptes montagnes alpestres, que je parcourus souvent, quand j'avais sur ma tête des cheveux d'une autre couleur.[436]

Yet, undeniably, Maldoror cannot survive completely without company, granted that it be worthy of, and truly resemble him. Here, the word *semblable* sheds its irony, as the superhero longs for "groupies" who understand him. In the first chant, singling out the loneliest and the most pensive boy in the Tuileries gardens, Maldoror professes to him that "La première chose, pour devenir célèbre, est d'avoir de l'argent. Or, comme tu n'en as pas, il faudra assassiner pour en acquérir [….]"[437] In this dandy recruitment scene, not dissimilar from the propositions made by Vautrin – the great precursor of all shape-shifting, rocambolic criminals – to the young Rastignac in *Le Père Goriot*, attention to aesthetics is remarkable, especially when it comes to violence. In the name of fame, killing is condoned, as long as it is done in style: "Tu vois que,

[434] Ibid., 185.
[435] Ibid., 118.
[436] Ibid., 30.
[437] Ibid., 74.

lorsqu'on veut devenir célèbre, il faut se plonger avec grâce dans des fleuves de sang. Le but excuse le moyen."[438]

3.2.2 Fashion, Spurs, and Armor

Maldoror's cruelty and his preference for aesthetics over ethics is evident in our last quote and also in his affirmation that: "nul ne sait la quantité d'amour que contiennent mes aspirations vers le beau,"[439] which equally indicates his drive ("aspirations") towards inhumanity. Beauty as sublime and exceedingly rare deviation from the norm – whether aesthetic or moral – is discussed in Villiers in the case of Alicia who is openly called a sublime monster[440] for the combination of an inhumanly ideal appearance and selfishness. Like Alicia, Maldoror is another example of sublime monstrosity, which he also values in his *semblables*, such as the handsome Scottish youth, "Mervyn, ce fils de la blonde Angleterre"[441]: "[M]éfiez-vous de moi, surtout si vous êtes beau."[442] One of the most memorable quotes often employed by the Surrealists is found in chant six, and is concerned with the same young man compared to a chance meeting "sur une table de dissection d'une machine à coudre et d'un parapluie!"[443] Despite being utterly baffling and fractured, this vision of beauty is also material and mechanical. It is firmly grounded in modernity with its links to urban environment (the umbrella being the *flâneur*'s eternal companion), fashion, and medical industries. Furthermore, Pierre Capretz suggests another domain of modernity – advertisement, – which may have influenced

[438] Ibid., 74.
[439] Ibid., 37.
[440] Villiers, 289.
[441] Lautréamont, 234.
[442] Ibid., 210.
[443] Ibid., 234.

Lautréamont's imagination when devising the comparison: "Il semble que l'étrange association de ces divers objects résulte de leur présence sur une feuille publicitaire de quelque journal."[444]

At the level of content, fashion is minimally dealt with in the poem, but there are numerous reflections on Maldoror's outer shell – his body armor so to speak – and its modern elements. Just as the fractured narrative structure of the poem, Maldoror's body does not seem to possess any vulnerable organs, and his appearance cannot be pieced together into a cohesive whole. What is clear is the remarkable ability of Lautréamont's language to optically zoom in on a variety of accessories and gadgets contributing to Maldoror's outfit and allure. Whether organic or mechanical, many of them have exoskeletal and prosthetic properties, with strong emphasis on protection, aggression, symbiosis, and mimicry. In *What is Posthumanism?* Cary Wolfe states that it is difficult for many to recognize that a human is "fundamentally a prosthetic creature that has coevolved with various forms of technicity and materiality, forms that are radically 'not-human' and yet have nevertheless made the human what it is."[445] In this chapter, Maldoror and other dandies, acknowledging and taking this "not-humanity" to the extreme, help to see the distinction between human and inhuman not as a binary opposition but as a continuum.

Physical violence is echoed by verbal violence. Lautréamont's language (whether channeled through the narrator or Maldoror – the distinction between the two is not always clear) is hurtful. Unceremoniously, the poem delves into such taboo subjects as bodily functions, sex, prostitution, rape, pederasty, bestiality, sodomy, and murder. Not unlike Colette Peignot's Laure, Maldoror engages in self-slander by donning filth as armor in order to escape humanity.

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[444] Pierre Capretz, "Notes" *Les Chants de Maldoror* (Paris: Gallimard: 1973), 437.
[445] Wolfe, xxv-xxvi.

Literally, his language can make him dirty, "Je suis sale. Les poux me rongent […]"[446] and deformed, "Sur ma nuque, comme sur un fumier, pousse un énorme champignon, aux pédoncules ombellifières."[447] These can be seen as a series of defense mechanisms of a dandy who is wary of any physical contact. Maldoror's legs are compared to the horn, literally *defense* in French, of a rare marine creature narwhal. Jacques Derrida in *Éperons: Les styles de Nietzsche*, explains his concept of a *spur*, either that of a fish, a mammal such as the narwhal, or a boat – a protruding rostrum, a hook-like object used in navigation, reconnaissance and protection against imminent danger. Derrida uses it as a metaphor for style and distinction (whether verbal or bodily) and their protective qualities:

> Le style s'avancerait alors comme l'éperon, celui par exemple d'un vaisseau voilé: le rostrum, cette saillie qui va au-devant, brise l'attaque à fendre la surface adverse [...] Le style peut donc *aussi* de son éperon protéger contre la menace terrifiante, aveuglante et mortelle (de ce) qui se présente, se donne à voir avec entêtement.[448]

On the other hand, these actions could also be perceived as strategies built not around the idea of lack but of Deleuze and Guattari's idea of fullness, self-sufficiency, the making of a body equipped with all sorts of instruments. By employing these accessories, the dandy is like a writer who becomes inseparable from his pen ("[C]e véritable ami qui me sert de compère,"), [449] as if it were grafted on him. The difference is that the dandy, in order to survive, relies on physical, bodily spurs, and not so much on language. This body is neither natural nor entirely artificial – a construction where alliances are formed with other bodies for the sake of an aesthetic experiment.

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[446] Ibid., 167.
[447] Ibid., 168.
[448] Jacques Derrida, *Épérons: Les styles de Nietzsche* (Paris: Champs Flammarion, 1978), 29-30.
[449] Lautréamont, 223.

While Maldoror has a variety of tools at his disposal, he is always accompanied by "ce couteau d'acier qui ne l'abandonne jamais"[450] and other cutting objects, as we see in the episode of Lohengrin's murder where "[t]out était prêt, et le couteau avait été acheté. Ce stylet était mignon, car j'aime la grâce et l'élégance jusque dans les appareils de la mort; mais il était long et pointu."[451] Incision is mirrored by mathematical precision, as it helps Maldoror design a sharp dagger that wins the battle against crude claws:

> O mathématiques sévères […] Sans vous, avec une griffe perfide, il aurait labouré ma chair et mes os [...] Je m'en servis pour dérouter les ruses pernicieuses de mon ennemi mortel, pour l'attaquer, à mon tour, avec adresse et plonger, dans les viscères de l'homme, un poignard aigu qui restera à jamais enfoncé dans son corps; car, c'est une blessure dont il ne se relèvera pas.[452]

Deleuze and Guattari point out in "Comment se faire un Corps sans Organes?" that the image of a thin, subtle blade opening up the organism to new configurations beyond the molar body should not be confused with murder or suicide. From this viewpoint, Maldoror is a surgeon-surveyor/drug addict preparing a Body without Organs:

> Comment dire à quel point c'est simple, et que nous le faisons tous les jours. Avec quelle prudence nécessaire, l'art des doses, et le danger, overdose. On n'y va pas à coups de marteau, mais avec une lime très fine. On invente des autodestructions qui ne se confondent pas avec la pulsion de mort. Défaire l'organisme n'as jamais été se tuer, mais ouvrir le corps à des connexions qui supposent tout un agencement, des circuits, des conjonctions, des étagements et des seuils, des passages et des distributions d'intensité, des territoires et des déterritorialisations mesurées à la manière d'un arpenteur.[453]

The extent of gore and bloodshed in Maldoror's deeds, however, is too vast to be dismissed. Maldoror is at once curious creator, serial killer, and merciless war machine: "J'acquis de la gloire dans les champs de bataille; […] tant mon artificielle main de fer répandait

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[450] Ibid., 110.
[451] Ibid., 65.
[452] Ibid., 89-3.
[453] Deleuze and Guattari, 198.

le carnage et la destruction dans les ranges ennemis."[454] The weapon used in this warfare becomes a bionic extension of Maldoror's body enabling him to singlehandedly, in super-heroic fashion, destroy his adversaries in large numbers ("répandait le carnage"). In addition to the scale of Maldoror's destructive power, he is also a master of stealth. He is, in a way, the precursor of today's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, or a drone – a ghostly, unpiloted aircraft used for reconnaissance and combat. To come back to the quote about the fantastic Rocambole, the two sentences that follow fit remarkably the description of a drone, including invisibility, ubiquity, secrecy, and speed: "Mais, affirmer exactement l'endroit actuel que remplissent de terreur les exploits de ce poétique Rocambole, est un travail au-dessus des forces possibles de mon épaisse ratiocination. Ce bandit est, peut-être, à sept cents lieues de ce pays; peut-être, il est à quelques pas de vous."[455]

Besides knives, there is an entire arsenal of sharp objects employed by Maldoror and his allies and accomplices, which help him to make incisions and inquiries into other bodies. There are actual spurs ("Imite mon exemple, et que ton éperon d'argent s'enfonce dans les flancs de ton coursier [...]"),[456] squid's tentacles compared to straps, wings that split through the air like steel ("On dirait que ses ailes blanchâtres, nouées par de fortes attaches, ont des nerfs d'acier, tant elles fendent l'air avec aisance"[457]), sharpened flat stones ("Il ne se résigne pas, et va chercher, sur le parvis de la miserable pagode, un caillou plat, à trenchant éffilé"),[458] a guillotine ("[e]xecuteur des hautes-oeuvres"),[459] and even a talking hair shaft.

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[454] Ibid., 225.
[455] Ibid., 231.
[456] Ibid., 127-8.
[457] Ibid., 134.
[458] Ibid., 96.
[459] Ibid., 119.

Body parts (Maldoror's tongue, which takes a walk on an angel's cheek),[460] and faculties, such as vision, become Maldoror's indispensable instruments of investigation and dissection: "je me suis écarté du rivage, jusqu'à le perdre de ma vue perçante."[461] As we have already seen, the eye of the superhuman dandy is also the eye of the camera – as Marie Lathers reminds us when she mentions Susan Sontag's comment on the Baudelairian *flâneur* as "a moving camera, a documentor of modernity's details."[462] Like a drone or a handsome cricket "aux movements alertes," Maldoror navigates the city, above or under ground, comfortable within the increasingly intricate urban landscape, "N'avez-vous pas remarqué la gracilité d'un joli grillon, aux mouvements alertes, dans les égouts de Paris? Il n'y a que celui-là: c'était Maldoror! "[463] Here, a series of exoskeletons dress and protect Maldoror: first, it is the shell of the cricket, then, the vaults of the Parisian sewers, and finally the ultimate armor – the city of Paris itself. Yet, while being familiar with the city, the dandy refuses to settle and get rooted in it. Fittingly, Lautréamont's depiction of Paris corresponds to a defamiliarized vision of space perceived and manipulated by the dandy's gaze.

For the most part, the action of *Les Chants* takes place nowhere and everywhere. The background is minimal, consisting mostly of natural elements: in, on, under water, underground, in caves, on cliffs, in the sky, and in the forest. The effect is all the more jolting and unexpected when the images of Paris appear suddenly, with stark details and names of real places. Modern Paris is not unlike the ocean – another environment where Maldoror feels at ease. The banks along the Seine, the city Morgue – a pivotal site in the story of Thérèse Raquin – the Palais Royal, the shops on the rue Vivienne, the Tuileries Gardens, the Pantheon, the Carrousel Bridge

[460] Ibid., 97.
[461] Ibid., 118.
[462] Lathers, 94.
[463] Lautréamont, 231.

– make their ghostly appearances and quickly fade back into the opaque backdrop. The fight scene between Maldoror and the lamp-turned-angel has no references to space, yet it culminates in an unexpected orientation towards a real place on the map, the Seine, which only heightens the surreal atmosphere:

> . . . Je t'avertis; la première fois que tu me désigneras à la prudence de mes semblables, par l'augmentation de tes lueurs phosphorescentes, comme je n'aime pas ce phénomène d'optique, qui n'est mentionné, du reste, dans aucun livre de physique, je te prends par la peau de ta poitrine, en accrochant mes griffes aux escarres de ta nuque teigneuse, et je te jette dans la Seine.[464]

Mechanically enhanced by a mix of artificially and naturally occurring accessories, the dandy in the figure of Maldoror is dehumanized and fictionalized not only at the level of the plot but also through the prism of poetic language, "rend[u] mystérieux" by the writer's pen. Literature, like Maldoror's city, is the perfect exoskeleton for the dandy, where the lines between imagined and real are blurred.

3.2.3 Fitness, Body Building, and Fencing

As it has been already pointed out, the popular understanding of the term "dandy" has been often reduced to the image of affected and effete young men. This description, however, corresponds only to one of the types of the dandy, the British Regency era "beau." Maldoror, however, is, to a large extent, a "buck" – a much less addressed dandy incarnation. According to the 1913 edition of Webster dictionary, a "buck" is a "gay, dashing young fellow; a fop; a dandy."[465] Besides the obvious meaning of the word that perfectly describes the robust "male of

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[464] Ibid., 95.
[465] *The ARTFL Project,* Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1913 and 1828 ed., s.v. "buck." 26 August 2012. <http://machaut.uchicago.edu/?resource=Webster%27s&word=buck&use1913=on&use1828=on>.

some antlered animals," today, the word is still registered in the current version of the Oxford American Dictionary, where it is defined as "a fashionable and typically hell-raising young man."[466] Both of these definitions underline vigor, speed, and energy. Bachelard points out that in *Les Chants de Maldoror*, where others see bare sublimation and pure madness of the author, he sees instead a poem that lives its own life, manifesting a strong literary, mental and physical wholesomeness. The work, like its protagonist, possesses guts and muscles. It enjoys "du lyrisme musculaire":

> En fait, quand la conscience organique se précise chez Lautréamont, c'est toujours la conscience d'une force. L'organe ne s'y désigne pas dans un trouble, dans une douleur, dans une paresse, comme une sorte de folie morcelée qui produirait une hantise, une phobie, une crainte et qui engourdirait la vie psychologique. Il semble que l'endoscopie chez Lautréamont soit au contraire toujours prétexte à une production d'énergie confiante d'elle-même. Cette endoscopie éclaire la conscience du muscle le plus dynamisé. Alors résonne, comme la corde d'une lyre vivante, en élément du lyrisme musculaire. [467]

Getting in shape – reconfiguring the outlines of one's body – requires hard work. A sadist, Mardoror is also a masochist. Here, he teaches the process of becoming a buck to his student Mervyn:

> [C]omme tu n'es pas assez fort pour manier le poignard, fais-toi voleur, en attendant que tes membres aient grossi. Et, pour qu'ils grossissent plus vite, je te conseille de faire de la gymnastique deux fois par jour, une heure le matin, une heure le soir. De cette manière, tu pourras essayer le crime, avec un certain succès, dès l'âge de quinze ans, au lieu d'attendre jusqu'à vingt. L'amour de la gloire excuse tout, et peut-être plus tard, maître de tes semblables, leur feras-tu presque autant de bien que tu leur as fait du mal au commencement![468]

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[466] *The Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English*. 2009 ed., s.v. "buck." 26 August 2012. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/buck.aspx>.
[467] Gaston Bachelard, *Lautréamont* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1939), 81.
[468] Lautréamont, 74.

The repetitive approach to fitness is machinic: "deux fois par jour, une heure le matin, une heure le soir." Like Barbey's Hauteclaire, Maldoror professes becoming larger than life by being preciously stronger for one's age and thus surmounting humanity.

Like the body, the mind of the dandy must be extraordinary, as Dolto repeatedly points out, "On peut dire aussi qu'il n'y a pas de dandy s'il n'y a pas une grande intelligence."[469] And intellect, like the body, needs exercise and tools. Math has already been mentioned as one of the ways to sharpen Malrodor's thought. Half-seriously, half-ironically, he elevates this discipline onto a pedestal by dedicating an ode spanning several pages to it. Math is all the more fit as a dandy activity, as it is inogranically cold, sublime, chaste, and "exempte de passion." Like warfare, it is used as a tool of distinction from humanity.

> Vous [the trinity of math sciences] me donnâtes la froideur qui surgit de vos conceptions sublimes, exemptes de passion. Je m'en servis pour rejeter avec dédain les jouissances éphémères de mon court voyage et pour renvoyer de ma porte les offres sympathiques, mais trompeuses, de mes semblables. Vous me donnâtes la prudence opiniâtre qu'on déchiffre à chaque pas dans vos méthodes admirables de l'analyse, de la synthèse et de la déduction. Je m'en servis pour dérouter les ruses pernicieuses de mon ennemi mortel, pour l'attaquer, à mon tour, avec adresse et plonger, dans les viscères de l'homme, un poignard aigu qui restera à jamais enfoncé dans son corps; car, c'est une blessure dont il ne se relèvera pas.[470]

Science, in this configuration, is a symbol of physical sado-masochistic violence, as it cuts through the human body like a knife: "plonger, dans les viscères de l'homme, un poignard aigu."

Similarly to other activities, which mix creation and creativity, destruction and sacrifice – calculation or killing – engaging in sports often requires a gadget, a device, an animal, or an environment that become extensions of one's body. Fencing requires a sword, which, like in Barbey's "Bonheur dans le crime," will guarantee distance between the sparring partners.

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[469] Dolto, 43.
[470] Lautréamont, 93.

Swimming requires an ocean – a place where one can come quite close to feeling disembodied – and is the most practiced physical activity in the poem. As it has already been discussed, Maldoror's first lover is a female shark, and he is such a good swimmer that even the fish cannot keep up with him. The sea for Maldoror, like the city, is his comfort zone, and it even carries his name, "la mer maldororienne."[471] The ocean is his brother, "Tu es plus beau que la nuit. Réponds-moi, ocean, veux-tu être mon frère?"[472] The narrator, watching Maldoror swim, calls him "cet amphibie de nouvelle espèce," a hybrid creature pushing the limits of humanity ("n'ignore pas les moyens d'en élargir encore les frontières"):

> Les marsouins, qui n'ont pas volé, d'après mon opinion, la réputation de bons nageurs, pouvaient à peine suivre de loin cet amphibie de nouvelle espèce [...] Qui parle ici d'appropriation? Que l'on sache bien que l'homme, par sa nature multiple et complexe, n'ignore pas les moyens d'en élargir encore les frontières; il va dans l'eau, comme l'hippocampe; à travers les couches supérieures de l'air, comme l'orfraie; et sous la terre, comme la taupe, le cloporte et la sublimité du vermisseau."[473]

It is possible that Lautréamont implies by "cet amphibie de nouvelle espèce" not just an animal but a machine capable to push these frontiers. Amphibious crafts have already been known since the late eighteenth century,[474] and so was ballooning, pioneered by the French, with the first piloted flight accomplished in 1852 by Henri Giffard,[475] only one decade prior to the creation of Maldoror.

Just as he becomes an amphibian while swimming, Maldoror turns into another hybrid being when he rides a horse, the mythical centaur. As it has been pointed out in chapter one,

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[471] Ibid., 261.
[472] Ibid., 36.
[473] Ibid., 180.
[474] Simon Werrett, 'The Panopticon in the Garden: Samuel Bentham's Inspection House and Noble Theatricality in Eighteenth-Century Russia,' *Ab Imperio*, No. 3 (2008).
[475] Lance Day and Ian McNeil, "Giffard, Baptiste Henri Jacques (Henri)" *Biographical Dictionary of the History of Technology*, Taylor & Francis: 1996), 285-6.

Balzac in his "Traité de la vie élégante," anticipates posthumanity by picking up on the dynamics of this dandy-animal-machine symbiosis: "Pour la vie élégante, il n'y a d'être complet que le centaure, l'homme en tilbury."[476] More than a century later, Donna Haraway still sees the figure of the Centaur as a precursor of the posthuman as a monster and an outsider. Her description could equally be applied to Maldoror:

> Monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations. The Centaurs […] of ancient Greece established the limits of the centered polis of the Greek male human by their disruption of marriage and boundary pollutions of the warrior with animality[.][477]

Even though the expression "aller au grand galop" implies riding a horse at a fast pace, in the first sentence of the following example, through synecdoche, the impression is that it is Maldoror-the cyborg, capable of moving at a superhuman speed:

> Maldoror s'enfuyait au grand galop, en paraissant diriger sa course vers les murailles du cimetière. Les sabots de son coursier élevaient autour de son maître une fausse couronne de poussière épaisse. Vous autres, vous ne pouvez savoir le nom de ce cavalier; mais, moi, je le sais. Il s'approchait de plus en plus; sa figure de platine commençait à devenir perceptible, quoique le bas en fût entièrement enveloppé d'un manteau que le lecteur s'est gardé d'ôter de sa mémoire et qui ne laissait apercevoir que les yeux. Au milieu de son discours, le prêtre des religions devient subitement pâle, car son oreille reconnaît le galop irrégulier de ce célèbre cheval blanc qui n'abandonna jamais son maître.[478]

Even though it is said that Maldoror makes only his eyes visible, it is also revealed that his face is metallic – either made of, or having the color of platinum. To highlight further Maldoror's hesitation regarding perceptibility and embodiment, an article of clothing – the coat – hides the seam at which the body of the lone rider connects to that of the horse.

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[476] Honoré de Balzac, *Traité de la vie élégante* (Paris: Librairie A. Michalon, 10, rue de Vaugirard: 1908), 16.
[477] Haraway, 180.
[478] Lautréamont, 216.

3.3 COLETTE PEIGNOT, *ECRITS DE LAURE*

3.3.1 The New Centaur

Fast-forward to the early twentieth century, and the Balzacian tilbury rider, together with Lautréamont's horserider, are forced to yield to the new centaur – a fusion of a human and an automobile that Colette Peignot, together with her fictional persona, Laure, embody remarkably. They presage Jean Brun's observation regarding "la naissance d'un nouveau couple: le couple machine-homme animé du désir de devenir le concepteur d'êtres anthropo-techniques venus du futur"[479] by several decades.

The centaur stands for both Peignot's limitations and victories. Not unlike Proust, Peignot was able to lead a socialite lifestyle, sampling different professional careers and postponing work, thanks to her family inheritance. Peignot traveled extensively. For her, mobility was something she could afford as leisure, taking advantage of the latest in technological advances in transport. But she was also forced to embrace it in order to get access to the latest treatments for her tuberculosis. Her illness, both an obstacle and an impetus to displacement, forced her to be active in order to survive, while always reminding her of physical restrictions. To a great extent, her travels around Europe were motivated by the desire to improve her health. Peignot kept coming back to the Pyrenees, including the posh ski resort of Font-Romeu. She also made trips to Corsica in 1926, Bois-Cerf in 1927, Leysin, Switzerland in 1928, Pension Piburgersee in Oetz,

[479] Brun, 6.

and Austria in 1934. Even during her trip to Russia, she made it all the way to Sotchi, a Black Sea resort with sanatoriums specializing in the treatment of pulmonary ailments. Illness combined with wealth endowed her with Maldoror-like speed.

Peignot penned an actual poem entitled "Le Centaure," in which the image of the creature is unflattering in its treatment of the Roman legend of the Centaur and Pallas, the former representing human monstrosity, unbridled desires and imperfection:

> L'homme entier n'est qu'une maladie. Assemblage inconcevable de deux puissances différentes et incompatibles, Centaure monstrueux, il sent qu'il est le résultat de quelque forfait inconnu, de quelque mélange détestable qui a vicié l'homme jusque dans son essence la plus intime.[480]

Energy is wasted on contradictions, desires are self-referential and futile, "Il ne sait ce qu'il veut; il veut ce qu'il ne veut pas; il *voudrait vouloir*." Mirror reflections, identity splits and irony – all dandy signs – are pervasive, "Il voit dans lui quelque chose qui n'est pas lui et qui est plus fort que lui […] Le moment de la grande dérision est venu – une dérision telle qu'elle vide toutes choses, empoisonne, gangrène."[481] The duality of the Centaur of this poem embodies the failure to synchronize the body and the spirit, much in the same way as Villiers's Alicia embodies the difference between *être* and *paraître*. A feeling of utter disappointment in humankind is also strikingly similar to the tone of Villiers evident in his description of Alicia:

> Mais ici, je vous le dis encore, la *non-correspondance* du physique et de l'intellectuel s'accusait constamment et dans des proportions paradoxales. Sa beauté, je vous l'affirme, c'était l'Irréprochable, défiant la plus dissolvante analyse. À l'extérieur – et du front aux pieds – une sorte de Vénus Anadyomène: au-dedans, une personnalité tout à fait ÉTRANGÈRE à ce corps.[482]

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[480] Laure, "Le Centaure", *Écrits de Laure*, (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert,1979), 150.
[481] Ibid., 150-1.
[482] Villiers, 85-6.

In contrast, in another poem, "Esmeralde,"[483] Peignot depicts a different kind of centaur. It is the harmonious relationship between the protagonist – a sensuous circus performer and her horse. No clothes interrupt the contact of the bodies, suggesting fusion, transformation ("se cabre, se renverse"). The woman's hair (*chevelure*) and the horse's mane and tail (*crinière*) are all whipped into one:

Esmeralda galope nue
sur un cheval fou
Esmeralda et son corps blanc
de neige et sa longue large
chevelure rousse
qui tombe et s'emmêle à
la crinière
à la queue
de lourd crin noir
Esmeralda se couche
se cabre
se renverse

To a large extent, this transformation is reinforced and made possible by the cinematic repetitions of textures ("lourd crin", "rutilante de nudité") and sounds ("claquement de fouet"). The tension between the black of the horse's mane and the white of Esmeralda's skin, the chant-like repetition of the woman's name, and the words *chevelure*, *queue*, *crinière* are strikingly visual (The image of the woman's hair works in a similar manner in Rachilde's *L'animale*. The

[483] Laure, "Fragments", *Écrits de Laure*, (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert,1979), 142-4.

hair for the dandy, a man or a woman, is a fetishistic part and parcel of the dress and armor). Short sentences containing verbs in the present tense flash past, as if in a video sequence ("Esmeralda sauté du cheval et ne remonte plus à sa chambre – elle suit le cheval et rentre à l'écurie"). As a result, writing repeats the motion of the movie camera, adding a mechanical aspect to Esmeralda's transformation into a hybrid. The images of theatrical and circus performances ("jouer"), exercise, and sex, with their obsessively repetitive sets of motion, add to the impression of the woman resembling a mechanism:

c'est l'heure pour elle
de jouer de s'exercer
de plus en plus savamment aux exercises
dans le petit cirque attenant à sa chambre
Esmeralda est promise au plaisir
Née pour le plaisir[484]

Restless motion and travel for Peignot was intermittently offset by periods of incubation, vegetative stillness, and surrender, once she was admitted to a spa or a sanatorium. In "Carnet rouge," she juxtaposes movement and the stillness of a rooted plant. Visually, the text of the poem is full of syncopated tension and gaps, reinforcing the feeling of simultaneous flow and stagnation:

– Plus rien
et cette passion ardente
et cette affreuse inquiétude
et lui

[484] Ibid., 143.

Non = rien

douleur

pas de douleur

immobilité

le silence tout le corps

Silence Plus de douleur

de tout

en toi

Et puis un jour le MOUVEMENT

restreint

et puis

libre

Vie physique

le corps comme

la plante

la plante la

terre[485]

On days when movement is possible again, travel requires, as it has been pointed out, the "prosthetics" of technology – a means of transportation where the traveler enters into a hybrid relationship with the machine, animating it, and as a consequence, extending her own body. Jean Brun calls this symbiosis a "mammifère machiné":

> Bref, les machines sont des prothèses du moi qui impliquent le désir de l'homme de se projeter au-delà de son essence et de son existence[486] […] L'homme lui-

[485] Laure, "Carnet Rouge", *Écrits de Laure*, (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert,1979), 198.

> même est appelé à devenir un mammifère machiné car les machines deviennent de plus en plus ses membres extra-corporels, les modes de développement grâce auxquels l'organisme humain est en train de se perfectionner; un train, par exemple, est une botte de sept lieues que 500 personnes possèdent en même temps.[487]

Peignot is aware of such transformational dynamic of technology as she revels in the latest it has to offer. She especially enjoys driving – an experience, which she describes as ecstatic, or "extra-corporel." According to Barillé, behind the wheel, Laure feels careless, superhuman, invincible: "Conduire lui procure le même plaisir que skier, la même jubilation, la même légèreté, la même euphorie. Au diable la prudence!"[488] Like traveling and driving, exercise – skiing, swimming, hiking – are ways of toying with and showing disregard for death. Together with Bataille, Colette Peignot undertakes a strenuous hike to the top of the Etna volcano:

> Nous étions épuisés et, en quelque sorte, exorbités par une solitude trop étrange, trop désastreuse […] [Colette] fut prise tout à coup d'une angoisse telle que, folle, elle s'enfuit en courant droit devant elle: l'effroi et la désolation dans lesquelles nous étions l'avaient égarée.[489]

The ascent to the crater is both exhilarating and suicidal: "Traquer toujours et encore la présence du sacré. S'y ressourcer et s'y perdre, atteindre enfin cet état où rien n'existe que la jouissance de faire corps avec le néant."[490] Barillé compares the experience to an uncanny meeting with an incarnation of Acéphale – a headless monster and a mascot of the eponymous literary journal and a secret society founded by Bataille.[491]

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[486] Brun, 4.
[487] Ibid., 11.
[488] Élisabeth Barillé, *Laure: la sainte de l'abîme*, (Paris: Flammarion,1997), 91-2.
[489] Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, V.5, (Paris: Gallimard: 1979), 499.
[490] Barillé, 334.
[491] Ibid., 334.

3.3.2 Vestment and Writing as Props

Peignot's own appearance is affected by her jet-set lifestyle: from a diaphanous teenager with heavy braids, she turns into a slender, androgynous being. The photos of her reveal a gaze that is intense and straightforward. With her hair cropped into a short bob or tied back, and her understated dress, she defies the image of a delicate victim of consumption, "[…] une jeune femme brune, d'allure austère avec son tailleur sombre et ses cheveux tirés en chignon sur la nuque,[...] Sa voix, ses gestes, son regard – deux yeux noirs qui vous fixent sans faiblir."[492] Even her name undergoes a similar transformation: from the "correct" bourgeois Colette Peignot, she goes on to become a bluntly aerodynamic, monosyllabic Laure. The transformation is not irreversible. While she revolts against her family, she uses other dictatorships within intellectual, social, and artistic circles as props. Her upbringing will never let her shake completely the snobbism and the sense of entitlement instilled by her class. A brief analysis of the role of vestment in Peignot's life and writing should help make these contradictions visible.

Clothing and accessories, similarly to travel and exercise, modify the body by altering its contours and dynamic qualities or at least by giving an illusion of that change. From a very young age, Peignot uses fashion as a weapon. In one instance, while preparing for an audience with a priest, the protagonist of a memoir *Histoire d'une petite fille*, sews a feather onto her hat so as to lessen the seriousness of her uptight outfit ("chapeau de paille […] très couvent"), and as a consequence, lessen the seriousness of the encounter:

> Comment entrer? dire bonjour? Commencer les explications? Avant de partir je me mis à coudre sur un chapeau de paille vernie de noir, très couvent, une effarante plume verte dressée toute droite. Il me semblait que, au cas où je serais

[492] Ibid., 183.

> par trop paralysée, l'idée de cet objet parfaitement ridicule m'amuserait et me rassurerait au point de me rendre mes esprits.[493]

The feather – a spur-like sharp object, a prosthetic extension of the body – simultaneously points to the wit, the irony, and the violence of this gesture. Albert Camus uses the same image of a spur ("éperonnée") to denote the dandy's need to astonish: "Miroir vite obscurci, il est vrai, car la capacité d'attention de l'homme est limitée. Elle doit être réveillée sans cesse, éperonnée par la provocation. Le dandy est donc forcé d'étonner toujours."[494]

As an adult, Laure demonstrates a more discreet elegance. In his short memoir, "Vie de Laure," Georges Bataille recalls that Laure "[…] se parait à l'époque de Berlin avec recherche […] de bas noirs, parfums et robes de soie des grands couturiers."[495] The word "recherche" applied to Laure's attitude towards fashion resonates with what Baudelaire says about the distinction between artifice and nature in *Le peintre de la vie moderne*. In the chapter "Éloge du maquillage," he states that employing embellishment and makeup is a sign of spirituality. A conscious effort to be beautiful (*beauté*) and flawless is equally an effort to be good (*bonté*). An aesthete and fashion deform nature, and in Baudelaire's eyes, both the technique and the resulting deformity are sublime. Discipline and Maldororian calculation are artificial:

> Tout ce qui est beau et noble est le résultat de la raison et du calcul. Le crime, dont l'animal a puisé le goût dans le ventre de sa mère, est originellement naturel. La vertu, au contraire, est artificielle, surnaturelle […] La mode doit donc être considérée comme un symptôme du goût de l'idéal surnageant dans le cerveau humain au-dessus de tout ce que la vie naturelle y accumule de grossier, de terrestre et d'immonde, comme une déformation sublime de la nature, ou plutôt comme un essai permanent et successif de reformation de la nature.[496]

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[493] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 73.
[494] Camus, 60.
[495] Georges Bataille, "Vie de Laure", *Écrits de Laure*, (Paris: Société Nouvelle des Éditions Pauvert,1979), 281.
[496] Charles Baudelaire, "Éloge du maquillage", *Au-delà du romantisme: Écrits sur l'art*, (Paris: GF Flammarion,1998), 238-9.

Like Baudelaire, Laure finds in adornment a rich source for poetic vocabulary with its evocative textures and repetitions,

> Perles, boîtes magiques où tremblent les couleurs, doigts d'enfants crispés au couvercle, perles d'émail, colliers d'ivoire et de corail, firmament des petites filles. Perles blanches, perles noires (où était-ce?) anges rouillés, monts délavés […] Mes couronnes des prés, on les retrouve sur les visages des héros; les fleurs du pommier, au cimetière: bric-à-brac funéraire.[497]

Laure admits, however, that just because she may use fashion as a weapon, it does not mean she will never fall its victim. At such moments, her guilty conscience takes over, and her carefully constructed and imagined ascetic persona slips away: "Avec des précautions de criminelle j'entrai un jour dans un magasin de luxe où j'achetai de la poudre et du parfum."[498] In a letter to her sister Suzanne, Laure writes about her fits of sartorial consumption fever, "Alors! Il y a aussi les jours où la pensée d'une robe, d'une boîte à poudre, d'un sac de chez Hermès absorbe tout le temps et l'importance des choses et de soi-même."[499]

Symbolically, a different weapon or accessory becomes a true prosthetic extension of her body – a writer's pen. While in Lautréamont, the conflation between the narrator and Maldoror is certain in the episode of the writer's pen mentioned earlier, Colette Peignot, inseparable from her pen, does become Laure. Writing, like exercise, is therapeutic, as another way of staying fit while living with tuberculosis. Doctor Borel who treated Peignot, encouraged her to write, precisely because he believed in its cathartic benefits. Writing is described in terms of athleticism. It is a springboard (*planche*), a get-away vehicle (*se sauver*), and a proper breathing technique ("L'important est que "ça sorte."): "C'est votre planche de salut, lui a-t-il assuré. L'écriture peut vous sauver […] Votre douleur vient de là. De ce silence. Brisez-le. Écrivez ce

[497] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille", 63.
[498] Laure, Ibid., 73.
[499] Laure, "Correspondance", 208.

que vos lèvres vous refusent. Et qu'importe l'élan qui vous y pousse. Rage, plaisir, dépit… L'important est que "ça sorte."[500] Coincidentally, writing about movement becomes an exercise in its own right:

> Colette entend se situer aux antipodes de la phtisique romantique, vestale de chromo soumise à son destin; "On ne 's'abandonne' pas au destin. On le gouverne soi-même, on le fait", a-t-elle écrit à Bernier peu de temps avant sa tentative de suicide. Loin de l'alanguir dans une féminité exacerbée jusqu'à la caricature, la maladie la pousse au contraire à une allégresse héroïque et rageuse dont certains poèmes du *Sacré* garderont l'empreinte[501]:
>
> La vie répond – ce n'est pas vain
>
> on peut agir
>
> contre – pour
>
> La vie exige
>
> Le mouvement
>
> La vie c'est le cours du sang
>
> le sang ne s'arrête pas de courir dans les
>
> veines
>
> je ne peux pas m'arrêter de vivre[502]

Every extra challenge and obstacle presented to Peignot by her initial physical fragility makes her transformation into Laure not just "héroïque" but superheroic.

3.3.3 Medicine, Monsters, and Mirrors

Medical procedures and masochistic interventions, together with writing and travel,

[500] Barillé, 273.
[501] Ibid., 128.
[502] Laure, "Sacré," 95.

become a reality of Peignot's existence. While still a teenager, she practices self-mutilation, mostly to copy the behavior of her role model, the younger but already famous philosopher and mystic Simone Weil. As she is trying to forget her body, the aspiring heroine replaces it with the image of a robotic core insensitive to physical pain:

> Ainsi sublimée, la souffrance devient héroïque […] et presque désirable […] À l'âge de dix-huit ans, alors qu'elle était en classe de philosophie au lycée Henri-IV, Simone Weil avait appliqué le tison d'une cigarette allumée sur sa main gauche. La plaie avait mis des mois à cicatriser […] Cette épreuve, Colette Peignot se l'est imposée elle aussi. Plus d'une fois et en pressant la cigarette toujours plus fort, plus longtemps sur sa peau […] N'être rien, afin d'être advantage […] Ne parlons pas de masochisme. Il s'agit de bien autre chose. Il s'agit d'orgueil et d'absolu. L'affirmation radicale du défi d'être soi […][503]

Later in life, during regular stays at spas and sanatoriums, her body was subjected to treatments, checkups, manipulations, and adjustments, some more radical than others. It was common to prescribe spending time at higher elevations, as it was believed that it would result in vigorous centrifugal blood flow.[504] The body image resulting from this view ends up resembling that of a mechanism in need of constant repair or a system reboot. As far as more invasive measures were concerned, Peignot underwent a therapy called diathermia requiring the use of "l'énergie électrique pour produire des effets thermiques dans l'organisme."[505] In 1938, the year of Peignot's death, she was admitted to a hospital for surgery in order to treat pneumothorax – a tuberculosis-related complication often leading to respiratory failure.[506] An oxygen flow is delivered into the lungs through a chest tube, as if in an attempt to breathe life into a lifeless doll. Once again, this image is reminiscent of Villiers's breathing life into his android Hadaly.

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[503] Barillé, 222.
[504] Ibid., 128.
[505] Ibid., 133.
[506] Ibid., 344.

Writing, travel, and illness made Peignot highly aware, yet unafraid, of mortality. Inventing, living, and seeing herself in the mirror reflection of the self-invented character "Laure" were ways of challenging death and becoming inhuman by assuming an artificial life. Laure is not unlike Hadaly who comes to life as a "new and improved" version of the sublime monster Alicia Clary. Laure, like Hadaly, is an undead. Despite the differences between Alicia Clary and Hadaly being the main driving force of the narrative, their relationship is symbiotic and complementary, just like the relationship between Peignot and Laure. Without Colette Peignot, there is no Laure. Without Laure, Peignot would only be remembered as an enigmatic socialite.

Gazing into a mirror, looking into someone's eyes, thrusting off, escaping, acting – are all recurring images in Laure's writing. What they all have in common is that they speak strongly of her philosophy and aesthetics of opposition, similarly to the dandy of Albert Camus's *L'Homme révolté.* In the chapter "La révolte des dandys," he highlights this visceral need for interpersonal ties, props, and foils:

> Le dandy est par fonction un oppositionnel. Il ne se maintient que dans le défi. La créature, jusque-là, recevait sa cohérence du créateur. À partir du moment où elle consacre sa rupture avec lui, là voilà livrée aux instants, aux jours qui passent, à la sensibilité dispersée. Il faut donc qu'il se reprenne en main. Le dandy se ressemble, se forge une unité, par la force même du refus. Dissipé en tant que personne privée de règle, il sera cohérent en tant que personnage. Mais un personnage suppose un public; le dandy ne peut se poser qu'en s'opposant. Il ne peut s'assurer de son existence qu'en la retrouvant dans le visage des autres. Les autres sont le miroir […] Il joue sa vie, faute de pouvoir la vivre.[507]

The distinction between acting and living is echoed in the difference between *être* and *paraître*. The latter – the dandy's fate and choice – always implies a certain analytical and

[507] Camus, 59-60.

emotional distance of an actor and the character played. Theater and acting are strong leitmotifs in Laure's writings:

> Archange ou putain
>
> je veux bien
>
> Tous les rôles
>
> me sont pretés[508]

The theatrical transformation in the following excerpt is similarly representative of the dandy's superhuman, Maldoror or android-like abilities to take new shapes, change colors, and perform disappearance acts:

> Un saule pleureur refermait sur moi ses feuilles lisses, une grotte m'acceuillait dans sa fraîcheur humide avec un jeune chat aveugle caché dans ma robe et glissant sur ma poitrine. J'allais disparaître et m'évanouir entre le mur et le lierre. Là, je devenais araignée, faucheux, millepattes, hérisson, tout ce qu'on veut et peut-être même bête à bon Dieu.[509]

In the second text of the compilation *Le Sacré*, Laure qualifies her extraordinary abilities and hypersensitivity as monstrous. The mirror, once again, is the mechanism that locates, shapes, and realizes that aberration: "Je me plaçais de manière à interposer seulement ma tête entre les deux glaces et je voyais des têtes *innombrables."*[510] Reality is a life-like construction, an optical illusion combining multiplied reflections, just like Villiers's Hadaly is an evasive amalgam of ideal traits of many women.

As stated above, Laure also has a bit of Maldoror in her. In the opening poem of *Le Sacré* collection, the narrator is as a female Maldoror, with a superhero ability to fly and the longing for kindred spirits ("mendiante d'amitié"):

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[508] Laure, "Le Sacré," 94.
[509] Laure, "Histoire d'une petite fille," 63.
[510] Ibid., 87.

Je chevauchais les nuages

avec des airs de folle échevelée

ou de mendiante d'amitié.

Me sentant quelque peu monstre,

je ne reconnaissais plus les humains

que pourtant j'aimais bien.

One me vit atterrir

au ciel de Diorama

où glacée jusqu'aux os

je me pétrifiai lentement

jusqu'à devenir

un parfait accessoire de décor.[511]

Both cynical and idealist, subtly invisible ("devenir un parfait accessoire de décor") and provocative, awkward ("Me sentant quelque peu monstre") and statuesquely inorganic ("glacée jusqu'aux os je me pétrifiai lentement"), Laure is an uneven and contradictory creature "chevauch[ant]e," not unlike Proust's project *A la recherche du temps perdu* and its dandy character Odette de Crécy – one of the main subjects of the next chapter.

Antoine Compagnon, in *Proust entre deux siècles,* describes Proust's novel as a limping monster having "la symétrie boiteuse ou défectueuse, du déséquilibre et de la disposition, du faux pas [.]"[512] By straddling the line between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and being at once démodé and hypermodern, the novel, the author, and Odette – one of the oldest original characters, who survives the entire chronological arch of the project – produce numerous

[511] Laure, "Le Sacré," 83-4.
[512] Antoine Compagnon, *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), 13.

tensions, all relevant to my idea of the dandy. In this respect, Proust is the logical choice for the final chapter of my study thanks to the historical span of the novel's narrative content and long composition, which roughly correspond to the chronological span of my entire project. This overlap will allow me to flesh out and fully express a synthetic image of the dandy who miraculously combines the elements already methodologically exposed in chapters one and two.

4.0 THE SYNTHETIC DANDY: ODETTE AND THE NEW GENERATION

Antoine Compagnon in *Proust entre deux siècles* places *À la recherche du Temps perdu* (1913-27),[513] as the title of his book suggests, between two centuries, calling it the "dernier grand roman organique du XIX^{e} siècle et premier grand roman expérimental du XX^{e} siècle."[514] No other character makes the "between two centuries" tension more poignant and visible than Odette de Crécy. While her own autopoeietic energy challenges Compagnon's equation between her lover and husband Charles Swann and Proust as artists, the suggestion that Odette is a metaphor for the novel is valid and crucial. Both Odette and *La Recherche* are not the ideal works of art envisioned in *Le Temps retrouvé* but strange, monstrous in their scope, full of contradictions, and fascinating for those very reasons:

> Si le narrateur était fidèle à la doctrine qu'il élabore dans *Le Temps retrouvé*, il devrait s'écrier comme Swann: "Dire que j'ai gâché des années de ma vie pour un livre qui n'était pas mon genre." Mais le narrateur n'aurait jamais écrit le livre conforme au modèle idéal tracé dans *Le Temps retrouvé*, comme Swann n'aurait jamais aimé une femme qui eût été son genre.[515]

Even though the first volume is published in 1913, the character of Odette is already born in 1905-6. Considering the history and lifespan of the character covering and even preceding the events of the novel, Odette, unlike any other dandy character in this study, witnesses and affects several cultural, historical, and aesthetic eras. Odette's expansive presence, resilience and

[513] *La Recherche* from now on within the text, RTP in footnotes. I use the 1987-89 *Pléiade* edition annotated by Jean-Yves Tadié.
[514] Compagnon, 49-50.
[515] Ibid., 302.

longevity help her become an amalgamation not only for all the Proustian dandies but also for practically all the figures studied in chapters one and two, which roughly cover the same period. Due to the fact that the last volume was published in 1927, and thanks to the work's stylistic and narrative innovations, the novel is ahead of its time, encompassing the era of the youngest writer in this dissertation, Collete Peignot, who died in 1938. And Odette is the one ushering in the youngest generation of the main Proustian dandy characters – the hero's lover Albertine, whose invention, according to Compagnon, "débarrasse le roman de ses personnages fin de siècle,"[516] Gilberte, the "clone" of her mother, "le dandy femelle" Andrée, Morel (one of the latest character additions to the novel in 1917-22),[517] and ultimately, Mlle de Saint-Loup (most likely Peignot's coeval) – to the next chronological step, thus ensuring Odette's own survival. A kindred spirit resonating and conspiring with Albertine and Andrée, Morel, whose androgyny is not connected to decadent femininity but is rather indicative of a new interpretation of the dandy "buck" (the valiant soldier and the virile womanizer), marks an important shift away from decadence and toward modernity, further helping the dandy in this study to migrate to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries:

> Or, Albertine une fois inventée [,..] Le couple décadent se retire; un autre couple s'installe dans ce roman tout rempli de symétries: Albertine et Morel, c'ést-à-dire Sodome et Gomorrhe […] Le musicien, qui était décrit comme une femme dans le brouillon de 1911 de la rencontre, un saint Georges, une "petite tante déguisée en soldat", devient tout différent cette fois : "donner à ce jeune homme un bel air si mâle qu'il soit insoupçonnable", ajoute Proust dans la marge. Albertine et Morel, à la place de saint Georges et de la Gorgone, les deux côtés vivement contrastés de l'androgyne décadent, seront, eux, impénétrables: voilà comment Proust à la fois se rattache au XIX^{e} siècle et s'en détache [.][518]

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[516] Ibid., 20.
[517] Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard Folio Classique, 1996), 800.
[518] Compagnon, 126-7.

But foremost, Morel and other younger dandies, owe their introduction to the plot and modernity to Odette. Regretfully, due to a misencounter between Proust and his critics regarding this character, not only has she not been recognized as a dandy, there was no vocabulary to describe her as such, even though by the time Proust publishes his first work, *Les plaisirs and les jours* in 1896, the figure of the historical and literary dandy is already fully fleshed out. His first attempts at *La Recherche, Jean Senteuil* (1895) and *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (1908), already contain sketches of dandies to be used in *La recherche,* but it is not until 1911 that he finds a formula for the project. This is why, in this chapter, I would like to shift focus away from such well-studied dandy characters as Baron de Charlus[519] and Swann, who are fully grounded in the nineteenth century, and recenter the discussion around the figures of Odette and the new, most modern generation of dandies. Ultimately, the shift in power dynamics will help me reevaluate and comment on the tensions inherent in the processes of artistic creation and aesthetic self-creation. With the exception of Albertine and the hero, very little or no work has been done on the younger characters in the novel. I intend to fill this critical gap through the lens of the dandy, by continuing to question the humanity of these characters through fantastical, organic, and mechanical aspects, using methodologies and concepts outlined in the two previous chapters.

[519] Simone François, *Le Dandysme de Marcel Proust: De Brummell au Baron de Charlus* (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1956).

4.1 ODETTE

4.1.1 La Dame en Rose, Rose Stérilisée

In literary works, dehumanization is registered in large part through comparison, metaphor, and analogy – also Proustian tropes of choice, which draw from an array of arts and sciences in order to illustrate his vision. Through insistent yet subtle repetition, the literal part of these devices take on a life of their own, as Allan H. Pasco states in his book *The Color-Keys to A la recherché du temps perdu*. Pasco quotes Proust himself: "In Giotto's work, as in *A la recherche*, 'le symbole tient tant de place et est représenté comme si réel' that one pays little or no attention to the symbolic meaning. But that only affirms the 'reality' of the symbol."[520] As the title of Luz Aurora Pimentel's book, *Metaphoric Narration: Paranarrative Dimensions in A la recherche du temps perdu*, suggests, Proust's writing favors the metaphor in its materiality, texture, and affect, rather than the metonymy and causality usually relied upon in narrative organization of a novel.[521] In addition to visual arts, music, and literature,[522] Proust borrows his metaphors from material disciplines and spheres, such as medicine, natural sciences, architecture, fashion, gastronomy, and technology. The dandy's interest in the material, the affective, the superficial, and the literal thus becomes relevant when discussing Proust's dandy and his vision of artistic creation, which relies on involuntary memory triggered by material evidence.

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[520] Allan H. Pasco *The Color-Keys to '*A la recherché du temps perdu', Geneva: Libraire Droz, 1976), 36.
[521] Luz Aurora Pimentel, *Metaphoric Narration: Paranarrative Dimensions in* A la recherche du temps perdu (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
[522] "In the creation of Proust's cosmology, the ability to perceive analogies is critical. He who cannot fathom restaurant tables as planetary orbs cannot expect to look upon Vermeer's View of Delft and discover the eternal." Eric Karpeles, *Paintings in Proust: A Visual Companion to* In Search of Lost Time, (London: Thames&Hudson Ltd, 2008), 24.

Like other literary dandies (Villiers's Alicia in particular), while collapsing the distinction between surface and interiority, Odette simultaneously flattens the difference between the literal and the figurative parts of the metaphors meant to elucidate her features. As a result, the literal, material part becomes just as important as the deep, figurative one. In the novel, Odette *is* an actual flower, an animal, a queen, an automaton, and a centaur. Odette does not always need to be likened to a flower, as she is *and functions like* an actual flower. Anne Favrichon points out that the use of the metaphor, and not of a simile, in describing her, helps us to see Odette as such, "L'art d'Odette, c'est celui d'éviter les comparaisons, de ne pas rassembler à, mais d'être, d'annuler la distance 'd'imitation' qui pourrait se creuser entre elle et les fleurs de sa robe, et de devenir cette fleur charmante."[523] But first of all, her opacity and sex drive, both worthy of Zola's "mangeuse d'hommes" Nana[524] or Rachilde's Laure, are articulated through inanimate language. Daniel Karlin in *Proust's English* explores the floral vein in the relationship between Odette and Swann by liking the former to a lurid, parasitic orchid, and the latter to an enthusiastic grower:

> With cattleyas she carries in her hand, and wears in her hair, and in her bosom (the point of entry for Swann's caresses), she is like an orchid herself, as exotic, as gorgeous, as expensive, and Swann her cultivator, her grower, her 'orchidophile'. And in his concern for the Odette-orchid, his dusting away of the

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[523] Anne Favrichon, *Toilettes et silhouettes féminines chez Marcel Proust* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1987),109.

[524] Roland Barthes writes: "Nana's raw, mechanical sexual drive is stronger than men around her: A bad actress but a good courtesan, Nana gathers around her a whole society of men: bankers, journalists, officers, aristocrats, high officials in Napoleon III's government. She lives sumptuously off them, squanders fortunes, drives some into ruin, others to stealing, and those that are left to suicide […] in the very movement that plunges them into misfortune, they acquire a more acute awareness of their humanity, they discover their own worth […] Now, none of this applies to Nana: she has no tragic power, because she has no power of understanding; she remains to the very end an instrument, an explosive or corrosive mechanism […] mercilessly placed in the society of the Second Empire, fulfilling her task of destruction without any possible redemption [...] Nana thus rises above her human nature, deified in an already conceptualized essence, the work of art." Quoted in David Baguely, ed., "The Man-Eater" *Critical Essays on Emile Zola.* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co, 1986), 117.

> pollen, he is like a collector carefully pollinating and fertilizing his precious specimen.[525]

Odette's entire life in the narrator's memory is framed by two incidents, in which Odette is associated with a rose. First, she is the ethereal *la dame en rose* (in French, this expression may signify "the lady as a rose," in addition to "the lady in pink") of the memorable meeting at uncle Adolphe's. Later, during the *Bal des têtes*, she is *une rose stérilisée*, a deceitful artificial flower. Passively waiting for the pollination that is the main survival and reproductive strategy for plants, at the very beginning of their relation, while trying to seduce Swann, Odette pretends she has plenty of time for him by exclaiming "Moi, je n'ai jamais rien à faire!"[526] Later, Swann is enraged by Odette's tactics, since in his jealous mind the work of social "pollination" done by Odette is sterile as it happens entirely in the world of social signs, which, according to Deleuze, are empty.[527] Emptiness, however, does not equate sterility.

In fact, even looking back, Swann's imagination paints Odette as a malicious, decadent-era "kept" woman-flower, a Gustave Moreau creature studded with a mix ("chatoyant amalgame") of artifice –"des joyaux précieux" –and stylized nature – "de[s] fleurs vénéneuses":

> Un jour que des réflexions de ce genre le ramenaient encore au souvenir du temps où on lui avait parlé d'Odette comme d'une femme entretenue, et où une fois de plus il s'amusait à opposer cette personnification étrange: la femme entretenue – chatoyant amalgame d'éléments inconnus et diaboliques, serti, comme une apparition de Gustave Moreau, de fleurs vénéneuses entrelacées à des joyaux précieux.[528]

Swann's jealousy escalates when a friend tells him that he saw Odette on the street alone, probably in between her visits. The inability to decipher Odette makes Swann accuse her of shallowness, bad taste, and vulgarity, similarly to Lord Ewald's accusations against Alicia and

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[525] Daniel Karlin, *Proust's English* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2005), 88.
[526] RTP, I, 196.
[527] Gilles Deleuzes, *Proust et les signes* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), 21.
[528] RTP, I: 263.

Edison's against Evelyn Habal in Villiers. The couple's secret code for sex – "faire cattleya" [529] – stemming from Swann's intimate proposition to arrange an orchid on Odette's corset, is now in his eyes made public and thus repulsive. Swann paints her in vulgar tones; the cut violets in her corset[530] and especially her jacket, "une visite garnie de skunks,"[531] – seem indecent. Confused by Odette's messages, like Laurent towards the end of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, Swann goes from attraction to paranoïa.

But Odette is not concerned with exercising good taste, as she creates her own, whether it is accepted by those around her or not. A new, carefully created plant, she does not have to belong to an existing species, as she is her own hybrid, mutation ("d'une espèce différente", "d'une race inconnue"):

> Tout d'un coup, sur le sable de l'allée, tardive, alentie et luxuriante comme la plus belle fleur et qui ne s'ouvrirait qu'à midi, Mme Swann apparaissait, épanouissant autour d'elle une toilette toujours différente mais que je me rappelle surtout mauve; puis elle hissait et déployait sur un long pédoncule, au moment de sa plus complète irradiation, le pavillon de soie d'une large ombrelle de la même nuance que l'effeuillaison des pétales de sa robe. […] [F]rêle, sans crainte, dans la nudité de ses tendres couleurs, comme l'apparition d'un être d'une espèce différente, d'une race inconnue, et d'une puissance presque guerrière, grâce à quoi elle compensait à elle seule sa multiple escorte.[532]

As several passages indicate, one of Odette's signature hues is mauve, a name implying the name of a flower, "mallow," but that, as a fabric dye, is also associated with a synthetic process.

Mauve was achieved in 1856 by a British chemist Sir Willaim Henry Perkin. As Simon Garfield points out, "It is ironic that [...] Perkin and Sons would adopt the French name of mauve for their own shade [...] Partly, William Perking liked the name mauve because of its

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[529] Ibid., 231.
[530] Ibid., 237.
[531] Ibid., 236.
[532] RTP, I, 625.

connotations with Parisian haute couture."[533] Odette's penchant for mauve, just like her Franglais, aside from highlighting the artifice, symbolizes the tension between two epicenters of historic dandyism, the Regency-era England, and later on, France.[534] Furthermore, as Compagnon discusses André Gide's initial refusal to publish *La Recherche*, he describes Gide's view of Proust's writing as being stuck in decadent clichés, one of them being the color mauve:

> *A la recherche du temps perdu* contient tout un côté fin de siècle, un bric-à-brac décadent – Wagner, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Boticelli et les préraphaélites, la cathédrale, l'androgyne, la correspondence des arts, les aubépines, le mauve, etc. –, une collection de lieux communs pour petits messieurs.[535]

But, as Compagnon's own project shows, the Proustian text pledges no allegiance to any specific aesthetic era. Similarly, Odette's love of mauve rather indicates a host of contradictions, such as her ability to blur the lines between nature and artifice, which fascinate not only Swann, but the young hero himself. For him, Odette's appearance is more natural than nature itself:

> D'autant plus que déjà persuadé qu'en vertu de la liturgie et des rites dans lesquels Mme Swann était profondément versée, sa toilette était unie à la saison et à l'heure par un lien nécessaire, unique, les fleurs de son flexible chapeau de paille, les petits rubans de sa robe me semblaient naître du mois de mai plus naturellement encore que les fleures des jardins et des bois; et pour connaître le trouble nouveau de la saison, je ne levais pas les yeux plus haut que son ombrelle, ouverte et tendue comme un autre ciel plus proche, clément, mobile et bleu.[536]

The blue of Odette's umbrella, not the color of the sky, is the barometer of the weather and beauty. But when it comes to creativity, nature is not Odette's only competitor, as the next section will illustrate.

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[533] Simon Garfield, *Mauve: How One Man Invented a Color that Changed the World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 63.
[534] Jessica L. Feldman points out the connection in an introduction to her book *Gender on the Divide : The Dandy in Modernist Literature* : According to this historical model, dandyism, originally an English phenomenon, crossed the channel to France when exiled French aristocrats, schooled in the ways of London and Paris, each group of dandies looking across the channel for the very essence of 'bon ton' (for the English dandy) or 'le high life' (for the French *fashionable*) (1-2).
[535] Compagnon, 32.
[536] RTP, I, 626.

4.1.2 The Swann/Odette Rivalry

There are several couples in *La Recherche* with power dynamics similar to Villiers' *L'Ève future* "creator-creature" relationship, with the dandy being on either side of it. The case of Swann and Odette, as well as the couple formed by the hero and Albertine, are the two most remarkable examples, where the "creature" obeys the "creator" to a certain degree but eventually takes over the initiative or escapes. The similarity with *L'Ève future* continues in that at first, Swann, like Edison, is convinced that he is the sole creator of Odette as a society woman. The mechanical processes and techniques of projection, amalgamation, and crystallization are the words used to describe the process. In Swann's situation, it happens by way of art and music:

> De sorte que ces parties de l'âme de Swann où la petite phrase avait effacé le souci des intérêts matériels, les considérations humaines et valables pour tous, elle les avait laissées vacantes et en blanc, et il était libre d'y inscrire le nom d'Odette. Puis à ce que l'affection d'Odette pouvait ajouter, amalgamer son essence mystérieuse.[537]

What the blind-sided lover cannot understand is that, when he meets Odette, she is already not quite human anymore. Only as Odette becomes Madame Swann and starts paying social visits, does Swann begin to fear that by becoming a socialite she will slip out of his control back into a treacherous *demi-mondaine*. Earlier, Swann thinks he can transform an ideal into a 'real woman', a "femme vivante", "et adaptant ce qu'il trouvait beau jusque-là d'une façon esthétique à l'idée d'une femme vivante, il le transformait en mérites physiques qu'il pourrait posséder."[538] However, Swann is incapable of humanizing Odette. Further proving Swann's incapacity as an artist facing Odette's autopoietic resistance, he counts on others, such as Dr. Cottard's wife in the following example, to render her "plus humaine":

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[537] Ibid., 233.
[538] Ibid., 221.

> Pour faire concurrence aux sentiments maladifs que Swann avait pour Odette, Mme Cottard, meilleur thérapeute que n'eût été son mari, avait greffé à côté d'eux d'autres sentiments, normaux ceux-là, de gratitude, d'amitié des sentiments qui dans l'esprit de Swann rendraient Odette plus humaine.[539]

The power dynamics within the couple are further complicated by the fact that their story is told by an unreliable narrator – either omnipresent, as in *Un amour de Swann,* which supposedly took place before the protagonist was born, or later, as an older hero himself. While in the former case, the role of the narrator is to tell the story of the couple, in the latter case, another role – to become another potential creator of Odette – is added. Here, the voice of the narrator, comparably to Swann, is trying to consolidate the image of Odette:

> Si je ne compris pas la Sonate je fus ravi d'entendre jouer Mme Swann. Son toucher me paraissait, comme son peignoir, comme le parfum de son escalier, comme ses manteaux, comme ses chrysanthèmes, faire partie d'un tout individuel et mystérieux, dans un monde infiniment supérieur à celui où la raison peut analyser le talent.[540]

Odette's status as the dandy's creature remains deeply problematic because she herself is a dandy. While Odette is still searching for her signature style, her appearance is a series of disjointed body parts. A doll-like awkwardness and excess result from these attempts to put herself together:

> [E]t quant à son corps qui était admirablement fait, il était difficile d'en apercevoir la continuité (à cause des modes de l'époque et quoiqu'elle fût une des femmes de Paris qui s'habillaient le mieux), tant le corsage, s'avançant en saillie comme sur un ventre imaginaire et finissant brusquement en pointe pendant que par en dessous commençait à s'enfiler le ballon des doubles jupes, donnait à la femme l'air d'être composée de pièces différentes mal emmanchées les unes dans les autres; tant les ruchés, les volants, le gilet suivaient en tout indépendance, selon la fantaisie de leur dessin ou la consistance de leur étoffe, la ligne qui les conduisait aux nœuds, aux bouillons de dentelle, aux effilés de jais perpendiculaires, ou qui les dirigeait le long du busc, mais ne s'attachaient

[539] RTP, I, 370.
[540] Ibid., 103.

> nullement à l'être vivant, qui selon l'architecture de ces fanfreluches se rapprochait ou s'écartait trop de la sienne, s'y trouvait engoncé ou perdu.[541]

At first, it might seem that Swann is the one who creates, or at least, refines Odette. However, while he does have the potential and sensibility of an artist, his musings never turn into actual work of art:

> [I]l se disait qu'il était raisonnable de donner beaucoup de son temps à un chef-d'œuvre inestimable, coulé pour une fois dans une matière différente et particulièrement savoureuse, en un exemplaire rarissime qu'il contemplait tantôt avec l'humilité, la spiritualité et le désintéressement d'un artiste, tantôt avec l'orgueil, l'égoïsme et la sensualité d'un collectionneur.[542]

Like Huysmans's Des Esseintes – the decadent dandy of *À rebours* – Swann is a dreamer, a collector, an amateur. A soft-spoken art critic, he is never a true creator. As a consequence, quite contrary to Cynthia J. Gamble's argument, Swann does not "construct an artificial Odette"[543] because she has already constructed herself before the two meet. Furthermore, despite Anna Favrichon's statement below, Swann is unable to redeem himself with Odette. He can only attempt to grasp her through art by liking her to Botticcelli's Zephora:

> Il faut à Swann toute l'intelligence de l'amour pour négliger la transparence des signes et aller recomposer Odette selon 'un écheveau de lignes subtiles et belles' capables de tisser d'elle un portrait 'en lequel son type devenait intelligible et clair.' Cette compréhension d'elle-même, Odette ne l'atteindra à son tour qu'en devenant Mme Swann.[544]

Swann's attempts at remaking Odette fail when faced with her obstinacy: "Swann possédait une merveilleuse écharpe orientale, bleue et rose, qu'il avait achetée parce que c'était exactement celle de la Vierge du *Magnificat*. Mais Mme Swann ne voulait pas la porter."[545] Quite the

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[541] Ibid., 194.
[542] Ibid., 221.
[543] Cynthia J. Gamble, "Zipporah: A Ruskinian Enigma Appropriated by Marcel Proust" *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Marcel Proust* Ed. Harold Bloom Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004) 72.
[544] Favrichon, 107.
[545] RTP, I, 607.

contrary, Swann himself falls under the spell of Odette and "la petite phrase de Vinteuil", the little musical *morceau* symbolizing their union. As a result, he becomes a fantastical creature:

> Grand repos, mystérieuse rénovation pour Swann […] de se sentir transformé en une créature étrangère à l'humanité, aveugle, dépourvue de facultés logiques, presque une fantastique licorne, une créature chimérique ne percevant le monde que par l'ouïe.[546]

Moreover, Odette starts evaluating his own style:

> Comme la vue de Swann était un peu basse, il dut se résigner à se servir de lunettes pour travailler chez lui, et à adopter, pour aller dans le monde, le monocle qui le défigurait moins. La première fois qu'elle lui en vit un dans l'œil, elle ne put contenir sa joie: 'Je trouve que pour un homme, il n'y a pas à dire, ça a beaucoup de chic! Comme tu es bien ainsi! Tu as l'air d'un vrai gentleman. Il ne te manque qu'un titre!'[547]

As Richard W. Saunders puts it in *Metamorphoses of the Proustian Body*: "Eventually Pygmalion will confront a frightening and autonomous creature."[548]As Odette insists on being recognized as her own engineer, all that Swann and the narrator can do is step back and observe her spectacular transformations:

> Sauf à ces moments d'involontaire fléchissement où Swann essayait de retrouver la mélancholique cadence botticellienne, le corps d'Odette était maintenant découpé en une seule silhouette, cernée tout entière par une 'ligne' qui, pour suivre le contour de la femme, avait abandonné les chemins accidents, les réentrants et les sortants factices, les lacis, l'éparpillement composite des modes d'autrefois, mais qui aussi, là où c'était l'anatomie qui se trompait en faisant des détours inutiles en deçà ou au-delà du tracé idéal, savait rectifier d'un trait hardi les écarts de la nature, suppléer, pour toute une partie du parcours, aux défaillances aussi bien de la chair que des étoffes. Les coussins, le 'strapontin' de l'affreuse 'tournure' avaient disparu ainsi que ces corsages à basques qui, dépassant la jupe et raidis par des baleines avaient ajouté si longtemps à Odette un ventre postiche et lui avaient donné l'air d'être composée de pieces disparates qu'aucune individualité ne reliait. La verticale des 'effilés' et la courbe des ruches avaient cédé la place à l'inflexion d'un corps qui faisait palpiter la soie comme la sirène bat l'onde et donnait à la percaline une expression humaine, maintenant

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[546] Ibid., 233-4.
[547] Ibid., 242.
[548] Richard W. Saunders, *Metamorphoses of the Proustian Body*: *A Study of Bodily Signs in* A la recherche du temps perdu (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 174.

> qu'il s'était dégagé, comme une forme organisée et vivante, du long chaos et de l'enveloppement nébuleux des modes détrônées.[549]

Her body, inseparable from her dress ("[les] défaillances aussi bien de la chair que des étoffes"), is no longer subject to haphazard nipping and tucking here and there. Now, everything – flesh and fabric – is cut in one confident motion. Cumbersome decorative details give way to a simpler, more transparent, breathable, and mobile style. Similarly to Albertine emerging later on from the Balbec water horizon, Odette emerges from a sea-like amorphous flux of fabric ("l'éparpillement composite des modes d'autrefois", "[l]es coussins, le 'strapontin', "les corsages"). The mention of the marine world, "baleine" or the whalebone, refers to a component that gives shape to one of the most "unnatural" and body-altering articles of clothing of the period, the corset. Furthermore, even as Odette becomes less divided and more put-together, she does not become more human. In fact, the word "humaine" is used to describe the simplicity and readability of her underskirt ("percaline"), while Odette is further dehumanized through comparison to a mythical creature, half-human, half-fish – the mermaid.

Certainly, at first, Odette is not as unified, and she does rely on others to contribute to her new "forme organisée," similarly to Villiers's Hadaly. It takes years of discipline and an entire army of professionals and advisors to help her construct and maintain the look:

> Le portrait était antérieur au moment où Odette disciplinant ses traits avait fait de son visage et de sa taille cette création dont, à travers les années, ses coiffeurs, ses couturiers, elle-même – dans sa façon de se tenir, de parler, de sourire, de poser ses mains, ses regards, de penser – devaient respecter les grandes lignes.[550]

In response to Odette's metamorphoses, other characters, such as the princess d'Épinoy, constantly readjust their view of her, and thus unknowingly help reposition Odette in society. When the princess realizes that Odette's salon attracts the members of the aristocratic and

[549] Ibid., 607-8.
[550] RTP, II, 216.

fashionable Faubourg Saint Germain who are out of her own reach, she swiftly "disincarnates" Odette from the ranks of those "qu'on ne reçoit pas" and "reincarnates" her "en une femme élégante."[551]

Yet, the most substantial outside contribution to Odette's becomings does not come from high society, but from an artist. Only true art can reconfigure her at any moment at the deepest level ("de dissocier les combinaisons d'atomes"). The painter Elstir, as one of the collective artist figures in the novel, thus competes with Swann and the narrator for the title of Odette's creator who anticipates all the relevant tensions:

> Mais d'ailleurs le portrait eût-il été, non pas antérieur, comme la photographie préférée de Swann, à la systématisation des traits d'Odette en un type nouveau, majestueux et charmant, mais postérieur, qu'il eût suffi de la vision d'Elstir pour désorganiser ce type. Le génie artistique agit à la façon de ces températures extrêmement élevées qui ont le pouvoir de dissocier les combinaisons d'atomes et de grouper ceux-ci suivant un ordre absolument contraire, répondant à un autre type. Toute cette harmonie factice que la femme a imposée à ses traits et dont chaque jour avant de sortir elle surveille la persistance dans sa glace, chargeant l'inclinaison du chapeau, le lissage des cheveux, l'engouement du regard, d'en assurer la continuité, cette harmonie, le coup d'œil du grand peintre la détruit en une seconde, et à sa place il fait un regroupement des traits de la femme, de manière à donner satisfaction à un certain idéal féminin et pictural qu'il porte en lui.[552]

If Elstir intervenes in Odette's self-creation process, the hero does the same for Albertine both aesthetically, romantically, and artistically.

Elstir, Odette, the hero, and other creators in the novel, engage in a complex exchange of information and knowledge similar to what in posthuman theory is called "distributed cognition" or "reflective epistemology." In *How We Became Posthuman*, Katherine Hayles describes these kinds of knowledge as different from an individual will where

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[551] RTP, III, 142.
[552] RTP, II, 216.

> the connection between the assumptions undergirding the liberal humanist subject and the ethical position that humans, not machines, must be in control. Such an argument assumes the vision of the human in which conscious agency is the essence of human identity. Sacrifice this, and we humans are hopelessly compromised, contaminated with mechanic alienness in the very heart of our humanity […] In the posthuman view, by contrast, conscious agency has never been 'in control' [,] emergence replaces teleology; reflexive epistemology replaces objectivism; distributed cognition replaces autonomous will; embodiment replaces a body seen as a support system for the mind […][553]

While Odette does have a "teleological" end goal in life, her at times aggressive arriviste drive is almost unconscious, machinic. She keeps going despite the fact that her *cocotte* past keeps reemerging and creating obstacles to her social ascent, thus deferring her introduction into high society. As for "reflective epistemology," as a dandy, she literally relies on the mirror as a source of information and support: "Toute cette harmonie factice […] dont elle surveille la persistence dans sa glace."[554]

What Odette sees in the mirror, however, is far from stable: her body, like her language, is subject to various transformations. Oftentimes, the effect is not unlike the results of plastic surgery. By gaining weight – the result of time but also Odette's conscious choice – she becomes more "well-rounded," literally fulfilled, and more harmonious in the eyes of the public:

> Ce n'était pas seulement l'ameublement du salon d'Odette, c'était Odette elle-même que Mme Cottard et tous ceux qui avaient fréquenté Mme de Crécy auraient eu peine s'ils ne l'avaient pas vue depuis longtemps à reconnaître. Elle semblait avoir tant d'années de moins qu'autrefois! Sans doute, cela tenait en partie à ce qu'elle avait engraissé, et devenue mieux portante, avait l'air plus calme, frais, reposé et d'autre part à ce que les coiffures nouvelles, aux cheveux lissés, donnaient plus d'extension à son visage qu'une poudre rose animait, et où ses yeux et son profil, jadis trop saillants, semblaient maintenant résorbés. Mais une autre raison de ce changement consistait en ceci que, arrivée au milieu de la vie, Odette s'était enfin découvert, ou inventé, une physionomie personnelle, un 'caractère' immuable, un 'genre de beauté', et sur ses traits décousus – qui pendant si longtemps, livrés aux caprices hasardeux et impuissants de la chair, prenant à la moindre fatigue pour un instant des années, une sorte de vieillesse

[553] Hayles, 288.
[554] RTP, II, 216.

> passagère, lui avaient composé tant bien que mal, selon son humeur et selon sa mine, un visage épars, journalier, informe et charmant – avait appliqué ce type fixe, comme une jeunesse immortelle.[555]

It should also be pointed out that Odette is the creator of her daughter Gilberte, who herself shows, from her adolescent years, the potential to become a dandy, in addition to being an aesthetic role model for the young hero. For him, getting access to her quarters in the Swann's household is akin to entering a magician's laboratory: "Et, certes, j'eusse été moins troublé dans un antre magique que dans ce petit salon d'attente où le feu me semblait procéder à des transmutations, comme dans le laboratoire de Klingsor."[556] Science fiction and fairy-tale mix as the narrator tries to purvey a sense of the exclusive, the supernatural:

> Le royaume dans lequel j'étais accueilli était contenu lui-même dans un plus mystérieux encore où Swann et sa femme menaient leur vie surnaturelle, et vers lequel ils se dirigeaient après m'avoir serré la main quand ils traversaient en même temps que moi, en sens inverse, l'antichambre. Mais bientôt je pénétrai aussi au cœur du Sanctuaire.[557]

Inside, the "Sanctuaire" looks and feels like a greenhouse with "tant de chaleur, de parfums et de fleurs" where new breeds of plants are invented:

> [C]'était comme une sorte de préface aux œufs à la crème, comme une patine, un rose et frais glacis ajoutés au revêtement de cette chapelle mystérieuse qu'était la demeure de Mme Swann et au cœur de laquelle il y avait au contraire tant de chaleur, de parfums et de fleurs. À midi et demi, je me décidais enfin à entrer dans cette maison qui, comme un gros soulier de Noël, me semblait devoir m'apporter de surnaturels plaisirs.[558]

The interior of Odette and Gilberte's apartment is magical as a result of the mother's own exceptional creativity. Luz Aurora Pimentel goes as far as to liken Odette to the hero and Proust as an artist:

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[555] RTP, I, 606.
[556] Ibid., 518.
[557] Ibid., 499.
[558] Ibid., 517.

> Therefore one could interpret all those effects of continuity, of superimposition, and of the fusion of spaces in the description of her salon as a metaphorical reflection of Odette's own artistic qualities. 'Comme dans un beau style qui *superpose* des formes différentes': thus Mme Swann, the artist, seems to possess the same stylistic attributes in her own person as the ones that have gone into the making of the description of her salon. She could be therefore 'read' as the diegetic counterpart of the artist, including the verbal artist, and therefore a counterpart of the narrator or Proust himself, since her achievements in the art of dressing are like those proclaimed by Marcel as the supreme qualities of style.[559]

Having practiced on the "inside" – decorating the house and choosing her dressing gowns – she takes her talent of *créatrice* for a street test. The word "créateur" here is related to both cosmogony and fashion:

> Souriante, heureuse du beau temps, du soleil qui n'incommodait pas encore, ayant l'air d'assurance et de calme du créateur qui a accompli son œuvre et ne se soucie plus du reste, certaine que sa toilette – dussent des passants vulgaires ne pas l'apprécier – était la plus élégante de toutes, elle la portait pour soi-même et pour ses amis, naturellement, sans attention exagérée, mais aussi sans détachement complet, n'empêchant pas les petits nœuds de son corsage et de sa jupe de flotter légèrement devant elle [.][560]

When idolized by the young hero Odette appears human, it has a startling effect on him. The anomaly only happens "parfois," as when he notices that "inversement il lui était arrivé depuis de revenir de l'Odette de Crécy, peut-être trop connue des fêtards, des hommes à femmes, à ce visage d'une expression parfois si douce, à cette nature si humaine."[561] Here, however, "humaine" refers rather to her sweetness ("douceur") and an opaque complaisance of a "supra-human" angel – this is what Odette is called by Swann one page earlier:

> Il posa d'abord l'excellence *a priori* d'Odette, l'axiome de sa supra-humanité séraphique, la révélation de ses vertus indémontrables et dont la notion ne pouvait dériver de l'expérience. 'Je veux parler avec vous. Vous, vous savez quelle femme au-dessus de toutes les femmes, quel être adorable, quel ange est Odette.'[562]

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[559] Pimentel,131.
[560] Ibid., 625.
[561] Ibid., 308.
[562] Ibid., 306-7.

It is true that even her carefully maintained physical appearance shows elements of humanity, like her nose becoming red when it is cold outside:

> L'arrivée de Mme Swann, préparée par tant de majestueuses entrées, me paraissait devoir être quelque chose d'immense …[A]près ces valets de pied en livrée, pareils aux figurants dont le cortège, au théâtre, prépare, et par là même diminue l'apparition finale de la reine, Mme Swann entrant furtivement en petit paletot de loutre, sa voilette baissée sur un nez rougi par le froid, ne tenait pas les promesses prodiguées dans l'attente à mon imagination.[563]

This disappointment joins a host of upsets regarding other characters, experiences, and places: a pimple in the corner of Oriane de Guermantes's nose, la Berma's theater performance, Balbec and Venice respectively. Whenever the reality or the flesh is all too visible, it becomes too much, "trop": "Pour lui plaire elle avait un profil trop accusé, la peau trop fragile, les pommettes trop saillantes, les traits trop tirés."[564] But these "humant" imperfections are not exactly qualities of these characters, experiences, or places but of the narrator himself. He, like Swann, sees them as failures of his own imagination, or as an indication that he is not yet ready to become an artist.

What makes Odette human in Swann's eyes is her social or aesthetic faux pas. He believes that simple language, like an unadorned body, is vulgar, and thus too 'natural," making him sound like Baudelaire of "Le peintre de la vie moderne":

> Mme Swann choisissait tantôt celles [expressions] qu'elle avait apprises de gens distingués que son mari n'avait pu éviter de lui faire connaître (c'est d'eux qu'elle tenait le maniérisme qui consiste à supprimer l'article ou le pronom démonstratif devant un adjectif qualifiant une personne), tantôt de plus vulgaires (par exemple: 'C'est un rien!' mot favori d'une de ses amies[.]'[565]

Surprisingly, any time disappointment in Odette is voiced, it does not result in representing her as more human, but rather denies her humanity along with its defining qualities of intelligence and judgement. The word *bête,* referring both to animality and stupidity, is used by Swann ("Il

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[563] Ibid., 518-9.
[564] Ibid., 193.
[565] RTP, I, 501.

voyait Odette avec une toilette trop habillée pour cette partie de campagne, 'car elle est si vulgaire et surtout, la pauvre petite, elle est tellement bête!!!")[566] and by the Verdurin circle:

> Elle avait l'habitude de dire qu'elle se passerait plus aisément de pain que d'art et de propreté, et qu'elle eût été plus triste de voir brûler *La Joconde* que des 'foultitudes' de personnes qu'elle connaissait. Théories qui semblaient paradoxales à ses amies, mais la faisaient passer pour une femme supérieure auprès d'elles et lui valaient une fois par semaine la visite du ministre de Belgique, de sorte que dans le petit monde dont elle était le soleil, chacun eût été bien étonné si l'on avait appris qu'ailleurs, chez les Verdurins par exemple, elle passait pour bête.[567]

Ultimately, due to the double meaning, Odette's *bêtise*, joined by other manifestations of her otherness, reinforces her own and other dandy characters' nonhumanity (Charles Swann, Orianne de Guermantes, Robert de Saint-Loup and his daughter are birds, and Charlus is a drone[568]).

4.1.3 Social Shape-Shifting

In *Toilettes et silhouettes féminines chez Marcel Proust,* Anna Favrichon states that "l'évolution vestimentaire d'Odette va de pair avec son ascension sociale et détermine quatre époques: l'époque de la cocotte, celle de Mme de Crécy amoureuse de Swann, celle de Mme Swann et celle de Mme de Forcheville."[569] As Mme Swann, Odette reaches the apex of grace and superiority, which are illustrated through an insistent comparison to a queen. Her coach, "incomparable victoria," is a symbol of the mechanism that is Odette's newly constructed persona:

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[566] Ibid., 281-2.
[567] Ibid., 605.
[568] In an infamous seduction scene at the beginning of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, a series of depersonalizations and becomings are taking place. Charlus is a drone (*bourdon*) pollinating an orchid, Jupien the taylor (RTP, III, 8-11). Leo Bersani in *Marcel Proust: The Fictions of Life and of Art* (Oxford Universtiy Press, 1965) also points to homosexual cruising as a practice that further animalizes Charlus (146). But cruising also mechanizes him: Charlus becomes a man-drone – a reconnaissance device.
[569] Favrichon, 103.

> [J]e voyais enfin, débouchant de l'allée qui vient de la porte Dauphine – image pour moi d'un prestige royal, d'une arrivée souveraine telle qu'aucune reine véritable n'a pu m'en donner l'impression dans la suite, parce que j'avais de leur pourvoir une notion moins vague et plus expérimentale – emportée par le vol de deux chevaux ardents, minces et contournés comme on en voit dans les dessins de Constantin Guys [..,] je voyais […] une incomparable victoria, à dessein un peu haute et laissant passer à travers son luxe "dernier cri" des allusions aux formes anciennes, au fond de laquelle reposait avec abandon Mme Swann, ses cheveux maintenant blonds avec une seule mèche grise ceints d'un mince bandeau de fleurs, le plus souvent des violettes, d'où descendaient de longs voiles, à la main une ombrelle mauve, aux lèvres un sourire ambigu où je ne voyais que la bienveillance d'une Majesté et où il y avait surtout la provocation de la cocotte, et qu'elle inclinait avec douceur sur les personnes qui la saluaient [...] Mme Swann laissant s'étaler derrière elle la longue traîne de sa robe mauve, vêtue, comme le peuple imagine les reines[.][570]

Contrary to Favrichon's statement, the transformation from Odette into Mme Swann is not irreversible, as there is always a bit of *nostalgie de la boue* present in her. As Karen Humphreys points out, "Memory is crucial to the dandy, who is a living memory of the past."[571] Susan Fillin-Yeh calls "[d]andies […] time capsules of sartorial events."[572] Fittingly, Mme Swann, mirroring the narrator and the novel, is deeply implicated in the process of remembering and resurrecting of other eras, personal or social. The names Odette and Mme Swann are interchangeable throughout the novel, and the two seemingly disparate images, Odette the cocotte, and Mme Swann "une Majesté," converge in that they describe an exceptional, highly staged persona. Once again, the mention of Baudelaire's protégé Constantin Guys and his watercolors brings in the discussion from "Le Peintre de la vie Moderne" on artifice as the defining virtue of a new, modern woman. The noblewoman-*demi-mondaine* tension within Odette is further accentuated by an antagonism between her and Orianne de Guermantes – one of the aristocratic symbols of Old France. In fact, the two women are the contenders for the title of the Parisian queen of

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[570] RTP, I, 411-2.
[571] Humphreys, 71.
[572] Fillin-Yeh, 16.

elegance. In the end, Odette wins. Her *demimonde* past, once again, boosts her creative advantage, as, according to Fillin-Yeh, "[Georg] Simmel traced innovation in fashion to the demimonde, with perhaps a nod to the Baudelairean notion of a dandy's characteristic oppositional stance, where an aristocracy of self-made elegance replaces one of birth."[573] Luz Aurora Pimentel also points out that even though the narrator says that the two most elegant women he knows are Mme Swann and Mme de Guermantes, and that of the two, the duchess is the most elegant, it is not what the narration actually shows:

> That is what he *says*, but the fact is that Mme de Guermantes's toilettes are described in exactly the same terms as Mme Swann's – without the idealization […] What is missing from the description of Mme de Guermantes's robes is the careful orchestration and gradation in the effects of ecstasy. It is this sustained effort and its achievements that make Mme Swann infinitely more beautiful and elegant than Mme de Guermantes, despite the narrator's avowed preferences; *textually* the idealized Mme Swann remains longer in the reader's imagination as the 'priestess' of elegance [.][574]

The narrator's puzzlement as to where this "quelque chose de noble"[575] is coming from is due, again, to the fact that Odette never fully sheds her past. Her love for the mauve hue highlights further her ability to cross social lines, as its invention made this color of the purple family less exclusive and accessible to the nobility and the bourgeoisie alike. The mauve, like Odette herself, is a mutation – a transitional hue between red and blue – and it highlights not only the uncertainty of Odette's social past or present, but also marks the meeting of two aesthetically different Odettes – the cocotte and an *élégante*. As Allan H. Pasco puts it,

> Not until many years after meeting [Odette] unexpectedly at his uncle Adolphe's does [the protagonist] discover that Mme Swann and la dame en rose are one and the same individual. There is a good reason for him not to connect the two, for in

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[573] Fillin-Yeh, 6.
[574] Pimentel, 131-2.
[575] RTP, I, 609.

> the meantime Mme Swann has recreated herself and become *une dame en mauve*.[576]

The same irreverence for class distinction is also the irreverence of a celebrity, a being dehumanized by being put on a pedestal: "Sans entendre les réflexions, je percevais autour d'elle le murmure indistinct de la célébrité."[577] Besides her disregard for social and aesthetic conventions, Odette, "cette femme dont la reputation de beauté, d'inconduite et d'élégance était universelle,"[578] feels superior not only to culture but even to nature, treating it with condescension:

> Car ces rites, s'ils étaient souverains, mettaient leur gloire, et par conséquent Mme Swann mettait la sienne, à obéir avec condescendance au matin, au printemps, au soleil, lesquels ne me semblaient pas assez flattés qu'une femme si élégante voulût bien ne pas les ignorer et eût choisi à cause d'eux une robe d'une étoffe plus claire, plus légère, faisant penser, par son évasement au col et aux manches, à la moiteur du cou et des poignets, fît enfin pour eux tous les frais d'une grande dame qui s'étant gaiement abaissée à aller voir à la campagne des gens communs et que tout le monde, même le vulgaire, connaît, n'en a pas moins tenu à revêtir spécialement pour ce jour-là une toilette champêtre.[579]

The descent to the level of the commoner "mortals" brings Odette's star attitude in line with the mythical, divine facet of her nonhumanity – the subject of the next segment.

4.1.4 Aesthetic Alterations: Myth, Androgyny, and the Mechanics of Clothes

Edward J. Hughes in "Proustian Metamorphosis: The Art of Distortion in 'À la Recherche du temps perdu" writes on the importance of mutation and misrecognition as central issues of the project: "Magical self-transformation would thus appear to be the inalienable birthright of key Proustian characters such as Swann. Moreover, Odette, Legrandin, Saint-Loup,

[576] Pasco, 111.
[577] RTP, I, 413.
[578] Ibid., 413.
[579] Ibid., 626.

and Charlus head a lengthy roll-call of Protean figures in the novel."[580] Coincidentally, all three of these characters, Odette, Charlus, and Saint-Loup are dandies (Albertine is mentioned later in the article). In addition to the fantastic, for Odette and others, these becomings are often articulated through a host of Ancient Greco-Roman and Christian creatures and deities. In the following example, Odette's transformation into a superheroine is accompanied by multiple distortions. The steel-winged horses are both a nod to the invention of the automobile and the ancient Greek Mares of Diomedes. The kind of carriage that she rides is named after the winged Roman goddess Victoria (also used by Zola's Nana), and is led by a giant of Maldororian proportions and a page-boy,[581] a miniature, caricature version of Saint Georges – a figure equally associated with the highly mythified Guermantes clan. Virtually indistinguishable from her agile entourage, Odette by extension is endowed with superhuman powers and velocity:

> L'idée de perfection que je portais en moi, je l'avais prêtée alors à la hauteur d'une Victoria, à la maigreur de ces chevaux furieux et légers comme des guêpes, les yeux injectés de sang comme les cruels chevaux de Diomède, et que maintenant, pris d'un désir de revoir ce que j'avais aimé, aussi ardent que celui qui me poussait bien des années auparavant dans ces mêmes chemins, je voulais avoir de nouveau sous les yeux au moment où l'énorme cocher de Mme Swann, surveillé par un petit groom gros comme le poing et aussi enfantin que saint Georges, essayait de maîtriser leurs ailes d'acier qui se débattaient effarouchées et palpitantes.[582]

The androgyne/hermaphrodite – another figure stemming from ancient mythology and a well-discussed topic in the dandy scholarship in terms of gender and sexuality, is worth revisiting in the larger context of dehumanization. Like the winged Victory, the centaur – a

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[580] Edward J. Hughes, "Proustian Metamorphosis: The Art of Distortion in 'À la Recherche du temps perdu.'" *The Modern Language Review* 94. 3 (July 1999): 661.
[581] Compagnon points out an allusion to Balzac's dandy character Godefroid de Beaudenord of *La Maison Nucingen*, 121.
[582] RTP, I, 417.

figure directly associated with Charlus,[583] and implied in the characters of Saint-Loup and Albertine, is altogether "prehuman." As David Leeming's *Oxford Companion to World Mythology* posits, "It could be argued that all creator gods – that is, those who create alone and *ex nihilo* – are by definition, androgynes."[584] As far as Odette is concerned, her androgyny has been largely overlooked or dismissed because it occurs only in the hero's imagination. When trying to forget the stress of being in a new place, Balbec, the hero, while daydreaming, superposes familiar faces on those of strangers around him. The waiter at a café thus becomes his grandparents' neighbor Legrandin, and a passerby becomes Swann's concierge. In his mind, Mme Swann is the only one who, with a new occupation – the lifeguard (*maître baigneur*), – also shapeshifts into a different sex:

> Esthétiquement, le nombre des types humains est trop restreint pour qu'on n'ait pas bien souvent, dans quelque endroit qu'on aille, la joie de revoir des gens de connaissance, même sans les dans les tableaux des vieux maîtres, comme faisait Swann. C'est ainsi que dès les premiers jours de notre séjour à Balbec, il m'était arrivé de rencontrer Legrandin, le concierge de Swann, et Mme Swann elle-même, devenus le premier un garçon de café, le second un étranger de passage que je ne revis pas, et la dernière un maître baigneur. Et une sorte d'aimantation attire et réticent si inséparablement les uns auprès des autres certains caractères de physionomie et de mentalité que quand la nature introduit ainsi une personne dans un nouveau corps, elle ne la mutile pas trop […] Mme Swann dans le sexe masculin et la condition de maître baigneur avait été suivie non seulement par sa physionomie habituelle, mais même par une certaine manière de parler.[585]

Odette's androgyny diminishes her humanity as she becomes less useful to the narrator's social advancement. As her humanity and corporality are scrutinized, the parallel is made to Swann's perception of Odette through art and representation:

> Seulement elle ne pouvait pas m'être de plus d'utilité entourée de sa ceinture rouge, et hissant, à la moindre houle, le drapeau qui interdit les bains (car les

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[583] "En M. de Charlus un autre être avait beau s'accoupler, qui le différenciait des autres hommes, comme dans le centaure le cheval, cet être avait beau faire corps avec le baron, je ne l'avais jamais aperçu." RTP, III, 16.
[584] David Leeming, *Oxford Companion to World Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17.
[585] RTP, II, 45.

> maîtres baigneurs sont prudents, sachant rarement nager), qu'elle ne l'eût pu dans la fresque de la *Vie de Moïse* où Swann l'avait reconnue jadis sous les traits de la fille de Jethro.[586]

The idea of uselessness and inhumanity linked to androgyny and the artifice of drag continues to manifest itself in Odette's portrait from another time, 1872, the era of Zola. Here, she is painted by Elstir as *Miss Sacripant,* one curious creature:

> C'était – cette aquarelle – le portrait d'une jeune femme pas jolie, mais d'un type curieux, que coiffait un serre-tête assez semblable à un chapeau melon bordé d'un ruban de soie cerise; une de ses mains gantées de mitaines tenait une cigarette allumée, tandis que l'autre élevait à la hauteur du genou une sorte de grand chapeau de jardin, simple écran de paille contre le soleil […] Le caractère ambigu de l'être dont j'avais le portrait sous les yeux tenait sans que je le comprisse à ce que c'était une jeune actrice d'autrefois en demi-travesti[…] Le long des lignes du visage, le sexe avait l'air d'être sur le point d'avouer qu'il était celui d'une fille un peu garçonnière, s'évanouissait, et plus loin se retrouvait, suggérant plutôt l'idée d'un jeune efféminé vicieux et songeur, puis fuyait encore, restait insaisissable […] On pensait du reste qu'il devait être factice et que le jeune être qui semblait s'offrir aux caresses dans ce provoquant costume avait probablement trouvé piquant d'y ajouter l'expression Romanesque d'un sentiment secret, d'un chagrin inavoué. Au bas du portait était écrit: Miss Sacripant, octobre 1872.[587]

As Cynthia J. Gamble explains the etymology of the name, she points out that it "is derived from the Italian male character Sacripante in Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato* and has now acquired the meaning in French of a 'rogue' or 'good for nothing'",[588] aligning Odette's uselessness with another Rocambolesque dandy outlaw in the novel, Charlus.[589] Gamble goes on to state that even though Odette's ambiguous gender is visible through her stage name Miss Sacripant, it is made

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[586] Ibid., 45.
[587] Ibid., 203-4.
[588] Cynthia J. Gamble, "Zipporah: A Ruskinian Enigma Appropriated by Marcel Proust" *Marcel Proust (Bloom's Modern Critical Views)* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 77.
[589] On Charlus as a criminal: "Il m'avait évidemment vu, sans le laisser paraître, et je m'aperçus alors que ses yeux qui n'étaient jamais fixés sur l'interlocuteur, se promenaient perpétuellement dans toutes les directions, comme ceux de certains animaux effrayés, ou ceux de ces marchands en plein air qui, tandis qu'ils débitent leur boniment et exhibent leur marchandise illicite, scrutent, sans pourtant tourner la tête, les différents poins de l'horizon par où pourrait venir la police." RTP, II, 118.

less relevant, "hidden owing to its connotations with the world of fashion and the Music Hall."[590] The unattractiveness to the male ("pas jolie"), allegedly heterosexual hero is likely due to the androgynous, decadent dandy outfit and highly theatrical allure – daring in 1872, and even later, close to the turn of the century, when Marcel discovers it. What further pushes Odette's look towards the unfeminine and thus inhuman are her doll-like features. In French, the adjective "factice" is used to imply imitation but also to describe a boutique display dummy, much like the ones by Thérèse Raquin.

The description of Miss Sacripant's portrait is fittingly placed in the chapter centered on the hero's obsession with the *petite bande* of young girls of Balbec. The energy generated by the group distinguishes them from the rest of holidaymakers ("la foule […] compose d'être d'une autre race"), as it powers an aggressive, spectacular machine or an extraterrestrial body:

> Telles que si, du sein de leur bande qui progressait le long de la digue comme une lumineuse comète, elles eussent jugé que la foule environnante était composée d'êtres d'une autre race et dont la souffrance même n'eût pu éveiller en elles un sentiment de solidarité, elles ne paraissaient pas la voir, forçaient les personnes arrêtées à s'écarter ainsi que sur le passage d'une machine qui eût été lâchée et dont il ne fallait pas attendre qu'elle évitât les piétons, et se contentaient tout au plus, si quelque vieux monsieur dont elles n'admettaient pas l'existence et dont elles repoussaient le contact s'était enfui avec des mouvements craintifs ou furieux, mais précipités ou risibles, de se regarder entre elles en riant.[591]

Similarly to the young Odette in the painting, their appearance and attitude at the beach is hooligan and unladylike

> […] d'une fille aux yeux brillants, rieurs, aux grosses joues mattes, sous un 'polo' noir, enfoncé sur la tête, qui poussait une bicyclette avec un dandinement de hanches si dégingandé, en employant des termes d'argot si voyous et criés si fort […] En tout cas, dans aucune de mes suppositions, ne figurait celle qu'elles eussent pu être vertueuses.[592]

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[590] Gamble, 77.
[591] RTP, II, 149.
[592] Ibid., 151.

While the young girls are driven by freedom and convenience of athletic wear, which is becoming more socially acceptable (polo caps and shirts), Odette's choices seem more radical, as she borrows items, cuts and patterns that still belong in a man's closet, such as the plaid-patterned tie. Its color palette is softened, from the masculine red and blue plaid to a more feminine rose and lilac combination, resulting in a new creation:

> sous sa veste qu'elle entrouvrait plus ou moins selon qu'elle se réchauffait en marchant, le 'dépassant' en dents de scie de sa chemisette avait l'air du revers entrevu de quelque gilet absent, pareil à l'un de ceux qu'elle avait portés quelques années plus tôt et dont elle aimait que les bords eussent ce léger déchiquetage; et sa cravate – de cet 'écossais' auquel elle était restée fidèle, mais en adoucissant tellement les tons "le rouge devenu rose et le bleu, lilas que l'on aurait presque cru à un de ces taffetas gorge de pigeon qui étaient la dernière nouveauté – était nouée de telle façon sous son menton, sans qu'on pût voir où elle était attachée, qu'on pensait invinciblement à ces 'brides' de chapeaux qui ne se portaient plus.[593]

Like the group of girls, Odette never stays still, stubbornly, automatically moving onto the next trend project. As her taste mutates, she has no problem denouncing what she used to covet in the past: "[E]lle vénérait le mot 'tocard' – lequel lui avait ouvert de nouveaux horizons parce qu'il désignait précisément les choses que quelques années auparavant elle avait trouvées 'chic.'"[594] Paradoxically, while always being out of step with fashion, Odette is inseparable from her time, as if dressed in it: "On sentait qu'elle ne s'habillait pas seulement pour la commodité ou la parure de son corps; elle était entourée de sa toilette comme de l'appareil délicat et spiritualisé d'une civilization."[595] Yet, there is something mechanical ("l'appareil délicat") and detached about Odette's way of operating her body, and her clothes help emphasize this. In the previously quoted passage, she maneuvers her outfit as if were a machine equipped with valves to ensure locomotion and ventilation: "sous sa veste qu'elle entrouvrait plus ou moins selon

[593] RTP, I, 608.
[594] Ibid., 604.
[595] Ibid., 609.

qu'elle se réchauffait en marchant." However, the science behind Odette's mechanism is never fully explained (it is unclear how the tie is attached), and a certain mystery is kept, not unlike in Villiers's science fiction. Equally reminiscent of Laure's and Maldoror's style, Odette's includes sharp ("une aile de lophophore") laconic pieces and accessories, contributing to an image of a streamlined mechanism:

> J'assignais la première place à la simplicité, dans l'ordre des mérites esthétiques et des grandeurs mondaines quand j'apercevais Mme Swann à pied, dans une polonaise de drap, sur la tête un petit toquet agrémenté d'une aile de lophophore, un bouquet de violettes au corsage.[596]

Later on, Proust will borrow a key dynamic piece – the toque hat with upright flowers or bird feathers – from Odette's wardrobe and pass it on to the hero's lover and "creature" Albertine.

4.1.5 Odette's Franglais

Together with Odette's fashion style, verbal expression is her signature trait. Daniel Karlin presents his *Proust's English* as a "book […] about the 'intermediate language' of *A la recherche*; the presence in it of English words and phrases, the 'Englishness' of its social and artistic worlds, and the larger theme of mixed or impure language […]"[597] The *anglomanie* of Proust's text stems from his own overall interest in the English lifestyle and aesthetic:

> Proust's strange intimacy with English is the product of a personal history, but also of a wider social history whose keyword was anglomanie, the craze for Englishness in politics, dress, furniture – for everything we now call by the term 'lifestyle' – included a fashion for English words – for *le gentleman*, who might suffer the agonies of *spleen* in le Jockey-Club, or even in his comfortable *home*[.][598]

[596] Ibid., 411.
[597] Karlin, 1.
[598] Ibid., 5.

Odette, unlike any other character in the present study, uses English as one of her signature accessories. Long before she meets Swann, Odette, like Proust, is already endowed with *anglomanie*, which teleports her to an earlier, Aurevillian or Balzacian dandy configuration. In part, her English is yet another link to her courtesan past. Karlin quotes Swann who wonders whether Odette's *origine anglaise* could be traced to her Nice years, when still a very young girl, practically a child, she is said to have been "sold" by her mother to a wealthy Englishman, "Pauvre Odette! Il ne lui en voulait pas. Elle n'était qu'à demi coupable. Ne disait-on pas que c'était par sa propre mere qu'elle avait été livrée, presque enfant, à Nice, à un riche Anglais?"[599]

As a former courtesan and a lifelong social climber, Odette is one of the most striking misfits in the novel and her obsession with Britain helps bring her otherworldliness to the fore. According to Charlus, she was first married and then estranged from the Comte de Crécy, one of the oldest English aristocratic transplants in France. Her second husband's name, Swann, is also of British origin.[600] She favors British fashion designers such as Redfern[601] and wears ties and *tailleurs* inspired by menswear. She takes milk with her tea and advocates fitness and *footing*:

> Maintenant c'était plus rarement dans des robes de chambre japonaises qu'Odette recevait ses intimes, mais plutôt dans les soies claires et mousseuses de peignoirs Watteau desquelles elle faisait le geste de caresser sur ses seins l'écume fleurie, et dans lesquelles elle se baignait, se prélassait, s'ébattait avec un tel air de bien-être, de rafraîchissement de la peau, et des respirations si profondes, qu'elle semblait les considérer non pas comme décoratives à la façon d'un cadre, mais comme nécessaires de la même manière que le 'tub' et le 'footing', pour contenter les exigences de sa physionomie et les raffinements de son hygiène.[602]

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[599] Ibid., 114 (RTP, I, 361).
[600] RTP, IV, 165.
[601] RTP, I, 588.
[602] Ibid., 605.

Odette, together with Saint-Loup "au pas 'gymnastique'," [603] is a Regency-era "buck" dandy. But her "beau" side with its foam-like dresses and her love of flowers, is just as important to her. Odette's favorite species is the *cattleya labiata*, named after a British amateur grower William Cattley.[604]

An immigrant in her own country, Odette does not assimilate easily. Karlin points out that Odette's Englishness

> is especially pointed alongside the lack of *franchise,* a word which, as Proust knew from his translation of Ruskin, is linked to the etymology of the word 'franc' and therefore to the aboriginal character of the French race. Odette's insincerity is a kind of transgression against Frenchness, and against the moral dimension of the French language.[605]

Virtually every time Odette is granted direct speech, she mixes French and English within one sentence, creating a singular patchwork, which disrupts narrative and syntactic conventions. In fact, the majority of English language in the novel is generated by Odette, "tout en ajoutant comme elle était anglomane: "On s'y embrouille dans ces 'Royalties'"[606]; "Je suis contente d'être exceptée et que vous ne me 'dropiez' pas tout à fait."[607] Odette's *code-switching,* like Proustian style, is *avant-garde* in that at first, it is classified as a faux pas but later, after the war, is followed, when the British become France's allies. In addition to code-switching, Odette uses literal translations of common expressions or structures used in English into French. For example, the verb tense "je ne suis pas" is a verbatim rendition of the present continuous form of English "I am not": "Puisque vous le voulez, répondit Odette sur un ton de marivaudage, et elle ajouta: vous savez que je ne suis pas *fishing for compliments.*"[608]

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[603] RTP, III, 480.
[604] Karlin 85
[605] Ibid., 83.
[606] Ibid., 90.
[607] Ibid., 20.
[608] RTP, I, 188.

Odette's writing style, like her speech, is characterized by "affectation de raideur britannique."[609] The resulting "British stiffness" will play a role in an image of an emotionless, doll-like appearance at the revelatory *Bal de têtes* at the end of the novel.

4.1.6 Breakdown and Relay

Odette is outside of human time, not unlike "un être extra-temporel"[610] who finally emerges and helps the hero visualize his artistic endeavor at the end of the novel. Due to many narrative contradictions and a complex representation of time, it is difficult to establish Odette's age – not only for the reader but for the characters in the novel as well:

> Ainsi grâce à Robert pouvait-elle, au seuil de la cinquantaine (d'aucuns disaient de la soixantaine) éblouir chaque table où elle allait diner, chaque soirée où elle paraissait, d'un luxe inouï sans avoir besoin d'avoir comme autrefois un 'ami'.[611]

Odette seems to always be out of sync with her age – be it her time period, or her physical age:

> [J]e trouvais souvent Mme Swann dans quelque élégant déshabillé dont la jupe, d'un de ces beaux tons sombres, rouge foncé ou orange qui avaient l'air d'avoir une signification particulière parce qu'ils n'étaient plus à la mode, était obliquement traversée d'une rampe ajourée et large de dentelle noire qui faisait penser aux volants d'autrefois […] Pour peu qu'elle sût 'durer' encore quelque temps ainsi, les jeunes gens, essayant de comprendre ses toilettes, diraient: 'Madame Swann, n'est-ce pas, c'est toute une époque?'[612]

By mixing different, ostensibly disparate eras, she creates her own anachronistic style:

> Et parfois, dans le velours bleu du corsage un soupçon de crevé Henri II, dans la robe de satin noir un léger renflement qui soit aux manches, près des épaules, faisaient penser aux 'gigots' 1830, soit au contraire sous la jupe aux 'paniers' Louis XV, donnaient à la robe un air imperceptible d'être un costume et en insinuant sous la vie présente comme une réminiscence indiscernable du passé,

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[609] Ibid., 218-9.
[610] RTP, IV, 450.
[611] Ibid., 263.
[612] RTP, I, 608.

> mêlaient à la personne de Mme Swann le charme de certaines héroïnes historiques ou romanesques.[613]

Odette's biological age is equally hard to pinpoint, just like that of Aurevillian Hauteclaire and Serlon. The younger Odette often looks tired ("ce visage […] malgré sa jeunesse, si fané"),[614] but the older she gets, the less she shows signs of aging. In *L'art d'être odieux*, Maxime Foerster posits that "Tôt ou tard, y compris en public, le dandy est attrapé par son humanité."[615] In Odette's case, however, her demise is not human but mechanical. At the momentous Guermantes matinée at the end of the novel, her unchanged appearance, where logically, she should be an old woman, is nothing short of a fairytale or science fiction miracle:

> Seule peut-être Mme de Forcheville, comme injectée d'un liquide, d'une espèce de paraffine qui gonfle la peau mais l'empêche de se modifier, avait l'une cocotte d'autrefois à jamais 'naturalisée'[…] son aspect, une fois qu'on savait son âge et qu'on s'attendait à une vieille femme, semblait un défi plus miraculeux aux lois de la chronologie que la conversation du radium à celle de la nature […] Elle avait l'air sous ses cheveux dorés tout plats – un peu un chignon ébouriffé de grosse poupée mécanique sur une figure étonnée et immuable de poupée aussi, de l'Exposition de 1878 (dont elle eût certes été alors, et surtout si elle eût eu alors l'âge d'aujourd'hui, la plus fantastique merveille) venant débiter son couplet dans une revue de fin d'année, mais de l'Exposition de 1878 représentée par une femme encore jeune […] Il semblait qu'elle eût pu y être encore. D'ailleurs, justement parce qu'elle n'avait pas changé, elle ne semblait guère vivre. Elle avait l'air d'une rose stérilisée.[616]

She is anything but human – a doll ("une figure étonnée"), an artificial flower ("une rose sterilisée"). The narrator wonders whether Odette has had her cheeks filled with paraffin[617] – a cosmetic procedure known to be performed as early as the turn of the nineteenth century.[618]

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[613] Ibid., 610.
[614] Ibid., 194.
[615] Maxime Foerster *L'art d'être odieux: Nouveaux essays sur le dandysme,*(Paris: Éditions Jean Paul Bayol, 2010), 85.
[616] RTP, IV, 526-8.
[617] P. Santoni-Rugiu and P.J. Sykes, *A History of Plastic Surgery* (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 301.
[618]. Ibid., 326: P. Santoni-Rugiu and P.J. Sykes mention Sarah Bernhardt's "face-lift through a scalp" done in the United States in 1912. As an industry, aesthetic plastic surgery emerged in Europe at the end of the World War I, when military surgeons with newly acquired reconstructive skills found themselves out without a job.

Even Odette's motherhood – a role that should in theory highlight her humanity and adherence to bourgeois values – instead, dismantles it further. In the novel, her pregnancy and its duration are never announced or described. Gilberte's emergence in the storyline is chaste, improbable, fantastical. Gilberte, the aesthetic project of two dandies, is also the child of the writer's imagination:

> Ainsi passa près de moi ce nom de Gilberte, donnée comme un talisman qui me permettrait peut-être de retrouver un jour celle dont il venait de faire une personne et qui, l'instant d'avant, n'était qu'une image incertaine.[619]

Odette is an authoritative ("despotique"), capricious mother, "l'impression laissée en moi par le ton despotique avec lequel la mère de Gilberte lui avait parlé sans qu'elle répliquât."[620] Like Flaubert's Emma Bovary, she is more preoccupied with her appearance and social standing. She dresses the adolescent Gilberte like a little girl, making the narrator wonder whether she is trying to prolong her own youth by having a younger-looking daughter.[621] Later, during the Guermantes matinee, the daughter and the mother look identical – Odette stopped aging, and Gilberte has caught up with the mother: "J'entendis la grosse dame me dire, une seconde plus tard: 'Vous me prenez pour ma mère."[622] This scene is a symbolic event where Gilberte, not so much Odette's daughter as her clone ("cette réplique du visage d'Odette […] poussée jusqu'à la plus parfait ressemblance")[623] or a newer version of a machine, is taking over Odette's place as an obstinate social climber. Odette is Haraway's cyborg whose "replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction."[624] Now, in a matter of three years after the ball, the latter will withdraw into the background, watch the new version of herself perform her role, and finally collapse.

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[619] RTP, I, 140.
[620] Ibid., 140.
[621] "soit que sa mère voulût la faire paraître plus longtemps enfant, afin de se rajeunir elle-même;" Ibid., 485.
[622] RTP, IV, 526.
[623] Ibid., 513.
[624] Haraway, 150.

4.2 ALBERTINE AND THE NEW DANDY GENERATION

4.2.1 La Petite Bande à Part

The name Albertine is heard by the hero for the first time, fittingly, from Gilberte: "C'est l'oncle d'une petite qui venait à mon cours, dans une classe bien au-dessous de moi, la fameuse 'Albertine'. Elle sera sûrement très 'fast' (in, à la mode), mais en attendant elle a une drôle de touché[…][625] Swann's exclamation following Gilberte's mention of Albertine, "Elle est étonnante ma fille, elle connaît tout le monde,"[626] highlights her symbolic position as a turning point for the narrative and thematic lines in the novel. Here, Gilberte's role as a relay is to predict the end of one romantic connection (the protagonist/herself), and announce the possibility of another one (the protagonist/Albertine). Equally, being the daughter of Swann and Odette – the two of the most important figures to shape the hero aesthetically, Gilberte is in a position to announce an important shift within the hero himself. While still having a long way to go before starting his artistic project, he is about to turn from being Odette's and Swann's disciple into an artist and, similarly to Edison, tackle the "creation" of Albertine. It is Albertine, however, and not so much Gilberte, who is a true Odette's dandy "daughter." Even though there is little to no interaction between Odette and Albertine, the filiation is strikingly visualized in Raúl Ruiz's 1999 film adaptation of the last volume, *Le Temps Retrouvé,* where Odette and Albertine are played by the real-life mother and daughter, Catherine Deneuve and Chiara Mastroianni.

The initial meeting at Balbec between the hero and Albertine is not exactly in person, as she is impossible to tell from the rest of the little band of girls. The group, in turn, is

[625] RTP, I, 503.
[626] Ibid., 503.

inseparable from the sea, because it is compared to an amorphous school of Marlororian marine creatures**:**

> ce n'était pas comme la veille dans leur première apparition devant moi, la vision du groupe, mais le groupe lui-même qui manquait de netteté. Alors, ces enfants trop jeunes étaient encore à ce degré élémentaire de formation où la personnalité n'a pas mis son sceau sur chaque visage. Comme ces organismes primitifs où l'individu n'existe guère par lui-même, est plutôt constitué par le polypier que par chacun des polypes qui le composent, elles restaient pressées les unes contre les autres. Parfois l'une faisait tomber sa voisine, et alors un fou rire, qui semblait la seule manifestation de leur vie personnelle, les agitait toutes à la fois, effaçant, confondant ces visages indécis et grimaçants dans la gelée d'une seule grappe scintillatrice et tremblante.[627]

Compared to seagulls, the girls are out of the water but still hovering close to it:

> Seul je restai simplement devant le Grand-Hôtel à attendre le moment d'aller retrouver ma grand-mère, quand, presque encore à l'extrémité de la digue où elles faisaient mouvoir une tache singulière, je vis s'avancer cinq ou six fillettes, aussi différentes, par l'aspect et par les façons, de toutes les personnes auxquelles on était accoutumé à Balbec, qu'aurait pu l'être, débarquée on ne sait d'où, une bande de mouettes qui exécute à pas comptés sur la plage – les retardataires rattrapant les autres en voletant – une promenade dont le but semble aussi obscur aux baigneurs qu'elles ne paraissent pas voir, que clairement déterminé pour leur esprit d'oiseaux.[628]

The girls' outlandish, bird-like gait is further differentiated by the emphasis on physical fitness and streamlined clothes:

> Une de ces inconnues poussait devant elle, de la main, sa bicyclette; deux autres tenaient des 'clubs' de golf; et leur accoutrement tranchait sur celui des autres jeunes filles de Balbec, parmi lesquelles quelques-unes, il est vrai, se livraient aux sports, mais sans adopter pour cela une tenue spéciale.[629]

Athleticism and animality are amplified by mechanistic qualities and a certain detachment of an actress or a mannequin as the girls turn the boardwalk into a catwalk. The necessary attributes of

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[627] RTP, II, 180.
[628] Ibid.,146.
[629] Ibid., 146.

today's *défilé* are there, complete with the podium, the music, and the public filling rows of seats:

> C'était l'heure où dames et messieurs venaient tous les jours faire leur tour de digue, exposés aux feux impitoyables du face-à-main que fixait sur eux, comme s'ils eussent été porteurs de quelque tare qu'elle tenait à inspecter dans ses moindres détails, la femme du premier président, fièrement assise devant le kiosque de musique, au milieu de cette rangée de chaises redoutée où eux-mêmes tout à l'heure, d'acteurs devenus critiques, viendraient s'installer pour juger à leur tour ceux qui défileraient devant eux.[630]

Just like it takes time for the narrator to single Albertine out from the little band, it takes time to separate her from the seascape and thus to make her more individual. In the mind of the narrator, she emerges from the water as a series of mental and visual impressions:

> Que connaissais-je d'Albertine? Un ou deux profils sur la mer […] Depuis que j'avais vu Albertine, j'avais fait chaque jour à son sujet des milliers de réflexions, j'avais poursuivi, avec ce que j'appelais elle, tout un entretien intérieur où je la faisais questionner, répondre, penser, agir, et dans la série indéfinie d'Albertines imaginées qui se succédaient en moi heure par heure, l'Albertine réelle, aperçue sur la plage, ne figurait qu'en tête […] Cette Albertine-là n'était guère qu'une silhouette[.][631]

The narrator takes Albertine out of the water, as if assisting her birth. Like the birth of Gilberte, Albertine's is an aesthetic and artistic miracle – the narrator paints Albertine like Botticelli paints *The Birth of Venus*, also emerging from the sea, centered, framed by the seashell. Albertine for the hero is a vision similar to Swann's obsession with Odette, for whom she resembles another Boticellian beauty, Jethro's daughter Zipporah of *The Trials of Moses*.[632]

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[630] Ibid., 146-7.
[631] RTP, II, 213-4.
[632] Karpeles, 345.

4.2.2 The Albertine-Andrée-Morel Pack

For a while, the hero hesitates as to which girl he should single out from the group. Andrée, Albertine's close friend and possibly her lover, is one of his initial interests. Similar in personality and social background to Colette Peignot, Andrée comes from a well-off bourgeois family, is of frail, nervous nature and health, and yet is strong-willed, elegant, and eloquent. Like the hero, Andrée is a liar and a manipulator. Both names – Andrée and Marcel –are homonymous and androgynous. By observing himself in the mirror, the hero sees Andrée:

> A ce moment je m'aperçus dans la glace; je fus frappé d'une certaine ressemblance entre moi et Andrée. Si je n'avais pas cessé depuis longtemps de raser ma moustache et si je n'en avais eu qu'une ombre, cette ressemblance eût été presque complète.[633]

When observing others, Andrée, like the hero, possesses sharp deadpan wit. She keeps her cool while dissecting her friend Gisèle's school essay. In fact, she is the only character in the book who is identified as a female dandy: "Andrée gardait le flegme souriant d'un dandy femelle."[634] Attentive to language, the protagonist and Andrée quickly establish their own secret communication code:

> 'Nous sommes justement dans le bois joli,' me dit Andrée en me désignant les arbres qui nous entouraient, avec un sourire du regard qui n'était que pour moi et semblait passer par-dessus les joueurs comme si nous deux étions seuls assez intelligents pour nous dédoubler et faire à propos du jeu une remarque d'un caractère poétique.[635]

Similarity borders on sameness when Andrée copies and mocks perhaps the hero's gestures:

> Du reste, vous n'avez pas remarqué qu'elle s'était mise à prendre vos manières de parler, de raisonner? Surtout quand elle venait de vous quitter, c'était frappant.

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[633] RTP, IV, 129.
[634] RTP, II, 268.
[635] Ibid., 273.

> Elle n'avait pas besoin de nous dire si elle vous avait vu. Quand elle arrivait, si elle venait d'auprès de vous, cela se voyait à la première seconde.[636]

Eventually, the narrator admits that Andrée is too closely related to be his lover: "Mais pour que j'aimasse vraiment Andrée, elle était trop intellectuelle, trop nerveuse, trop maladive, trop semblable à moi. Si Albertine me semblait maintenant vide, Andrée était remplie de quelque chose que je connaissais trop."[637] He ends up choosing the mysteriously "blank" Albertine because in his eyes, she promises to provide more material for his aesthetic and romantic project, similar to the one described in Villiers's *L'Eve Future*.

However, there are important similarities between Andrée and Albertine, which should be pointed out in light of the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of *voisinage* and *becoming* discussed in previous chapters. As someone who serves both as Albertine's foil and one of the hero's doubles (along with Swann, the childhood friend Bloch, and Saint-Loup) Andrée, out of the Balbec gang, is second only to Albertine in terms of character development. Albertine's and Andrée's association with the same clique, the resemblance of their names, just as well their looks and tastes, – all suggest kindred energy. In the infamous scene depicting the lesbian "danse contre seins" at Balbec, the two young girls' sensuous embrace illustrates becoming literally. Andrée and Albertine converge into one knot, their body contours being irrelevant. They are the combined qualities of one becoming-woman, as imagined by the hero. The themes of androgyny, twins, and love triangles further highlights this process. David Ellison in his essay "The Disquieting Strangeness of Marcel Proust" discusses instances of Freudian *Das unheimliche* and *doppelgänger* in the novel by reading the Venice episode in *Albertine disparue*

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[636] RTP, III, 530.
[637] RTP, II, 295.

as a space where home and travel, the real and the imaginary confront one another.[638] Such observations can also be extended from spaces to the characters in the novel. Likewise, as Anne Chevalier points out in her preface to the Folio edition of *Albertine disparue*, may be inspired by Balzac's *La fille aux yeux d'or*, featuring a strikingly similar resemblance between Paquita's lovers Henry de Marsay and Marquise de San-Réal – both dandies.[639] Expectedly then, even though Albertine is the final romantic choice of the hero, his infatuation with Andrée does not die completely, pointing once again to a lack of molar distinction between the two young women. By choosing to see Andrée after Albertine's passing, the hero further refuses to separate the two. In the following scene occurring long after Albertine's death, Andrée is haunted, inhabited, by Albertine:

> Comme une sombre fleur inconnue qui m'était par-delà le tombeau rapportée d'un être où j'e n'avais pas su la découvrir [,..] À l'univers vague et inexistant où se passaient les promenades d'Albertine et d'Andrée, il me semblait que celle-ci venait par une création postérieure et diabolique, d'ajouter à l'œuvre de Dieu une vallée maudite.[640]

Andrée is Albertine's ventriloquist, a sinister messenger of her past secrets, which keep her friend/twin alive.

One of the secrets Andrée reveals to the protagonist is that of the strikingly handsome Charles (Charlie) Morel, the protégé and lover of Charlus, Robert de Saint-Loup and the Prince de Guermantes, who was also part of the girls' louche clique back in Balbec:

> Ah nous avons passé toutes les deux de bonnes heures, elle était si caressante, si passionnée. Du reste ce n'était pas seule avec moi qu'elle aimait prendre du plaisir. Elle avait rencontré chez Mme Verdurin un joli garçon, appelé Morel. Tout de suite ils s'étaient compris.[641]

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[638] David Ellison, "The Disquieting Strangeness of Marcel Proust", André Benhaïm, ed., *The Strange M. Proust* (London: Legenda, 2008),16.
[639] Anne Chevalier, Preface to *Albertine disparue* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard Folio, 1990), xxvi.
[640] RTP, IV, 127.
[641] Ibid., 179.

From the beginning, Morel is connected to an essential younger character, Gilberte, and her mother Odette. An equal-opportunity bisexual cheater, he steals Gilberte's husband Robert de Saint-Loup, who is desperately in love with Charles. Saint-Loup is blackmailed by Odette, who trades her silence about the affair for money and luxury goods. But before this link between Odette and Morel of *Le Temps retrouvé* is established, it is Odette of *Du côté de chez Swann* who lures Morel into the plot. A son of uncle Adophe's valet, he appears for the first time in *Le Côté de Guermantes* as he pays a visit to the protagonist, with photos of *Miss Sacripant*, and other cocottes the hero's uncle frequented, in hand. By speaking of Adolphe's amorous liaisons, Morel helps the hero realize that Odette, *Miss Sacripant* and the mysterious *la dame en rose* of his childhood are all incarnations of one being.[642]

This momentous connection between Odette and Morel, even though the two have little to no interaction within the narrative, sets up a precedent for many parallels in their respective ways of becoming a dandy. What Morel's "caractère étrange"[643] takes after Odette is her monstrous, contradictory moral and sexual bearing. Similarly to Odette's, his androgyny is a sign of a glitch in his humanity. Like her, he is in love with money ("ce garçon qui mettait l'argent au-dessus de tout"),[644] always squeezing his lovers and prostituting himself for cash. Like the Balzacian dandies "hors nature,"[645] Rastignac and Lucien de Rubempré, guided by an invisible hand of a Vautrin-like *voyou* and Odette's friend Charlus,[646] Morel is a vicious and robotically stubborn social climber. Unlike decadent, romantic, or earlier dandies, Morel has a career – he is a violinist. Perfectionist work ethics, repetition, and reproduction add to the doll-like image of

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[642] RTP, III, 769.
[643] Tadié, 783.
[644] RTP, IV, 421.
[645] Ibid., 440.
[646] Charlus is a big admirer of Balzac's *La Comédie Humaine,* and its most notorious dandy characters Lucien de Rubempré and Rastignac.

Morel who mechanically reiterates both the stock sounds that he performs, and the various teachings handed down to him by Charlus[647]:

> Une fois que je disais mon désir de me mettre au travail: 'Travaillez, devenez illustre, me dit-il. — De qui est cela? lui demandai-je. — De Fontanes à Chateaubriand.' Il connaissait aussi une correspondance amoureuse de Napoléon. Bien, pensai-je, il est lettré. Mais cette phrase, qu'il avait lue je ne sais pas où, était sans doute la seule qu'il connût de toute la littérature ancienne et moderne, car il me la répétait chaque soir.[648]

Unlike Venteuil or Elstir, he is not a "grand artiste" but a virtuoso – an executant like Villiers's Alicia, or E.T.A. Hoffmann's mechanical doll Olympia who, with the use of an instrument, reproduces someone else's work. Impersonation, becoming a copy of someone else, like performance, becomes for Morel his second nature, an unconscious neurotic impulse:

> Morel imitait Bergotte à ravir. Il n'y eut même plus besoin au bout de quelque temps de lui demander d'en faire une imitation. Comme ces hystériques qu'on n'est plus obligé d'endormir pour qu'ils deviennent telle ou telle personne, de lui-même il entrait tout d'un coup dans le personage.[649]

This later Morel of *Le Temps retrouvé* is a corrected version of an earlier one whom Charlus teaches to inhabit the composer, according to Compagnon:

> Charlus reprochait précisément au jeune homme de négliger le "côté médiumnique" de l'interprétation musicale. Le pianiste doit se conduire comme s'il était un medium placé sous le contrôle du compositeur lui-même, comme s'il réincarnait le compositeur: "Il faut jouer ça comme si vous le composiez."[650]

Morel's doll-like mechanicity and animal mimicry are reverberations of Odette's *bêtise*. In addition to being *bête*, Morel is also a brute.[651] Proust foremost accentuates Morel's

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[647] "Je sentis qu'il [Charlus] donnerait à Morel, merveilleusement doué pour le son et la virtuosité, précisément ce qui lui manquait, la culture et le style." RTP, IV, 343.
[648] Ibid., 420-1.
[649] Ibid., 278.
[650] Compagnon, 278; RTP, III, 398.
[651] According to Tadié, "Morel devient un personage de premier plan, dont Proust précise la fonction dans son article 'A propos de Baudelaire', publié par *La Nouvelle Revue française* en juin 1921: 'Cette 'liaison' entre Sodome et Gomorrhe que dans les dernières parties de mon ouvrage […] j'ai confiée à une brute, Charles Morel (ce sont du reste les brutes à qui ce rôle est d'habitude départi), il semble que Baudelaire s'y soit de lui-même 'affecté' d'une façon toute privilégiée […] Tout se passe alors comme si […] Morel, artiste lui aussi, avait fini par ressembler à

caricaturistically forceful energy and lack of culture, reminiscent of Zola's bovine Laurent. For that reason, Charlus, Morel's main mentor in sentimental education, laments: "Je vois du reste que vous ne savez rien. Si vous n'avez même pas lu Molière…"[652] On the other hand, taken literally, Morel is an untamed animal similar to Rachilde's Laure Lordès, prone to tenuous, intermittent slippages into humanity:

> Si, dans l'après-midi, j'avais vu la colère amoureuse d'un animal furieux, ce soir, en quelques heures, des siècles avaient passé, et un sentiment nouveau, un sentiment de honte, de regret et de chagrin, montrait qu'une grande étape avait été franchie dans l'évolution de la bête destinée à se transformer en créature humaine. Malgré tout j'entendais toujours "grand pied de grue" et je craignais une prochaine récurrence à l'état sauvage.[653]

Such reading *à la lettre* of Morel's *bêtise* and animality is pertinent, as Morel himself, like Odette and Villiers's Alicia, flattens metaphors, favoring surface over depth in his vision of the world, and in the way he constructs his persona:

> J'attribuai son changement d'attitude à l'influence de M. de Charlus, laquelle, en effet, le rendait, sur certains points, moins borné, plus artiste, mais sur d'autres, où il appliquait à la lettre les formules éloquentes, mensongères, et d'ailleurs momentanées, du maître, le bêtifiait encore davantage.[654]

Morel's cruelty toward his lovers, whatever their social standing or sex, is of Maldororian proportions and velocity. A fashionable poseur and Kierkegaardian seducer, he takes advantage of Jupien's niece, *couturière,* and the aristocratic Charlus, also nicknamed *couturière*.[655] Morel, like Odette, but also Albertine, is impossible to keep up with, and Charlus, the nineteenth-century dandy, "[h]abitué aux façons de Morel et sachant combien il avait peu de prise sur

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Baudelaire tel que Proust l'imaginait, c'est-à-dire, inverti, mais fasciné par l'homosexualité feminine, comme l'auteur des *Plaisirs et les jours*[.]' 888.

[652] RTP, IV, 399.
[653] RTP, III, 699.
[654] RTP, IV, 420.
[655] RTP, III, 713.

lui,"[656] is painfully aware of the fact. While telling Charlus of his plans to deflower Jupien's niece, Charlie already plans his escape: "L'épouser? Des nèfles! Je le promettrais, mais dès la petite opération menée à bien, je la plaquerais le soir même […] Je ferais mes malles d'avance et je ficherais le camp sans laisser l'adresse [.]" When Charlus asks him "Et moi?" Morel does not think twice before lying: "Je vous emmènerais avec moi, bien entendu', s'empressa de dire Morel qui n'avait pas songé à ce que deviendrait le baron, lequel était le cadet de ses soucis."[657] Similarly to Albertine, Morel is kept prisoner by his lovers (Charlus, his "garde du corps,"[658] being one of his obstacles to freedom) and constantly feels the need to change scenery. And the car is a perfect contemporary to Morel's generation symbol of getting away. Morel, together with Albertine, Andrée and the hero, is its most ardent enthusiast and promoter of the automobile. The four use the services of the same driver, but Morel is actually his friend: "Je sonnais, car c'était l'heure où Andrée allait venir avec le chauffeur, ami de Morel et fourni par les Verdurin, chercher Albertine."[659] This last circumstance drives Morel to precipitate a symbolic replacement of the Verdurin's nineteenth-century horse-drawn carriage, the *break*, with an automobile. His friend, of course, becomes the chauffeur, leaving the Verdurin's coachman, his predecessor, sadly unemployed.

At the end of the novel, a coward fugitive and a deserter, Morel ends up arrested, reinlists in the army, gets sent to the front, and returns, having escaped death, a decorated veteran: "Il s'y conduisit bravement, échappa à tous les dangers et revint, la guerre finie, avec la croix[.]"[660] Camus is especially relevant to Morel the careerist and survivor: "Quand les dandys ne se tuent

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[656] Ibid., 454.
[657] Ibid., 396-7.
[658] Ibid., 749.
[659] Ibid., 527.
[660] RTP, IV, 431-2.

pas ou ne deviennent pas fous, ils font carrière et posent pour la prospérité."[661] Morel, always an opportunist, always a rocambolesque shape-shifter, always comes up on top. Representing the twentieth-century take on mythology – not the decadent, pre-Raphaelite effete but a fit, Futurist, Art Deco warrior and unmistakably "buck" dandy male, Morel is solid, inorganic: "[C]omme le fragment d'une sculpture grecque – un aspect du visage de Morel, dur comme le marbre et beau comme l'antique, était enclos dans leur cervelle, avec ses cheveux en fleurs, ses yeux fins, son nez droit[.]"[662] The ancient statue's marble is updated with the steel of the car. Even if Morel slows down and settles as the story draws to a close, as the next section will show, like Albertine had done in her *prisonnière* era, for Morel there is no guarantee that this immobility will last.

4.2.3 The Incubation Period

In the volume *La Prisonnière*, Albertine is transplanted from the seascape of Balbec into closed space of the hero's Parisian apartment. From the active lifestyle of the band, she is transformed into a rose, the flower strongly associated with Odette: "Elles étaient devenues pour moi, obéissantes à mes caprices, de simples jeunes filles en fleurs, desquelles je n'étais pas médiocrement fier d'avoir cueilli, dérobé à tous, la plus belle rose."[663] The plant is dormant, and the protagonist spends many hours watching it:

> Étendue de la tête aux pieds sur mon lit, dans une attitude d'un naturel qu'on n'aurait pu inventer, je lui trouvais l'air d'une longue tige en fleur qu'on aurait disposée là; et c'était ainsi en effet: le pouvoir de rêver que je n'avais qu'en son absence, je le retrouvais à ces instants auprès d'elle, comme si en dormant elle était devenue une plante.[664]

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[661] Camus, 61.
[662] RTP, III, 702.
[663] RTP, III, 577.
[664] Ibid., 578.

For a moment, the hero is convinced of possessing her: "Elle n'était plus animée que de la vie inconsciente des végétaux, des arbres, vie plus différente de la mienne, plus étrange et qui cependant m'appartenait davantage."[665] In the following scene with necrophilic overtones, he moves from contemplation to caress and manipulation of sleeping Albertine's limp, unconscious body – a corpse, a mechanism ("une montre"), an animal, a climbing plant ("un volubilis"):

> Quand je revenais elle était endormie et je voyais devant moi cette autre femme qu'elle devenait dès qu'elle était entièrement de face. Mais elle changeait bien vite de personnalité car je m'allongeais à côté d'elle et la retrouvais de profil. Je pouvais mettre dans sa main, sur son épaule, sur sa joue, Albertine continuait de dormir comme une montre qui ne s'arrête pas, comme une bête qui continue de vivre quelque position qu'on lui donne, comme une plante grimpante, un volubilis qui continue de pousser ses branches quelque appui qu'on lui donne.[666]

The scene with its houseplants ("rosier à qui j'avais fourni le tuteur") is complete with domestic animals, all impersonated by Albertine. The alternation between images of a dog and a cat is symbolic of Albertine's ambiguity towards her "tuteur" – one minute, she is as fickle as a cat in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* and Rachilde's *L'Animale:*

> Toute la soirée elle avait pu, pelotonnée espièglement en boule sur mon lit, jouer avec moi comme une grosse chatte; son petit nez rose, qu'elle diminuait encore au bout avec un regard coquet qui lui donnait la finesse privilégiée de certaines personnes un peu grosses, avait pu lui donner une mine mutine et enflammée…[667]

Then, she is docile and patient as a dog: "Elle avait déjà eu un premier pressentiment de cela à Balbec, mais, à Paris, n'essaya même pas de résister et attendit patiemment chaque matin mon coup de sonnette pour oser faire du bruit."[668]

Albertine's docility is animalistic but also mechanical, artificial, like a pinned butterfly with eyes made of opal and wings – of mauve silk (the narrator borrows materials from his style

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[665] Ibid., 620.
[666] Ibid., 620.
[667] Ibid., 585.
[668] Ibid., 526.

tutor, Odette): "les yeux, comme dans un minerai d'opale […] faisaient apparaître, au milieu de la matière aveugle qui les surplombe, comme les ailes de soie mauve d'un papillon qu'on aurait mis sous verre[….]"[669] A reliable watch ("une montre qui ne s'arrête pas"),[670] she is equally a doll, with her full, waxy cheeks and opaque gaze: "[E]lle avait pu laisser tomber une mèche de ses longs cheveux noirs sur sa joue de cire rosée et, fermant à demi les yeux, décroisant les bras, avoir eu l'air de me dire: 'Fais de moi ce que tu veux.'"[671] When Albertine actually speaks, there is a resemblance to Odette's equivocal, mechanical responses. The following exchange between the hero and Albertine could have as well taken place between Odette and Swann: "À quoi pensez-vous, ma chérie? – Mais à rien."[672] As the word *bête* in French blurs the line between animality and human intelligence, it is very telling that both Swann and the narrator use it to show their frustration at the inability to understand their lovers' obscure language. Once again, the analogy can also be extended to Villiers's Alicia and E.T.A. Hoffmann's singing doll Olympia of *The Sandman* (1816).

When going out, Albertine gets ready in no time, as if she were not a woman but a robot:

> En une minute elle fut prête, avant que j'eusse pris mon paletot, et nous allâmes à Versailles. Cette rapidité même, cette docilité absolue me laissèrent plus rassuré, comme si en effet j'eusse eu, sans avoir aucun motif précis d'inquiétude, besoin de l'être. 'Tout de même, je n'ai rien à craindre, elle fait ce que je lui demande, malgré le bruit de la fenêtre de l'autre nuit. Dès que j'ai parlé de sortir, elle a jeté ce manteau bleu sur son peignoir et elle est venue[.][673]

The hero decides the level of dressiness for a given occasion, as if Albertine were not capable of differentiating between various social settings. The phrase "Il faudrait rentrer vous habiller" takes on an ambiguous meaning: who should be doing the dressing of Albertine, she or the hero?

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[669] Ibid., 884-5.
[670] Ibid., 620.
[671] Ibid., 585.
[672] Ibid., 886.
[673] Ibid., 906.

"Vous n'êtes pas assez habillée, il faudrait rentrer vous habiller, il serait bien tard. Oui, vous avez raison, rentrons tout simplement,' répondit Albertine, avec cette admirable docilité qui me stupéfiait toujours."[674] The hero is also the one giving orders to undress. The order is accompanied by information on the room's temperature, the thickness of the cloth and its value:

> Puisque vous êtes si gentille que de rester un peu à me consoler, vous devriez enlever votre robe, c'est trop chaud, trop raide, je n'ose pas vous approcher pour ne pas froisser cette belle étoffe et il y a entre nous ces oiseaux fatidiques. Désabillez-vous, mon chéri.[675]

According to the *Trésor de la langue française,* the word *mannequin* used to signify a figurine used as a model for a human body. For 1865, it registers another, more contemporary to Proust meaning of the term, in a *Journal* by the brothers Goncourt, meaning "jeune femme employée par un couturier pour la présentation des modèles de confection."[676] Albertine is both an inanimate figurine and a young model for the hero to try his visions on, as well as his ambitions of a fashion designer, c*réateur*. Richard W. Saunders points out that unlike Oriane de Guermantes, Albertine is a passive recipient of fashion represented by the Fortuny dresses:

> Subtly, the pliant and mechanical connotations of the latter empty the historic body of its substance. Like a professional model Albertine merely acquiesces in the imposition of an external identity according to the fantasy of the observer, in contrast to the Guermantes, for whom their self-chosen envelope of signifiers served rather to enhance or reveal, in the hero's view, a genuine indwelling signification.[677]

As Albertine performs a private fashion show in his bedroom, the description of her attitude contains a succession of images going from illusion to reality. At first, she is an Italian noblewoman, then a model, and finally a prisoner. The contrast between the impressions of the other "fashion show" back at Balbec is as striking as the contrast between the spaces where they

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[674] Ibid., 911.
[675] Ibid., 901.
[676] *Le trésor de langue française informatisé*. 2012 ed. Jacques Dendien, s.v. "mannequin." 20 September 2012. < http://atilf.atilf.fr/dendien/scripts/tlfiv5/visusel.exe?11;s=3091701090;r=1;nat=;sol=0;>.
[677] Saunders, 198.

are held. One happens in the most intimate and confined part of the house – the bedroom, while the other – *en plein air*, on the beach:

> Quelquefois même, en attendant que fussent achevées celles [robes de Fortuny] qu'elle désirait, je m'en faisais prêter quelques-unes, même parfois seulement des étoffes, et j'en habillais Albertine, je les drapais sur elle, elle se promenait dans ma chambre avec la majesté d'une dogaresse et d'un mannequin. Seulement, mon esclavage à Paris m'était rendu plus pesant par la vue de ces robes qui m'évoquaient Venise. Certes, Albertine était plus prisonnière que moi […] Ce n'était plus la même Albertine, parce qu'elle n'était pas, comme à Balbec, sans cesse en fuite sur sa bicyclette […][678]

This unusually passive dandy role played by Albertine, through the Pygmalion story, is revealing its own functioning as a necessary creation for an artist who can no longer find its subjects or objects in nature (hence the narrator's feeling of being imprisoned himself) or in the domain of representation. The dandy is the "creature" par excellence to a literary Frankenstein, be it Zola, D'Aurevilly, Villiers or Proust. To counter Saunder's argument, on the other hand, one might note that seen chronologically, Albertine's passive dandyism, unlike Odette's, and akin to Hadaly's robotic docility in Villiers, and Laurent's brute dormancy in Zola, is a period of apprenticeship or self-imposed incubation, followed by an awakening and a new set of metamorphoses. Albertine's docility is a conscious choice to cede to the hero, out of friendship and respect toward a mentor. She knows, however, that this slowing down is temporary: "Mais Albertine avait après d'affreux remords […] Puis son amitié pour vous était si grande qu'elle avait des scrupules. Mais il était bien certain que si jamais elle vous quittait elle recommencerait."[679]

While the hero feels entitled and obligated to teach Albertine about beauty and style, most of the time, he himself is still unsure of his authority on the subject. Similarly to Villiers's

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[678] RTP, III, 873.
[679] RTP, IV, 179-80.

Edison and Ewald, he reaches out to an army of "professeurs de beauté" outside the confined space of his apartment/laboratory. Through his inquiries about fashion, Oriane and Odette, who are not depicted in the same scene up until the *Bal de têtes* in *Le Temps retrouvé*, collaborate, without knowing it, as Albertine's style coaches:

> [E]lle portait quelqu'un des jolis peignoirs en crêpe de Chine, ou des robes japonaises dont j'avais demandé la description à Mme de Guermantes, et pour plusieurs desquelles certaines précisions supplémentaires m'avaient été fournies par Mme Swann.[680]

The makeover is also based on tips from male aesthetes – Elstir[681] and Charlus.[682] With everyone's help, the hero fashions a series of nesting-doll cages around Albertine – the outer shell being Paris, then the apartment, then the bedroom, and then the Fortuny *robe de chambre*. These outfits are meant to be worn indoors, but as soon as there is a comparison made to Bakst's costumes designed for Diaghilev's *Ballets russes*, an outlet to an exciting world beyond the bedroom is open:

> Or ces robes, […] étaient plutôt à la façon des décors de Sert, de Bakst et de Benois, qui en ce moment évoquaient dans les *Ballets russes* les époques d'art les plus aimées, à l'aide d'oeuvres d'art imprégnées de leur esprit et pourtant originales; ainsi les robes de Fortuny, fidèlement antiques mais puissamment originales, faisaient apparaître comme un décor, puisque le décor restait à imaginer, la Venise tout encombrée d'Orient où elles auraient été portées [.][683]

But it is the Fortuny gowns, while symbolizing imprisonment for both the narrator and Albertine and drawing inspiration from the past (Venice, Renaissance, theater, decadence), which actually announce the inevitable escape and mobility regained (innovative fabric, simple, aerodynamic

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[680] RTP, III, 571.
[681] Just like with Odette, Elstir plays an important role in Albertine's aesthetic formation: "C'est qu'en réalité, bien que cela ne se vît guère encore, elle était très intelligente et dans les choses qu'elle disait, la bêtise n'était pas sienne, mais celle de son milieu et de son âge. Elstir avait eu sur elle une influence heureuse mais partielle. Toutes les formes de l'intelligence n'étaient pas arrivées chez Albertine au même degré de développement." RTP, II, 239-40. "Albertine écoutait avec une attention passionnée ces détails de toilette, ces images de luxe que nous décrivait Elstir." Ibid., 252.
[682] Charlus gives Albertine advice on exotic (Russian *kakochnyk* hat) and theatrical (Fortuny) dress, RTP, III, 714-5.
[683] Ibid., 871.

silhouettes, and train travel): "La robe de Fortuny que portait ce soir-là Albertine me semblait comme l'ombre tentatrice de cette invisible Venise."[684]

4.2.4 Taking Flight

Gradually, Albertine becomes *une élégante*: "Certes, une femme élégante, Albertine peu à peu en devenait une"[685] – a metamorphosis for which her mentor, like Villiers's Edison, is quick to take credit:

> Ses belles jambes, que le premier jour j'avais imaginées avec raison avoir manoeuvré pendant toute son adolescence les pédales d'une bicyclette, montaient et descendaient tour à tour sur celles du pianola, où Albertine, devenue d'une élégance qui me la faisait sentir plus à moi, parce que c'était de moi qu'elle lui venait, posait ses souliers en toile d'or.[686]

Her feet, which used to push the pedals of a bicycle, are now trapped in golden slippers, barely moving while pushing the pedals of a piano to produce quiet chamber music. The tomboy who used to hold on to the handlebar, is now a delicate, saintly automaton: "Ses doigts jadis familiers du guidon se posaient maintenant sur les touches comme ceux d'une sainte Cécile."[687] Yet, the narrator corrects himself almost immediately, reversing his conclusion that despite all his efforts in training, Albertine is not entirely a work of his art:

> Mais ma chambre ne contenait-elle pas une œuvre d'art plus précieuse que toutes celles-là? C'était Albertine elle-même. Je la regardais. C'était étrange pour moi de penser que c'était elle, elle que j'avais crue si longtemps impossible même à connaître, qui aujourd'hui, bête sauvage domestiquée, rosier à qui j'avais fourni le tuteur, le cadre, l'espalier de la vie, était ainsi assise, chaque jour, chez elle, près de moi, devant le pianola, adossée à ma bibliothèque […] Mais non; Albertine

[684] Ibid., 895-6.
[685] Ibid., 572.
[686] Ibid., 884.
[687] Ibid., 884.

> n'était nullement pour moi une œuvre d'art. Je savais ce que c'était qu'admirer une femme d'une façon artistique – j'avais connu Swann.[688]

Encouraged by her aesthetic instructors, Albertine chooses her own palette. If Odette's signature hues are decadent mauve and pink, Albertine prefers metallic colors, just as gray – a uniformed, disciplined, "détachée de la vie" hue she picked up from Elstir's palette. Still, like Odette's dress, Albertine's is understatedly British rather than French, pointing further to their aesthetic *voisinage*. After all, the gray of Albertine's dress, on a closer inspection, reveals delicate iridescent hues of a Scottish plaid already used in the description of Odette's cravat:

> [P]our choisir des toilettes à Albertine, je m'inspirais du goût qu'elle s'était formé grace à Elstir, lequel appréciait beaucoup une sobriété qu'on eût pu appeler britannique s'il ne s'y était allié plus de douceur, de mollesse française. Le plus souvent les robes qu'il préférait offraient aux regards une harmonieuse combinaison de couleurs grises […] En effet, croissant sur sa jupe de crêpe de chine gris, sa jaquette de cheviotte grise laissait croire qu'Albertine était tout en gris. Mais me faisant signe de l'aider parce que ses manches bouffantes avaient besoin d'êtres aplaties ou relevées pour entrer ou retirer sa jaquette, elle ôta celle-ci, et comme ces manches étaient d'un écossais très doux, rose, bleu pâle, verdâtre, gorge-de-pigeon, ce fut comme si dans un ciel gris s'était formé un arc-en-ciel.[689]

The folding and unfolding of the puffy sleeves, with their allusion to wings, together with the color *gorge-de-pigeon*, add to Albertine's bird-like appearance. The toque hat – another signature element of Albertine's wardrobe given to her by the hero – completes the look. Also worn by Odette on several occasions, regardless of the modifications that the hat's style has sustained through time, it has always stayed a compact, brimless or narrow-brimmed hat that hugs the head snugly. It is often decorated with spiky feathers, making its wearer, symbolically and physically, more aerodynamic. As the toque is compared to the polo hat Albertine wore at Balbec when riding her bicycle, the link between two styles announces a possibility of

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[688] Ibid., 884-5.
[689] Ibid., 442.

movement in this new being: "On ira la prochaine fois, n'est-ce pas?" me disait-elle en me regardant de ses yeux noirs sur lesquels sa toque était abaissée comme autrefois son petit polo."[690] For Albertine, as for Odette and Colette Peignot's Laure, the accessories become implants, naturalized parts of her body:

> Tout autant que de ses membres, Albertine avait une conscience directe de sa toque de paille d'Italie et de l'écharpe de soie (qui n'étaient pas pour elle le siège de moindres sensations de bien-être), et recevait d'elles, tout en faisant le tour de l'église, un autre genre d'impulsion, traduite par un contentement inerte mais auquel je trouvais de la grâce; écharpe et toque qui n'étaient qu'une partie récente, adventice, de mon amie, mais qui m'était déjà chère [.][691]

Receiving gifts is not entirely passive, as it enables and symbolizes change and helps Albertine regain velocity. The silk scarf only adds to the image: like exhaust fumes of a car, it helps visualize the trajectory of the traveler.

Albertine alternates periods of creativity and dormancy, speed and voluntary stillness, all the way until her disappearance: "aussi ma jalousie se confinait-elle à une expression discontinue, à la fois fugitive et fixée, et aux êtres qui l'avaient amenée sur la figure d'Albertine."[692] The hero, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is jealous not so much of Albertine herself but of her pure speed, which he fails to dominate:

> [L]a parade du narrateur ne sera plus principalement celle d'un policier qui enquête, mais figure très différente, celle d'un geôlier: comment devenir maître de la vitesse, comment la supporter nerveusement comme une névralgie, perceptuellement comme un éclair, comment faire une prison pour Albertine? […] Car le narrateur, malgré des victoires partielles, échouera dans son projet qui n'était nullement de retrouver le temps ni de forcer la mémoire, mais de devenir maître des vitesses, au rythme de son asthme.[693]

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[690] Ibid., 403.
[691] Ibid., 402.
[692] Ibid., 655.
[693] Deleuze and Guattari, 333.

The hero's authority as the creator of the new Albertine is thus constantly threatened by flashbacks and sightings all over Paris of the traces of the little Balbec band on their winged bicycles:

> trois jeunes filles étaient assises à côté de l'arc immense de leurs bicyclettes posées à côté d'elles, comme trois immortelles accoudées au nuage ou au coursier fabuleux sur lesquels elles accomplissaient leurs voyages mythologiques. Je remarquais que chaque fois Albertine regardait un instant toutes ces filles avec une attention profonde et se retournait aussitôt vers moi […] Plus loin une autre fillette était agenouillée près de sa bicyclette qu'elle arrangeait. Une fois la réparation faite, la jeune coureuse monta sur sa bicyclette, mais sans l'enfourcher comme eût fait un homme. Pendant un instant la bicyclette tangua, et le jeune corps semblait s'être accru d'une voile, d'une aile immense et bientôt nous vîmes s'éloigner à toute vitesse la jeune créature mi-humaine, mi-ailée, ange ou péri, poursuivant son voyage.[694]

For the narrator haunted by Balbec, Albertine becomes a caged seagull:[695] "Parce que le vent de la mer ne gonflait plus ses vêtements, parce que, surtout, je lui avais coupé les ailes, elle avait cessé d'être une Victoire, elle était une pesante esclave dont j'aurais voulu me débarrasser."[696] Albertine too looks nostalgically back at Balbec but at the same time, she is no longer part of the seascape – she is a new being who starts to take initiative and express her own aesthetic desires. Here, for example, she joins the lineage of collectors in the novel – Swann, Charlus, Odette, Oriane, and the hero himself:

> Je savais qu'Albertine avait lu la description des merveilles que Roettiers avait faites pour Mme du Barry. Elle mourait d'envie, s'il en existait encore quelques pièces, de les voir, moi de les lui donner. Elle avait même commencé de jolies collections qu'elle installait avec un goût charmant dans une vitrine et que je ne pouvais regarder sans attendrissement et sans crainte car l'art avec lequel elle les disposait était celui d'oublier, auquel se livrent les captifs.[697]

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[694] RTP, III, 675-8.
[695] "Elle était si bien encagée que certains soirs même, je ne faisais pas demander qu'elle quittât sa chambre pour la mienne, elle que jadis tout le monde suivait, que j'avais tant de peine à rattraper filant sur sa bicyclette et que le liftier même ne pouvait pas me ramener, ne me laissant guère d'espoir." Ibid., 576.
[696] Ibid., 873.
[697] Ibid., 871.

The apartment in Paris for Albertine becomes as stifling as the atmosphere of Edison's lab in Villiers's *L'Ève future*, which the miraculously animated android feels ready to leave behind. The narrator is surprised at the transformation in Albertine. She, in turn, thanks her mentor:

> Elle était devenue extrêmement intelligente. Elle disait, en se trompant d'ailleurs: "Je suis épouvantée en pensant que sans vous je serais restée stupide. Ne le niez pas, vous m'avez ouvert un monde d'idées que je ne soupçonnais pas, et le peu que je suis devenue, je ne le dois qu'à vous.[698]

Her docility seems to hide, however, some kind of mystery or a hidden motive:

> Mais j'hésitai un instant, car le bord bleu de la robe ajoutait à son visage une beauté, une illumination, revint lentement et me dit avec beaucoup de douceur et toujours le même visage abattu et triste: "Je peux rester tant que vous voudrez, je n'ai pas sommeil." Sa réponse me calma car, tant qu'elle était là, je sentais que je pouvais aviser à l'avenir, et elle recelait aussi de l'amitié, de l'obéissance, mais d'une certaine nature, et qui me semblait avoir pour limite ce secret que je sentais derrière son regard triste, ses manières changées, moitié malgré elle, moitié sans doute pour les mettre d'avance en harmonie avec quelque chose que je ne savais pas.[699]

Albertine's awakening is both brought about by her wild side, but also plainly out of financial necessity, joining other dandies (mostly Odette and Morel) burdened with modest origins. An orphan with no safety net, she cannot get enough of food and luxury. Driven by this hunger, Albertine's rebellion manifests itself in various ways. First, it is her sudden cravings for street food caused by an unusually warm day in the middle of Parisian winter. The vendors' chants, with their simple, free-flowing, melodious sales pitches sound contagious. She raises her voice too, demanding this noise be transformed into her next meal:

> Oh! s'écria Albertine, des choux, des carottes, des oranges. Voilà rien que des choses que j'ai envie de manger. Faites-en acheter par Françoise. Elle fera les carottes à la crème. Et puis ce sera gentil de manger tout ça ensemble. Ce sera ces bruits que nous entendons, transformés en un bon repas […] C'est dit, je pars,

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[698] Ibid., 572-3.
[699] Ibid., 901.

> mais je ne veux plus jamais pour nos dîners que des choses dont nous aurons entendu le cri.[700]

Albertine, similarly to Françoise, an unrivaled artist in the kitchen who transforms simple ingredients into magical dishes, transforms sound bites coming from the street into her own poetic concoction. The violent burst of energy delivered in one long breath, the originally sequenced images, places, frank colors and textures, the dizzying contrasts in scale and speed, – all resemble Lautréamont's language, as she talks about something as mundane as ice cream.[701] As Albertine speaks, she turns herself into a destructive giant. Buildings, surreal landscapes appear and vanish, children perish in avalanches started by her *langue* – literally, her tongue, and figuratively, her language:

> Pour les glaces (car j'espère que vous ne m'en commanderez que prises dans ces moules démodés qui ont toues les formes d'architecture possible), toutes les fois que j'en prends, temples, églises, obélisques, rochers, c'est comme une géographie pittoresque que je regarde d'abord et dont je convertis ensuite les monuments de framboise ou de vanille en fraîcheur dans mon gosier […] Ces pics de glace du Ritz ont quelquefois l'air du mont Rose, et même si la glace est au citron je ne déteste parce qu'elle n'ait pas de forme monumentale, qu'elle soit irrégulière, abrupte, comme une montage d'Elstir. Il ne faut pas qu'elle soit trop blanche alors, mais un peu jaunâtre, avec cet air de neige sale et blafarde qu'ont les montagnes d'Elstir. La glace a beau ne pas être grande, qu'une demi-glace si vous voulez, ces glaces au citron-là sont tout de même des montagnes réduites, à une échelle toute petite, mais l'imagination rétablit les proportions comme pour ces petits arbres japonais nains qu'on sent très bien être tout de même des cèdres, des chênes, des mancenilliers, si bien qu'en en plaçant quelques-uns le long d'une petite rigole, dans ma chambre, j'aurais une immense forêt descendant vers un fleuve et où les petits enfants se perdraient. De même, au pied de ma demi-glace jaunâtre au citron, je vois très bien des postillons, des voyageurs, des chaises de poste sur lesquels ma langue se charge de faire rouler de glaciales avalanches qui les engloutiront […] de même, ajouta-t-elle, que je me charge avec mes lèvres de détruire, pilier par pilier, ces églises vénitiennes d'un porphyre qui est de la fraise et de faire tomber sur les fidèles ce que j'aurai épargné. Oui, tous ces monuments

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[700] Ibid., 634-5.
[701] This image also bears striking resemblance to the narrator's description of Combray coming out of his cup of tea in *Du côté de chez Swann*. RTP, I, 47.

> passeront de leur place de pierre dans ma poitrine où leur fraîcheur fondante palpite déjà.[702]

The narrator is taken aback – where is this "trop bien dit" language coming from? "Et alors elle me répondit par ces paroles qui me montrèrent en effet combien d'intelligence et de goût latent s'étaient brusquement développés en elle depuis Balbec[.]"[703] In fact, Albertine is repeating the rhetorics of the hero through mimicry. Like Morel the soulless virtuoso, she is a "talking doll". As the hero realizes, the danger of Albertine's way with language lies not only in her poetic and aesthetic sensibilities, but also in her opacity about her life outside their relationship. When reflecting on her lies, the narrator sees a monstrous flower of evil, reminiscent of the deceitful Evelyn Habal in *L'Ève future*:

> Et ces charmes qui, pour m'irriter, matérialisaient ainsi les parties nocives, dangereuses, mortelles, d'un être, étaient-ils avec ces secrets poisons dans un rapport de cause à effet plus direct que ne le sont la luxuriance séductrice et le suc empoisonné de certaines fleurs vénéneuses?[704]

Whether a deliberate choice or a result of an editing slip, Albertine's inconsistent eye color – dark (*noir*) in *Sodome et Gomorrhe*,[705] blue in *La Prisonnière*[706] – comments yet again on Albertine's elusive, nonhuman nature. Cameleontic lying is for her, like for Morel, half deliberate, half instinctive, and the narrator, along with accusations ("dans toute sa hideur") tries to understand and explain this behavior: "N'était-ce pas en effet, malgré toutes les dénégations de ma raison, connaître dans toute sa hideur Albertine, que la choisir, l'aimer?"[707] The words "fuyant", "prudent", "fourbe", "habile", and "ruse" in the following example are doing just that:

> cet être fuyant, prudent et fourbe, dont la présence se prolongeait de tant de rendez-vous qu'elle était habile à dissimuler, qui la faisaient aimer parce qu'ils

[702] RTP, III, 636-7.
[703] Ibid., 635.
[704] RTP, IV, 190.
[705] RTP, III, 403.
[706] Ibid., 528.
[707] RTP, IV, 190.

> faisaient souffrir, que sous sa froideur avec les autres et ses réponses banales, on sentait le rendez-vous de la veille et celui du lendemain, et pour moi cerné de dédain et de ruse.[708]

Similarly to Colette Peignot, Albertine's feeling of imprisonment is often counteracted by a fleeting image conveyed to a large extent through love of speed and sports (in case of Peignot, her illness is her prison). Peignot's and Albertine's beauty and attractiveness lie in their illusiveness and movement:

> Pour comprendre les émotions qu'ils donnent et que d'autres êtres, même plus beaux, ne donnent pas, il faut calculer qu'ils sont non pas immobiles, mais en mouvement, et ajouter à leur personne un signe correspondant à ce qu'en physique est le signe qui signifie vitesse.[709]

Such descriptions of Albertine create the impression of a hybrid creature, part human, part animal, part machine.[710] Like Peignot, she embodies the elements of a mythical centaur and a charioteer projected into modernity. According to Proust's *Cahier 54,* in a scene not included in the final draft, Albertine joins the coachman on the front seat during one of the promenades: "Albertine n'y était pas 'assise au fond de la voiture à côté de moi' mais debout, 'montée sur le siège à côté du cocher."[711] Centaurs of different eras come together in a sequence where, having just spoken with Charlus and Morel, and gone on a car promenade with Albertine, like a true romantic hero straight out of E.T.A. Hoffmann, Georges Sand or Théophile Gautier, the protagonist goes on a lone, melancholy horse ride. Between the earth and the sky, ancient Greek

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[708] RTP, III, 873.
[709] Ibid., 599.
[710] Compagnon goes as far as to compare *La Recherche* to a machine when discussing Proust's connections between organic and inorganic worlds: "[I]l faut se demander si Proust est vraiment dupe de l'équivoque qu'il entretient à plaisir entre l'organique et le mécanique, entre le vitalisme et le machinisme. […] A mi-chemin du cygne et de l'aéroplane, de la nature et de l'artifice, c'était à un 'pigeon voyageur', c'est-à-dire à un animal-machine, que Proust se comparait en 1913, à la recherche de lois générales et non des details minutieux. Cette belle machine qu'est la *Recherche du temps perdu* […]", 51-2.
[711] *Notes*, *Albertine Disparue*, Paris: Folio Classique, Gallimard, 1988, 317.

mythology (as interpreted by Gustave Moreau) and the technology of tomorrow (the airplane and its angelic pilot), fantasy and science fiction, he imagines meeting a Centaur:

> [J]'avais reconnu le paysage montagneux et marin qu'Elstir a donné pour cadre à ces deux admirables aquarelles, 'Poète rencontrant une Muse", "Jeune homme rencontrant un Centaure", que j'avais vu chez la duchesse de Guermantes. Leur souvenir replaçait les lieux où je me trouvais tellement en dehors du monde actuel que je n'aurais pas été étonné si, comme le jeune homme de l'âge antéhistorique que peint Elstir [Gustave Moreau], j'avais au cours de ma promenade croisé un personnage mythologique. Tout à coup mon cheval se cabra; il avait entendu un bruit singulier, j'eus peine à le maîtriser et à ne pas être jeté à terre, puis je levai vers le point d'où semblait venir ce bruit mes yeux pleins de larmes, et je vis à une cinquantaine de mètres au-dessus de moi, dans le soleil, entre deux grandes ailes d'acier étincelant qui l'emportaient, un être dont la figure peu distincte me parut ressembler à celle d'une homme. Je fus aussi ému que pouvait l'être un Grec qui vouait pour la première fois un demi-dieu. Je pleurais aussi, car j'étais prêt à pleurer du moment que j'avais reconnu que le bruit venait d'au-dessus de ma tête – les aéroplanes étaient encore rares à cette époque – à la pensée que ce que j'allais voir pour la première fois c'était un aéroplane.[712]

As Albertine disappears, the hero idealizes her by remembering her as a mythical, immortal ("Jamais elle n'y avait été plus vivante.")[713] deity fit for the twentieth century, on her own horse, – the bicycle. Like the airplane, the bicycle is made of steel and rubber. In the two passages below, the antiquity of the "roue mythologique", "la tunique guerrière," mixed with the Rachildian decadence of a "tête enturbannée et coiffée de serpents"), are brought up to speed with modernity. Both Albertine's mythical status, and aerodynamic materials lift her, turning her into a terror-reining Maldoror. Albertine is one with the machine, as the rubber of the bicycle wheels blends with the *caoutchouc* of her riding outfit:

> Comment m'avait-elle paru morte, quand maintenant pour penser à elle je n'avais à ma disposition que les mêmes images dont, quand elle était vivante, je revoyais l'une ou l'autre: rapide et penchée sur la roue mythologique de sa bicyclette, sanglée les jours de pluie sous la tunique guerrière de caoutchouc qui faisait

[712] RTP, III, 416-7.
[713] RTP, IV, 60.

> bomber ses seins, la tête enturbannée et coiffée de serpents, elle semait la terreur dans les rues de Balbec [.][714]

In another version of the same description found in *Cahier 46* and pointed out by Compagnon, Proust makes an allusion to Saint George – a figure used in the description of Barbey's *diabolique* Hauteclaire, as well as by Proust himself in his description of Odette's entourage as she rides her Victoria carriage. Albertine-Saint George is clad in metal:

> Ce caoutchouc, matière à la fois souple et qui semblait durcie partout où elle fait de belles cassures, lui faisait aux genoux de nobles jambières qui semblaient en métal, comme dans Saint Georges de Mantegna, mettait sur sa tête un bonnet aux longues cornes de même qu'il faisait courir des espèces de surfaix autour de sa poitrine profondément cachée comme sous une armure, sous un couvert impénétrable. Les gens se rangeaient effrayés et disaient qu'il se plaindraient au maire qu'on allât avec cette vitesse. [715]

While varying in detail, all renditions of the scene are consistent in that they keep one material emphasized: *caoutchouc.* Whenever mentioned, it is linked to speed, release of tension, travel or mobility. The material keeps the hero's fashion-forward feet dry in his American rubber boots ("[La princesse de Parme] me voyait chaussant mes caoutchoucs américains […] 'Grâce à cela, vous n'aurez rien à craindre, même s'il reneige et si vous allez loin; il n'y a plus de saison,"[716]), and it gives the wheels of Odette's carriage the ability to glide through Paris stealthily ("les roues caoutchoutées donnaient au pas des chevaux un fond de silence"[717]). As the hero mourns Albertine, he sees her as a queen, like Odette: "Fugitive parce que reine, c'est ainsi"[718] or as an unapproachable deity donned in armor: "Jamais je n'avais caressé l'Albertine encaoutchoutée des jours de pluie, je voulais lui demander d'ôter cette armure, ce serait connaître avec elle

[714] Ibid., 69.
[715] RTP, III, 1089-90.
[716] RTP, II, 835.
[717] RTP,I, 582.
[718] RTP, IV, 9.

l'amour des camps, la fraternité du voyage."[719] Compagnon underscores an even stronger association of Albertine with speed in one of Proust's drafts where she becomes "une sorte de symbole de voyage."[720] He also brings together androgyny and the rubber's pliability as the perfect symbols for Proustian "entre deux" poetics:

> [I]l ["caoutchouc"] désigne pourtant l'objet poétique pas excellence. D'une matière intermédiaire entre la chair et le fer, empruntant à l'une et à l'autre, ni dur ni mou, à la fois souple et rigide, froid et chaud, défensif et attrayant, le caoutchouc, qui transporte les qualités, est la matière même de la métaphore, en tout cas de la métaphore proustienne, dont Gérard Genette a montré l'attache métonymique dans une liaison de contenu à contenant. Matière au demeurant stérile, comme le rappelle Proust, et en ce sens emblématique de l'androgyne [.][721]

An even faster and more modern androgyne-centaur than the hybrid between a human and a bicycle is implied by Albertine's love of the sea (yachting) and driving. Albertine, like Colette Peignot, becomes obsessed with cars, the new fashion that comes with it, and their combined ability to transform the body:

> Comme j'aimerais être riche pour avoir un yacht! dit-elle au peintre. Je vous demanderais des conseils pour l'aménager. Quels beaux voyages je ferais! Et comme ce serait joli d'aller aux régates de Cowes! Et une automobile! Est-ce que vous trouvez que c'est joli, les modes des femmes pour les automobiles?[722]

While dreaming about a car, Albertine becomes one, with her eyes likened to the headlights:

> Elle me parlait aussi de ces promenades qu'elle avait faites avec des amies dans la campagne hollandaise, de ses retours le soir à Amsterdam, à des heures tardives, quand une foule compacte et joyeuse de gens qu'elle connaissait presque tous emplissait les rues, les bords des canaux, dont je croyais voir se refléter dans les yeux brillants d'Albertine, comme dans les glaces incertaines d'une rapide voiture, les feux innombrables et fuyants.[723]

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[719] Ibid., 70-1.
[720] RTP, III, 1089, *Cahier* 46, f58v and 94r.
[721] Compagnon, 116-8.
[722] RTP, II, 254.
[723] RTP, III, 886-7.

The already mentioned toque hat is given to Albertine right before their first car ride together.[724] Both lovers are thrilled by the novelty ("ces voitures étaient assez rares à Balbec"[725]) and acceleration.[726] Because they embrace the novelty of driving before the rest, the maître d'hôtel at Balbec promptly acknowledges that superiority by upgrading Albertine to the status of a "princesse":

> [C]'est justement Mademoiselle Simonet, et Monsieur, qui te commande de lever ta capote, est justement ton patron […] T'en conduirais bien tous les jours, hein! Si tu pouvais, des princesses comme ça![727]

In *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, Albertine realizes that by jumping into a car, she, like Maldoror or "le géant aux bottes de sept lieues," can conquer distances[728]:

> c'était facile d'aller dans une même après-midi à Saint Jean et à La Raspelière. Douville et Quetteholme, Saint-Mars-le-Vieux et Saint-Mars-le-Vêtu, Gourville et Balbec-le-Vieux, Tourville et Féterne, prisonniers aussi hermétiquement enfermés jusque là dans la cellule de jours distincts, […] délivrés maintenant par le géant aux bottes de sept lieues[…] [729]

The possibility of releasing of all these places from the prison of time is a reflection on Albertine's soon-to-become-prisoner situation, as well as on eventual escape from it. Albertine's fate is at once that of Collette Peignot, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *andréïde*, Zola's Thérése Raquin and other rogue creatures, who are fast driven to premature death: "Tout cela qui n'était pour moi que souvenir avait été pour elle action, action précipitée, comme celle d'une tragédie, vers une mort rapide."[730]

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[724] Albertine's interest in cars, boats and planes is likely to be inspired by Proust's personal driver, secretary, and a love interest, Alfred Agostinelli. Tadié mentions Mallarmé's sonnet that "… le Narrateur inscrit sur le yacht d'Albertine, et Marcel sur l'avion d'Agostinelli." (Paris: Éditions Gallimard Folio Classique, 1996), 309.
[724] RTP, III, 384.
[725] Ibid., 384.
[726] Ibid., 385.
[727] Ibid., 385.
[728] Other, more ancient, mythical figures in winged shoes known for their speed are the Greek gods Hermès and Athena. Botticelli's painting *Pallas and the Centaur* (Uffizi, Florence, c.1482).
[729] RTP, III, 385-6.
[730] RTP, IV, 81.

The next and last step in Albertine's acceleration, already brought up in her description as a mythical creature on a bicycle, is flying. Likened on many occasions to a bird, she also develops a passion for aviation: "j'aimais souvent qu'à la fin de la journée le but de nos sorties – agréable d'ailleurs à Albertine, passionnée pour tous les sports – fût un de ces aérodromes."[731] It is not a coincidence that the couple's last outing is a trip to the airfield outside Paris in Versailles. As if pointing to her imminent departure, she tries to draw the hero's attention to an airplane in the sky. He does not take the hint, confusing the machine for an insect, "C'était comme le bourdennement d'une guêpe. 'Tiens, me dit Albertine, il y a un aéroplane, il est très haut, très haut'.''[732] Images of winged creatures – birds, planes, angels – will haunt the hero for a long time after Albertine is gone. While on a trip from Venice to Padua, he visits the Arena Chapel decorated by Giotto. A bright, expansive sky-blue ceiling inside this intimately small structure has an emotionally unsettling effect on him. All of a sudden, the angels in *The Lamentation* scene look at once like extinct birds ("une variété disparue d'oiseaux") and young pilots ("[des] jeunes élèves de Garros").[733] Fittingly, the paragraph following the description of Giotto's frescoes describes an encounter in Venice with a young woman who brings back the memory of Albertine.

A bicyclist, a driver, a yachter, and an aviator, Albertine is fully projected into the world of the 1920s. Together with Morel, Albertine brings Odette's "entre deux siècles" self-fashioning into the twentieth century while leaving behind such nineteenth-century dandies as Oriane de Guermantes, Charles Swann, and Baron de Charlus. A brand-new wardrobe and vocabulary are needed for this new, physically fit and "fast" generation. Albertine, Morel – still a loose cannon

[731] RTP, III, 612-3.
[732] Ibid., 907.
[733] RTP, IV, 227.

at the end of the war, and ultimately, the youngest character of the novel, Mlle de Saint-Loup, whose demeanor and appearance betray a budding dandy, bridge Proust's fin de siècle with the time of the youngest author and dandy in this project, Colette Peignot.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Even though this dissertation stops with Proust and Peignot, it could be easily projected into the future, as the dandy shows no sign of slowing down his constant processes of becoming. In her already mentioned study, Jessica Feldman states that "[d]andies are skeptics who demand that their audiences recognize their status as human signifiers, freely moving about in a world that is always textual."[734] For the twentieth-century dandy, this constant search for affirmation translates into a set of important updates and adjustments, brought about mostly by the innovations of media technology. Like posthumanism, which as a theoretical discourse is found at the crossroads of various disciplines within the humanities, my conception of the dandy as posthuman also allows this figure to work as a mediation between literature and popular culture. It comes to no surprise, then, that this new dandy opts for migrating to ever-new operating systems.

In the twentieth century, the book, the main medium of exposure for the nineteenth-century dandy, found a new competitor – the cinema, and already in the 1930s, the border between the literary contours of this figure and the cinema star was starting to fray. The dandy being a figure of visibility but also of innovation, which literally thrives in the limelight, the screen becomes a much more enticing option for a detailed description of their persona than the intimacy and labor of writing and reading. As Rhonda Garelick sustains in *Rising Star:*

[734] Feldman, 5.

Dandyism, Dender, and the Performance in the Fin de Siècle, "It was inevitable that dandyism should merge with the culture industry, an apparatus designed to disseminate the charismatic personality."[735]

The "fast" dandy, at it has been shown with Villiers, Peignot, and Proust, is ahead of everybody else in attaching to, absorbing, and commenting on the latest technologies, or any other fashionable cultural production. The paradox is that this quest for ever more energy-efficient options of becoming more visible coexists with the enduring desire to "become imperceptible" in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, or even "disappear" in Schiffer's terms. The cinema satisfies both of these desires, as it simultaneously gives the dandy that new mirror, condensing everything in the body of the performer and thus making it more present, and yet, rendering it intangible. Instead of words on a printed page, the dandy can exist in cinema as a fleeting optical illusion projected on the silver screen.

While already in the early 1800s, Lord Byron was considered the first literary celebrity, it is not until after the World War II that we see dandy fully implicated in the world of fame. As I anticipated in my introduction, it is one of these celebrities, Albert Camus, who in *L'homme révolté* (1951), by framing the Romantic dandy as an oppositional figure, also speaks from the point of view of an era when the idea of stardom and performance is already formed. Now, the new mirror for the new dandy is no longer the movie screen, but also the audience itself. More than ever, the dandy needs to keep in shape, faced with an equally fickle and fast-moving public ("Miroir vite obsurci, il est vrai, car la capacité de l'homme est limitée") always on the lookout for new sensations, idols, and thrills:

> 'Vivre et mourir devant un miroir,' telle était, selon Baudelaire, la devise du dandy [….] Dissipé en tant que personne privée de règle, il sera cohérent en tant

[735] Garelick, 154.

> que personnage. Mais un personnage suppose un public; le dandy ne peut se poser qu'en s'opposant. Il ne peut s'assurer de son existence qu'en la retrouvant dans le visage des autres. Les autres sont le miroir. Miroir vite obscurci, il est vrai, car la capacité d'attention de l'homme est limitée. Elle doit être réveillée sans cesse, éperonnée par la provocation. Le dandy est donc forcé d'étonner toujours [….] Toujours en rupture, en marge, il force les autres à le créer lui-même, en niant leurs valeurs. Il joue sa vie, faute de pouvoir la vivre.[736]

As a movie star, the dandy literally acts life out ("joue sa vie"), while it is more and more up to the public to serve as a witness to his or her performance. Like any celebrity, the dandy is designated as such by someone else.

Along with the younger generation of Proustian heroes who engage in a lifestyle of sports, driving, and aviation, there is a real-life contemporary and a fellow dandy, Jean Cocteau (1889 – 1963). Indeed, the young Cocteau was the inspiration for Octave, one of *La Recherche*'s most peculiar secondary dandy characters. Portrayed at first as an utterly superficial gigolo and a gambler,[737] Octave, like Morel, undergoes a metamorphosis in the eyes of the narrator by settling down and getting married. The twist, of course, is that this marriage is a camouflage for yet another symbiotic coupling, since the bride is none other than the shady "dandy femelle," Andrée. Another twist is that Octave, much like Cocteau, turns out to be an aesthetic visionary and writer "de génie."[738] Like Octave, Cocteau writes, but there is so much more to his creative output. Extremely flexible in his artistic interests, Cocteau undergoes multiple aesthetic mutations, or, as he calls them, "mues" – snake-like moltings – "the discarding of old tastes for new[.]"[739] The ultimate molting for Cocteau is, expectedly, his spectacular death:

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[736] Camus, 59-60.
[737] "Joli Monsieur! dont ils qualifiaient un jeune gommeux, fils poitrinaire et fêtard d'un grand industriel et qui, tous les jours dans un veston nouveau, une orchidée à la boutonnière, déjeunait au champagne, et allait, pâle, impassible, un sourire d'indifférence aux lèvres, jeter au Casino sur la table de baccara des sommes énormes [.]" RTP, II, 38.
[738] RTP, III, 186.
[739] Francis Steegmuller, "Jean Cocteau: 1889-1963." *Cocteau and the French Scene* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 17.

> Jean Cocteau lived to be seventy-two [….] His intimates agreed that 'he never seemed old'; and when he died, to the accompaniment of the usual publicity, in 1963, one can imagine him saying of that supreme event, which came in the form of a heart attack, that it was merely the last, and grandest, of his 'moultings."[740]

While Cocteau's artistic versatility is remarkable, there is a definite penchant for visual, decorative, and performance arts. He is an illustrator, a set, fashion, and interior designer, a photographer, a draftsman, and an author of numerous librettos and scripts for the theater, ballet, opera, and film. The most remarkable way of seeing Cocteau's aesthetic engagement in a transition from words and painting to the movies is to consider his active role in the making of a screen adaptation of his 1929 novel *Les Enfants terribles* (1950). In a commentary to the 2007 Criterion Collection DVD of the film, Gilbert Adair points out the creative tension between Cocteau and the director Jean-Pierre Melville on the set and behind the movie camera. Adair goes on to insist that the result unmistakably reflects Cocteau's, and not Melville's, aesthetics.

The path of Antonin Artaud (1896 –1948) goes even further in attesting to the twentieth-century dandy's push for visibility onstage and on the screen. Artaud, unlike Cocteau, who is rarely seen in the picture, actually becomes an actor. Enigmatic and handsome, he is best known for his performances as the monk Massieu in Carl Theodor Dryer's silent film *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928), Savonarola in Abel Gance's *Lucrèce Borgia* (1935), and Marat in *Napoléon Bonaparte* (1935). Artaud, while stressing the importance of the body in his drawings, as well as in cinematic and theatrical engagements, calls for its complete reworking through raw, Maldoror-like "'athleticism', [and] 'appetite for life'."[741] With his concept of the *Théâtre de la Cruauté*, Artaud envisions a new kind of performance, where words are secondary, and the

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[740] Ibid., 36.
[741] Edward Scheer, ed., *Antonin Artaud A critical reader* (London : Routledge, 2003), 3.

visceral aspects – facial expressions and the voice – are pushed to the limits of their affective capacities:

> In Artaud's perception, the human body is a wild, flexible but flawed instrument that is still in the process of being forged. The body suffers malicious robberies (by society, family and religion) which leave it fixed and futile, smothered to the point of a terminal incoherence and inexpressivity. Throughtout his life, Artaud worked through ideas and images which explore the explosion of that useless body into a deliriously dancing, new body, with an infinite capacity for self-transformation [….] In particular, his drawings of the human face – the only remaining authentic element of the anatomy for Artaud – endeavor to obliterate the body's weaknesses and to return it to a vivid manifestation of turbulent movement and experiental existence. The facial features in his drawings – hard bones and concentrated eyes – challenge and reformulate the visual world[.][742]

Remarkably, Deleuze and Guattari borrow Artaud's expression "le corps sans organes" – the Body without Organs – from his 1947 radio play *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu* for the sixth chapter of *Mille Plateaux*, "28 novembre 1947 – Comment se faire un Corps sans Organes?". Reading those pages, it becomes clear that the concept of *becoming* and the *Body without Organs* are tightly related: in fact, the former is the process of altering the human body in order for it to mutate into the latter – an artificial, posthuman, and postorganic reality. As my analyses of the becoming dandy demonstrate, this mutation can never be fully realized, and Artaud's life and art are testaments to this paradox: "The residue of his life's trajectory is fierce and volatile. It appears as the burning light of a constellation of dead stars."[743]

Further still into the twentieth century, the show and music business industry provides yet another venue for the dandy's performances. Multitalented and unstoppable like Cocteau, Boris Vian (1920 –1959) was, according to James Campbell, "in the vanguard of everything he turned

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[742] Scheer, 3.
[743] Stephen Barber, *Antonin Artaud: Blows and Bombs* (London : Faber and Faber, 2003), 1.

his hand to, and he turned his hand to everything."[744] Formally trained in mathematics and philosophy, Vian was an engineer, and an amateur auto mechanic, "restor[ing] old cars and carr[ying] out metamorphoses in their design."[745] In the 1940s, he became known for his novels, densely populated by dandy characters, such as *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* (1946) and *L'Écume des jours* (1947). A decade later, Vian turned to jazz and songwriting, performing songs whose titles, such as "Le Déserteur" and "Je suis snob", perfectly represent his investment in different aspects of the dandy ethical-esthetical project. Vian's stage presence was a major inspiration for Serge Gainsbourg, a further incarnation of the dandy whose constantly mutating persona kept mesmerizing and shocking the public from the 1960s all the way till his death in 1991.

And indeed, if one had to look for a becoming dandy of today, one might look no further than Charlotte Gainsbourg, the daughter of Serge, "l'homme du devenir", and of the "It" girl of the sixties, Jane Birkin. By now a full-fledged celebrity in her own right, an actress and a singer, Charlotte is revered in France and abroad for, among other things, her imperceptible, vulnerable *élégance anglaise*. She is perfectly bilingual, having been born in London and brought up in Paris – still two capitals of dandyism up to this day, alongside New York and Tokyo. She has been explicitly linked to the iconic Romantic dandy featured in Alfred de Musset's *Confessions d'un enfant du siècle* since, together with the controversial British rock star Pete Doherty in the role of Octave, she plays his mistress in a 2012 film adaptation of the novel. She is also fully marked by the decadent version of dandyism, because after having grown up in her father's apartment at 5 bis rue Verneuil, she is now the inheritor and caretaker of the place, whose décor

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[744] James Campbell, *Exiled in Paris: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett, and Others on the Left Ba*nk (New York: Scribner, 2003), 240.
[745] Ibid, 240.

comes straight out of Huysmans, with dark felt and mirrors on the walls, and a mink fur on the bed.[746]

Like her father, Charlotte still likes to *épater le bourgeois*, an art that she learned at age thirteen, when she appeared as a child in Serge's scandalous video "Lemon Incest." Attentive to money, just like any good dandy, Charlotte does not shy away from "prostituting" her talents, by occasionally taking on romantic comedy roles. Whether being part of a blockbuster or an independent drama, her acting style is consistently "emotionally minimal."[747] A fetish actress of the controversial *enfant terrible* Lars von Trier, in her late 30s she gave a memorably disturbing performance as a psychotic mother incapable of grieving the death of her son in a 2009 horror film *Antichrist*. Charlotte's character identified as a "She", just as violent as Maldoror and self-mutilating like Laure, goes through a purely animal erasure of self. In a scene visualizing the woman's becoming, "He", the husband, played by Willem Dafoe, goes searching for her into the woods, stumbling upon an eviscerated fox instead. The digitally manipulated animal utters "Chaos reigns" in a deliberately dramatic human voice.

If this were not enough, the story of Charlotte's personal brush with death has added to her public image a definite posthuman aura. In 2007, she endured a sports-related accident, which almost killed her: "'They did an MRI scan and found that my brain had been pushed to the side and my head was filled with blood,' she says, sounding slightly dazed. 'The doctor was totally shocked. He told me that I should be dead or paralyzed'."[748] For the next two years of treatment and recovery, the lulling sound of the MRI became part of Charlotte's life. She did not

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[746] Lisa Robinson, "The Secret World of Serge Gainsbourg" *Vanity Fair*. N.p. 23 May, 2007. <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/features/2007/11/gainsbourg200711>.
[747] Sean O'Hagan, "Charlotte Gainsbourg: 'I had no idea how scared I was of dying'" *The Guardian/The Observer*. N.p. 9 January 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/jan/10/charlotte-gainsbourg-interview-beck>.
[748] Ibid., <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/jan/10/charlotte-gainsbourg-interview-beck>.

keep this experience to herself but turned it into a public performance, affirming her own embodiment, and recording a possible disappearance as part of her 2009 album *IRM* (MRI in French) containing sound samples of the machine scanning and digitizing the body. Charlotte's musical style is often described as electropop, with aesthetic *voisinages* and affinities to other star dandies, which often result in symbiotic projects, namely, with Etienne Daho, Jean-Benoît Dunckel and Nicolas Godin of an electronica duo *Air*, Jarvis Cocker, and Beck, a multi-instrumentalist known for his remixes of Bowie and Björk.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we can see that the dandy, ever in search of new ways of surpassing his or her humanity, has learned to work within the star system, as the career of Charlotte Gainsbourg and others demonstrates. At the beginning of his project, Schiffer stresses that for the dandies "La multiplicité de leurs individualités fait d'eux des êtres absolument atypiques."[749]

We have seen how the dandy, whose prerogative is to engage in a process of singular transformation, might choose to temporarily settle into couples, clusters and packs, but pledges allegiance to no group, and forms no movement. Concluding my own project, I admit that the absence of a "dandy system" makes it impossible to identify a common denominator that would account for all aspects of what must remain unique dandy trajectories. The only option, both challenging and rewarding, is to continue contemplating this enigmatic figure one case at a time.

[749] Schiffer, 2.

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