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*PRATIQUES D'ÉCRITURE TRANSGENRE:*

**WRITING THE TRANSGENDER BODY IN FOUR NINETEENTH CENTURY**

**FRENCH NOVELS**

A Dissertation in

French and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

by

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## ABSTRACT

Instead of considering cross-dressing to be a form of masquerade, I propose that the cross-dressing protagonists of four nineteenth century French novels partake in transgender practices and incorporate masculinity into their own conceptions of self. Further, I argue that the authors themselves construct their gender-bending characters through transgender writing practices, or *pratiques d'écriture transgenre*. I examine how the protagonists of *Clémentine, orpheline et androgyne* by P. Cuisin, *Gabriel* by George Sand, *Aline-Ali* by André Léo, and *Monsieur Vénus* by Rachilde contribute to a reconceptualization of the biological body. Using queer theories, I build upon the notion that the physical body is not inherently sexed and that sex is just as much a social construct as gender.

My nineteenth century corpus provides important tools for re-theorizing the body and creates new spaces for gender non-conforming characters to occupy. Transgender writing practices can and should transfer from the written page to lived experiences in order to reshape how societies, then and now, categorize, prioritize, and normalize individuals and their bodies. My corpus offers ways to create a more inclusive and just community so that queer and transgender individuals' identities and bodies are no longer violated by forced gender conformity and/or harassment. When supposedly sexed bodies are accepted as socially assigned constructs, people can present themselves through self-actualized and self-determined identities. The fictional creation of my corpus's literary characters provides for the re-imaginings of physical, nonfictional bodies. In other words, the creativity associated with literature allows us to re-conceptualize how we structure "real" life, "real" bodies, and "real" men and women. It is in part through the imaginary world—fiction—that such realization is enabled.

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Androgyne [*androgynie*]:** (noun) One exhibiting traits and characteristics of both traditional genders or of neither; of indeterminate gender or sex. Balzac's *Séraphîta* from the novel of the same name is an example as this character is both masculine (*Séraphitûs*) and feminine (*Séraphîta*).

**Cis-gender [*cis-genre*]:** (adjective) An individual whose gender matches his or her biological sex, as defined by traditional sex/gender binaries. In other words, a person with female genitalia who identifies as a woman. As this is the normative gender identity, many characters from nineteenth century French novels fall into this category. To name a few, Guy de Maupassant's *Georges Duroy* from *Bel-Ami*, Sophie Cottin's *Claire d'Albe*, and Alfred de Musset's *Lorenzaccio*.

**Cross-dresser [*travesti(e)*]:** (noun) One who wears clothes traditionally attributed as those belonging to the opposite sex. Joan of Arc is a famous historical cross-dressing figure; Théodile Gautier's *Madeleine/Théodore* and Honoré d'Urfé's *Céladon*, who poses as Alexis in *L'Astrée*, are literary examples.

**Intersex [*intersexué(e)*]:** (adjective) One whose body has either ambiguous sexual organs or sexual organs attributed to both sexes or to the opposite sex (such as an individual with chromosomes XX whose sexual organs appear to be those attributed as male). *Herculine Barbin* is a famous intersex person from the nineteenth century.

**Transgender [*transgenre*]:** (adjective) An individual whose gender does not match his or her socially-assigned biological sex. For example, a person who has been assigned the sex of male yet who identifies as a woman (called, in this instance, a

trans woman). Gautier's Madeleine/Théodore can also be read as transgender as s.he asserts that h.er soul does not have a sex. While some might argue that Silence, from Heldris de Cornuälle's *Le Roman de Silence*, features a female cross-dresser, I would include Silence as an example of a trans man since he was brought up male and has become "denatured" by this upbringing (until, of course, the end of the book when s.he begins living as a queen).

**Transsexual [*transsexuel*]:** (adjective) An individual who undergoes gender confirmation surgery (also known as sex reassignment surgery). The designation "transsexual" is being phased out as a way to respect one's privacy; many transgender and transsexual people are simply identifying as "trans."

## INTRODUCTION

What can a “handsome hermaphrodite,” a prince, a “young Frenchman,” and a “jealous man” from four nineteenth century French novels teach us about gender relations and gender identities in the twenty-first century? A great deal, as it turns out. The protagonists from *Clémentine, orpheline et androgyne* (1819) by P. Cuisin, *Gabriel* (1839) by George Sand, *Aline-Ali* (1869) by André Léo, and *Monsieur Vénus* (1884) by Rachilde not only provide insight into how times have changed (or not), they also offer ways into new conceptualizations of gender identity and even sexed bodies that will prove invaluable when applied to the struggles facing gender non-conforming individuals today. Significantly, the stories featured in my corpus are anything but homogeneous. *Clémentine* recounts the life of an intersexual who was shipwrecked as a young child and was adopted by a wealthy family. This novel is presented as Clémentine’s memoirs and details her life as she comes to terms with who she is, searches for her lost family, and falls in love with her fiancé Saint-Elme, who turns out to be her brother. *Gabriel* is a dialogic novel about a prince who, at the age of fifteen, learns that he is biologically female and that his grandfather had him raised as a boy in order to keep control of the kingdom. Gabriel meets and saves the life of cousin Astolphe. The two become friends until Astolphe discovers Gabriel’s secret; they then become lovers. *Aline-Ali* is the story of a young woman, Aline, whose sister Suzanne commits suicide after confiding to Aline that society lies to women, pretending to revere them when really women are despised and disrespected. Marriage, according to Suzanne, is a form of tyranny for women. Aline decides to find out for herself what men think of women and becomes Ali, a young Frenchman traveling around Italy with his father. There they meet Paul Villano, and Ali and Paul become good friends. In *Monsieur Vénus*, young aristocrat

Mademoiselle Raoule de Vénérande begins an affair with a lower-class artificial flower maker, Jacques. Raoule calls Jacques her mistress and turns into an overly protective and self-proclaimed jealous man. This wide array of gender-bending characters can be viewed as nineteenth century literary counterparts to contemporary transgender people.

In particular, in recent years the media has focused on individuals such as Laverne Cox, American actress, LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer) advocate, and the first trans person to be featured on TIME Magazine's cover; Conchita Wurst, the Austrian drag queen persona of Thomas Neuwirth<sup>1</sup> and winner of the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest; and Chaz Bono,<sup>2</sup> American writer, actor, activist and son of Cher and Sonny Bono. Even though public response and the media frenzy surrounding transgender individuals appear to be generally supportive,<sup>3</sup> one of the problematic underlying notions of these discussions continues to be the assumption that a trans person's biological sex does not match his or her gender identity and that he or she was therefore "born in the wrong body." In these instances, surgical procedures may be utilized as a means to correct the discrepancy between sexed body and gender identity. Despite the fact that not all trans people opt for or even have the means to undergo surgery, "born in the

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that Thomas Neuwirth considers Conchita his on-stage persona and Neuwirth, when he is not in drag, goes by masculine pronouns and his own masculine name. Neuwirth therefore does not identify as transgender: "I'm happy being a man in a dress. Some people get confused and think I'm a trans woman, but I'm strict about the difference. What I do is performance, it's staged, it's glamour—it's not real life. But for trans people, being *born in the wrong body*—there's nothing glamorous or easy about that" ("Eurovision: This Much I know," emphasis added).

<sup>2</sup> It is equally important not to conflate Bono's identity, that of a transgender man, with that of a drag king or a cross-dresser.

<sup>3</sup> Excepting, of course, the recent political backlash to LGBTQ tolerance in the United States as seen in the Indiana religious freedom bill that essentially grants businesses the right to discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation as well as the recent surge of "bathroom bills" that force people to use public restrooms that correspond to their biological sex as assigned at birth.

wrong body” rhetoric continues to underpin this discourse that maintains a clear distinction between male and female, and masculine and feminine.

While gender is now widely accepted as a social construct, thanks in part to Judith Butler’s theory on gender performativity, Western society’s notions of the physical body have remained largely unexamined and un-problematized, save for certain scholars whose work I shall address further in Chapter One. Sex and the body appear to remain squarely in the realm of the natural as unchanging biological “facts.” This line of reasoning can cause transsexual individuals to undergo surgery in order for their (new) biological sex to match their gender identity. In this sense, surgery corrects where nature supposedly went wrong. However, building off of queer and gender theorists such as Butler who suggests that perhaps the “construction called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender” (10), I examine and draw upon literary texts that encourage us to stop thinking of the body as exhibiting a “true” and biologically-assigned sexed identity. Currently, notions of a body’s “real” sex and its corresponding or non-corresponding gender tend to color perceptions of who an individual is, thereby dangerously imposing preexisting stereotypes and assumptions about the person’s identity based on how we view his or her body.

A new understanding of the physical body becomes of particular importance when one considers how society situates cis-gender men and women as the norm and positions trans people as oddities. It becomes even more urgent considering the consequences trans people face for having their bodies constantly probed, studied, and disputed. Take, for instance, the statements of three trans people interviewed in a 2015 episode of the podcast *A’live*, hosted by Pascale Clark. In this episode, called “Paroles de transgenres,” guest Coline declares that the age at which a transgender person officially transitions is not important: “Ce qui est important, c’est que à tout

âge le fait d’être perçu(e) comme trans ou de l’exprimer, ça vous expose à des violences, à des discriminations”<sup>4</sup> [What is important is the fact that, at all ages, being seen as trans or of presenting as such exposes you to different forms of violence and discrimination].<sup>5</sup> Guest H  l  ne Hazera adds that the trans community faces some of the highest rates of AIDS and murder in France. She provides the horrific example of Myl  ne, a trans woman who, in the summer of 2013, “s’est fait tu  e    coups de marteau dans le visage” (“Paroles de transgenres”) [was killed by blows to the face with a hammer]. Indeed, as I elaborate upon in the Conclusion where I discuss the state of crisis in which the trans community finds itself in today, trans people face greater instances of discrimination and violence than their non transgender LGBTQ peers (“A National Crisis” 2). Not conforming to traditional gender expectations therefore not only exposes individuals to social stigma, but also puts people at risk for experiencing bodily harm.

As my dissertation demonstrates, literature offers a privileged space for the advocacy of gender non-conforming people. My corpus provides important tools for re-theorizing the body and creates new spaces for these non-normative bodies to occupy. As I shall argue in the following chapters, these literary models can and should transfer from the written page over to lived experiences in order to reshape how societies, then and now, categorize, prioritize, and normalize individuals and their bodies. These texts offer ways to create a more inclusive and just community so that LGBTQ individuals’ identities and bodies are no longer violated by social harassment or forced gender conformity. When sexed bodies are accepted as socially assigned constructs, people can live as human beings, embodying liberty and equality and presenting

<sup>4</sup> I have transcribed, to the best of my ability, the comments made in this podcast.

<sup>5</sup> All translations in this dissertation are mine unless otherwise noted. I have tried to translate as closely to the original text as possible; I recognize that, in my attempt to provide faithful translations, my English translations may lack certain finesse.

themselves through self-actualized and self-determined identities. The fictional creations of Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule provide for the re-imaginings of physical, nonfictional bodies. In other words, the creativity associated with literature allows us to re-conceptualize how we view “real” bodies, and “real” men and women. It is through the imaginary world—fiction—that such realization is enabled.

## **Part One**

### **Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth Century France**

Before discussing the specifics of my corpus, let us first briefly explore how gender is treated in some iconic nineteenth century French texts. Much like today, the crisis of gender and sexed identities abounds during this time period as shown through the prevalent literary themes of androgyny, cross-dressing, gender prescription, and gender confusion. During the nineteenth century, the prevailing social belief was that women’s biological capacity to give birth relegated them, in theory, to domestic roles as caretakers of both their husbands and children. “Women were thought to possess a maternal instinct that made them inherently nurturing and self-sacrificing. Their ‘natural’ place was in the familial home, where they also served as the bedrock of social morality” (Roberts 3). Along with justifying women’s place in the domestic sphere through their reproductive capacity, regulatory norms of gender<sup>6</sup> naturalized and controlled female sexuality. A woman’s destiny was to become wife and mother; marriage’s main goal was “LA PERPÉTUATION DE L’ESPÈCE” (Debay 1) [THE PERPETUATION OF THE SPECIES.] In the pervasive view of the period, women’s bodies, as Anne Martin-Fugier notes,

<sup>6</sup> Mary Louise Roberts explains that “regulatory norms of gender” are made up of a “set of ideals and practices that attempted to control the terms of male and female in nineteenth-century France. Such norms were materialized in the gendered body and enacted in individual and social behavior” (3).

function primarily as “une page blanche, [...] il n’y a pas de sexualité féminine” (125) [a blank page, there is no feminine sexuality]. The emphasis on reproduction transforms women into an object valued for its ability to bear children. Female sexuality and desire therefore threaten this supposedly biological purpose of women.<sup>7</sup>

The danger of the lusting woman is a prominent theme in Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856) and Sophie Cottin’s *Claire d’Albe* (1799). Both novels feature adulterous female protagonists who are also mothers. Asserting that the nineteenth century in France was an era of scandal symbolized by the naked female body (15), Nathalie Rogers argues that the epitome of scandal is the figure of the desiring mother since female desire and maternity are supposedly incompatible (58). Emma Bovary and Claire d’Albe serve as counterexamples for how women, and mothers, should behave since both are punished for their extra-marital desires; their deaths can be read as cautionary tales for female readers. However, the readers are directly implicated in the characters’ transgressions. Indeed, the texts themselves, through their publication and subsequent dissemination, become scandalous due to the very fact that they present alternative models of female sexuality that complicate the prescription for proper feminine behavior.

Ideals of masculinity, like those of femininity, are also explored in most nineteenth century French novels.<sup>8</sup> François-René de Chateaubriand’s hero in *René* (1802) suffers nobly while punishing himself for an illicit love while Guy de Maupassant’s Georges Duroy (*Bel-Ami*, 1885) is the anti-hero who advances his social status mainly by manipulating women. Émile Zola’s *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) features multiple examples of masculinity. One of the

<sup>7</sup> This topic will be further explored throughout the dissertation; see, for instance, Chapters One and Three.

<sup>8</sup> Rita Felski, in *Literature after Feminism* (2001), argues that any book featuring humans automatically examines gender, whether it be prescription for normative roles or otherwise.



protagonists, Camille, is presented as a weak and sickly man who disgusts his own wife Thérèse, while the other male protagonist, Laurent, is depicted as hyper masculine and the opposite of Camille. In fact, the moment when Thérèse sees her future lover Laurent is described as the first time she ever saw a man (23). Laurent's potent masculinity soon gets the better of him as he and Thérèse begin their affair and plot to kill Camille.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, Laurent's masculinity, as constructed through lust and violence, leads to his downfall. The depictions of male characters do not present one single model of masculinity and the various representations suggest that masculinity is not stable and that it fluctuates constantly, from novel to novel and even within the same novel.

As the variety of masculine and feminine characters in nineteenth century French literature attests, gender ideals themselves are based on unstable and constantly evolving beliefs. Several Decadent novels feature gender-bending practices and allude to the construction of gender, each in their unique ways. For instance, a primary theme of J.K. Huysmans' *À Rebours* (1884) is artifice, which protagonist Des Esseintes considers the distinct mark of the "génie de l'homme" (60) [genius of man]. In one of Des Esseintes' visions, Miss Urania transforms into a man before his eyes: "il voyait un artificiel changement de sexe se produire en elle; ses singeries gracieuses de femelle s'effaçaient de plus en plus tandis que se développaient, à leur place, les charmes agiles et puissants d'un mâle" (Huysmans 138) [he was watching an artificial sex change at work; her graceful female antics erased themselves more and more while the agile and powerful charms of a male developed in their place]. In *L'Ève future* (1886) by Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, the automaton Hadaly that Edison invents is modeled after Lord Ewald's love

<sup>9</sup> *Thérèse Raquin's* commentary on femininity, then, also appears to support the prevalent idea that adulterous women ruin their lives and the lives of their husbands.

interest Alicia, and “[I]a fausse Alicia semblait [...] plus *naturelle* que la vraie” (326, emphasis in original) [the fake Alicia seemed more *natural* than the real one]. The automaton’s body appears to be the “real” woman through the addition of hair, clothes, and adornments. In this sense, Hadaly’s artificial body reflects Butler’s theory that gender manifests itself through speech, dress, and performative acts instead of being an innate or inner identity (Butler 179). While no one would claim that Hadaly is naturally or biologically female, her femininity nevertheless shines through to the extent that Ewald prefers her to the real Alicia; he even falls in love with Hadaly. *L’Ève future* and *À Rebours* therefore devalue the “real” biological body in favor of artificial gender.

The notion of gender as a construct separate from biology was indeed a contested topic at the time of these decadent novels’ publications. For over a century, the ideology of true womanhood had “legitimated itself as the ‘natural’ [...] destiny of all women. Under the force of new historical circumstances at the turn of the century, however, this vision of sexual difference was betrayed for what it was—an ideology, contingent and precarious, rather than a reality, absolute and fixed” (Roberts 4). Perhaps most threatening to the traditional order was the idea that, if sexual difference is an ideology, then people no longer have to adhere to the strict masculine/feminine gender binary (Showalter 9). Instead, differences between male and female roles could potentially disappear, leading to “sexual anarchy [...] in which] all the laws that governed sexual identity and behavior [would break] down” (Showalter 3). The concept of the New Woman, or *femme nouvelle*, that emerged during this time fittingly embodied the social gender crisis.

The stereotyped figure of the Belle Époque's *femme nouvelle*, by not fully rejecting traditional concepts of femininity and by forcing herself into the male-dominated public sphere (Showalter 38), was viewed as both masculine *and* feminine. While she inverted traditional sexual roles and separated production from reproduction (Silverman 63), the New Woman also “displayed many of those qualities that her culture defined as truly ‘feminine’” (Holmes and Tarr 19). This mix of male-female traits acts as a “cultural illegibility” that actually questions gender essentialism in the ideology of womanhood (Holmes and Tarr 18). Mixing the two genders complicates the gender dichotomy by showing gender does not have to be one or the other; it can be both. It would have been easier to discredit the New Woman by claiming she has entirely switched sex-roles and is therefore a “freak” of nature. By becoming both feminine and masculine, she upsets the entire notion of separate and absolute gender characteristics.

As we will see, the ambiguity of gender and the mixing of gender roles are overtly explored in novels featuring characters that are explicitly both masculine and feminine in their appearance and gender presentation. The following section provides a discussion of androgyny and cross-dressing in nineteenth century French literature and its scholarship. This section will help to position my corpus among other similar works, while the final section of the Introduction will focus specifically on my corpus and its justification.

## Part Two

### Androgyny and Cross-dressing in French Literature and Scholarship

Henri de Latouche's *Fragoletta* (1829), *Séraphîta* (1834) by Honoré de Balzac, and *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835) by Théodile Gautier appear frequently in scholarship as nineteenth century French texts that feature the figure of the androgyne. What is the androgyne

and how does it differ from characters that can be seen as exhibiting both masculine and feminine qualities? In *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (1964), a foundational work on the subject of androgyny and its significant contribution to cultural productions, Carolyn G. Heilbrun argues that androgyny provides a way to remove oneself from sex/gender roles and stereotypes. She thus proposes androgyny as a means of liberation (x-xi). Androgyny is a “condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned. Androgyny seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate” (Heilbrun x). In his influential article “The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century” (1967), A.J.L. Busst examines the motif of androgyny in works of art and literature, particularly those from nineteenth century France. His argument situates the androgyne as an optimistic figure in French literary texts of the first half of the nineteenth century and a pessimistic one in works written during the latter half of the century (39 and 75-76). During the early nineteenth century, according to Busst, the androgyne represented the “reunification of humanity and universal man and marriage of men and women and God and knowledge” (39), whereas in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the androgyne tended to represent vice, homosexuality, and sadism. However, Busst admits that Balzac’s *Séraphîta* does not fit into either category. This inability to be defined suggests that the figure of the androgyne is even more ambiguous than previously thought.

The androgyne, according to Busst, is situated squarely as myth (85). *Séraphîta*, who lives in the mystical mountains of Norway, belongs to this mythical world, and the fact that s.he ascends to Heaven, angel-like, at the end of Balzac’s tale further secures the association. In his preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Gautier writes that “[i]l n’y a de vraiment beau que ce qui

ne peut servir à rien” (22) [there is nothing truly beautiful except for that which is useless], and for his character d’Albert, it appears that androgyny is the beauty ideal. Does this suggest that androgyny is useless? Perhaps it indicates that androgyny has no place on earth. Indeed, Théodore/Madeleine writes to d’Albert: “j’étais votre idéal [...] J’ai servi de corps à votre rêve” (418) [I was your ideal. I provided a body for your dream]. Théodore/Madeleine embodies this supposedly mythic figure of the androgyne, yet Kari Weil writes in *Androgyny and the Denial of Difference* (1992) that “the androgynous ideal of totality demands this kind of mystical reading in which the body is present only as a veil to an Isis-like presence beyond. To call attention to the body(ies) of the androgyne is to bring into focus another figure, one I would [...] call the figure of the hermaphrodite” (35). Here, Weil suggests that the androgyne as a concept exists *hors corps* [beyond the body] and when one attempts to theorize the androgynous body, one is confronted with the “hermaphrodite,” who occupies the space of the body and belongs to the realm of the visible (Weil 36). However, Théodore/Madeleine is *not* a hermaphrodite, but rather a cross-dresser. Why, then, must the androgyne be divorced from the body? What if the body itself was thought of more as an androgynous entity instead of a sexed one? Théodore/Madeleine evokes her own physical state, remarking, “je suis d’un troisième sexe à part qui n’a pas encore de nom” (398) [I belong to a third sex that doesn’t yet have a name]. Perhaps this sex is nameless in order for it to stay in the domain of desire, the imaginary, and the mythical. However, as we shall see, the protagonists in my corpus, despite being fictional characters, enter society, and their stories are not presented as myth.

The character d’Hauteville in *Fragoletta* questions the will to pull the androgyne from the realm of the mythic and drag it into real life. Looking at the statue of Polyclès, a

hermaphrodite, he asks: “Pourquoi donner un corps à une si fabuleuse rêverie?” (47) [Why give a body to such a fabulous revery?] His question supports statements from Busst and Weil that underscore the notion that the androgyne is a myth and that giving it a body destroys its appeal (and, perhaps, transforms it into a “hermaphrodite”). While d’Hauteville speaks specifically about the statue, this could also be interpreted as a meta-reflection commenting on the text’s presentation of Camille as the embodied androgyne of Latouche’s novel. In the “real” world, the androgyne is rejected: Latouche made the androgyne Fragoletta “non l’être de la beauté et du désir, mais l’être du refus et du maléfice” (Crouzet 36) [not the being of beauty and desire, but the being of rejection and curse]. While, in theory, the androgyne represents perfection and the marriage of masculine and feminine, in reality the physical body that is neither strictly masculine nor strictly feminine becomes suspicious due to its inability to be categorized. The embodied androgyne thus symbolizes incompatibility with the existing social structure, much like how transgender people have been, and in some cases continue to be, viewed as “freakish.” Keeping the androgyne in the realm of the mythical as previous scholarship has done provides little room for considering the lived experiences of people who do not adhere to the gender binary, and my examination of female cross-dressers in select nineteenth century novels questions the supposed disconnect between supposedly androgynous literary representations and real life gender-bending practices.

It should be noted that Weil emphasizes Roland Barthes’s conclusion in *S/Z* that “there is no disembodied narration, no androgynous totality” since narration “is the product of a specific narrator with a specific body, and that body is an effect of the act of narration” (Weil 37). It appears that the psychological and spiritual joining of the genders can never completely manifest

since the body will always come into play. This directly acknowledges the central and influential position of the body, even in literature, and provides the opportunity for me to explore the effects of narration on a cross-dressing character and the effects of a cross-dressing character (narrator or otherwise) on narration. In the cross-dressing novels I have selected as my corpus, all of which could be considered androgynous texts<sup>10</sup> since their main characters exhibit psychological and physical traits associated with both the masculine and the feminine, the body necessarily comes into play. Androgyny and cross-dressing are thus interconnected.

Indeed, Leonard R. Koos in “Improper Names: Pseudonyms and Transvestites in Decadent Prose” (1999) attempts to tease out the differences between the androgyne and the cross-dresser. Drawing upon the notion that the androgyne is relegated to the mythical realm while the cross-dresser appears to exist in the “real” world, Koos writes in a footnote that the androgyne has a “mythical ethos while transvestite redraws the parameters of agency by constructing the signs that correspond to the opposite sex, thus tricking the viewer into reading those signs as a part of an authentic version of referentiality. It can be noted, however, that many decadent transvestites are also androgynous” (212). Koos reads the layering on of clothes as a way to redefine one’s body, and in doing so suggests that the cross-dresser’s actions influence what is thought of his or her “real” identity while, according to Koos, the androgyne is able to exist as a mythical idea or concept. His treatment of the two terms also suggests that once the

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<sup>10</sup> Curiously, the more famous novels in my corpus— *Gabriel* and *Monsieur Vénus*—have elicited scholarship based primarily on the notion of the androgyne and not on the cross-dresser despite the fact that the protagonists overtly cross-dress. For instance, Busst analyzes *Monsieur Vénus* as a text in which both main characters display traits of the opposite gender yet Busst does not mention their clothing, despite the fact that the female aristocrat Raoule often dresses as a man and her lover Jacques wears dresses.

spectator realizes that he or she has been, as Koos puts it, “tricked,” the cross-dresser’s perceived gender transitions from initially being read as that of the opposite sex to being simply androgynous.

Pratima Prasad, in “Deceiving Disclosures: Androgyny and George Sand’s *Gabriel*” (1999), offers another distinction between androgyny and cross-dressing by suggesting that cross-dressing is a manner of performing androgyny. She writes:

Although transvestism and androgyny share the impulse towards blurring or crossing the boundaries of gender binarism, they are empirically distinct: in nineteenth-century French literature in particular, transvestism is an observable realization of androgyny. From Gautier’s *Mademoiselle de Maupin* to Rachilde’s *Monsieur Vénus*, transvestism relates to androgyny as *parole* [word] does to *langue* [language] in Saussurian linguistics. It is the performance of an androgynous vision of gender. (332)

According to Prasad, transvestism is a component of androgyny and could be considered a building block in the construction of an androgynous subject. Interestingly, the definitions that both Prasad and Koos provide of cross-dressing do not reflect upon the *masculine* performance of gender that some female characters exhibit when dressing in men’s clothing. Both comments situate female cross-dressers as reinforcing an androgynous depiction of gender; in other words, the definitions do not account for Judith (Jack) Halberstam’s assertion that women can and have performed their own versions of masculinity. Halberstam argues that the androgyne represents some version of gender mixing yet when a woman is mistaken for a man, masculinity, not androgyny, is in play (57). If I were to accept Prasad’s distinction that cross-dressing is the



performance of an androgynous vision of gender, it would mean that I accept all my protagonists as androgynous rather than viewing them as situated on the feminine or masculine side of the sliding gender spectrum.

However, Prasad does recognize Gabriel's masculinity in what I consider one of her most important contributions to the study of cross-dressing. At the end of her article, she makes the case that while transvestism implies a transgression, one perhaps cannot call Gabriel a transvestite since "h/er gender identifications are mostly masculine and sometimes fluid[.] What if we consider the fact that the cross-dressed subject h/erself perceives h/er 'inner' self as masculine, and therefore considers her [sic] costume to be gender normative, not transgressive" (Prasad 342). Like Gabriel, Clémentine, Aline-Ali, and Raoule successfully portray their own forms of masculinity in the sense that other characters believe their gender representation. I therefore use the act of cross-dressing as a way to explore these four characters' gender identities. Christine Bard, in her preface to *Travestissement féminin et liberté(s)* (2006), states that cross-dressing "met à nu le mécanisme de la construction des genres; il dévoile l'ordre sexuel, qu'il défie" (13) [strips away the mechanism of the construction of genders; it unveils the sexual order that it defies]. Bard thus places greater emphasis on the role cross-dressing plays in revealing gender performativity and construction rather than in supporting the notion of androgyny.

Marjorie Garber was one of the first to write an in-depth survey of cross-dressing across historical periods and genres in *Vested Interests* (1992). She argues convincingly that transvestism reveals a "failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of [sic] border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another" (16), or

what Garber terms “category crisis.” Importantly, the cross-dresser puts into crisis the very notion of category itself (Garber 32). While Garber argues the cross-dresser creates a third space of possibility outside of the established masculine/feminine binary (Garber 11), Joseph Harris notes that this third term, rather than maintaining any subversive power, has the potential to be appropriated and reified in a new hegemonic order (Harris 18). Halberstam posits that there may be a fourth, fifth, or one-hundredth space beyond the binary but Garber’s third space shuts down this chance (Halberstam 27).

Despite cross-dressing’s potential for deconstructing gender, it has often been used in literature to reinforce the gender binary. Valerie R. Hotchkiss, in *Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross Dressing in Medieval Europe* (2012), argues that female cross-dressing was often used in medieval texts to reclaim feminine roles despite the fact that disguising as men allowed women greater social freedom and liberty (83 and 89). Cross-dressing therefore served as a way to restore order and traditional gender roles (Hotchkiss 96). Even though Hotchkiss argues that Heldris de Cornuälle’s medieval French text *Le Roman de Silence* “views maleness as social performances, while femaleness looks much more like a sexed body” (110), Hotchkiss continually refers to Silence as “she,” even when the text that Hotchkiss quotes uses the masculine pronoun (108). It therefore appears that Hotchkiss reproduces the very gender essentialism that she attributes to *Le Roman de Silence*. Further, Hotchkiss concludes that male domination lies at the root of gender inversion (125); this assumes that the female desire to cross-dress is based on the idea that appropriating masculinity will provide empowerment. While I agree that this is part of the motivation for some of my protagonists—Aline-Ali and Raoule in particular—it misses the dimension of gender identity and suggests that the choice is a purely an

objective one. Additionally, I stress the need to remove cross-dressing from the male-dominated way of thinking. This merely reinforces the binary that situates the masculine as the superior gender.

*Gabriel* and *Le Comte Kostia* (1863) by Victor Cherbuliez are similar to *Le Roman de Silence* in that Gabriel, Stéphane, and Silence were forced by their guardians to don men's clothing for the benefit of their families. However, unlike Silence and Gabriel, Stéphane was not raised male from birth and only started dressing as a boy after the death of her eleven-year-old twin brother (Cherbuliez 300). Additionally, unlike the other two protagonists, Stéphane despises having to cross-dress and only does so out of fear for her father's temper. She identifies as a woman—"je sens s'éveiller dans mon sein un cœur de femme" (302) [I feel a woman's heart awakening in my chest]—and, if given the choice, would immediately go back to wearing feminine clothing. Unlike Silence and Gabriel, who have been conditioned to be masculine, Stéphane holds on dearly to traces of her femininity; for instance, she refuses to cut her "magnifiques cheveux bouclés" (127) [magnificent curly hair] because it reminds her of her feminine identity and she knows her love interest Gilbert finds her tresses pleasing (282). However, Gilbert, unlike Astolphe from *Gabriel* and Paul from *Aline-Ali*, is not attracted to Stéphane until she starts dressing as a woman.

Other French novels from the nineteenth century present similar portrayals of cross-dressing as reinforcing essentialist, heteronormative, and gender-normative views like those of *Le Comte Kostia*. Koos provides a brief survey of nineteenth century works that feature cross-dressers or androgynous characters, including Balzac's *Sarrasine* (1830) and *La Fille aux yeux d'or* (1835), Villiers de L'Isle-Adams's *Isis* (1862), and Nodier's *Thérèse Aubert* (1819). Each of

the novels Koos references is written by a man and several feature male cross-dressers (204). Each text takes the point of view of either the male cross-dresser or the non-cross-dressing, cis-gender man, which reinforces the belief that the masculine is the universal or superior gender. The novels in my corpus, on the other hand, recount their stories from the point of view of the protagonists, who are not cis-gender men. These texts present the gender-bending, non-male subject as someone to be understood rather than as an object to be exoticized or ridiculed for comic relief.

### **Part Three**

#### **Corpus Justification**

My corpus is composed of novels that have previously been thought of as depicting androgynous, cross-dressing characters. Instead, I accept Marie-Hélène/Sam Bourcier's request that cross-dressing be treated as a *pratique transgenre* [transgender practice] (118) and I argue that these works feature protagonists that engage in transgender acts. The novels of my corpus differ from other nineteenth century French novels that depict androgyny, cross-dressing, and/or gender confusion in a number of ways. Except for *Clémentine*, whose intersex heroine nevertheless uses feminine pronouns, the texts of my corpus feature a female-assigned cross-dresser as the protagonist; in each of the four novels, the male *je* is minimal and does not dominate the narration. Individuals with female-assigned bodies have frequently been excluded from studies of androgyny and it is in part due to this absence that I focus primarily on non-male cross-dressers who dress in masculine attire. More significantly, female cross-dressers provide critical examination of the traditional hierarchies of male/female, masculine/feminine. For instance, Busst emphasizes the mental health and wholeness of Romanticism's "androgynous

universal man” that occurs once masculine logic, mind, and subject-hood is joined with feminine emotion, spirit, and object-hood (13 and 60). His study is wholly centered on the masculine—on this “androgynous universal *man*” (13, emphasis mine)—and therefore remains within the realm of the phallogocentric. One is reminded of Ancient Greek statues of hermaphrodites that, despite being praised for their supposed transcendence of sex, “only represented male genitalia, never female, and the feminine element served only to soften and complement the masculine, not to challenge its privilege of representing Man” (Weil 2-3). While Busst erases the feminine in favor of a more feminized yet nevertheless masculine androgyne, Heilbrun erases both the masculine and the feminine in order to prioritize the androgynous. However, according to Weil, this “neglects how the feminine is produced for the purpose of ‘civilizing’ or perfecting a male subject whose implicit supremacy is never challenged” (148). Following Weil’s lead, I propose that female and intersex cross-dressers directly challenge phallogocentrism just as female and intersex cross-dressing literary figures directly challenge phallogocentrism.

The second unifying feature of the four texts in my corpus is the fact that the protagonist is romantically involved with another character. How do the protagonists’ transgender practices affect or influence their relationships, platonic and otherwise? Busst states that asexuality has always been synonymous with androgyny in the long tradition (47), yet he does not consider how in *Monsieur Vénus*, the sexual relationship between Raoule and Jacques complicates this claim. Indeed, the notion of desire, friendship, and the transgender literary figure will be the topic of Chapter Two.

Unlike stories that surprise the reader by unveiling a character as a cross-dresser at the very end—indeed, Koos notes that a number of nineteenth century novels are written such that

“the narrative participates in the secret and its unmasking” (204)—the novels in my corpus alert the reader to the cross-dressing component early on. The reader therefore plays a role in the transgender act from the beginning. Since there is no surprise revelation for the reader, he or she is privy to any and all commentary the act of cross-dressing produces. Furthermore, the four novels implicate society at large rather than portraying isolated, mythical cases. They all engage with larger social questions. As mentioned earlier, the texts in my corpus do not suggest that biological sex is essential and they do not use the act of cross-dressing to reaffirm the traditional gender binary and hierarchy. The notion of a “true” or “natural” sexed identity is strongly questioned. The fact that none of the novels use cross-dressing for comic effect or treat it as an abnormal or demented practice suggests that these four authors are interested in exploring this practice rather than condemning it outright. The reader, by being aware that the protagonist cross-dresses instead of being “tricked” until the end of the novel, is encouraged to participate in this rethinking of gender roles and “natural” biology.

Although Chapter One will provide an in-depth theorization of the body, I would like to briefly build upon what I started to propose at the beginning of the Introduction. This dissertation draws upon the work of Butler and Anne Fausto-Sterling, among other scholars, and argues that the sexed body is socially constructed. I suggest that instead of viewing the body as a corporeal representation of biological sex, we should consider the body to be something the characters work with and manipulate in order to present their own gender identities. Prasad states that, in *Gabriel*, the “body is mute natural fact, subject only to the vagaries of *le destin* [fate]. On the other hand, subversion and manipulation of gender categories can be carried out in the space of learning” (336). While Prasad nears a theorization of the body as void of any pre-determined

identity, she comes close to saying that the body is silent and natural (biological), an object to be acted upon by outside forces. This threatens to erase the body completely, and, with it, remove the character's physical and embodied desires. Prasad states that Gabriel "is corporeally female, but can become male (in the sense that gender is a process of becoming, *devenir*)" (336).

However, this does not take into consideration Gabriel's body when he dresses as a man. In these instances, his body is presented as corporeally male. Indeed, Prasad acknowledges that "[f]or Gabriel to achieve complete masculine identification, h/er biological sex has been hidden from h/er; in other words, s/he has been made to believe, implicitly or explicitly, that h/er body is masculine" (337). I add here that there is the distinct possibility that Gabriel does not stop seeing his body as masculine even after he learns the "truth" about his biological sex. His body therefore would not be muted or erased.

That Gabriel is able to read his body as masculine suggests that there is no original and essential masculine body. Prasad appears to question her own findings by saying that this "masculine identification, however, is not complete, as Gabriel is disturbed by an unconscious manifestation of h/er biological sex, creating a strong sense of gender instability" (337).

Significantly, Prasad concludes by saying that

Gabriel's actual gender identifications defy the fixity of both sex and gender. The appearance of Gabriel on the scene lays bare a certain fluidity that Jules de Bramante's scheme failed to foresee: that anatomical sex is not fixed, as it comes into being through the discursive process of naming; that gender identity may fluctuate ambiguously between different positions; that the relationship between sex and gender may therefore never be constant. (338)

While I agree with Prasad’s conclusion regarding the fluidity of sex, the importance of naming something masculine, and the performative power of language, I once more underline the need to write the physical body into this equation and deconstruct its supposedly natural biology. Harris writes that, “[u]nlike the hermaphrodite or the androgyne, which are both by definition sexually dimorphic, the cross-dressed figure always has a single, determinate sex” (235). His statement suggests that, hidden beneath the cross-dresser’s clothing, there is a “true” and fixed sex that cannot be changed regardless of the sartorial choices the individual makes. This sentiment becomes dangerous since it implies that, by partaking in transgender practices, the person in question actually engages in deception by “masking” his or her single sexed body. Instead of “naturally” male or female, the body should be viewed as androgynous in the sense that no anatomical feature, including breasts and genitalia, should be thought of as male or female. Once bodies are situated outside the sex binary, corporeal gender presentation loses all contested meaning, thereby freeing both transgender and cis-gender people from having to defend or explain their gender choices, particularly in relation to their bodies. This is vital at a time when trans people are frequent targets for discrimination, assault, and murder, as I will discuss in the Conclusion. By rejecting the idea that the physical body is inherently sexed, we start to untangle notions of “real” or “true” identity. This reading accepts the characters as void of inherent or essential identities and establishes transgender practices as the key way Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule remove themselves from sex/gender binaries.

As a lens through which to analyze these four texts that feature protagonists who partake in transgender practices, I develop an analytical and theoretical framework of *pratiques*



*d'écriture transgenre* [transgender writing practices].<sup>11</sup> In this dissertation, I argue that the literary texts of my corpus, by privileging their gender non-conforming characters, question the existence of a “real” sexed body and offer alternate modes of gender expression and human existence; furthermore, I propose that it is through transgender writing practices that the authors create both their unique protagonists and their radical texts. Each chapter of my dissertation examines certain elements that constitute *pratiques d'écriture transgenre*.

Chapter One, entitled “Transgender Practices and the Body,” first shows how the four novels reject notions of “real” sexed identities through the use of cross-dressing, a transgender practice that directly implicates the physical body and its gender presentation. The protagonists’ bodies, constructed through language, are written as masculine and feminine, at different times and sometimes simultaneously, and as neither feminine nor masculine. This chapter will then offer a theorization of the physical body as lacking an original sex or gender. It also examines how the texts deconstruct the categories of “man” and “woman” as they relate to bourgeois class-based notions.

Chapter Two, “Rewriting Traditional Gender Relationships,” centers on how the protagonists rework conventional ideas of friendship, love, and the couple. I argue that just as their transgender practices dismantle notions that biological sex determine one’s (gender) identity, the protagonists partaking in transgender practices also attempt to restructure their relationships. Traditional views surrounding the heterosexual couple and marriage are necessarily deconstructed and replaced with more egalitarian views of the couple, founded in

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<sup>11</sup> Thanks to Professor Bénédicte Monicat for suggesting this term.

particular on friendship between two peers. It is through transgender practices that the characters transform not only their bodies, but also their status as friends, lovers, and even brothers.

Chapter Three, as suggested by its title “Social Critiques and Transgender Practices in Nonfiction and Autobiographical Texts of Cuisin, Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde,” focuses on the authors themselves. I examine their community involvement, showing how Cuisin and André Léo engage in political writing while George Sand and Rachilde offer more implicit critiques of women’s rights (or lack thereof). Indeed, I suggest that George Sand and Rachilde embody their activism through their own transgender practices as depicted in their autobiographical works. In addition, George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde enact a type of nominal cross-dressing by using male pennames.

In Chapter Four, entitled simply “*Pratiques d’Écriture Transgenre*,” I pull together the different elements of transgender writing practices as discussed in the previous chapters. I also introduce three more components of this theoretical framework: employing fiction writing to promote gender equality, using gender non-conforming characters to create queer texts, and playing with literary genres to create transgeneric texts. This chapter argues that the bodies of the protagonists are intertwined with the literary bodies of the texts; the body of the text and the body of the protagonist inform and support each other, creating a work whose social commentary advocates for gender equality and disrupts the idea of traditional gender norms. My nineteenth century corpus, by fostering creativity and by playing with notions of identity in the literary realm, ultimately serves as a conduit into our twenty-first century world, bringing informed theorization to the physical body and gender identities so that all forms of gender expression, non-conforming and otherwise, are accepted, respected, and valued.

It should be noted that my main characters all belong to the upper class. My corpus itself therefore is situated in, and perpetuates, specific class-based ideas of what it means to identify as a man or a woman. Further, while the characters are all portrayed as white, the fact that Aline-Ali chooses the Arabic name Ali as her masculine name ties this transgender practice to issues of racial identity. Despite the fact that my dissertation does not analyze this aspect of the novel, an examination of how race, gender, and class play into Aline-Ali's conception of identity, as well as that of the other three protagonists, is needed for future studies, particularly considering how trans women of color are at the highest risk for violence, as discussed in the Conclusion.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Transgender Practices and the Body

In this chapter, I examine the physical bodies of the literary protagonists Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule. First, however, I would like to consider briefly how questions of sex, gender, and the categories man/woman have evolved in French and American scholarship over the past several decades. Christine Planté explains that in the fields of literature and art during the 1990s in France, differences between the work and experiences of men and women were discussed through the framework of sexual difference, which seemed “réitérer l’affirmation de la différence” (Postface 324) [to reiterate the assertion of difference]. The concept of gender, meanwhile, was relegated more to the field of history as a way to analyze disciplinary paradigms and power dynamics (Planté, Postface 324-325). The French use of the notion of gender diverged from how it was used in the United States during this same time period. Despite the fact that scholars in each country generally accepted gender as a social construct, in the United States the term was largely associated “à la question des identités sexuelles” (Planté, Postface 325) [with the question of sexual identities].

Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) questioned the oversimplified idea that gender is merely “sexe social” (Planté, Postface 325) [social sex].<sup>12</sup> Indeed, just as complications arise when “sexual difference” is used to explain variances between men and women, it is also

<sup>12</sup> Planté writes that the gap between how gender was studied by American scholars versus how it was understood by French intellectuals took more time to close than one would like to admit (Postface 325); in fact, that Butler’s *Gender Trouble* was translated into French almost fifteen years after its original publication is but one indication of the differences between how gender was treated in each country (Planté, Postface 325). Planté discusses the resistance to a “pensée féministe états-unienne” (Postface 326) [American feminist thought], which endured several years into the new millennium. Queer theory, explains Planté, has experienced much faster diffusion in French thought (Postface 327).

unhelpful to consider both gender to be a complete social construction, divorced from physical bodies, and sex to be a naturally occurring phenomenon linked to biology. Éric Fassin points out that gender studies do not ignore the body and that it “serait donc absurde de les accuser de verser dans l’antinaturalisme. [...] [S]i le genre est un concept utile, c’est bien pour dénaturer le monde, et non pour le dénaturer. Autrement dit, il s’agit, non d’artifice, mais de construction sociale. Car ce constructionnisme n’est pas défini contre la biologie, mais avec elle” (Postface 345-346) [would therefore be absurd to accuse gender studies of slipping into anti-naturalism. If gender is a useful concept, it is so for de-naturalizing the world and not for de-naturing it. In other words, it is not about artifice but rather social construction. This constructionism is not defined against biology, but with it]. Accepting gender as a social construct does not overlook the existence of the physical, biological body; rather, the field of gender studies helps us tease out the relationship between how biology both contributes to and is used to naturalize how men and women are categorized.

Gender Studies scholars theorize that the supposed existence of biological differences among individuals is naturalized into essentialist beliefs about supposedly innate and fixed differences between two genders. Erika E. Hess explains that the danger of not de-naturalizing gender lies in the “unreflective acceptance of gender as biologically determined. According to this model, sex-gender identity originates in the body itself, and thus any deviation from the standard, heterosexual sex-gender orientation must be due to a biological, hormonal or chromosomal abnormality” (51). Bodies, therefore, risk being coded with essentialist significance that makes it difficult to separate a person’s gendered identity from his or her body. When an individual cross-dresses, however, he or she “disrupts the theoretical primacy of the

body as the locus of identity, and indicates the possibility of an eventual noncorrespondence between sex and gender” (Hess 51). The cross-dresser is therefore a key player in the effort to show how the body does not dictate one’s gender.

In this chapter, I consider the cross-dressing bodies of Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule. I argue that rather than simply cross-dressing, the protagonists of my corpus partake in transgender practices through their attire. To fully appreciate the significance of this distinction, it is important to understand first how cross-dressing as a practice has been commonly viewed as a method of disguise. The novels, however, do not present the characters as hiding themselves or their “real”<sup>13</sup> identities through dress. I therefore move away from the idea that cross-dressing cloaks, through gendered sartorial means, the “true” sexed identity of the individual.

In part two of this chapter, I take Hess’s observation that the cross-dresser disrupts the supposed importance of the physical body as the locus of identity and, following the lead of my corpus, I theorize the de-naturalized body as being gender neutral; biological sex, like gender, is itself a social construction. The significance attributed to biological sex is therefore not a natural result of physical bodies and their differences. It should not be surprising that my corpus provides the foundation for this theorization since literature, notes Planté, “a constitué, au cours des deux derniers siècles, un espace d’interrogations [...] des normes de genre, et un lieu privilégié de compréhension, de rêverie, d’écart, de possible constitution de soi comme autre

<sup>13</sup> I push back against the notion that one’s “real” identity is linked to their biological sex. The terms “real” and “true” when referring to one’s body are grounded in ideas of essential sex and/or gender. I generally invoke the term “real” to describe authenticity (for instance, why aren’t trans men seen as authentic or “real” men?) and I use “true” to refer to supposedly objective states of truth or lie (for example, there is the assumption that one’s “true” sex is the biological one assigned to his or her body).

pour lectrices et lecteurs” (Postface 350) [has constituted, over the last two centuries, a space of interrogation of gender norms and a privileged place of comprehension, of reverie, of disparity, and of possible constitution of self-as-other for male and female readers]. Through their transgender acts, the characters inscribe their own gender choice on their de-sexed bodies. As part three shows, these practices result in the deconstruction of the categories “man” and “woman.”

## Part One

### Cross-dressing: From Masquerade to Transgender Practice

The term cross-dressing evokes different connotations depending on whether one accepts gender as fluid or considers it to be fixed. While cross-dressing can be defined simply as the act of “wearing gender-atypical clothing” (Stryker 17), traditional views of gender as stable and unchanging infuse cross-dressing with the idea that the cross-dresser intends to mislead those who gaze upon him or her. Cross-dressing, “in its sartorial implications, is a form of masquerade” (Prasad 332). As I demonstrate, cross-dressing as masquerade implies that the body holds the key to one’s “real” identity. While the novels ultimately discount this notion, one can in fact find instances in *Gabriel* and *Clémentine* that suggest that the protagonists disguise themselves by cross-dressing.

Since Clémentina, the “bel hermaphrodite” (xvj) [beautiful hermaphrodite], is intersex and therefore neither uniquely male nor uniquely female, she does not have a specific gender assigned to her biological sex. Instead, she crosses from one gender to the other, blending in with both men and women so easily that, in his preface, Cuisin calls her a chameleon whose “visage adorable [...] présent[e] simultanément toutes les couleurs et toutes les nuances des deux sexes”

(xvj) [adorable face simultaneously presents all the colors and all the nuances of the two sexes]. Comparing herself to mermaids who appear feminine but who have no genitalia, Clémentina believes that she can only “porter le masque de [s]on sexe” (1: 45) [wear the mask of her sex]. In this sense, masculine and feminine clothing codes her body as either male or female, respectively; furthermore, these adornments cover and protect her intersex body, masking it from curious spectators’ eyes and inquiries. If both masculine and feminine clothing cloak Clémentina’s intersexuality, it follows that she cross-dresses as a man and as a woman since neither outfit conveys her body’s duality.<sup>14</sup> However, Clémentina’s preferred gender presentation is feminine, suggesting that she is more comfortable in women’s clothing. For instance, she explains that she was “indécise si [elle] pouvai[t] aller à l’église, habillée en homme [...] toutefois, [s]on cœur et [s]es sens ayant toujours fait pencher la balance du côté des inclination féminines, [elle se] détermin[er] [...] à aller assister au service divin, sous [s]es habits de femme” (2: 98) [indecisive if she could go to church dressed as a man. However, because her heart and senses had always made the scale tip to the side of feminine inclinations, she decided to go to services in her women’s clothing]. By referencing *cœur* and *sens*, Clémentina also highlights the supposed duality of her full being, not just that of her body; I propose that heart and mind belong to the same side of the dichotomy, with senses and body on the other side. Both her body and mind find themselves on the feminine side of the gender spectrum, according to Clémentina. Therefore, despite her ambiguous and dual morphology, Clémentina appears to feel more

<sup>14</sup> In a 1629 court decision in the Virginia colony, a judge ruled that an intersex individual must wear men’s clothes in addition to a woman’s hat and apron in order to represent h.er male- and femaleness (Fausto-Sterling 41). It stands to reason that the judge concluded that h.er intersexuality would have been hidden beneath either men’s and women’s clothing, and h.er intersexuality therefore required a mix of the two.



“authentic” presenting as a woman and employs language that corresponds to this chosen identity.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, Cuisin’s novel emphasizes disguise when Clémentina dresses as a man more heavily than when she dresses as a woman. It is as though the “feminine inclinations” that she references call into question her ability to present “authentically” as a man. Clémentina explains: “me mettant à faire mes malles, j’en sortis des habits d’homme, [...] me proposant de fuir et de vivre désormais *comme homme*, me plaisant à espérer que, sous ces nouvelles apparences, je dompterais peut-être les cruautés de ma fortune. Mes moustaches ne tarderaient pas à croître, et l’illusion serait complète” (2: 53-5, emphasis in original) [preparing to pack my trunk, I took from it my men’s clothes, proposing that I flee and live *as a man*, enticing myself with the belief that, under these new appearances, I could perhaps control the cruelties of my fortune. My mustache would grow quickly and the illusion would be complete]. The “illusion” of living as a man situates Clémentina’s “real” self as a woman, suggesting that she only transcends her (chosen) gender identity when she dresses as a man. She never says that she dresses *as a woman*—she does say that she dresses in women’s clothing (2: 98)—but she twice states that she dresses as a “*jeune homme*” (1: 101, 103, emphasis in original) [*young man*]. I distinguish between wearing women’s clothing and dressing *as a man*. The latter, through the use of a simile, suggests that the person wearing the clothes attempts to “pass” as a man. The phrase “dressing as a man” implies that the subject is not already masculine and thus needs to dress as such in order to be perceived as a man. By wearing women’s clothing—not “dressing as a

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<sup>15</sup> For this reason, I use feminine pronouns when referring to Clémentina throughout my dissertation. As I later explain, I use masculine pronouns for Gabriel and the pronouns “s.he”/“h.er” when referring to Aline-Ali and Raoule.

woman”—Clémentina does not appear to change genders; in other words, her perceived feminine-gendered self and the gender identity the feminine clothes present to the world correspond to each other.

Despite her feminine inclinations, Clémentina nevertheless enjoys masculine activities such as fencing and gymnastics. These “développ[ent] en [elle] le secret de la chaleur virile qui circul[e] dans [s]es veines” (1: 60) [develop in her the secret of the virile heat that circulates in her veins]. Dressing as a man allows her to blend in and embrace her supposedly masculine traits. Because of this, Clémentina “[s]’habillai[t] souvent en homme” (1: 98) [often dressed as a man]. By dressing as a man so frequently, Clémentina soon becomes more at ease in her men’s clothes. For instance, she stays in Bordeaux under the name Monsieur Dérrouville. It thus appears that (cross-)dressing in masculine clothing no longer is a disguise but rather the expression of another aspect of her identity. For the moment, however, let us pause the discussion of a multifaceted, vacillating gender identity and return to the notion of cross-dressing as a way to conceal one’s biological sex by examining the instances in which a female child raised as a boy is portrayed as a masquerade in Sand’s *Gabriel*.

Metaphors of veils and masks dominate the language surrounding Gabriel’s masculine upbringing. His tutor explains that ignorance, like a “voile si impénétrable” (15) [veil so impenetrable], surrounds the truth of Gabriel’s biological sex and Gabriel laments the fatal day that “ce secret funeste [lui] a été dévoilé” (51) [this fatal secret was unveiled to him]. By extension, if raising Gabriel as a prince veils the truth of his birth, the very act of dressing Gabriel in masculine attire hides his biological sex, thereby masquerading him as a boy. Gabriel expresses outrage at his grandfather for turning him, and his body, into an “instrument de la

haine, le complice de l'imposture et de la fraude" (32) [instrument of hate, the accomplice of imposture and fraud]. Gabriel's upbringing, education, and physical appearance serve to complete this "fraudulent" portrayal of him as a prince. The young prince calls this charade both an insolent artifice and an admirable ruse (33), and initially seems to accept that his "real" condition is that of a biological woman. However, it is important to note that while Gabriel's masculine upbringing is portrayed as veiling his femaleness, the actual act of dressing in men's clothes is not presented as masquerade in George Sand's novel. Rather, metaphors of disguise appear when Gabriel dresses as a woman, which suggests that Gabriel's "real" gender is indeed masculine, as I will discuss shortly.

Despite the use of masks and veils to describe the situations of Clémentina and Gabriel, the novels in my corpus ultimately reject the idea that the protagonists cross-dress to disguise themselves. Gabriel's grandfather intended to hide the fact that his grandchild is female by having Gabriel raised as a boy, yet this upbringing forms Gabriel into a masculine subject, who, like Clémentina, enjoys masculine activities: "Il aime l'étude, et il aime aussi les violents exercices, la chasse, les armes, la course" (12) [He loves his studies, and he also loves violent exercises like hunting, weaponry, racing]. In other words, Gabriel embraces the masculine role thrust upon him at birth and for him living as an active young prince is not a fraudulent act. When faced with the knowledge of his biological sex, Gabriel fears having to live as a woman. However, his grandfather explains that he still has a choice: "entre le sort brillant d'un prince et l'éternelle captivité du cloître, choisissez! Vous êtes encore libre" (32) [between the shining destiny of a prince and the eternal captivity of the convent, choose! You are still free]. Gabriel

eventually does decide to return for good to his masculine clothes in order to live as a free subject.

Gabriel and Clémentina present themselves as men with the motive of being able to participate in the masculine activities they enjoy and to live life as they so please. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Hotchkiss concludes that freedom from masculine domination lies at the root of gender inversion in medieval texts (125). Aline-Ali and Raoule have a similar motive for their initial act of cross-dressing since they begin presenting as men in order to avoid being controlled by them. Having just broken her engagement to a dominating fiancé, Aline-Ali starts cross-dressing as a social experiment to see how s.he will be treated differently as a man. S.he aims to fulfill two other goals: “son propre désir à elle-même d’aimer, de vivre la vie humaine, mais sans se perdre ni s’abaisser; et [...] de connaître en frère et en ami celui qu’elle épouserait” (263) [her own desire to love, to live the human life, but without losing or degrading herself; and to know as a brother and a friend the person she would marry]. As Ali, Aline-Ali suppresses h.er femininity but does not hide h.er convictions about society and gender equality. Dressing as a man therefore allows h.er opinions to be heard and gives Aline-Ali greater control of h.erself and h.er actions.

Raoule, like Clémentina and Gabriel, enjoys masculine activities such as fencing, but the deciding factor in assuming a masculine persona seems to be when s.he thinks Jacques possess all the power in their relationship.<sup>16</sup> Raoule agonizes:

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<sup>16</sup> As I show in Chapter Two, Raoule searches for a type of relationship where s.he can take the masculine role because s.he is tired of giving and never receiving love (Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus* 87).

Il est beau, j'ai peur. Il est indifférent, je frissonne. Il est méprisable, je l'admire! [...] je le ferai mon maître et il tordra mon âme sous son corps. Je l'ai acheté, je lui appartiens. C'est moi qui suis vendue. [...] Ah! démon de l'amour, tu m'as faite prisonnière, me déroband les chaînes et me laissant plus libre que ne l'est mon geôlier. J'ai cru le prendre, il s'empare de moi. [...] Et depuis quand Raoule de Vénérande, qu'une orgie laisse froide, se sent-elle bouillir le crâne devant un homme faible comme une jeune fille? Elle répéta ce mot: une jeune fille! (41) [He is beautiful, I am afraid. He is indifferent, I tremble. He is contemptible, I admire him! I will make him my master and he will twist my soul beneath his body. I bought him, I belong to him. It is me who is sold. Ah! Demon of love, you have made me prisoner, stealing my chains and leaving me freer than my jailor. I thought to take him, he has seized me. And since when Raoule de Vénérande, whom an orgy leaves cold, feels her skull boil in front of a man feable as a young girl? She repeated this word: a young girl!]

Paradoxically, Raoule is both master and slave, possessor and possessed. Situating herself as feminine through the use of "prisonnière" [female prisoner] and "se sent-elle" [she feels], she positions Jacques as masculine through "il" [he] and "homme" [man]. However, the simile "as a girl" references the gender role reversal that occurs throughout Rachilde's novel. Later Jacques is wearing "une chemise de femme" (58) [a woman's blouse] and Raoule is dressed "d'un complet d'homme" (98) [in a man's suit]. Perhaps the shedding of her chains symbolizes the removal of her feminine persona and garb. This reversal of gender roles through dress (re)establishes Raoule's dominance over Jacques by making her the more powerful individual.

Instead of offering cross-dressing as a means of disguising oneself, my corpus suggests that dressing as men enables Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule to present themselves exactly as they wish.<sup>17</sup> Reclaiming his masculine identity, Gabriel asserts, “je me comporterai en homme!” (61) [I will behave as a man!] Wearing men’s clothes allows the characters to act like men, which brings with it certain privileges and power. Since Gabriel, Aline-Ali, Raoule, and, occasionally, Clémentina make the decision to live as men because it is more fulfilling for them, cross-dressing in these four novels should be understood as a (transgender) way of life rather than as a method of disguise.

Those who understand cross-dressing as masquerade do so in part because wearing gender atypical clothes supposedly hides one’s “real” gender, as prescribed by the body’s biological sex. A female-bodied person wearing masculine clothing would therefore be seen as hiding “her” femininity. However, according to Butler, gender is not fixed but rather constituted through performative acts. It manifests itself through repetition of behaviors, acts, and gestures that create the sense of an inner gendered self (Butler 179). Susan Stryker succinctly sums up Butler’s theory: “The main idea is that ‘being something’ consists of ‘doing it’” (131). The phrase *pratiques transgenres* that Bourcier proposes as a replacement for cross-dressing also emphasizes the importance of actions rather than an inherent identity.

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<sup>17</sup> While Cecilia Beach, for example, suggests that, “chez Aline, il y a un élément de fraude [...] Elle continue à tromper Paolo [...] afin de préserver des rapports fraternels” (14) [with Aline, there is an element of fraud. She continues to trick Paolo in order to preserve the fraternal rapport], I propose instead that Aline-Ali does not conceal anything about herself from Paul aside from certain corporeal properties. As we will see, Aline-Ali does not hide her convictions or beliefs and she and Paul achieve an intimate level of mutual understanding. In other words, and as Chapter Two demonstrates, in order for Aline-Ali to know Paul as a brother, she must keep from him her body’s socially-assigned sex.

The term transgender indicates the rejection of imposed gender norms. Transgender people experience a disconnect between their own perception of their gender identity and their socially-assigned gender.

Some people move away from their birth-assigned gender because they feel strongly that they properly belong to another gender in which it would be better for them to live; others want to strike out toward some new location, some space not yet clearly defined or concretely occupied; still others simply feel the need to get away from the conventional expectations bound up with the gender that was initially put upon them. In any case, it is *the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place*—rather than any particular destination or mode of transition—that best characterizes the concept of “transgender.” (Stryker 1, emphasis in original)

Trans individuals therefore reject the masculine or feminine identities imposed on them by traditional notions of gender. Since their choice to perform masculine acts, to dress in men’s clothes, and to live as men contradicts their socially-assigned gender, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule partake in transgender practices. Clémentina does as well since she crosses easily from one gender to the other, away from preconceived notions of who, or what, she is. In doing so, she frees herself from gender expectations, which Stryker identifies as one of the definitions of transgender:

It most generally refers to any and all kinds of variation from gender norms and expectations. [...] What counts as *transgender* varies as much as gender itself, and it always depends on historical and cultural context. [...] [T]he difference

between gender and transgender in any given situation, however, involves the difference between a dominant or common construction of gender and a marginalized or infrequent one. (19, emphasis in original)

By virtue of being intersex, Clémentina finds herself possessor of a marginalized sex and gender identity. Some characters in the novel assign her a masculine identity, while others view her as feminine. However, it is up to Clémentina to decide how she wants to present herself at each moment.

Dressing as men provides the protagonists with a way to change their otherwise sexed and gendered bodies. While one's genetics cannot be altered, Stryker explains that "a person's morphology, or the shape of the body that we typically associate with being male or female, can be modified in some respects—through surgery, hormones, exercise, clothing, and other methods" (9). Changing their morphology through clothing allows the protagonists to present their body in a way that matches their gender identity. In other words, cross-dressing as a transgender practice keeps Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule from being read as female when they wish to be accepted as men.

Understandably, some people caution against applying modern-day terminology such as "transgender" and "cross-dresser" to nineteenth century literary characters. For instance, Marianne Camus warns that the word "*travestie*" [female cross-dresser]

s'entend aujourd'hui dans son sens transgenre mais cela n'est pas satisfait quand on aborde la littérature du XIXe siècle. [Cette acceptation du terme] [...] mène à faire violence au texte en lui imposant une perception anachronique du concept qui conduit à ignorer les aspects moins immédiatement visibles mais tout aussi



significatifs du travestissement. (89) [is understood today in its transgender sense but that is not satisfied when looking at nineteenth century literature. This acceptance of the term does violence to the text by imposing an anachronistic perception of the concept, which causes us to overlook less visible, yet just as important, aspects of cross-dressing.]

Camus instead proposes the umbrella term “*déguisement en ce qu’on n’est pas. Cette définition inclut le travesti transgenre*” (89) [disguise as that which one is not. This definition includes transgender cross-dressing]. While I appreciate that Camus is wary of labeling historical figures with anachronistic terms, I find her proposed solution equally dissatisfying since it does not take into account the fact that the characters of the text(s) in question—such as those in my corpus—may in fact present themselves as they consider themselves to be. While judging what one “*n’est pas*” [is not] may imply an objective assessment, it actually forces prejudiced and essential understandings of gender upon the individual. Furthermore, it reinforces the idea that cross-dressing is a disguise hiding who one “*really*” is rather than a means of portraying how someone thinks of his or herself.

While it may be anachronistic to assign a transgender identity to the protagonists of my corpus, I follow Stryker’s lead by using the word transgender as a “shorthand way of talking about a wide range of gender variance and gender atypicality in periods before the word was coined” (24). The term is extremely useful for “indicating when some practice or identity crosses gender boundaries that are considered socially normative” (Stryker 24). Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule therefore display transgender practices by dressing as men contrary to the social gender norms of their time. Indeed, it is important to examine how not accepting cross-

dressing as a transgender practice affects contemporary studies of historical figures, both fictional and real. Sylvie Steinberg writes that Pierre Aymond Dumoret, “l’un des rares hommes travestis de l’Ancien Régime” (91) [one of the rare male transvestites of the *Ancien Régime*], was an “homme qui pensait être une femme” (91) [a man who thought he was a woman]. Despite recognizing that “il met une énergie à se dire femme et n’a aucun doute sur cette identité qu’il considère comme la seule véritable, malgré toutes les apparences” (95) [he puts energy into calling himself a woman and has no doubt regarding this identity that he considers the only real one, despite all appearances], Steinberg uses masculine pronouns when writing about this individual. While Steinberg does not call Dumoret’s feminine presentation an outright disguise, she suggests that Dumoret’s “real” identity is masculine. In Dumoret’s eyes, however, her feminine persona would not have been a disguise; as Steinberg writes, it was the only *véritable* one.

I argue that for both Dumoret and the protagonists in my corpus, cross-dressing does not hide their “real” identity and that their physical bodies neither connote nor convey any deeper truths. However, the majority of analyses surrounding cross-dressing or trans figures focuses on the biological body as though it contains the key to one’s identity. As Koos explains, in nineteenth century French novels in which the reader is unaware that a character cross-dresses, the “narrative participates in the secret and its unmasking,” where the secret is a character’s “true sexual identity” (204). As depicted through the use of masculine pronouns, Steinberg considers Dumoret’s “true” sexed identity to be male. Regina Bollhalder Mayer also refers to Raoule’s “true” sex, situating her identity as ultimately female: “malgré ses travestissements masculins, les seins nus sous son gilet défait trahissent son ‘vrai’ sexe” (94) [despite her masculine cross-

dressing, bare breasts under her undone undershirt betray her “true” sex]. Gabriel’s grandfather asks the tutor if he is sure Gabriel “ne se doute pas lui-même de la vérité?” (10) [does not suspect the truth?], referring to Gabriel’s biological sex. The subject of “true” sex appears again when Koos writes in a footnote that the cross-dresser “redraws the parameters of agency by constructing the signs that correspond to the opposite sex, thus tricking the viewer into reading those signs as a part of an authentic version of referentiality” (212). However, as Butler argues, the original referent of gender does not exist. “Tricking” implies that the cross-dresser is being deceptive. Instead, I claim that the “real” self of each of the protagonists is actually their self that participates in transgender practices.

For Gabriel, wearing women’s clothes, not men’s clothes, is a disguise. When he dresses up as a woman at the request of his cousin Astolphe, the feminine clothing physically hurts him: “Que je souffre sous ce vêtement! Tout me gêne et m’étouffe. Ce corset est un supplice, et je me sens d’une gaucherie!” (71) [How I suffer in this clothing! Everything bothers and suffocates me. This corset is torture and I feel awkward!] Gabriel feels uncomfortable dressed in these clothes to the point where he doesn’t even feel like himself. Further, he wonders if his charade is convincing. Gabriel asks if he is “bien déguisé” (72) [well disguised] and the stage direction indicates that Gabriel, “déguisé en femme, est assis” (77) [disguised as a woman, is seated]. Not only is his portrayal of a woman a disguise, but the masculine adjectives of the text and of Gabriel’s own dialogue clearly establish his gender as masculine.

Once Astolphe learns of Gabriel’s biological sex and convinces his cousin to live as a woman, Gabriel laments the loss of his masculine persona. He tells Astolphe: “[J]’avoue qu’il me serait pénible de renoncer à être homme quand je veux; car je n’ai pas été longtemps

heureuse sous cet autre aspect de ma vie” (127) [I confess it would be hard for me to renounce being a man when I want; because I have not been very happy under this other aspect of my life]. Living as a woman does not fulfill him and he fears losing the ability to make decisions for himself. Being a man and enjoying the freedom to choose how he presents himself are intricately intertwined. Renouncing his masculinity means giving up his freedom.

George Sand’s text, however, vacillates between Gabriel being presented as a “real” man and a “fake” one. Astolphe, for instance, admits that Gabriel has a “vrai cœur d’homme!” (130) [true heart of a man!]. Yet when Gabriel is attempting to live as a woman and must dress as a man one last time, he asks forgiveness for the final act of deceit. He prays: “Ô Dieu! pardonne-moi cette dernière tromperie. Tu connais la pureté de mes intentions. Ma vie est une vie de mensonge; mais ce n’est pas moi qui l’ai faite ainsi, et mon cœur chérit la vérité!” (143) [Oh God! Forgive me this last trickery. You know the purity of my intentions. My life is a life of lies; but it was not me who made it this way, and my heart cherishes truth!] In this plea, Gabriel insinuates that he has learned to be who he is and cannot simply stop being a man. He speaks of the truth as though it is grounded in his biological female sex. The end of the novel, however, suggests that Gabriel’s “real” self is actually masculine.<sup>18</sup> When speaking to the pugnacious Antonio who claims that Gabriel is a woman, Gabriel asserts: “Vous êtes un sot, aussi vrai que je suis un homme” (145) [You are an idiot, as true as I am a man]. Gabriel offers to prove that both of his statements are true by proposing they fight: “vous êtes fou. Vos commentaires absurdes m’important peu, nous devons nous battre” (146) [you are crazy. Your absurd remarks matter

<sup>18</sup> In Chapter Four, I demonstrate how, at the end of the novel, the narrative structure of the text itself reinforces Gabriel’s masculinity; this ultimately allows the character to exit the text as a free man.

little to me; we must fight each other]. For Gabriel, defending his masculinity is a matter of honor and he takes offense to the idea that Antonio accuses him of “mensonge et de fraude” (147) [lies and of fraud]. By successfully fighting Antonio, Gabriel intends to prove once and for all that his “real” identity is that of a man, not a woman. Finally, even more telling, Gabriel decides to spend the rest of his life living as a man: “À présent que je suis garçon pour toujours, il est bon que mes joues se creusent” (174) [Now that I am a boy forever, it is good that my cheeks grow hollow]. Because of Gabriel’s choice to live (and ultimately die) as a man, I have used and will continue to use the masculine pronoun when writing about him.

The motif of *vrai* [truth] appears throughout *Aline-Ali*, which ultimately questions what is authentic and genuine. Aline-Ali, through h.er transgender practices, is at the center of this interrogation. Suzanne, Aline-Ali’s sister, warns h.er of women’s inferior status in the world and then tells h.er to go forth and destroy the rhetoric surrounding femininity: “sois vraie” (60) [be true], she tells Aline-Ali. Suzanne’s sibling then becomes Ali in order to test h.er sister’s claims. I suggest that this is Aline-Ali’s way of honoring h.er sister’s wishes and of “being true.” Further, André Léo’s novel suggests that the character’s “real” identity is that of Aline-Ali. While Paul asserts that s.he metamorphosed from Ali (back) to Aline (285) and that he has “découvert une femme dans Ali” (279) [discovered a woman in Ali], Aline-Ali argues that s.he is still the same person (379). S.he rejects the notion of a true gender by acknowledging the role clothing and adornment play in making someone masculine or feminine; h.er feminine clothing makes h.er

plus belle. Sans doute la femme a non-seulement une autre beauté, mais plus de beauté que l’homme. Toutefois, l’opinion générale, très-affirmative sur ce point,

ne tient pas compte en ceci de ce que l'art ajoute à la nature [...] l'on peut remarquer dans le travestissement en femme d'un adolescent l'effet de tels avantages (306) [more beautiful. Without doubt woman has not only another beauty, but more beauty than man. However, general opinion, very affirmative on this point, does not take into consideration what art adds to nature. One can see the effects of such advantages in an adolescent boy who cross-dresses as a woman]

Even though s.he returns to wearing women's clothes at the end of the novel, I argue that we cannot conceptualize the person of Aline separate from h.er identity as Ali; the title of the novel itself even emphasizes Aline-Ali. I have thus taken to writing Aline-Ali to show the interconnectedness. This literary subject is therefore both feminine and masculine.

Similarly, Clémentina presents as both masculine and feminine, and neither masculine nor feminine. She has a clear sense of who she is: "la nature m'a fait l'objet de ses plus indécents [sic] caprices, mais mon âme est restée pure" (2: 43) [nature made me the object of its most indecent caprices, but my soul stayed pure]. While one could read this declaration as suggesting that her body, being intersex, is sexed twice over and that her soul is unsexed, I refer back to her earlier statement that her heart and senses share feminine inclinations and instead propose that Clémentina blames nature for her supposedly indecent and scandalous intersexuality; she has a clear soul, or conscience. In other words, Clémentina is innocent amidst all the scandal surrounding her being. Despite the fact that Clémentina understands her own body and her heart to be more feminine than masculine, she does not have to choose a single gender in order to be "real." She is comfortable as both Clémentina and Monsieur Derouville.

Like Gabriel, Raoule embraces h.er masculine identity to the point where s.he appears to be in disguise when s.he wears women's clothing. H.er everyday outfit is itself rather masculine—"Elle envoya son manteau sur un fauteuil et apparut, svelte, le chignon tordu [...] Aucun bijou, cette fois, ne scintillait pour égayer ce costume presque masculin" (36) [She threw her overcoat onto an armchair and appeared, svelt, hair twisted back in a chignon. This time she wore no jewelry to brighten this almost masculine attire]—and when Raoule does wear feminine clothing, the clothing influences how s.he feels: "La glace du coupé lui renvoyait son image [...] elle se sentait *femme* jusqu'au plaisir" (56) [The window of the car reflected her image; she experienced pleasure in feeling *womanly*]. I highlight the verb *se sentir* [to feel]. Rather than *être* [to be], Raoule feels like a woman. The claim to be a woman rather than to feel like a woman "tends to subordinate the notion of gender under that of identity and to lead to the conclusion that a person *is* a gender and *is* one in virtue of his or her sex, psychic sense of self, and various expressions of that psychic self, the most salient being that of sexual desire" (Butler 29, emphasis in original). Instead, as Raoule's statement suggests, one can vacillate between feeling different ways: masculine, feminine, both, or neither. H.er psychic sense of self, and h.er desires, change depending on the moment. While the car's window causes Raoule to feel feminine, at other moments s.he feels like a man.

In order to further assert h.er masculinity, Raoule also constructs h.er male persona through masculine language.<sup>19</sup> Referring to Melanie Hawthorne's remark that, in the last sentences of Rachilde's novel, Raoule is no more than a pronoun, Koos writes that "the

<sup>19</sup> Since the novel consistently uses *elle* [she] to refer to Raoule despite the fact that Raoule vacillates between *elle* and *il* [he], I have referred and will continue to refer to the character as s.he to indicate this gender fluidity.

transvestite triumphs in language and narration as its simulated self attains a linguistic and referential status as indistinguishable in its signifying authority as that of the real self” (210). Building on Koos’ argument, I propose that Raoule’s “real” self and the simulated masculine self, as projected through language, are one and the same. Her constructed self becomes the “real” self s.he feels h.erself to be. By reminding Jacques of this fact, Raoule also reminds the reader: “souvenez-vous donc que je suis un garçon, moi, disait-elle, un artiste que ma tante appelle son neveu” (38) [remember that I am a boy, she said, an artist that my aunt calls her nephew]. As the linguistic labels indicate, Raoule considers h.erself masculine.

Furthermore, explains Hawthorne, “although Raoule is biologically female and Jacques male, within the context of *Monsieur Vénus*, Raoule is actually occupying a male-marked position and Jacques a female one” (“*Monsieur Vénus*” 173). Indeed, Jacques’s first sentence in Rachilde’s novel ends with, “pour le moment, Marie Silvert, c’est moi” (9) [for the moment, I am Marie Silvert]. Additionally, the Baron Raittolbe insists that he and Raoule must decide upon which subject pronoun to use when referring to Jacques—“*il* ou *elle*” (77, emphasis in original) [*he* or *she*—and Raoule replies: “Soit: *Elle*” (77, emphasis in original) [Let it be: *She*]. These affirmations linguistically situate Jacques in the feminine position and because of this and other instances I will bring up throughout this chapter, I use feminine pronouns when referring to Jacques. However, Katherine Gantz writes that it is a “misnomer to label *Monsieur Vénus* with the now-familiar catch-all term of transgenderism, because despite the many daring transgressions in this novel, *there is no gender line being crossed*. It is not as if Jacques abandons his established rugged masculinity to try his hand at the art of being a woman—he is already there” (126, emphasis in original). While I agree that Jacques is not forcing herself to



present as feminine despite other inclinations, I do think her actions can and should be labeled as transgender due to the fact that Jacques does not conform to the masculine gender expectations thrust upon her by virtue of being assigned male at birth. The gender line that the two characters cross is based on social perceptions of both Jacques and Raoule. Similar to other trans individuals, Jacques and Raoule suggest that they are being true to themselves by presenting as feminine or masculine despite the social conventions that suggest otherwise.

To sum up, Raoule and Gabriel are both depicted as being their “real” selves when they wear men’s clothing and use masculine language, and the novels suggest that Clémentina and Aline-Ali are “real” whether they present as masculine, feminine, both, or neither. All the protagonists, including Jacques, destroy the idea that gender expression and the biological body must match up in order to portray one’s “true” self. Regardless of his or her biological sex, each character’s linguistically-constructed literary body emerges as the one that best fits his or her desired identity. Similar to Jay Prosser’s suggestion that the “the failure to be real is the transsexual real” (166), these novels indicate that the failure to be “real” is also the transgender real. The transgender real disrupts traditional ideas surrounding the cis-gender real where the biological body is supposed to be key in discovering one’s “real” identity.

The primary reason cross-dressing is often associated with disguise is because the body is thought to possess an anatomical truth concerning a true sexed identity. Sex becomes naturalized as empirical and absolute, which results in the conflation of biological sex with truth. Fausto-Sterling explains that “[i]n most public and most scientific discussions, sex and nature are thought to be real, while gender and culture are seen as constructed” (27). Gabriel’s tutor also wonders if the way Gabriel is raised (nurture) will overrule his biological sex (nature): “Pouvais-

je donc être un magicien plus savant que la nature, et détruire l'œuvre divine dans un cerveau humain?" (29) [Could I be a magician wiser than nature and destroy the divine work in a human brain?] In other words, he wonders if Gabriel could have been taught to overpower his supposedly natural feminine proclivities or if his biological sex will somehow assert itself as his "true" identity. Clémentina also links her body to truth when she notes how someone knew to read "la vérité dans [s]on regard, dans [s]on accent, dans [s]on geste" (2: 198) [the truth in her regard, in her accent, in her gesture]. However, just as one's gender falls somewhere between a person's physical body and his or her understanding of self, the truth is not in the body, per se, but in how one uses it as an extension of his or her being (through dress, through actions, for example). More specifically, in the above citation, Clémentina refers to her *regard*, *accent*, *geste* and not to her *œil* [eye], *voix* [voice], or *main* [hand]. She therefore suggests that her acquaintance searches for the key to her "real" self in how she employs her body. In a separate instance, when Clémentina tells the abbess "*toute la vérité*" (2: 3, emphasis in original) [*the whole truth*] regarding her condition, the abbess studies Clémentina's body as though that is the sole location for the truth:

Cette femme spirituelle et pénétrante, pendant mes momens [sic] de pause et de silence, ne faisait que m'examiner. Etonnée, confondue de la rapidité des impressions opposées que lui offrait ma physionomie trop mobile, elle tombait en extase; [...] ma nouvelle protectrice semblait posséder un fil tutélaire dans ce dédale nouveau, et chercher l'énigme de ma personne jusque dans le son de ma voix (2: 3-4) [This spiritual and penetrating woman, during my moments of pause and of silence, did nothing but examine me. Surprised, confounded by the rapidity

of opposing impressions that my overly mobile physiognomy offered her, she fell in ecstasy; my new protector seemed to possess a tutelary thread in this new labyrinth, and searched for the enigma of my person as far as in the sound of my voice]

Her notable physical experience aside, it is clear that the abbess hopes to decipher Clémentina's identity within Clémentina's body, physiognomy, appearance, and even voice. Rather than examining the complexity of Clémentina's regard, accent, gesture, and, I would add, dress, the abbess focuses solely on the physical traits of the body and discovers that aside from perhaps her voice, Clémentina's body does not definitively define her as belonging to one sex or another. In this instance, the abbess does not find that the manner in which Clémentina presents herself—as a woman—conveys her “true” biology located beneath her clothes. The abbess is thus left baffled as to who, or what, Clémentina is.

Corporeal gender presentation was traditionally thought to complement one's biological sex, both of which then worked together to portray an individual's supposedly coherent identity. As Nicole-Claude Mathieu explains, “[l]e genre traduit le sexe. Entre sexe et genre, est établie une *correspondance homologique*” (232, emphasis in original) [*gender translates sex. A homological correspondence is established between sex and gender*]. Maleness [*mâlité*] traditionally was believed to correspond to masculinity and femaleness [*fémellité*] to femininity (Mathieu 232). Significantly, people who participate in transgender practices separate maleness from masculinity and femaleness from femininity.

However, the “born in the wrong body” rhetoric that often surrounds discussions of trans experiences actually perpetuates the idea that femaleness should still go with femininity and

maleness with masculinity. “In European and American culture we understand transsexuals to be individuals who have been born with ‘good’ male or ‘good’ female bodies. Psychologically, however, they envision themselves as members of the ‘opposite’ sex” (Fausto-Sterling 107). Based on this insight, it appears that Raoule believes Jacques to be transsexual: “ce n’est pas même un hermaphrodite, pas même un impuissant, c’est un beau mâle de vingt et un ans, dont l’âme aux instincts féminins s’est trompée d’enveloppe” (89-90) [He’s not even a hermaphrodite, not even impotent. He’s a beautiful male being, aged twenty-one, whose soul with its feminine instincts found the wrong envelope]. Raoule therefore views Jacques as a feminine person trapped in a male body; according to her logic, Jacques would be happier if her feminine gender corresponded to a supposedly female body. By dressing as a woman, Jacques nevertheless is able to alter her perceived sex. Indeed, Mathieu confirms that certain forms of cross-dressing “sont une manière d’habiller la modification de sexe” (236) [are a manner of dressing the modification of sex]. In other words, even though Jacques does not undergo surgery to fix her “envelope,” she does utilize clothing to change her physical appearance and give the impression of having a female body.

While cross-dressing may be a way to fix the discrepancy between sexed body and gender identity as in the case of Jacques, transgender practices actually complicate the very notion of distinct sexes. This idea, a position taken by a “certain nombre de sociétés autres qu’occidentales” [certain number of non-occidental societies], is that “ni les définitions du sexe ni les frontières entre sexes et entre genres n’y sont aussi claires” (Mathieu 229) [neither definitions of sex nor the boundaries between sexes and between genders are clear].

Significantly, transgender practices confuse the visual markers of sexual and gender identity. “Le

*travestissement masque la différence visible entre les sexes. [...] Le travestissement disjoint l'ordre biologique des corps et les signes extérieurs qui sont attachés cet ordre biologique*" (Steinberg 129, emphasis in original) [*Transvestism masks the visible difference between the sexes. Transvestism pulls apart the biological order of bodies and the exterior signs that are attached to this biological order*]. These practices consequently cut the supposed link between the sexed body and its corresponding gender.

In conclusion, the idea that the protagonists in my corpus have a “real” identity hidden beneath their masculine clothes supports the notion that biological sex contains one’s truth and that cross-dressing, by hiding the bodily reality, is a form of masquerade. Instead, I have argued that transgender practices destroy the idea that biological sex must match one’s outward appearance since the signifier—masculine or feminine clothing—does not match the supposedly signified maleness or femaleness of the body. In other words, the signifier no longer marks the pre-determined and fixed object of the sexed body. Rather, the body becomes unsignified and unpredictable. Transgender practices therefore indicate the failure to remain true to the idea that biological sex and gender presentation correspond in a precise manner. Biological sex does not contain the truth about one’s identity. In fact, in the next section I discuss how biological sex does not actually exist. As Butler argues, it is as much a constructed concept as gender.

## **Part Two**

### **De-sexing the Body**

Although the dual system of male/female uses biological bodies to justify its existence, this binary breaks down when one observes the wide variety of human bodies. Rather than considering that physical bodies provided the foundation for Western understandings of sex,

Fausto-Sterling argues that the notion of a two-sex system actually precedes the body, which then itself becomes shaped according to this pre-determined order. Fausto-Sterling posits that the concepts of sex and sexuality are always already “embedded in our philosophical concepts of how matter forms into bodies” (22). Physical bodies are thus transformed into objects laden with meaning. Consequently, “the matter of bodies cannot form a neutral, pre-existing ground from which to understand the origins of sexual difference” (Fausto-Sterling 22). Bodies themselves do not divide neatly into male and female categories: “A body’s sex is simply too complex. There is no either/or. Rather, there are shades of difference” (Fausto-Sterling 3). Sexual differences among bodies are indeed less distinct than the sex binary would have one believe.

Intersex individuals provide the perfect example when considering how physical bodies do not always adhere to the two-sex system. Fausto-Sterling explains that it is in the interest of social and scientific traditions to “control those bodies that are so unruly as to blur the borders. Since intersexuals quite literally embody both sexes, they weaken claims about sexual difference” (8).<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, in the United States during the twentieth century, physicians tended to tell parents that their intersex newborn was “clearly either male or female, [and] that embryonic development has been incomplete” (Fausto-Sterling 64).<sup>21</sup> This statement reflects the beliefs that an inherent identity is tied to one’s sex and that one’s sex must be either male or female. In the previous section, I showed how “real” identity should not be tied to biological sex;

<sup>20</sup> Ironically, doctors and scientists studying intersexuality during the twentieth century “never questioned the fundamental assumption that there are only two sexes, because their goal in studying intersexuals was to find out more about ‘normal’ development” (Fausto-Sterling 46).

<sup>21</sup> Activism in recent years has attempted to change these practices and more and more parents are choosing not to have their child undergo genital surgery immediately after birth (Fausto-Sterling 81).

turning to our intersex heroine, Clémentina, let us now see how having both male and female corporeal characteristics destroys the very notion of biological sex.

Clémentina's intersexuality is presented in different ways throughout the novel. Cuisin, in his preface, writes about her as a wondrous mix of masculinity and femininity and evokes mythology to create a fantastical aura surrounding his character. Addressing his heroine directly, he writes:

Ton bras velu annonçait la force et l'énergie, tandis que ta main, petite, blanche, et vraiment admirable, ne semblait créée que pour les Grâces et les Amours!... Mélange vraiment inconcevable, tu seras toujours le désespoir de tous les faiseurs de descriptions; et le peintre et le poète [sic] se sont à peine emparés d'une lyre et d'un pinceau, qu'ils les brisent aussitôt, de dépit de ne pouvoir saisir au passage cette mobilité de traits qui fait de toi, au même instant, une Nymphé enchanteresse et un superbe Hippolyte. (xvij-xviii, ellipses included in original)

[Your hairy arm announced force and energy, while your hand, small, white, and truly admirable, seemed to be created only for the Graces and Loves!... A truly inconceivable mix, you will forever be the despair of all those who describe; the painter and the poet, having barely taken hold of their lyre and their brush, break their tools immediately from the disappointment of not being able to capture in passing the mobility of traits that makes you, at the same instant, an enchanting Nymph and a superb Hippolytus]

Awe and admiration clearly shape Cuisin's portrayal of his subject. While painters and poets might not succeed in recreating Clémentina's unique masculine and feminine condition, Cuisin's

book is a literary attempt at capturing her experience. More specifically, Clémentina's own words convey her life story to the reader via her fictional memoir. In contrast to Cuisin's colorful and awe-ridden description of the heroine, Clémentina's initial presentation of her own intersexuality is ridden with confusion and shame.

As Clémentina recounts to the reader, she overhears her adoptive father, Don Anzelmo, explaining to his friend that she is a "hermaphrodite." Ignorant as to what this means, she promptly looks the term up in a dictionary. The dictionary informs her that a hermaphrodite is "du mâle et de la femelle; qui réunit les deux sexes" (1: 21) [of male and of female; that which reunites the two sexes]. Clémentina's understanding of her own intersexuality is thus immediately framed and enforced by outside forces.<sup>22</sup> These outside sources—Don Anzelmo, the dictionary, doctors—tell her that not only is she a mix of male and female, but that this is a problem to be solved. She explains how she noticed her adoptive father "frappé de ces *nuances masculines* qui ne se peignaient que trop souvent sur [s]on visage; [elle] avai[t] beau chercher à tempérer l'ardeur trop mâle de [s]es yeux, la nature est indomptable: toute [s]a personne enfin lui paraissait un problème qu'il se proposait déjà de résoudre un jour" (1: 85, emphasis in original) [struck by these *masculine nuances* that appeared only too often on her face; however she tried to temper the much too male ardor of her eyes, nature is untamable: her whole person appeared to be a problem that he proposed to solve one day]. Cuisin also alludes to the problematic aspect of Clémentina's intersexuality when he calls her masculinity and femininity an impossible union: "Dans notre hermaphrodite, deux sexes sont comme liés ensemble d'un chaînon indissoluble, et

<sup>22</sup> In Chapter Four, I argue that Clémentina's intersexuality first comes into being for her linguistically, not physically. This chapter also includes a discussion of how Clémentina's memoirs counter medical and scientific understandings of intersexuality.



paraissent ne s'être unis que pour se déclarer une guerre continuelle" (xj) [In our hermaphrodite, two sexes are tied together as though with an indestructible link and they appear to have only been united to wage a continuous war upon each other]. Can maleness and femaleness exist together peacefully in Clémentina? At first it appears the answer is no, due to forces beyond Clémentina's control.

Practically everyone and everything has an opinion about Clémentina. Don Anzelmo considers her intersexuality a problem and destiny calls her "*Homme et femme*" (1: 3, emphasis in original) [*Man and woman*]. Nature says "*ni l'un ni l'autre*" (1: 3, emphasis in original) [*neither one nor the other*]. Despite her body being a natural creation, according to Doctor Stareindorff who calls Clémentina "un des plus beaux phénomènes que la nature ait jamais créés" (2: 116) [one of the most beautiful phenomena that nature has ever created], Clémentina's biology renders her unreadable and places her in an ambiguous social position: "exclue d'un sexe, sans appartenir positivement à un autre, la nature veut qu'elle consacre ses jours à la piété et au silence" (1: 19) [excluded from one sex, without belonging completely to another, nature wants her to devote her days to piety and silence]. Since Clémentina does not fit into the supposedly natural categories of male/female, there is no place in society for her and one option is to remove herself by joining a convent and remaining silent. Clémentina therefore believes that she is not only excluded from both sexes, but also from the human race (1: 162).

Unsurprisingly, Clémentina learns to hate her body and its ambiguous physiology that bars her from the world. She wants to destroy her masculine traits even if that means killing herself: "la mort seule pouvait, en terminant la vie de l'infortunée Clémentina, tuer aussi le serpent affreux qui s'était attaché impudiquement à sa ceinture" (1: 138) [only death could, by

terminating the life of the unfortunate Clémentina, also kill the horrific serpent who had shamelessly attached itself to her belt]. This serpent, a phallic metaphor, forces maleness on Clémentina despite her objections. While Clémentina believes her body “naturally” excludes her from society, condemning her to live as a nun, she recognizes that, paradoxically, her intelligence and her talents give her a distinguished place in the world (1: 19). This significant realization finally dawns on Clémentina: her identity is more than what society makes of her body. Further, Clémentina embraces her ambiguous physical traits in order to foster both her masculine and feminine gender identities. By eventually overcoming outside influences, Clémentina and her memoirs show that she does indeed hold a prominent and compelling place in society.

Clémentina is both masculine and feminine and is proud of this fact. She strongly asserts: “je ne rougis pas d’être ce qu’il a plu à Dieu de me faire, [...] puisque jusqu’à présent j’ai déployé les vertus des deux sexes, je le dis avec orgueil” (2: 81) [I do not blush to be what it pleased God to make me, since up until now I have deployed the virtues of the two sexes, I say this with pride]. Clémentina’s mother later evokes the dictionary definition of hermaphrodite—of male *and* female—by saying that her intersex child could have been “ton amant *et* ta sœur” (2: 167, emphasis mine) [your (masculine) lover *and* your sister].<sup>23</sup> In both instances, male and female and *amant* and *sœur* are joined by the conjunction “and,” not “or.” In other words, the terms are not mutually exclusive. Clémentina therefore appears to be male and female, brother

<sup>23</sup> I believe the mother uses the masculine form of lover because she is speaking to Clémentina, whom she does not know is her daughter and whom she believes to be feminine; therefore, by saying *amant*, the mother upholds heteronormativity by suggesting that Clémentina would take a male lover rather than a female one. Had she been speaking to a man (or Clémentina presenting as a man), I consider it likely that she would have told him that her intersex child could have been his *amante* [feminine lover] as well as his *frère* [brother].

and sister, *amant* and *amante*. She is proud of these identities, proud to be as God (or nature) made her. By crossing from one gender to another and by having a body that combines maleness and femaleness, Clémentina disrupts the rigid gender binary and destroys the idea of two distinct, natural sexes.

The character Jacques also evokes intersexuality, although not to the same degree as Clémentina. Writing that Jacques's beauty is that of the hermaphrodite (92), Bollhalder Mayer argues that if *Monsieur Vénus* “représente une inversion des sexes, il aboutit aussi à leur confusion” (Bollhalder Mayer 94) [represents an inversion of the sexes, it also results in their confusion]. In both *Clémentine* and *Monsieur Vénus*, the sex binary, rather than being clear and distinct, dissolves. In the future, suggests Fausto-Sterling, “concepts of masculinity and femininity might overlap so completely as to render the very notion of gender irrelevant” (101). I add that, thanks to the existence of intersex individuals, the difference between femaleness and maleness also becomes murky, making the very notion of two distinct sexes extraneous.

As intersexual bodies reveal, the sex binary is a faulty construction. Furthermore, the physical body—whether male, female, or intersex—cannot be read as a natural entity since it is impossible to separate the body from its social conditioning: “[Elizabeth Grosz] insists that we cannot merely ‘subtract the environment, culture, history’ and end up with ‘nature or biology’” (Fausto-Sterling 25). Butler adds that because they are themselves a construction, “bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender” (13). Indeed, Butler calls bodies “passive mediums on which cultural meanings are inscribed” (13); while bodies may in fact be “passive mediums” without any pre-existing significance, it is important not to divorce the active subject from his or her body. In other words, bodies should not be removed from the

(embodied) subject. Environment, history, culture, and social conditioning contribute to the formation of the body and at the same time the body and its capabilities help the subject live life. Taking the arguments of Butler and Fausto-Sterling a step further, I suggest that my corpus depicts the body as a material entity whose gender identity becomes constructed through choices, acts, dress, and, most importantly in these literary instances, words and language.

Literature provides particular usefulness for proposing a new theory of the body, one that is void of pre-determined meaning, since literature involves no actual physical body. This permits the creation of an imagined body that exists amidst the pages of a book; however, this body is a physical reality for the characters and it becomes a reality for the reader immersed in the novel. Cuisin, for instance, welcomes this involvement. He invites the reader to enter Clémentina's world: "C'est un autre monde dont l'entrée vous est ouverte" (vij) [It is another world whose entrance is open to you]. While a reader might have trouble categorizing an intersex person whom he or she encounters in everyday life, the reader can suspend any judgment or preconceived notions, use his or her imagination, and accept this new literary body that exists beyond the sex binary. In the text itself, Clémentina's mother offers her own overactive imagination as the reason for her daughter's condition. She explains to Clémentina: "tu ne sais que trop enfin, chère fille, jusqu'à quel point je te rendis victime de mon imagination frappée. La nature indécise, ne sachant à quels vœux elle devait obéir, accorda une fille à mon amour [...] et se pliant à la fois aux caprices de mes envies, elle mêla indécement à ce premier sexe d'autres attributs" (2: 181) [you have no idea, dear girl, to what extent I made you a victim of my stricken imagination. Indecisive nature, not knowing which wishes to obey, bestowed a daughter unto my love, and, bending to the fickleness of my desires, indecently mixed other attributes to this first

sex]. The mother is convinced that Clémentina's intersexuality, while clearly something that exists in reality, is a direct result of her overactive imagination. Literature therefore becomes a perfect medium to explore this state of being.

Literature also provides for the exploration of gender non-conforming beings. Since many people “understand gender to be more like language than biology” (Stryker 4), and because gender “is like a language we use to communicate ourselves to others and to understand ourselves” (Stryker 131), the literary text allows us to re-theorize the gendered and sexed body through language. How, then, do the four novels' protagonists show that the sexed body is a construction and that the actual physical body is an androgynous entity used to further one's own desires and wishes? Despite being told their body is female, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule refuse imposed femininity and create their own masculinity.<sup>24</sup> Since I question the notion of natural sex, I suggest that masculine and feminine genders should simply be markers of how someone wants to present him or herself, completely divorced from ideas of biology.

Each of the protagonists has a specific way in which to perform masculinity. Their gender presentations are not uniform, yet, significantly, other characters accept their masculinities. The other characters in André Léo's novel accept Aline-Ali as a man and h.er masculinity is never questioned despite the fact that h.er body has an “assez petite taille et [une] fort jolie figure” (96-7) [rather small size and a very pretty face]. Due to his lack of facial hair—one should keep in mind that “la barbe ne fait pas l'homme” (Sand, *Gabriel* 55) [the beard does not make the man]—Gabriel is called a “garçon rangé” (37) [dutiful boy] and his body matters

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<sup>24</sup> Even if one accepts the sex binary, Halberstam argues that masculinity should not be seen as an exclusively male trait. Female bodies too can exhibit masculinity, hence Halberstam's concept of female masculinity.

much less than his actions in conveying his gender. Gabriel asserts that when he and Antonio fight, and the latter sees “la manière dont [Gabriel] [s]e ser[t] de [s]on épée” (147) [the manner in which Gabriel uses his sword], Antonio will no longer doubt Gabriel’s masculinity. Even when Gabriel presents as a woman, he is considered masculine. Frère Côme, for instance, remarks that the woman he knows as Gabrielle “monte à cheval comme saint Georges” (95) [rides a horse like Saint Georges] and is terrible at performing women’s work (94). Gabriel’s masculine gender presentation is thus stronger than his feminine portrayal. Significantly, Clémentina successfully passes as both a man and a woman, and attractive ones at that. She is “belle” (1: 37) [beautiful] and has the “traits séduisants d’une jolie femme” (1: 24) [seductive traits of a pretty woman]; as a man, she is “un des plus séduisants cavaliers” (1: 80) [one of the most seductive horsemen]. Her friend the Countess doesn’t even recognize her when she appears as a cavalier. She thinks Clémentina is some “audacieux héros de roman” (2: 57) [some daring hero of fiction]. Therefore, through masculine dress, acts, and talents, Clémentina, Gabriel, and Aline-Ali convince others of their masculinity.

Along with clothing and comportment, language contributes a great deal to the gender construction of the protagonists. More specifically, the protagonists’ own language can be understood as a *pratique transgenre* as it both constructs and re-writes their individual bodies according to how they wish them to be viewed. As we saw in part one, Raoule refers to herself as a *garçon* and uses masculine pronouns and adjectives. Further, Gabriel has grown up calling himself a boy. “[T]he body, or anatomical sex is posited not as a fixed entity, but a shifting, malleable ‘signified’: it has been named masculine at the time of the child Gabriel’s entry [...] into the symbolic” (Prasad 337). By highlighting Gabriel’s discursive identity as masculine,

Prasad thus makes a crucial observation. Gabriel, accustomed to using masculine language to think of himself and his body, actually succeeds in reading his body as masculine. Even when his grandfather tells him he was born female, Gabriel continues to think of himself as a man: “Ô honte! Honte et malédiction sur le jour où je suis né!” (31) [Oh the shame! Shame and curses on the day I was born!] Significantly, in this reaction to his grandfather’s confession, Gabriel uses the masculine past participle *né*. While one might not be born a man, Gabriel was born into the social and cultural position of one, reinforced through his linguistic identification.

Language, as opposed to body parts, succeeds in defining the protagonists’ gender identities. While language is indeed a human construct, the characters have control over how they use it to shape themselves. Since their bodies, also a construct, become laden with social meaning beyond their control, language becomes a critical tool in combating and in overriding corporeal connotation. Koos claims that Raoule “is a female transvestite who establishes a language that corresponds to the nature of her transvestism” (209), and I expand on this point to argue that Raoule’s language does not just correspond to the nature of her “transvestism” (transgender practices), it becomes part of these practices and actually re-writes her supposedly natural biology. No longer a natural entity, the body becomes a literary construction.

Since my corpus shows the protagonists’ bodies to be literary constructions, it follows that their bodies are also linguistic constructions. Let us apply this to our world. If the physical body is but a linguistic construction brought into significance through words, would changing its signified concept cause the body to lose pre-determined meaning with regard to sex and gender? Koos notes that Raoule’s “inversion of language is a temporary albeit radical disruption of the referential marks and conventions that link the various elements” (201). There is potential for an

even greater disruption. While Joseph Harris terms “the sartorial, behavioral, verbal, and other elements that contribute to the impression of a stable gender” the “semiotics of cross-dressing” (130), I propose that these same semiotics destabilize the semiotics of gender and sex since, once the practice is revealed as cross-dressing, the idea of a stable gender and sex disappears.<sup>25</sup> The very practice of cross-dressing therefore changes the semiotics of the body. For instance, a female-bodied woman (the sign) is denoted by the arbitrary connection between her physical body (the signifier) and what it signifies, in this case her sex (female-ness) and gender (femininity). A male-bodied woman upsets the connection between physical body and sex/gender and further confuses the already arbitrary link between body and what it signifies. As this example indicates, the body no longer signifies male or female, masculine or feminine. More specifically, transgender practices as depicted in my corpus shows that a specific body part should not signify masculine or feminine, male or female; rather, the signified should remain open-ended, un-sexed, and un-gendered, simply connoting the sign of “person.”

However, if Fausto-Sterling’s hypothetical, genderless world is not realized, gender should at the very least be accepted as a way to present oneself without being linked to the supposedly sexed body. Gender identity and presentation can vacillate, as we see with Clémentina, Aline-Ali, and Raoule who go from feminine to masculine and back again. Thanks to clothing and language, themselves unfixed instruments that can be literally and figuratively put on and taken off, and thanks to the concept of a neutral or androgynous body, gender choices can be made again and again. To provide a twentieth century non-fiction example, Fausto-

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<sup>25</sup> Christine Bard posits that cross-dressing itself “met à nu le mécanisme de la construction des genres; il dévoile l’ordre sexuel, qu’il défie” (Préface 13) [strips away the mechanism of the construction of genders; it unveils the sexual order that it defies].



Sterling cites “several clinical case studies in which adolescent or adult intersexuals rejected their sex of rearing and insisted on changing sex” (68). In the cases she mentions, the subjects also changed genders. Furthermore, people who are not intersex also can opt to change sex and/or gender as we see in instances of transsexual and transgender individuals. When pre-determined identities based upon genetics and body morphology are no longer thrust upon people, individuals can enjoy the freedom to present themselves as they please.

Even though I focused on the characters Clémentina, Gabriel, and Aline-Ali who “pass” as men in the section on female masculinity, passing should not be viewed as the way to measure successful transgender practices. In other words, despite the fact that these three characters are read as having male bodies when they wear masculine clothing, the masculine presentation of Clémentina, Gabriel, and Aline-Ali should not be given more importance than that of Raoule, who is rarely seen as biologically male. To situate passing as the main indication of success merely reinforces the idea that there is a specific way to present as feminine or masculine and that the body itself has an inherent femaleness or maleness that corresponds to its gender presentation. Trans people who fail to pass as cis-gender do so because their body is read as “betraying” their “true” sex, as though it is obvious they are “really” male or female.<sup>26</sup> As we previously saw, it is crucial to stop thinking of bodies as though they contain an inner biological truth. The idea that the biological body has “primary signifying status [...] ignores the fact that in the everyday world gender attributions are made without access to genital inspection [...] [W]hat has primacy in everyday life is the gender that is performed, regardless of the flesh’s

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<sup>26</sup> For instance, picture a broad-shouldered individual wearing a dress. One might immediately believe this person to be a “man in a dress,” thinking that the musculature of the body contradicts and overrides the feminine clothing, “revealing” the individual to be male.

configuration under the clothes” (Fausto-Sterling 110). Indeed, feminine gender presentation should be acceptable on bodies that are socially labeled male, just as masculinity should be accepted on so-called female bodies.<sup>27</sup> If this were to happen, the ability to give birth, which I talk about in the following section, would no longer be viewed as a uniquely feminine characteristic. Once these identities become not only accepted but also unremarkable, the notion that bodies are void of pre-determined meaning (erasing the need to signify sex) will become even further established. Additionally, the destruction of the sex binary would bring about the destruction of the gender binary, encouraging more people to experiment with non-binary gender presentation, thereby creating even more gender freedom and fluidity.<sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, the body is a physical entity, disengaged from the two-sex system, that each of the protagonists must engage with in order to navigate throughout h.er life. Sometimes the protagonist struggles to accept h.er embodied state, as we saw with Clémentina, but the novels overall encourage a linking of the mind and body. This evokes the concept of what Fausto-Sterling calls the “psyche, a place where two-way translations between the mind and body take place” (24). Aline-Ali also privileges this connection, calling a separation between the body and mind poisonous (295). Despite being furious with his grandfather for taking over his body and rendering it an instrument of hatred and fraud (32), Gabriel eventually returns to living as a man since this identity unites his body and mind. The protagonists therefore decide how they want to live and how they want to use and construct their bodies. By living at times as women and at times as men, they challenge the rigidity of these very identities.

<sup>27</sup> In other words, the body and the gender presentation of the aforementioned broad-shouldered, dress-clad person should no longer be seen as antithetical.

<sup>28</sup> In my Conclusion, I discuss present-day examples of non-binary individuals who also advocate for LGBTQ rights.

### Part Three

#### Deconstructing the Categories “Man” and “Woman”

While the categories “man” and “woman” may appear to be a convenient way of organizing people, this oversimplification is not always possible as we see in the case of intersex individuals. Clémentina, for instance, falls outside the strict social categories of masculine/feminine and man/woman. Blushing, Clémentina feels unworthy of the title “*demoiselle*” (1: 27, emphasis in original) [*maiden*] and she believes “[l]es doux noms de mère, d’amante, d’épouse [lui] sont pour toujours interdits” (1: 44-5) [the sweet names of mother, (feminine) lover, wife are forever forbidden to her]. Since Clémentina feels excluded from the category of woman due to her intersexuality, she thinks other feminine identities such as wife and mother are also beyond her reach.

For the moment, let us entertain the claim that, by being man and/or woman, “*Héros*” [*Hero*] and/or “*Héroïne*” [*Heroine*] (Cuisin, *Clémentine* i, emphasis in original), Clémentina belongs to none of these categories exclusively. Instead, people call her other descriptive nouns as a way to place her squarely in a defined group: “*Créature inintelligible*” (1: 77, emphasis in original) [*Unintelligible creature*], “*Étrange créature*” (2: 7) [Strange creature], “*monstre[...]*” (1: 80, emphasis in original) [*monster*]. While “unintelligible creature” seemingly positions Clémentina as unable to be defined, the term actually relegates her to the category of Other. I suggest “unintelligible” refers specifically to her sex and gender—is she a man? A woman?—and because she is identifiable as neither, Clémentina becomes an unintelligible creature. Unreadable as a man or woman, Clémentina has her status as a member of the community revoked and she becomes a social outcast. In an attempt both to re-enter society as a human

being and to cloak her intersexuality, Clémentina changes her name. This name change, “un nouveau voile impénétrable jeté sur [s]on secret, [lui] rendait l’honneur, le bonheur et les plaisirs d’une nouvelle vie” (1: 136-137) [a new impenetrable veil thrown over her secret gave her honor, happiness, and the pleasures of a new life]. Like clothing that covers and influences how the body is perceived, names and categories contribute to this perception, whether they serve to render someone a freak—monster, creature—or whether they claim a normative identity—woman.

Despite the fact that Clémentina’s disconnect from feminine names and titles stems from her intersex body, the categories man and woman are not biological phenomena. Since, as we saw in the last section, the sex binary is a construction, the categories of man and woman, based on these constructed notions of maleness and femaleness, cannot be natural. One of Fausto-Sterling’s major claims “is that labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision” (3) and Stryker argues that “one of the central issues of transgender politics [is] that the sex of the body does not bear any *necessary* or *deterministic* relationship to the social category in which that body lives” (11, emphasis in original). Consequently, being a man or woman holds social and political implications, not biological ones, as my corpus demonstrates.

The title of Rachilde’s novel perfectly illustrates how social labels are not and should not be linked to one’s biological sex. To which character, Raoule or Jacques, does *Monsieur Vénus* refer? If one based his or her answer on the characters’ supposed biological sexes, assuming that the masculine title *Monsieur* always refers to a male-sexed individual, one would respond: “Jacques.” However, if this same person assumed that *Vénus* designates a feminine individual, he or she might be inclined to say “Raoule,” thinking that femininity indicates biological female

sex. However, as we have seen, socially-assigned sex affects neither gender nor social role. Therefore, *Monsieur* could easily refer to Raoule, as s.he calls h.erself a man and takes a masculine role in society, while *Vénus* could easily refer to Jacques, since Jacques situates herself as feminine. “En soulignant leur nature androgyne, l’oxymore *Monsieur Vénus* désigne soit Jacques soit Raoule” (Bollhalder Mayer 94-5) [by underlining their androgynous nature, the oxymoron *Monsieur Vénus* designates either Jacques or Raoule]. Melanie Hawthorne, on the other hand, suggests that Raoule is the *Monsieur Vénus* of the title. Hawthorne cites Raoule’s last name Vénérande, which “appears to combine both the name of Venus—goddess of love and part of the novel’s title—and the noun ‘veneration’” (“*Monsieur Vénus*” 166). Not only would *Monsieur Vénus* situate Raoule as a man, Raoule’s first name too is “derived from a boy’s name (Raoul), but the ‘e’ ending marks it as grammatically feminine, stressing the gender ambiguity” (Hawthorne, “*Monsieur Vénus*” 166). I add that, when h.er name is pronounced, the “e” is silent which allows the name to orally indicate that Raoule is masculine. Raoule even asserts to Jacques: “de nous deux, le plus homme c’est toujours moi” (99) [of the two of us, I am still the one who is more of a man]. Finally, Gantz remarks that “Raoule’s emphasis [is] on her *comparative* masculinity instead of an *essential* one” (121, emphasis in original). All this brings us to the general social category “man.”

Gabriel, the character who identifies perhaps most strongly as a man and least as a woman, illustrates that the concept “man” has nothing to do with biological maleness. Indeed, one becomes a man through learned behavior. Gabriel’s tutor affirms that the young prince’s studies have been “fortes et vraiment viriles” (12) [strong and very virile], and he teaches Gabriel that a man “ne doit jamais avoir peur” (18) [must never be afraid]. Thanks to his upbringing,

Gabriel is an ideal princely specimen. Gabriel, through his transgender practices, therefore disrupts the notion of man as a natural identity by revealing it to be a construction of society, not nature.

Aline-Ali, gaining entrance to the social identity of man as Ali, manages to modify what this category entails. Aline-Ali's sister Suzanne reveals that she hoped to raise an enlightened son who would turn into a decent man: "Pour [mon fils], je refis mon éducation [...] je voulais être son institutrice, en faire un *homme nouveau*, un homme pur et juste. Je caressai ce rêve que mon fils ne serait l'agent de la dégradation d'aucune femme" (31, emphasis mine) [For my son, I redid my education; I wanted to be his instructor, forming him into a *new man*, a pure and just man. I entertained this dream that my son would be the agent of no woman's degradation]. By emphasizing education's role in transforming human behavior, Suzanne shares her belief that one can learn how to become an *homme nouveau*. She rejects the essentialist idea that one's biology justifies social status. Aline-Ali, by living as Ali, therefore becomes the new man of whom Suzanne dreamed and uses her own education to inform other men of the rights of women. By teaching other men, Aline-Ali encourages them to challenge their own sexist beliefs. In order for men's opinions of their feminine counterparts to be transformed, their social clique must be infiltrated by those who have lived the experiences of the dominated: those belonging to the category "woman."

Long before Simone de Beauvoir famously wrote that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman (2: 13), Gabriel argues that woman's inferior status is not biological but rather a creation of men (Sand, *Gabriel* 49). Similarly, Aline-Ali and Suzanne maintain that the social structure justifies women's subjugation by basing it on their maternal role and then

perpetuates this inferiority by providing women with substandard education. If women's intellect and talents were nurtured, there would be no way to continue the ruse that women are naturally weaker in mind. When Paul asks what women are, Ali responds: “des êtres humains, tout simplement, doués des mêmes facultés et des mêmes passions [...] que nous; très-semblables à l'homme et peu différentes, si ce n'est par ces différences artificielles que créent à l'envi leur éducation, leur condition sociale, la volonté des hommes et les fantaisies de l'opinion” (225-226) [quite simply, human beings, gifted with the same faculties and the same passions as us; very similar to men and barely different, if it is not for these artificial differences created by their education, their social condition, the will of men, and the fantasies of opinion]. Women's clothing also contributes to the artificial differences by creating a false sense of natural femininity (André Léo, *Aline-Ali* 306). Despite being grounded in morphology, the categories of woman and man have more to do with education than body.

Perhaps the strongest illustration of the idea that the category of woman has nothing to do with biology is the fact that Clémentina, who is intersex, and Jacques, socially-assigned male at birth, are the most beautiful, feminine<sup>29</sup> characters in my corpus. Raoule is distracted by Jacques's “beauté féminine” (99) [feminine beauty] and tells her: “tu es plus belle que moi!” (102) [you are more beautiful than me!] Raoule even calls Jacques “*beauté*. (Elle disait: beauté, ne pouvant pas dire: *femme*)” (89, emphasis in original) [*beauty*. (She said: beauty, not being able to say: *woman*)]. Clémentina, also beautiful, laments her looks, which call attention to her when she would rather go through life unnoticed: “Ma beauté même [...] n'était qu'un

<sup>29</sup> Here I marry notions of femininity and feminine beauty, suggesting that both social constructions are based on visual features and physical adornment of the body. While there is a corporeal element involved in conceptions of beauty, Jacques and Clémentina show that beauty and femininity is not tied to an innate female biology.

acheminement funeste à la découverte de mon affreux secret. D'une figure et d'une tournure insignifiante, *j'aurais glissé* entre la vie, sans être aperçue, et n'aurais pas été si fatiguée d'éloges, que pour être ensuite couverte d'infamie" (1: 120, emphasis in original) [Even my beauty was a fatal means by which to discover my horrible secret. With an insignificant face and appearance, *I would have glided* between life and would not have been so tired of receiving praises only to be then covered in infamy]. Clémentina would rather appear less femininely beautiful in order to avoid the shame that comes with the spectator realizing that Clémentina does not fully belong to his or her conception of "woman" as being tied to a biologically female body.

Just as Clémentina and Jacques, the two most feminine characters in my corpus, cannot give birth, neither Raoule nor Aline-Ali, who each sometimes present as feminine, bears children. Since biological sex and sexuality have for so long been absorbed in the rhetoric of reproduction (Foucault 10), it is important that none of the main characters, including Gabriel, reproduce. This allows us to consider the characters and their bodies as removed from the maternal.<sup>30</sup> Further, reproduction should *always* be considered separately from categories of gender and sex since being biologically female does not necessarily mean one will give birth. Just as the body should be thought of as neutral, the ability to give birth should not be coded as feminine or female (although, again, the concepts of "female" and "male" should be done away with altogether). Stryker remarks that we are on currently the "verge of completely separating biological reproduction (the functional reason for sexual difference) from the status of one's

<sup>30</sup> Fausto-Sterling elaborates on the link between the female body and reproduction: "That classical philosophers associated femininity with materiality can be seen in the origins of the word itself. 'Matter' derived from *mater* and *matrix*, referring to the womb and problems of reproduction" (22).



social and psychological gender” (28) and Fassin notes that, with new technology, there is a “rupture between sexuality and reproduction” (*L’Inversion* 185). With this technology not available in the nineteenth century, the novels of my corpus separate maternity from social notions of sex, gender, and sexuality simply by not having any of the characters reproduce.

Because of both her intersexuality and her inability to bear children—Clémentina “était condamnée à donner l’image d’un éternel printemps qui ne produit que des fleurs, et n’a ni fruits, ni automne” (2: 244) [was condemned to give the image of an eternal spring that produces only flowers and has neither fruits nor autumn]—Clémentina believes she is destined “par [*s*]a nature à la vie des cloîtres” (1: 11, emphasis in original) [by *her nature* to life in a convent]. Since she cannot produce offspring, she is discouraged from marrying. She is better suited for a sequestered life, or so she is led to believe initially. Despite her aunt’s belief that Raoule is a virgin by virtue of the Vénérande family’s noble class (28), Raoule soon reveals a promiscuous side. Informally diagnosing Raoule as an emerging sexual deviant, a family friend who is also a doctor reveals his prediction for Raoule’s future: “Quelques années encore, et cette jolie créature que vous chérissez trop, à mon avis, aura, sans les aimer jamais, connu autant d’hommes qu’il y a de grains au rosaire de sa tante. Pas de milieu! Ou nonne, ou monstre! Le sein de Dieu ou celui de la volupté!” (26-27) [A few more years and this pretty creature that you cherish too much, in my opinion, will have, without ever loving them, known as many men as there are beads in her aunt’s rosary. No middle ground! Either nun, or monster! The bosom of God or that of delight!] Sleeping with men without love or marriage indicates sex for pleasure’s sake and removes the possibility of producing (legitimate) offspring. He implies that, faced with this possibility, Raoule’s family is better off sending her to a convent where she can live a chaste life without the

temptation of earthly passion. The examples of both Clémentina and Raoule suggest that the woman who does not conform to expectations of her gender group has no place in society; she must isolate herself in a convent and dedicate her life to religion.

However, and most importantly, both Clémentina and Raoule escape prescribed seclusion. Rachilde's narrative explains: "Il y avait dix ans de cela, au moment ou [sic] commence cette histoire... et Raoule n'était pas nonne..." (41, suspension points in original) [That was ten years before this story begins... and Raoule was not a nun...] The second set of suspension points refer to the doctor's original statement of "ou nonne, ou monstre" without actually assigning the description of monster to Raoule.<sup>31</sup> It therefore reworks Raoule's labels; s.he is not a nun, but perhaps neither is s.he a deviant monster. Similarly, despite not being able to procreate, Clémentina marries and lives happily with her husband. Sex consequently becomes a means of pleasure rather than of reproduction.

In conclusion, Clémentina, Raoule, Gabriel, and Aline-Ali show that if one removes social categories from the body, which has been stripped bare of socially ascribed biological markings, it becomes something that the subject can use for h.er own satisfaction as s.he moves through life. In the next chapter, I examine how desire and relationships manifest themselves between the gender non-conforming protagonist and h.er significant other. The discussion of categories will continue in Chapter Two, where I show how the social group "man" is infiltrated by the protagonists in order to foster equality among all genres and genders of people.

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<sup>31</sup> Gantz notes that "[e]llipses and suspension points [...] figure largely in Rachilde's writing, trailing off mid-sentence in ways that insist the reader interpret her implications, or failing that, to invent new ones" (122). Here I add a third possibility: the suspension points are a refusal on Rachilde's part to name Raoule a monster.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Rewriting Traditional Gender Relationships

In this chapter, I first return to traditional notions of the body as “naturally” sexed in order to explore how these concepts shape the heteronormative couple in much of nineteenth century Western society. In this coupling, as my corpus illustrates, the power dynamic between men and women is not equal. As a wife, the woman finds herself in a submissive position. I argue that Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule escape or attempt to escape this role through their transgender acts. All the protagonists, save Raoule whom I claim is always more powerful than Jacques, form friendships before then entering into romantic relationships with their significant others. The second part of this chapter examines how the protagonists practically become brothers to the other masculine characters, and the third part considers how the protagonists queer the traditional couple, thereby destabilizing heteronormativity itself.

#### Part One

#### Dynamics of the Normative Straight Couple

Heterosexuality is based on essential notions of the sexed body where male supposedly complements female. In this sense, heterosexuality is thought to be the expression of nature (Mathieu 232) and is built on a “two-sex model of masculinity and femininity” (Fausto-Sterling 14). Since the gender categories “masculine” and “feminine” are supposed to correspond to “maleness” and “femaleness,” respectively (Mathieu 232), the social categories “man” and “woman” form the heteronormative couple. The man/woman model not only prevails throughout Western society’s recent history, but also structures society to the point where Adrienne Rich

argues that heterosexuality should be “recognized and studies as a *political institution*” (637, emphasis in original).

Furthermore, suggesting that “la pensée a toujours travaillé par opposition” (Cixous, *La jeune née* 116) [thought has always worked by opposition], Hélène Cixous shows how Western thought is structured in binary form of superior/inferior: “tous les couples d’opposition sont des couples” (*La jeune née* 116) [all the couples of opposition are couples]. In other words, argues Cixous, the couple man/woman forms the basis for all opposing binary concepts such as action/passivity, culture/nature, father/mother, logos/pathos (*La jeune née* 115). The female/feminine component in each couple must be passive (Cixous, *La jeune née* 118) and even though the woman finds herself in the inferior position of the hierarchy, the heteronormative system appears unavoidable: “women have been convinced that marriage, and sexual orientation toward men, are inevitable, even if unsatisfying or oppressive components of their lives” (Rich 640). One of the ways male power asserts itself as a supposedly natural phenomenon is through physical domination, which leads to control over women, their bodies, and their sexuality (Rich 638-639).

Accordingly, Carol Pateman theorizes that Western society is implicitly founded on a sexual contract in which men possess a sex right or conjugal right over women (102). Raoule recognizes that no matter a woman’s social standing, she is at the mercy of men: “Il y a une chaîne rivée entre toutes les femmes qui aiment... .L’honnête épouse, au moment où elle se livre à son honnête époux, est dans la même position que la prostituée au moment où elle se livre à son amant. La nature les a faites nues, ces victimes” (108-109, suspension points in original) [There is a chain linked between all women who love... .The honest spouse, at the moment

when she gives herself to her honest husband, is in the same position as the prostitute at the moment when she gives herself to her lover. Nature made them both naked, these victims]. In each instance, they relinquish their bodies to a situation that appears, according to Rich, inevitable. Furthermore, the verb *se livrer* [to give oneself] implies that one is somehow involved in his or her own victimization; Raoule's word choice therefore suggests that the woman actively allows herself to become passive and to give herself to her dominator. Whether or not the woman consciously participates in becoming what Raoule calls a victim, the end result remains the same: the honest husband and the paying client each have a sex right over wife and prostitute, respectively. Additionally, as mentioned above, Cixous demonstrates that sexual difference used to be treated in terms of activity/passivity with the woman as passive (*La jeune née* 117); Raoule's use of *se livrer* insinuates that while the woman might not start out passive, she ultimately gives herself up to passivity. Surrendering herself and her body to the man therefore cements the woman's role as the paradoxically actively passive object and the man's role as the active subject. Astolphe, for instance, brags about his possession of a female companion "dont [il a] fait la conquête" (66) [whom he has conquered]. As this example illustrates, women are objects to be conquered, dominated, and bartered. In fact, using women as objects in male transactions is yet another way masculine power exerts itself (Rich 639). As indicated by the previous two examples, the protagonists of my corpus examine at length the unequal power dynamic in the heteronormative couple, ultimately denouncing marriage as a form of slavery for the individual who finds herself in the social position of woman.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The link between marriage and slavery is not new to the nineteenth century nor is it limited to my corpus. Indeed, writes Moira Ferguson, "in all forms of discourse throughout the eighteenth century, conservative and radical women alike railed against marriage, love, and education as

Suzanne holds nothing back when disclosing to Aline-Ali the cruel reality of matrimonial life. She declares: “Se marier, c’est prendre un maître” (41) [To marry is to take on a master] and “en imposant à la femme un maître, vous lui avez conféré les droits de l’esclave,” (35) [by forcing a master upon woman, you give her the rights of a slave]. Even more forcefully, Suzanne asserts that “le mariage est la forme la plus absolue et la plus complète de ce viol de l’être qui se nomme la tyrannie!” (51) [marriage is the most absolute and most complete form of this rape of being that calls itself tyranny!] Suzanne thus discourages Aline-Ali from marrying and tells her sister to take a lover, not a master (50). She advocates adultery over marriage, claiming that adultery is “l’amour choisi, donné [...] l’amour volontaire et libre” (36) [love chosen, given, a voluntary and free love]. Aline-Ali takes her sister’s tirade against marriage to heart and questions her fiancé Germain Larrey on his expectations for their union. Just as Suzanne predicted, Germain asserts that women’s purpose is to please men and, calling to mind Cixous’s binary, states that women are spirit while men are reason (*Aline-Ali* 81). Realizing that her “liberté ne serait pas respectée par [lui]” (91) [freedom would not be respected by him], Aline-Ali breaks off their engagement.

Similarly, Gabriel’s tutor recognizes that Gabriel will want to remain a man due to “l’horreur de l’esclavage, la soif d’indépendance, d’agitation et de gloire” (16) [the horror of slavery, the thirst for independence, for agitation, and for glory]. Living as a woman would

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forms of slavery perpetrated upon women by men and by the conventions of society at large” (83). For instance, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft promotes a discourse on British and French colonial slavery “that highlight[s] female subjugation. [...] [T]he constituency Wollstonecraft champions—white, middle-class women—is constantly characterized as slaves” (Ferguson 82). This characterization of marriage as enslavement is not only relegated to political texts; George Sand’s *Indiana* (1832), for example, also situates the husband as tyrannical master of his enslaved wife.

reduce Gabriel's social standing just as becoming a wife would limit Aline-Ali's freedom. Thanks to Gabriel's grandfather who had him raised as a boy and thanks to Aline-Ali's father who respects h.er decision to live as Ali, both protagonists enjoy a life relatively free of gender constraints. As a rich, young aristocrat whose late father was libertine, Raoule also finds h.erself with unusual freedom to do as s.he pleases. However, h.er aunt attempts to control h.er by marrying h.er off. Echoing Suzanne, Raoule's friend Baron Raittolbe advises h.er not to marry and to take a lover instead (48).<sup>33</sup> *Aline-Ali, Gabriel, and Monsieur Vénus* therefore suggest that women should not marry for fear of losing their independence and they instead advocate taking a lover over a husband.

Clémentina, on the other hand, is eager to marry Saint-Elme. She admits: "Si je voulais un amant, je voulais encore plus un époux" (2: 67) [If I wanted a lover, I wanted a husband even more]. However, I believe this yearning is in part due to Clémentina's initial wish to establish herself as a woman. By marrying Saint-Elme, Clémentina would enter into the sexual contract as a normative woman, thereby solidifying her social position vis-à-vis her husband. Saint-Elme, unlike Germain, respects Clémentina and does not treat her as an object he possesses. In fact, their interaction borders on platonic. For instance, he takes her out only to "la déposer chastement dans une sorte de sanctuaire, dont l'entrée lui était interdite" (2: 66) [drop her chastely off in a sort of sanctuary whose entrance was forbidden to him]. As we will see in part two, the relationship between Clémentina and Saint-Elme is built on mutual respect and is free from the threat of bodily possession. In this sense, the husband that Clémentina desires in Saint-

<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Rachilde "s'est toujours montrée hostile à l'égard du mariage" (Bollhalder Mayer 37) [always appeared hostile to the subject of marriage].

Elme is closer to the lover that Suzanne believes women should take. Clémentina elaborates further on their bond:

Je ne crois pas avoir passé jamais de momens [sic] plus délicieux, que ceux que mon bon génie voulut bien m'accorder avec Saint-Elme. Galant sans afféterie, bel-esprit sans prétentions, amant sans emphase, instruit sans lourdeur, et passionné sans tyrannie, mon amour, mon esprit, étaient complètement satisfait, ainsi que ma vertu parfaitement à son aise (2: 84-5) [I do not believe having ever spent more delicious moments than those my guardian spirit was kind enough to grant me with Saint-Elme. Chivalrous without affectation, good spirit without pretentions, lover without pomposity, educated without heaviness, and passionate without tyranny, my love and my spirit were completely satisfied, and my virtue was perfectly at ease]

Clémentina therefore found someone willing to treat her as an equal, free from tyranny. As earlier indicated, their relationship verges more on platonic than romantic and Clémentina's desire for Saint-Elme as a husband dissolves when she learns that he is her long-lost brother.<sup>34</sup> Their rapport therefore differs from that of the other couples in the novels.

The majority of the characters in my corpus believe that the relationship between men and women can never be free from tyranny due to their unequal social dynamics. Suzanne explains:

Non, ma sœur, crois-moi, il n'existe ni amour, ni justice, ni dignité, ni entente possible [...] entre celui qui se croit roi par la grâce divine et l'être qu'il prétend

<sup>34</sup> The fraternal dimension to their relationship will be further explored in part two.



ranger à sa loi. Il n’y a de possible entre eux que la douleur et la haine. L’homme ne comprend pas comme nous l’amour. Pour lui, ce n’est pas un échange, c’est une conquête. À ses yeux, la femme, infériorisée, est bien moins un être qu’un objet (48) [No, my sister, believe me, there exists neither love, justice, dignity, nor understanding possible between the one who believes himself to be king by divine grace and the being that he claims belongs to his law. There is nothing possible between them save for pain and hatred. Man does not understand love as we do. For him, it is not an exchange, it is a conquest. In his eyes, woman, rendered inferior, is much less a being than an object]

According to Suzanne, the concept of love between men and women is therefore tainted and questioned for its complicity in keeping women inferior. Aline-Ali asserts that “[l]’amour, qui devrait être l’expression la plus haute de la vie morale, n’est jusqu’ici que le terrain où l’homme et la femme forcément se rencontrent, mais en adversaires. Ce n’est point une union, mais une bataille où il s’agit d’être le plus fort, et où le plus fort est toujours celui qui aime le moins” (225) [love, which should be the most elevated expression of moral life, is up until now the terrain where man and woman meet, but as adversaries. It is not a union, but a battle where one has to be the stronger of the two, and where the stronger one is always the one who loves the least]. Loving makes one weak, putting him or her at risk of succumbing to the possessor. Astolphe too shares the idea that love between a man and woman is inherently unbalanced and potentially dangerous for women. He gives Gabriel an ultimatum: “Élève tes désirs vers Dieu seul, ou consens à être aimée comme une mortelle. Jamais tu ne rencontreras un amant qui ne soit pas jaloux de toi, c’est-à-dire avare de toi, méfiant, tourmenté, injuste, despotique” (133)

[Raise your desires toward God himself, or consent to be loved as a mortal woman. Never will you find a lover who is not jealous of you, that is to say, who is not greedy with you, suspicious, tormented, unjust, and despotic]. Ironically, Astolphe does not think of himself as a threat to Gabriel; rather, he seems to think that jealousy and despotism are unavoidable aspects of being in a relationship. Further, Astolphe feminizes Gabriel linguistically, thereby situating his cousin in the feminine position of object to be controlled by the male lover. Astolphe's statement also recalls Clémentina's dilemma of having to choose between isolating herself in a convent or living as part of society. It appears that if Gabriel wishes to remain a social being, one that Astolphe considers feminine, he will always be subjected to despotic masculine lovers. It is therefore impossible for Gabriel to have a romantic, egalitarian relationship when he is living as Gabrielle.

As Mademoiselle de Vénérande, Raoule cannot enter the relationship s.he desires. S.he is tired of being a woman at the beck and call of men: “brutalité ou impuissance. Tel est le dilemme. Les brutaux exaspèrent, les impuissants avilissent et *ils* sont, les uns et les autres, si pressés de jouir, qu'*ils* oublient de nous donner, à nous, leurs victimes, le seul aphrodisiaque qui puisse les rendre heureux en nous rendant heureuses: l'*Amour!*” (72, emphasis in original)

[brutality or powerlessness. That is the dilemma. The brutal exasperate us, the powerless belittle us, and *they* are both so eager to have their pleasure that *they* forget to give us, their victims, the only aphrodisiac that can make them happy by making us happy too: *Love!*] S.he is finished with being the woman of the relationship since it yields h.er little satisfaction and no love. Raoule therefore is determined to find a new love dynamic, “un amour tout neuf” (Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus* 72) [a brand new love], causing Raittolbe to call her “le Christophe Colomb de l'amour

moderne” (73) [the Christopher Columbus of modern love]. In her quest to restructure love, Raoule positions herself as Monsieur Vénérande and Jacques as her mistress. While Raoule’s new love, which Hawthorne notes “consists of a role reversal” (“*Monsieur Vénus*” 165), certainly goes against traditional gender roles and in this sense continues the work of Chapter One, I argue that it is not a better replacement for traditional love since it too creates and maintains unequal dynamics.

Despite their nontraditional gender identities, Raoule as the controlling man and Jacques as the submissive woman reproduce the inequality between men and women. Bollhalder Mayer confirms:

Dans la littérature fin-de-siècle, le rapport du couple s’exprime le plus souvent en termes d’agression. Or, la revendication “féministe” de Raoule—le droit au désir et à la jouissance—n’aboutit pas à la réciprocité du rapport entre l’homme et la femme. Loin de rendre l’amour plus heureux, le renversement des rôles ne change pas l’essence d’un érotisme fondé sur l’affrontement rigoureux des partenaires, respectivement victime et bourreau. La prise de pouvoir par la femme va de pair avec un acte vampirique de dépossession de l’homme. La célèbre scène de “défloration”, dans *Monsieur Vénus*, décrit l’acte d’amour comme un véritable massacre (93) [In fin-de-siècle literature, the couple’s dynamic expresses itself most often in terms of aggression. However, Raoule’s “feminist” claim—the right to desire and pleasure—does not succeed in the man and the woman’s equal rapport. Far from making love happier, the reversal of roles does not change the essence of an eroticism founded on the rigorous confrontation of partners, victim

and executioner, respectively. The gaining of power by the woman goes hand in hand with a vampiric act of dispossession of the man. The famous “deflowering” scene in *Monsieur Vénus* describes the act of love-making as a true massacre]

Since Raoule has declared herself to be Jacques’s masculine lover—“Je serai son amant” (75) [I will be his masculine lover]—Jacques has little to no control over her body and her actions.

Raoule forbids Jacques to smoke and to speak to another man without her permission; moments after this command, Raoule “se jeta sur lui, le coucha à ses pieds avant qu’il ait eu le temps de lutter, puis, prenant son cou que le veston de molleton blanc laissait décollété, elle lui enfonça ses ongles dans les chairs. —Je suis *jaloux!*” (84, emphasis in original) [threw herself on him, laid him at her feet before he had time to fight back, then, taking his neck that the white fleece jacket left uncovered, she thrust her nails into his skin. —I am a *jealous man!*] Raoule physically assaults Jacques’s body in an attempt to establish dominance. Jacques’s body, a sign both of Raoule’s desire and of Jacques’s insubordination—has Jacques spoken to another man? has Jacques smoked?—is controlled by Raoule. She is jealous at the thought of another man possessing Jacques. In an attempt to establish claim to Jacques’s body, Raoule announces: “Tu seras mon esclave, Jacques, si l’on peut appeler esclavage l’abandon délicieux que tu me feras de ton corps” (89) [You will be my slave, Jacques, if one can call “slavery” the delicious abandonment that you give me with your body]. To Jacques’ protests, Raoule responds: “Tu ne t’en iras pas, Jacques. Tu t’es livré, tu ne peux pas te reprendre! Oublies-tu que nous nous aimons?... Cet amour, maintenant, était presque une menace” (89) [You won’t leave, Jacques. You have given yourself to me. You cannot take yourself back! Do you forget that we love each other?... This love was now practically a menace]. While the past participle *livré* situates

Jacques in a masculine subject position, the context of the sentence does not. Raoule's verb choice *se livrer* echoes her earlier statement about wives and prostitutes relinquishing their bodies to men. Jacques, now in the feminine position, clearly does the same. Jacques resigns her body to Raoule, her masculine lover, whom she will later call "cher maître de mon corps" (180) [dear master of my body]. Jacques has given up her body to Raoule as a result of being in love, or so claims Raoule. This refers back to the idea that love between a man and a woman cannot be equal; in this rendition of love, as Pateman and Rich argue, woman is compelled to offer her body to man.

As Raoule, Aline-Ali, and Suzanne understand it, love is an unequal dynamic comprised of a masculine subject and a feminine object. Accepting her role as the woman in a relationship with a man, Jacques becomes a passive object, submissive to Raoule. So writes Rachilde:

Une vie étrange commença pour Raoule de Vénérande, à partir de l'instant fatal ou [sic] Jacques Silvert, lui cédant sa puissance d'homme amoureux, devint sa chose, une sorte d'être inerte qui se laissait aimer parce qu'il aimait lui-même d'une façon impuissante. Car Jacques aimait Raoule avec un vrai cœur de femme. Il l'aimait par reconnaissance, par soumission, par un besoin latent de voluptés inconnues (94) [A strange life began for Raoule de Vénérande the fatal moment when Jacques Silvert, giving her his virility as a man in love, became her thing, a kind of inert thing that lets itself be loved because he himself loved in a powerless fashion. For Jacques loved Raoule with a true woman's heart. He loved her out of gratitude, out of submission, out of an underlying need of unknown delights]

As Jacques relinquishes her power as a man, Raoule assumes h.er own masculine dominance. Jacques affirms that her only role is to please Raoule. Raoule responds: “Eh bien! tais-toi. Je ne viens pas ici pour t’entendre” (59) [Fine! Be quiet. I do not come here to listen to you]. This reply reasserts Jacques’s position as a silent object whose own thoughts come second to those of Raoule, if at all. Jacques is h.er feminine possession—“vous serez toujours *mienne!*” (98, emphasis mine) [you will always be my *feminine thing!*—to be controlled and objectified. As Hawthorne notes, “Raoule uses the dynamics of looking as a means of empowerment. She objectifies Jacques, and the more he becomes aware of being the object of the gaze, and the longer he remains complicit, the more Raoule has control” (“*Monsieur Vénus*” 172). Raoule’s dominance grows stronger the more infatuated s.he and Jacques become with each other and the more they fall into their respective gender roles.

Raoule’s aristocratic status also contributes to h.er ability to dominate Jacques, a working class flower-maker. In fact, Jacques at first attributes Raoule’s class to the reason s.he occupies a masculine role: “le grand monde devait être plus libre que celui qu’il connaissait” (38) [high society had to be freer than the world he knew]. Deferring to Raoule, Jacques does not attempt to undermine or question h.er authority. She accepts Raoule’s dominance even though Jacques initially experiences shame at having to give Raoule property of her body (*Monsieur Vénus* 39). Raoule’s privilege is thus established in two ways: through h.er class and through h.er masculinity. Thanks to being part of the aristocracy, Raoule is able to situate h.erself as masculine (Hawthorne, “*Monsieur Vénus*” 169-170); s.he is thus doubly more powerful than Jacques. As Jacques and Raoule fall deeper in love with each another, their relationship cannot become egalitarian due to these class and gender differences.

The relationship between Jacques and Raoule experiences several transformations. Even though Raoule establishes herself as the dominant man in the beginning, she tries to restructure their rapport by making Jacques her husband, not wife: “Je ferai de toi mon mari [...] je t’ai perdu, je te réhabilite. Quoi de plus simple! Notre amour n’est qu’une dégradante torture que tu subis parce que je te paye. Eh bien, je te rends ta liberté. J’espère que tu sauras en user pour me reconquérir... si tu m’aimes” (112) [I will make you my husband. I ruined you, I will rehabilitate you. What could be simpler! Our love is but a degrading torture that you submit to because I pay you. So I will give you back your freedom. I hope that you will know how to use it in order to reconquer me... if you love me]. One should note the use of *mari* in addition to the masculine past participle *perdu*. Raoule thus attempts to situate Jacques in the masculine position. By giving Jacques liberty, Raoule hopes Jacques will use it to gain masculinity and to claim possession and authority over her, now in the role of woman. Jacques will, Raoule hopes, conquer her in the name of love. This restructuring, however, merely creates confusion, evoking a bigger crisis of identity. While Raoule hopes to “rehabilitate” Jacques as a man, it appears Jacques has never before occupied this role and is quite happy being a woman. Consequently, Jacques refuses this role reversal, responding: “quand vous voudrez de moi, je serai encore votre esclave, celui que vous appelez ma femme!” (113) [when you want me, I will be your slave again, the one that you call my wife!]

Raoule, undeterred, insists that they marry. Her persistence causes Jacques to break down, asserting that her gender and her class forbid a union between the two of them: “Je ne suis pas un homme! je ne suis pas du monde! riposta Jacques [...] Je suis l’esclave qui aime pendant qu’il amuse! Tu m’as appris à parler pour que je puisse dire *ici* que je t’appartiens!... Inutile de

m'épouser, Raoule, on n'épouse pas sa maîtresse, ça ne se fait pas dans tes salons!" (155, emphasis in original) ["I am not a man! I am not part of this social circle!" responded Jacques. "I am the slave who loves while he amuses you! You taught me to speak so that I can say *here* that I belong to you!... It is useless to marry me, Raoule, you do not marry your mistress. That is not done in your circle!"] Jacques and Raoule cannot wed as husband and wife, respectively, because Jacques is not a man and is not of the same class as Raoule. Furthermore, even if one accepts Jacques as a woman and Raoule as a man, they still cannot marry since, according to Jacques, one does not marry his mistress in the aristocratic world. It therefore appears that it is Raoule's class status that forbids them to marry, not their gender role reversal.

However, just as Raoule ignores traditional gender conventions, s.he repudiates class protocol and marries Jacques. Despite the fact that Jacques becomes h.er "femme chérie" (158) [cherished wife], Raoule's desire to create yet another scandal falls short since, as Hawthorne notes, their marriage "serves to normalize and neutralize the disruption which her affair with Jacques hitherto represented" ("*Monsieur Vénus*" 174). Furthermore, their normative relationship causes Raoule to lose control as s.he "discovers that the symbolic institution of marriage now seems to control her, prescribing behavior that was unthinkable for Raoule de Vénérande" (Hawthorne, "*Monsieur Vénus*" 175). Hawthorne suggests that Raoule cannot maintain the "illusion" of being a man ("*Monsieur Vénus*" 174), but I contend that h.er inability to maintain a dominating hold on Jacques reflects the flawed dynamic within the man/woman relationship. The sexual contract and imposed institution of heterosexuality may make masters out of men, but the constant need to assert one's power cannot be sustained indefinitely. As we previously saw, Raoule's jealousy and fear of losing h.er possession weighs heavily on h.er mind. Raoule does



lose Jacques, and it is of h.er own doing. When Raoule claims the position of dishonored wife by insisting that Jacques fight Raittolbe in a duel, Gantz argues that “the plot reaches this disastrous apex when *and because* Raoule forces Jacques abruptly into the guise of manhood, a role he is fatally unprepared to play” (127, emphasis in original). While being forced into the position of man does indeed lead Jacques to his death, it is because of the problems ensuing from their marriage and their overall relationship that Jacques sought out a new master and lover, Raittolbe, in the first place.

Raoule is thus unsuccessful in finding a new love structure since s.he remains within heterosexual and heteronormative marriage. The dynamic s.he institutes between Jacques and h.erself remains grounded in heteronormative inequality between men and women, with Jacques controlled, enslaved, and finally killed by Raoule’s dominance. Even in death, Jacques’s body is an object possessed by Raoule. Not only does s.he make Jacques’s body into a mannequin, but “[u]n ressort disposé à l’intérieur des flancs correspond à la bouche et l’anime en même temps qu’il fait s’écarter les cuisses” (210-211) [a spring disposed in the interior of the flanks corresponds to the mouth and animates it at the same time that it makes the thighs spread]. Raoule has fashioned Jacques’s body to be penetrated. S.he thus plays the masculine role to the end, and beyond. While Raoule and Jacques might have been in love, this love is practically a menace (Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus* 89) and appears to be of the same nature as the love against which Suzanne, Aline, and Gabriel rally. What, if anything, can replace this deceptively hostile love? Arguing that “[p]uisque [l’on] méprise[...] tant ce sexe, [on] ne peu[t] l’aimer” (74) [since one despises this sex so much, one cannot love it], Gabriel asserts: “l’amour n’est pas autre chose que l’idée de la supériorité de l’être qu’on possède, et, cette idée détruite, il n’y a plus que

l'amitié" (182) [love is nothing other than the idea of the superiority of the being that one possesses, and, this idea destroyed, nothing remains but friendship]. As the next section will demonstrate, Aline-Ali, Clémentina, and Gabriel succeed in changing the dynamic between themselves and their romantic interests not by reversing roles as Raoule did, but by establishing first a friendship.

## Part Two

### Friendship and Brotherhood

Through their transgender practices, Aline-Ali and Gabriel avoid falling into institutionalized heterosexual dynamics when they first meet Paul and Astolphe. By presenting as men, the two protagonists take advantage of heteronormativity that assumes two men will take to each other on a platonic, not romantic, level. Even though Bard speaks of cross-dressing as a disguise, she makes the important point that in this practice, "la notion de liberté de mouvement est essentielle [...] Le masque est nécessaire pour pénétrer dans l'espace que s'approprient les hommes, pour passer du statut d'observée à celui d'observateur" (*Une Histoire politique du pantalon* 164) [the notion of freedom of movement is essential. The mask is necessary in order to penetrate spaces that are appropriated by men, in order to go from the status of (feminine) observed to status of (masculine) observer]. Gabriel and Aline-Ali thus avoid being initially placed in the position of object that Jacques held as a woman and they enter the masculine world as a friend, an equal. In fact, both *Gabriel* and *Aline-Ali* privilege friendship over love and marriage.

Gabriel becomes fast friends with his cousin Astolphe, calling their rapport an "amitié sainte" (34) [saintly friendship]. Astolphe agrees, saying that his life seems more precious now

that it is united with Gabriel's (60). Seemingly wary of traditional relationships that deteriorate because of male domination, Gabriel wishes that their friendship could remain "aussi pure, aussi belle que le jour dont cette aurore est le brillant présage!" (60) [as pure, as beautiful as the day whose dawn is a bright omen!] In contrast to the character's definition of love, friendship appears to be based on an equal partnership. Astolphe even seems to privilege his friendship with Gabriel over their relationships with women. However, just as Gabriel feared, their initially pure rapport quickly transforms into a relationship characterized by Astolphe's obsession with controlling his cousin. Astolphe worries that Gabriel will replace him with a woman and warns: "Mon pauvre Gabriel, continue, si tu peux, à ne point aimer. Quelle femme serait digne de toi? Il me semble que le jour où tu aimeras je serai triste, je serai jaloux" (76) [My poor Gabriel, continue, if you can, not to love. What woman would be worthy of you? It seems to me that I will be sad when the day comes when you love. I will be jealous]. Since no woman can be good enough for Gabriel, claims Astolphe, any relationship between Gabriel and a woman would result in an unequal power dynamic. While Astolphe suggests that only he is worthy of Gabriel's affection, thereby insinuating that their friendship is one between equals, Astolphe's possessive behavior betrays itself through his assertion that he will be jealous when Gabriel takes a lover. By implying that friendship trumps love, Astolphe exploits Gabriel's desire for a relationship based on equality to manipulate his cousin into following Astolphe's wishes.

In *Clémentine*, even though friendship might not quite outweigh love, it nevertheless remains a major theme. In fact, *amour* and *amitié* become intertwined to the extent where it is difficult to distinguish between the two. The line between love and friendship is blurred in Cuisin's text more so than in the other novels. This reflects, I suggest, Clémentine's own

transgender practices: just as she successfully merges masculine and feminine, floating almost seamlessly between the two genders, she also manages to blend *amour* and *amitié*. Clémentina is immediately attracted to Saint-Elme when she first sees him; her heart is “pénétré de toutes les flammes de l’amour” (1: 69) [penetrated by all the flames of love]. However, Clémentina’s close friend Nathalia evokes friendship, not love, during this meeting: “Saint-Elme est séduisant; [...] conviens que tu as déjà toi-même *beaucoup, mais beaucoup d’amitié* pour [lui]” (1: 72, emphasis in original) [Saint-Elme is seductive; admit that you already have *lots, but lots of friendship* for him]. While her use of friendship could be a tactic used to mask Clémentina’s desire, it nevertheless links romantic love and platonic friendship. Furthermore, Clémentina’s own linguistic choices when she discusses her relationship with Nathalia hint at substituting friendship for love: Clémentina explains that while she loves Nathalia, she is worried that Nathalia’s passion for Clémentina, a passion “criminelle à *demi*, s’était glissée dans son sein à l’insu de sa vertu [...] [L’am...itié [de Clémentina] serait assez forte pour aller [la] consoler” (2: 11-12, emphasis in original) [*half-criminal*, had slid down her bosom unbeknownst to her virtue. The lov...ing friendship of Clémentina would be strong enough to go console her]. Clémentina thus fears that Nathalia may harbor indecent feelings for her; Clémentina offers friendship, not love, in return when she decides to comfort her impassioned friend. Further, Clémentina remarks that Saint-Elme is “[s]on *am...i*” (2: 131, emphasis in original) [her *lov...ing friend*]. However, the ellipses splitting *amitié* and *ami* in the previous two examples suggest that other endings could have completed each word: *amour* [love] and *amant* [lover], respectively. The meaning of each quote would not have changed significantly if the words in question had been replaced.

Despite Clémentina's infatuation with Saint-Elme, she believes that he is only interested in fostering a platonic relationship with her, as mentioned earlier. She reluctantly admits: "je parierais que son amour a pris une direction *platonique*, et que rejetant l'influence matérielle des sens, il ne veut désormais m'aimer que de l'amour divin des anges: moi-même, ajoutais-je dans mon enthousiasme, épurant mes feux, ne lui portons qu'un cœur *sans désir*, une passion *sans but*" (1: 135-136, emphasis in original) [I would bet that his love took a *platonic* direction and that, rejecting the material influence of the senses, he only wanted to love me with the divine love of angels: as for me, I added in my enthusiasm, purifying my burning desire, let us bring him a heart *without desire*, a passion *without purpose*]. Since Clémentina refers to Saint-Elme's love as a divine love, I read his love as chaste, without desire, which situates Saint-Elme's feelings for her as amicable, not romantic. By taking on a platonic dimension, his love therefore becomes more of a friendship. Clémentina, in contrast, desires this man, yet she suppresses these passionate feelings in order to put forth a chaste version of love: a friendship. Saint-Elme himself confirms this type of platonic rapport, stating: "nous ne pouvons nous aimer que d'un *amour céleste*" (1: 100, emphasis in original) [we can only love each other with a *celestial love*]. The religious metaphors of a celestial, divine, and angelic love refer back to Clémentina's supposed destiny as a nun and threaten to confine her to a spiritual relationship void of what she calls "l'influence matérielle des sens" [the material influence of the senses].

However, just as Clémentina does not live isolated in a convent, neither does she appear to be excluded from the carnal bonds of marriage. Clémentina recognizes that Saint-Elme will marry her "autant par amour que par grandeur d'âme" (1: 137) [as much for love as for grandeur of his soul]. A mix of platonic friendship and celestial love structures their rapport and veers it

toward marriage, which, one imagines, will add a physical element to their relationship. Significantly, Saint-Elme intends to marry Clémentina even though he is somewhat aware of her intersexuality. When they travel together, Clémentina presents as a man; for instance, once Saint-Elme comes to the door to see if “*son cher cousin était visible*” (2: 67-68, emphasis in original) [*his dear male cousin was visible*]. While Clémentina previously believed she desires Saint-Elme more than he desires her, she and Saint-Elme develop a mutual infatuation during these travels in which she presents as his masculine cousin:

Quelles heures délicieuses! avec quelle rapidité elles passaient! Les yeux fixés l’un sur l’autre, nous nous abreuvions à longs traits de la volupté de nous aimer, de nous le dire sans contrainte, sans obstacles, et surtout, de mon côté, sans remords [...] [J]’avais la force de m’arracher à ses caresses, aussitôt qu’elles me paraissaient perdre le caractère de la retenue et du respect (2: 67-8) [What delicious hours! With what speed they passed! Eyes fixed upon each other, we drank up in long gulps the delight of loving each other, of telling each other without constraint, without obstacles, and, above all, for my part, without remorse. I had the strength to extract myself from his caresses as soon as they seemed to lose the character of restraint and respect]

Their once-chaste love, or platonic friendship, therefore gradually takes on elements of lust. Importantly, when desire comes into play, Clémentina notes that respect and self-control disappear. This new type of relationship dynamic therefore exhibits components of what Aline-Ali and Gabriel find so repulsive about traditional love between men and women; Clémentina must leave the room in order to maintain control. Nevertheless, the masculine friendship between

Saint-Elme and his *cousin* prevents their love from slipping entirely into an unequal power structure in which one man dominates.

The relationship between Clémentina and Saint-Elme takes on an entirely new form when they learn that they are long-lost siblings. Having once referred to herself as Saint-Elme's *cousin*, Clémentina now becomes his sister and his brother: "Ce nouveau titre de *sœur*, de *frère*, porta, il est vrai, dans mon âme, les plus doux allégemens [sic]. Je souriais à ces délicieux sentimens [sic] de fraternité, et dans la perte que je faisais de mon amant, ne m'était-il pas bien doux d'y retrouver en compensation un parent chéri[?]" (2: 119, emphasis in original) [This new title of *sister*, of *brother*, brought, it is true, in my soul, the most gentle lightness. I smiled at these delicious sentiments of fraternity, and in the loss of my lover, was it not nice to find in him a cherished relative as compensation?] Clémentina's use of the singular "title" indicates, I suggest, that she is speaking only of *her* new role as both *sœur* and *frère*, not of the new titles she and Saint-Elme each would distinctly and respectively possess. Her new title is thus sister *and* brother, reflecting her mixed gender identity. She even identifies their new relationship as a kind of fraternity in which her brother replaces her lover. Although Clémentina's situation is clearly a unique case, the theme of a fraternal bond replacing romantic love and vice versa figures prominently in the novels of George Sand and André Léo.

Society, argues Pateman, is not patriarchal in nature. Rather, it is fraternal and the original social contract is a fraternal pact (Pateman 77). While Clémentina and Saint-Elme nearly wed, thereby almost transforming the matrimonial union into a literal fraternal contract, under normal circumstances the fraternal pact oppresses women: "The individuals who enter the contract are brothers [...with a] common interest in upholding the civil laws that secure their

freedom. [...] They also have a common interest *as men* in upholding the terms of the sexual contract” (Pateman 102-103, emphasis in original). Importantly, not only do Aline-Ali and Gabriel succeed in becoming friends with Paul and Astolphe through their transgender practices, they also manage to enter into a fraternal pact with them. Both characters use the rhetoric of *frère* [brother] to describe their relationships. For instance, Gabriel requests that Astolphe treat him as a brother. Astolphe readily agrees, proclaiming: “nous serons frères [...] Nous courrons le monde ensemble; nous nous ferons de mutuelles concessions, afin d’être toujours d’accord” (59) [we will be brothers. We will travel the world together; we will make mutual concessions in order to always be in agreement]. *Frère* touches on a rapport deeper than that of *ami*; the dynamic is fully founded on equality and interconnectedness.

In addition to investigating Suzanne’s claim that women occupy a subordinate social position, one of the reasons Aline-Ali dons men’s clothes is to make friends with someone who might then become h.er husband. Since Suzanne tells Aline-Ali that a husband is akin to a master, Aline-Ali intends to know h.er future husband as two brothers would know each other. S.he tells her father: “Je ne sais si j’aimerai, père; mais, je vous l’affirme, je ne me marierai point, à moins de connaître mon fiancé, non comme un frère est connu de sa sœur, ce qui serait peu, mais comme un frère connaît son frère” (94) [I don’t know if I will love, Father; but, I assure you, I will not marry unless I know my fiancé not as a brother is known by his sister, which would be little, but as a brother knows his brother]. In this sense, it is crucial that Aline-Ali partake in transgender practices in order to erase h.er perceived femininity that would inhibit h.er ability to know Paul intimately. Furthermore, it appears that merely becoming friends with h.er future husband would not succeed in forming a close-enough bond. Aline-Ali’s masculine



attire helps situate h.er immediately as a friend, not lover, and this masculine friendship has the ability to become an even deeper fraternal connection.

Recognizing that his child and Paul have become very close, Aline-Ali's father asks if s.he is starting to "le connaître en frère?" (137) [know him as a brother?] Even though Aline-Ali and Paul begin to accept each other as brothers—Paul even promises Aline-Ali's dying father that he will be the "frère dévoué d'Ali" (139) [devoted brother of Ali]—Paul cannot believe that this brotherhood could be a precursor to marriage. More specifically, he doesn't think that it is possible to share this kind of rapport with a woman, a future wife. He asks the person he calls Ali: "Quelle femme pourrait me donner les joies de cette entente si vraie, si profonde, que je goûte avec toi?" (226) [What woman could give me the joy of this connection so true, so profound, that I enjoy with you?] This echoes Astolphe's earlier assertion that his friendship with Gabriel is stronger than any bond Gabriel could have with a woman. Women are thus minimized to the point where they are deemed unworthy of partaking in the fraternal pact. Working against this male exclusivity, Gabriel and Aline-Ali attempt to restructure the pact, making it so that anyone and everyone has access, regardless of gender or social status. As we shall see, however, Aline-Ali and Gabriel have different experiences in their quest to expand the fraternal pact. When the transgender practices of Aline-Ali and Gabriel come to light, the dynamic between them and their *frères* shifts dramatically. In other words, the fraternal respect and admiration fostered and developed by each pair threaten to dissipate once Paul and Astolphe believe their counterparts to "really" be female.

Despite the fact that Aline-Ali tells Paul to continue viewing h.er as his brotherly friend, Paul is severely shaken by what he perceives to be Aline-Ali's "true" identity. Their

relationship's dynamic has shifted and Paul doubts they can share as deep a bond as before.

Aline-Ali laments the change s.he sees in him. S.he writes:

Depuis le changement qui s'est fait en toi, notre intimité n'est plus la même [...] La question posée actuellement entre nous [...] est celle précisément à l'égard de laquelle l'éducation [...] [a] établi entre nous de telles dissemblances, que peut-être nous est-il impossible de nous bien comprendre, réciproquement (288) [Ever since the change that occurred in you, our intimacy is no longer the same. The question now posed between us is precisely the one with regard to which education has established such differences between us, that perhaps it is impossible to understand each other reciprocally]

Aline-Ali's sartorial change elicits a mental change in Paul, to the point where he does not view their relationship the same as before. Because of the differences in their education, Aline-Ali does not believe that Paul is capable of accepting Aline-Ali's claims that s.he is still his "frère, [s]on ami" (268) [brother, his masculine friend]. Paul confirms Aline-Ali's fear when he confesses: "il me semble en ces moments que nos liens sont détendus; je te vois alors dans une autre sphère, loin de moi, qui, du fond de mon ombre, ne puis t'atteindre. Ta métamorphose, qui m'enivre, me cause aussi mille terreurs; tu deviens pour moi plus idéale, plus sévère, plus éloignée" (285) [it seems to me that in these moments our links are loosened; I see you in another sphere, far from me, who, from the bottom of my shadow, cannot reach you. Your metamorphosis, which intoxicates me, also causes me thousands of terrors; you become more ideal to me, more severe, more remote]. Metamorphosis indicates a change deeper than physicality; Aline-Ali, in Paul's eyes, has undergone an intense transformation from male to

female. I propose that Paul mourns their broken bond as a result of his belief that women cannot share in the fraternal bond. This metamorphosis intoxicates Paul since now he can take Aline-Ali as a heteronormative lover, and he sees h.er as ideal because of h.er “real” sex. However, Aline-Ali is further removed from him due to the social and/or natural differences that Paul believes exist between men and women.

Significantly, Aline-Ali works to show Paul how these distinctions are constructed. S.he reminds him that he managed to become close to Ali and that this proves their supposedly biological differences are negligible. Paul at last accepts that the individual he now labels as Aline is the same person as Ali. He alternates between masculine and feminine language when writing to Aline-Ali and continues to call h.er his brother: “Tu es pour moi tout: le frère, l’ami, la femme adorée, l’idéal et la vie” (343) [You are everything to me: brother, (masculine) friend, adored woman, the ideal and life]. The relationship between Aline-Ali and Paul therefore combines friendship, brotherhood, and romantic love. Paul’s words take on a decidedly cliché tone, however, slipping into the idealistic, woman-praising rhetoric that Suzanne and Aline-Ali criticize in their condemnation of traditional love and that I discuss in Chapter Four.

While Aline-Ali succeeds in convincing Paul that s.he is the same person he befriended months prior, s.he continues to deconstruct their relationship by working to eliminate the toxic remnants of traditional masculine-feminine dynamics. Further, Aline-Ali attempts to transform the masculine fraternal pact from within. S.he critiques its nature, confessing:

Ce que j’ai vu sous mes yeux, ce que d’odieuses confidences ont appris à mon oreille, ce qu’il m’a été donné de découvrir d’infamie, de lâcheté, d’abjection, dans ce monde où mon pied ne s’est posé qu’en passant, à jamais, vois-tu, mon

âme en sera troublée. Je suis comme un voyageur qui, s’approchant d’une source pour y boire, la voit remplie d’immondices, au milieu desquelles nagent des reptiles affreux; il fuit, pénétré d’un tel dégoût, que sa soif se trouve éteinte sans avoir été satisfaite (289) [That which I saw under my eyes, what unbearable things were confided to my ears, that which was given to me to discover in infamy, in cowardice, in abjection, in this world where my foot had stepped only in passing, will forever trouble my soul. I am like a traveler who, approaching a source from which to drink, sees it filled with filth, in the middle of which frightening reptiles swim; he flees, penetrated with such disgust that his thirst finds itself extinguished without having been satisfied]

This traveler explores the unknown land just as Ali discovers the masculine world. He needs to intimately know and understand this territory in order to live as an equal. However, once having gained admission to the fraternal pact thanks to h.er transgender practices, Aline-Ali realizes this very structure is poisonous to those belonging to the social category of woman. Furthermore, society itself, being fraternal in nature according to Pateman, is detrimental to women. Not only are women excluded from the fraternal pact because of their supposed sex, they are also actively oppressed by the masculine world. Aline-Ali must therefore rework the brotherly bonds that structure society in order to develop an inclusive and nurturing “watering hole” from which everyone can drink.

Even though Aline-Ali yearns to flee the poisonous fraternal world, s.he attempts to restructure the rapport between men and women by replacing it with an altered version of the fraternal pact. This expanded bond would allow anyone to attain status of *frère* regardless of

gender. Unsurprisingly, h.er trans identity is at the center of this transformation. Aline-Ali as *homme nouveau* Ali provides the model for others to emulate in this new emancipating social order. Having facilitated the publication of a journal article written by Metella Marti, Ali visits her “en frère” (165) [as a brother] and elicits the following response from Metella: “En frère! En frère!... C’est ce que j’ai cherché, mais n’ai trouvé nulle part. Je n’ai trouvé que l’infamie, nulle part la fraternité. Ah! vous seul m’avez fait entendre cette parole! Soyez béni pour cela. Mais, hélas! vous venez trop tard!” (165) [As a brother! As a brother!... That’s what I’ve been searching for, but have found nowhere. I only found infamy, never fraternity. Ah! You alone have made me heard this word! Be blessed for that. But, alas! You come too late!] Despite Ali’s efforts, Metella has been refused entrance to the fraternal pact for so long that h.er gesture is now futile; as Metella puts it, Ali comes too late. Fraternity’s toxicity to women is confirmed, causing Aline-Ali to work even harder to transform this dynamic/fraternal pact.

Aline-Ali introduces maternal love as an antidote to both brotherhood and traditional heteronormative love. As Ali, s.he first evokes this new dynamic by telling Paul that the latter “a été [s]on frère, et, dans la douleur, presque [s]a mère” (240) [had been his brother, and, in suffering, almost his mother]. Later in the novel, the transformation from fraternal pact to maternal love is complete: the relationship between Ali and Paul “n’était plus l’amitié de deux frères, ou de deux amis ...; ni même celle plus tendre d’une sœur et d’un frère. Dans la vivacité, dans l’exaltation de leur sentiment, il y avait plutôt de cet amour, le plus saint et le plus ardent de tous peut-être, l’amour maternel, ici réciproque” (248) [was no longer the friendship of two brothers or of two friends...; nor was it the friendship between a sister and a brother. In the vivacity and exaltation of their sentiment, there was instead the most saintly and most ardent of

all love, perhaps, maternal love, which was, here, reciprocal]. In this context, the two brothers transform into two mothers who share a mutual love. The fact that Ali and Paul are both in the position of mother eliminates any sort of hierarchy. Significantly, this rapport also excludes reproduction since there is no mention of children.

Paul continues to evoke the metaphor of maternity after he learns of Ali's transgender practices. He writes to Aline-Ali: "Tu étais ainsi plus que mon frère, tu étais bien mon amant; tu étais plus encore peut-être, et m'inspirant de toutes les tendresses de ce monde pour les verser sur toi, je t'aimais encore de la plus haute et la plus profonde, l'amour maternel" (297) [You were more than my brother, you were my (masculine) lover; you were even more, perhaps, and inspiring in myself all the tenderness of this world to shower on you, I also loved you with the highest and most profound maternal love]. Although *amour maternel* includes an adjective associated with the feminine, this dynamic does not aim to replace the masculine fraternal bond with a feminine one; rather, this rapport situates itself outside the phallogocentric system so that all people are included. Maternal love, a universal love that does not prioritize according to gender, provides the necessary escape. Unlike the poisonous fraternal pact, *la mère* "ne tue personne" (Cixous, *Entre l'écriture* 61) [kills no one].<sup>35</sup> Figuratively, maternal love gives life to those suppressed by heteronormative and cis-gendernormative culture. *Amour maternel* is thus re-appropriated from being the female biological destiny that we dismantled in Chapter One. This

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<sup>35</sup> I am extrapolating a bit from Cixous' argument. She writes: "Femme, est pour moi celle qui ne tue personne en elle, celle qui (se) donne ses propres vies: femme est toujours d'une certaine manière 'mère' pour elle-même et pour l'autre" (*Entre l'écriture*, 61) [Woman is for me the one who kills no one in her, the one who gives (herself) her own lives; woman is always in a certain manner "mother" for herself and for the other].

new maternity rewrites traditional relationships and disregards social constructions of gender and sex. It bases itself on unconditional love, mutual respect, and compassion.

Unfortunately for Gabriel, Astolphe is not as willing as Paul in accepting that the person he calls Gabrielle remains his *frère* and *ami*. Their relationship changes to reflect the traditional dynamics between men and women. Rejecting the label of *frère* for Gabriel, Astolphe exclaims: “Ma sœur! ô ma femme!” (112) [My sister! Oh my wife!] Aline-Ali has reminded us that treating women as sisters is not equivalent to how men treat other men as brothers, and Gabriel pushes back against Astolphe’s words, arguing: “Je n’ai pas cessé d’être ton frère et ton ami en devenant ta compagne et ton amante” (116) [I didn’t stop being your brother and your (masculine) friend by becoming your (feminine) companion and (feminine) lover]. Despite Gabriel’s protests, Astolphe refuses to change his mind and considers his friend Gabriel to be gone, replaced by lover Gabrielle: “J’avais en toi le meilleur des amis; un soir Dieu fit un miracle et te changea en une maîtresse adorable: je ne t’en aimai que mieux. N’est-ce pas bien charitable et bien méritoire de ma part?” (116) [I had in you the best of friends; one evening, by miracle, God changed you into an adorable mistress: I can only love you better because of it. Is that not charitable and commendable on my part?] Astolphe thus frames Gabriel’s supposed transformation in terms of how it impacts him specifically. Syntactically, he is the subject of the first sentence and speaks of his friendship with Gabriel in past, not present, tense; further, Astolphe sees himself at the center of Gabriel’s supposed transformation. He believes his former friend is a gift God sent him for his pleasure and even concludes his speech by fishing for a compliment of his own goodwill. Astolphe offers no place for Gabriel as subject or masculine friend. Even when Astolphe calls Gabriel a friend, he genders the noun accordingly: “Ô mon amie!” (118) [Oh my feminine

friend!] Despite the fact that their relationship lacks equality, Astolphe purports to love his mistress Gabrielle even “better” than his former friend Gabriel; the type of love therefore is different from the friendship they previously shared.

Astolphe’s love for the one he calls Gabrielle spills off of his tongue in rhetoric dripping with clichés. Echoing Paul’s own exaggerated affection for Aline, Astolphe cries: “ô ma Gabrielle!... ô ma seule joie, ô le seul être généreux et vraiment grand que j’aie rencontré sur la terre!” (112) [oh my Gabrielle!... oh my only joy, oh the only generous and truly grand being that I’ve encountered on Earth!] In fact, Astolphe does not believe that Gabriel is an earthly being. Instead, Astolphe claims that Gabriel is an angel walking among humans. Astolphe tells him: “[tu] n’es pas à moitié homme et à moitié femme comme tu le crois, mais un ange sous la forme humaine” (117) [you are not half man, half woman as you believe, but rather an angel in human form]. Instead of calling Gabriel his *ami* or *frère*, Astolphe calls him an *ange*;<sup>36</sup> labeling Gabriel an angel does not carry with it the same equality that the term brother implies. An angel is to be admired and revered but is not considered an equal counterpart in the fraternal pact. This other-worldly being is, above all, a stranger. In other words, woman remains, to a certain extent, disembodied other.

Astolphe purports to understand Gabriel’s difficulty in living as a woman yet does not try to improve the situation. He cries: “Je serais un misérable si j’oubliais quel sacrifice tu m’as fait en reprenant les habits de ton sexe et en renonçant à cette liberté, à celle [sic] vie active, à ces nobles occupations de l’esprit dont tu avais le goût et l’habitude” (114-115) [I would be a wretch if I forgot what sacrifice you made for me by taking back the clothing of your sex and by

<sup>36</sup> It is impossible not to recognize the link between the angel Gabriel, messenger of God, and Astolphe’s claim that the character he calls Gabrielle is an angel.



renouncing the liberty, the active life, and those noble occupations of mind that you enjoyed and were used to]. However, unlike Paul who works with Aline-Ali to improve her life, Astolphe does not attempt to grant Gabriel any freedom. Instead, it is as though he believes that Gabriel automatically renounces any form of liberty by living as a woman; feminine and free are mutually exclusive states of being. Furthermore, even though Astolphe considers Gabriel an angelic being, he still identifies Gabriel's sex as both female and linked to his new feminine clothes as indicated through his phrasing of "les habits de ton sexe" [the clothing of your sex]. Finally, the only reason Gabriel renounces his liberty is to appease Astolphe's infatuated heart and his apparently fragile ego. In other words, Gabriel lives as Astolphe's wife in order to make Astolphe happy. Gabriel pleads: "Donne-moi le temps de m'habituer à être aussi femme qu'il me faut l'être à présent pour te plaire [...] Tu aurais dû m'avertir, dès le premier jour où tu m'as aimée, qu'un temps viendrait où il serait nécessaire de me transformer pour conserver ton amour!" (129) [Give me time to get used to being as much as a woman as I need to be in order to please you. You should have warned me from the first day you loved me that a time would come when it would be necessary to transform myself in order to conserve your love!] Maintaining Astolphe's love therefore comes at a very high cost: the transformation of Gabriel from brother to lover and from free man to enslaved woman.

Despite Astolphe's claim that he appreciates all that Gabriel has given up to be his lover, his words ring out as false when compared to his treatment of his cousin. Astolphe claims: "je ne pourrais te voir opprimée sans me révolter ouvertement" (116) [I would not be able to see you oppressed without revolting outright]; however, he does not offer Gabriel freedom. Rather, Astolphe appears to accept Gabriel's oppression so long as he remains the oppressor. For

instance, Astolphe betrays this sentiment when he asks Gabriel: “N’es-tu pas à moi pour jamais?” (119) [Are you not mine forever?] He sees himself as possessor not only of Gabriel’s love, but also of his person. Gabriel, to his credit, sees through Astolphe’s empty rhetoric:

Astolphe! Astolphe! tu as eu bien des torts envers moi, et tu as fait bien cruellement saigner ce cœur, qui te fut et qui te se sera toujours fidèle! [...] c’est un grand crime d’avoir flétri un tel amour par le soupçon et la méfiance: et tu en portes la peine; car cet amour s’est affaibli par sa violence même, et tu sens chaque jour mourir en toi la flamme que tu as trop attisée par la jalousie. Malheureux ami!” (121) [Astolphe! Astolphe! you have committed many wrongs against me, and you cruelly made my heart bleed, this heart that has been and will always be faithful to you! It is a major crime to have caused such a love to wither away by suspicion and distrust: and you suffer its pain; because this love has been weakened by its very violence, and each day you sense the flame die, the flame that you stoked too much by jealousy. Sad friend!]

I underscore Gabriel’s assertion that this love contains violent elements, including jealousy and mistrust. This returns to the idea that love between a man and a woman involves power dynamics where the former attempts to possess the latter. Astolphe, because of his suspicious and jealous mind, seeks to dominate Gabriel. I suggest that by calling Astolphe “sad friend,” Gabriel attempts, however hopelessly, to re-establish a more equal rapport. This attempt is short-lived as Gabriel falls further under Astolphe’s control.

Astolphe despises any reminder of Gabriel’s masculine identity since it directly challenges his claim to Gabriel’s body and self. It also disrupts their newly established

relationship as lovers, or, more precisely, as masculine possessor and feminine object. Accordingly, Gabriel explains to his tutor that when he “porte ces vêtements de femme, tout ce qui rappelle [s]on autre sexe irrite Astolphe au dernier point” (126) [wears these women’s clothing, all that reminds him of his other sex irritates Astolphe to no end]. The fact that Gabriel uses the possessive when speaking of his “other sex” reinforces the claim that Gabriel’s masculine gender is intricately tied to Gabriel’s own conception of his identity. Furthermore, his association with femininity is reduced to “ces vêtements de femme” [these women’s clothing], suggesting that “these” clothes are where the association ends; linguistically, they are not even *his* clothing. Masculinity may well be Gabriel’s “other sex” (gender), but his female “sex” (gender) is forced upon him practically without his consent since he dresses as a woman to please Astolphe. Astolphe’s discomfort with Gabriel’s masculinity speaks to his desire to control his cousin, keeping him a feminine object he can dominate. Gabriel attempts to convince himself that the bond that ties them together is love, “une force divine qui [l’]a toujours enchaîné[...] à [Astolphe]” (130) [a divine force that always chained him to Astolphe], yet the verb *enchaîner* [to chain] underscores the nature of this love. Gabriel cannot be a free agent in this relationship.

The romantic love between Astolphe and Gabriel directly contradicts the friendship and brotherhood that they shared earlier. However, it appears that Astolphe has always yearned for this kind of relationship with Gabriel as illustrated through the fact that, at the beginning of George Sand’s text, Astolphe dreams of finding a woman who resembles his cousin. Dressing Gabriel up as a woman for Carnival feeds his fantasy. Astolphe recognizes sadly that, after the fun is over, “[l]es jolis pieds [de Gabriel] disparaîtront dans des bottes, [...]a main secouera rudement et fraternellement la [s]ienne” (75) [the pretty feet of Gabriel will disappear into boots,

his hand will roughly and fraternally shake his]. Astolphe would therefore rather kiss Gabriel's "main si douce" (75) [hand so soft] than hold it as that of an equal.

Despite his dream of a feminine Gabriel coming true, Astolphe realizes that he ultimately cannot keep Gabriel chained to his side as a lover. He even questions why Gabriel loves him. Astolphe asks: "Pourquoi m'aimes-tu encore, Gabrielle? que ne me méprises-tu! Tant que tu m'aimeras, je serai exigeant, je serai insensé, car je serai tourmenté de la crainte de te perdre. Je sens que je finirai par là, car je sens le mal que je te fais" (132) [Why do you still love me, Gabrielle? Why don't you despise me? As long as you love me, I will be demanding and foolish because I will always be tormented by the fear of losing you. I sense that I will finish that way, because I sense the harm that I do to you]. The more Astolphe loves Gabriel, the more he fears losing him and the desire to control the object of his affection grows stronger. This vicious cycle can only result in Astolphe losing Gabriel forever. Astolphe knows he is pushing Gabriel away, yet he cannot stop himself. Further, Astolphe acknowledges that living as a woman does not fulfill Gabriel: "Tu rêves un amour idéal comme jadis j'ai rêvé une femme idéale. Mon rêve s'est réalisé, heureux et criminel que je suis! Mais le tien ne se réalisera pas, ma pauvre Gabrielle! Tu ne trouveras jamais un cœur digne du tien; jamais tu n'inspireras un amour qui te satisfasse, car jamais culte ne fut digne de ta divinité" (133) [You dream of an ideal love just as I dreamed of an ideal woman. My dream has come true, happy and criminal as I am! But yours will never come true, my poor Gabrielle! You will never find a heart worthy of yours; never will you inspire a love that will satisfy you, because never was worship worthy of your divinity]. As we have seen, Astolphe's ideal woman embodies someone submissive who bends to the will of the man. While Gabriel tries to fulfill this role, it goes against his conditioned behavior; he enjoys his freedom

and cannot live as an enslaved wife. Instead, he dreams of what Astolphe calls an ideal love. I suggest that the only love that will satisfy Gabriel is one based on equality and is therefore similar to Aline-Ali's concept of a maternal love. Astolphe claims that it is impossible for Gabriel to ever attain this love, and he once more references Gabriel's divine status. Perhaps if Astolphe took Paul's lead and accepted Gabriel not as an angelic being but as an equal human being, with rights and desires similar to his own, he would realize that the ideal love to which he refers is possible and they could share mutual respect and compassion.

Astolphe, however, clings to the idea of love as a fixed, hierarchical rapport. He considers himself lucky to have "found" a woman in his friend Gabriel and credits himself with developing their platonic friendship into a romance: "j'eus découvert dans ce gracieux compagnon une femme ravissante, je l'adorai et ne songeai plus qu'à elle [...] [N]ous vécûmes chastes comme frère et sœur durant plusieurs mois, et elle n'avait pas la pensée que je pusse avoir jamais d'autres droits sur elle que ceux de l'amitié. Mais moi, j'aspirais à son amour" (156) [I discovered in this graceful companion a ravishing woman. I adored her and dreamed only of her. We lived chastely as brother and sister during several months, and she never had the thought that I could ever have rights over her other than those of friendship. But me, I aspired to her love]. Friendship was thus not enough for Astolphe. Further, it appears that their friendship was never completely based in equality. Even when Gabriel and Astolphe were friends, Astolphe practically claimed ownership rights over his cousin; as we saw earlier, Astolphe feared losing Gabriel to a woman. Just as he declared he would be envious of any woman who caught Gabriel's attention, Astolphe is jealous of masculine friends who try to befriend the person he now knows as Gabrielle:

quand tu redeviens le beau Gabriel, recherché, admiré, choyé de tous, c'est encore une autre souffrance qui s'empare de moi; souffrance moins lente, moins profonde peut-être, mais violente, mais insupportable. Je ne puis m'habituer à voir les autres hommes te serrer la main ou passer familièrement leur bras sous le tien. Je ne veux pas me persuader qu'alors tu es un homme toi-même, et qu'à l'abri de ta métamorphose tu pourrais dormir sans danger dans leur chambre, comme tu dormis autrefois sous le même toit que moi sans que mon sommeil en fût troublé. Je me souviens alors de l'étrange émotion qui s'empara peu à peu de moi à tes côtés, combien je regrettai que tu ne fusses pas femme, et comment, à force de désirer que tu le devinsses par miracle, j'arrivai à deviner que tu l'étais en réalité (136) [when you become once more the handsome Gabriel, sought after, admired, adored by everyone, yet another suffering takes over me; a lingering suffering, perhaps less profound, yet violent and unbearable. I cannot become used to seeing other men grasp your hand or link their arm under yours in that familiar manner. I do not want to persuade myself that you are then a man and that, under the shelter of your metamorphosis, you would be able to sleep without danger in their bedroom as you slept under the same roof as me without my sleep being disturbed by it. I also remember the strange emotion that took hold of me little by little by being at your side, how much I lamented the fact that you were not woman, and how, by so desiring that you became one by miracle, I came to guess that you were one in reality]

Astolphe therefore believes that it is not possible that other men will want to befriend Gabriel on a merely platonic level. Once he considers Gabriel a woman, there is no way he can imagine his cousin (re)entering the fraternal pact. When Gabriel dresses as a man, not only does it hurt Astolphe by concealing the feminine Gabrielle, but it opens up the potential to give other men access to Gabriel's body that Astolphe has claimed for himself. Astolphe's worry that Gabriel will suffer sexual abuse at the hands of other men perhaps projects what he would like to do to Gabriel's female body; Astolphe even references the desire he experienced before knowing his cousin's supposedly true sex. He can only think of Gabriel's interaction with himself and with other men as sexual. He is therefore afraid to give up ownership of Gabriel's body and allow Gabriel to dress as a man.

Gabriel soon rejects the dominance Astolphe forces upon him. Gabriel asserts: "Il faut qu'[Astolphe] apprenne l'effet de la tyrannie sur les âmes fières, et qu'il ne pense pas qu'il est si facile d'abuser d'un noble amour!" (142) [Astolphe needs to learn the effect of tyranny on proud souls and he need not think that it is easy to abuse a noble love!] Astolphe takes advantage of their relationship, having assumed Gabriel would be content with having it be based on inequality and oppression. Gabriel's tutor warns Astolphe that he needs to reassess and restructure his rapport with Gabriel if he hopes to placate his cousin: "Ainsi, vous voulez être le maître? Si j'avais un conseil à vous donner, je vous dissuaderaï. Je connais Gabriel: on a voulu que j'en fisse un homme; je n'ai que trop bien réussi. Jamais il ne souffrira un maître; et ce que vous n'obtiendrez pas par la persuasion, vous ne l'obtiendrez jamais" (153) [So, you want to be the master? If I had a piece of advice to give you, I would dissuade you. I know Gabriel: they wanted me to make him a man; I succeeded only too well. Never will he suffer a master; and

what you will not obtain through persuasion, you will never obtain]. It is important to note here that Gabriel's tutor employs masculine pronouns when speaking of his pupil despite the fact that Astolphe continues to use feminine ones during the conversation. The tutor thus affirms Gabriel's masculine identity through his language as well as through his mention of Gabriel's successful masculine upbringing. The way in which Astolphe establishes his authority only drives Gabriel further away. Accordingly, the tutor advises: "Ne contractez pas de mariage avec Gabrielle. Qu'elle vive et qu'elle meure travestie, heureuse et libre à vos côtés. [...] [E]lle sera enchaînée [...] par votre amour et le sien" (155) [Do not enter into marriage with Gabrielle. Let her live and let her die as a cross-dresser, happy and free at your side. She will be chained by your love and hers]. The use of feminine pronouns and the feminine version of Gabriel's name in this quote reflect the fact that the tutor speaks about marriage, a specifically heterosexual structure; if George Sand had written "Gabriel," the quote would have referenced matrimony between two men, which would have gone counter to the institution of marriage at the time. The tutor encourages Astolphe not to pursue a matrimonial bond with Gabriel as this would cement the latter's enslaved status. However, Gabriel nevertheless remains a captive through the mere acts of loving Astolphe and of being loved by him. In other words, it appears Gabriel can never be as free so long as Astolphe is in his life.

Astolphe, ignoring the tutor's warning, insists that he must marry his cousin. He threatens to reveal Gabriel's "true" identity if denied: "Je puis, dans l'empirement de ma jalousie, songer à faire connaître Gabrielle pour la forcer à m'appartenir; mais, du moment qu'elle sera ma femme, je ne la dévoilerai jamais" (159) [I can, in the impulse of my jealousy, consider making Gabrielle known in order to force her to belong to me; however, at the moment when she



becomes my wife, I will never unveil her]. The tutor instead cautions that the title of spouse will not give Astolphe “plus de sécurité auprès de Gabrielle que celui d’amant, et alors [...] vous voudrez la forcer publiquement à cette soumission qu’elle aura acceptée en secret” (159) [more security with Gabrielle than that of lover, and so you will want to force her publicly to this submission that she will have accepted in secret]. The tutor’s very words reveal that while there is a difference between lover and husband, the actual dynamic remains the same: *amant* and *mari* both control the submissive party. Lover, according to the tutor, is slightly better since Gabriel would suffer this submission in private.

Unsurprisingly, Gabriel ultimately rejects a romantic relationship with Astolphe. He will be neither his wife nor his lover since Astolphe’s love “n’est plus qu’un orgueil sauvage, une soif de vengeance et de domination” (179) [is no longer anything more than a savage pride, a thirst for vengeance and domination]. Having made his decision, Gabriel declares: “je quitte Astolphe pour toujours” (178) [I’m leaving Astolphe forever]. Gabriel nevertheless hopes that he and Astolphe might be able to reestablish their fraternal bond; for instance, he speaks of one day being able to “lui tendre une main fraternelle” (178) [extend a fraternal hand to him]. Even though Gabriel dies before this occurs, Astolphe does in fact enter into a new fraternal bond before the end of George Sand’s novel. This fraternal pact involves none other than Gabriel’s killer, to whom Astolphe declares: “tu auras l’absolution, et tu seras mon ami, mon compagnon! Nous ne nous séparerons plus, car nous sommes deux assassins!” (192) [you will have absolution and you will be my friend, my companion! We will never separate because we are both assassins!] These two men therefore bond over being the cause of Gabriel’s death. Not only does the fraternal pact establish itself on the common interest of men in controlling women’s bodies

as Pateman asserts, but the ultimate brotherly bond solidifies itself over the actual killing of someone Astolphe considers a woman. In other words, the epitome of masculine control over the female body lies in the destruction of the latter by the former. This underscores the necessary restructuring of the fraternal bond as indicated by Aline-Ali; as long as the fraternal pact remains exclusively masculine, it symbolizes women's oppression and ruin.

A healthy, inclusive relationship needs both desire and respect. Even though Aline-Ali finally succeeds in getting Paul to understand that s.he is the same person as Ali, thereby creating a type of maternal love based on friendship and love, Paul's desire for h.er body worries him. Earlier, having just learned of Aline-Ali's biological sex, he attempted to possess what he saw as a feminine body: "une folie le prit, et—ce qui d'ailleurs lui était arrivé cent fois déjà—il serra sur son cœur son bien-aimé compagnon, mais avec une violence inusitée, et, au lieu de son front, rencontra ses lèvres" (271) [a madness took over him, and—as had already happened a hundred times before—he clasped to his chest his beloved companion, but this time with an unusual violence. Instead of her forehead, he met her lips]. Later, after Aline-Ali said s.he wished to marry him, "pris de délire, [Paul] la saisit et l'emporta dans le pavillon... Elle ne résistait pas... Mais il la vit tout à coup affreusement pâle; il la sentit se glacer entre se bras... Il jeta un cri terrible, et, la repoussant, il s'enfuit" (344, all suspension points in original) [delirious, Paul grabbed her and carried her into the pavilion... She was not resisting... But suddenly he saw her terribly pale; he felt her turn to ice in his arms... He let out a horrible cry, and, pushing her away, he fled]. The suspension points indicate potentially intimate acts and Aline-Ali's reaction shows that s.he does not consent enthusiastically, to say the least. Paul recognizes h.er reluctance and is perhaps reminded of the last time his passion took hold of him and Aline-Ali "fondit en larmes"

(271) [dissolved in tears]. He realizes that their love can never be equal and that it is not fair to his beloved. Paul writes: “Je te demandais l’impossible; ta volonté me l’accordait; mais quelque chose de plus fort que ta volonté me condamne. [...] je serais un lâche de t’imposer de nouveau ce triste amour que tu ne peux partager” (348) [I asked of you the impossible; your will granted it to me, but something stronger than your will condemns me. I would be a coward to impose on you once more this sad love that you cannot share]. Aline-Ali’s vision of an *amour maternel* therefore does not quite succeed in the way s.he hopes. Even though education and reconditioning show Paul the faultiness in the belief that he has a right to Aline-Ali’s body, he suggests that, due to his learned behavior and social expectations, they can never maintain a respectful relationship. Ashamed of his actions and not wanting to “forcer [s]on front pur à rougir en [l]e revoyant” (347) [force her pure forehead to blush when seeing him again], Paul flees to Italy where he is killed fighting for Italy’s independence.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, Aline-Ali and Paul experience no reconciliation.

*Clémentine* is the only novel that features an uplifting resolution with the romantic couple. Clémentina transitions from loving Saint-Elme as a lover to embracing him as a brother. She replaces her lost love with Santa-Colomba, whom she had previously rejected as a potential suitor. Clémentina explains: “j’affectai dans ce moment de nommer Saint-Elme, *mon frère, mon cher frère*, et je n’envisageais plus comme le plus grand des malheurs, la nécessité de faire du marquis de Santa-Colomba mon époux” (2: 147, emphasis in original) [I moved in this moment to name Saint-Elme *my brother, my dear brother*, and I no longer envisioned as the biggest of

<sup>37</sup> A parallel can be drawn between Paul, emasculated and ashamed of his actions, and Italy, war-torn and rendered weak as a country. While the Roman Empire once symbolized strength and virility, now the country is fragmented and chaotic, much like Paul.

misfortunes the necessity of making the marquis of Santa-Colomba my spouse]. The “versatilité de [ses] sentiments [sic]” (2: 147) [versatility of her sentiments] thus reveals itself in the relatively easy transition Clémentina makes between lover and brother, and friend and lover. Clémentina blends together love and fraternal bonds, saying, “[l]’amour, l’amitié, tous les sentiments [sic] généreux nous liaient comme d’une chaîne électrique” (2: 173) [love, friendship, all the generous sentiments connected us like an electric chain], and it appears she succeeds in this unification by having two significant others in her life: her actual brother and her lover. Clémentina further elaborates: “si je chérissais mon frère, *j’aimais* beaucoup aussi le marquis; l’amour et la tendresse fraternelle enfin avaient fait entr’eux le plus doux accommodement” (2: 204-205) [if I cherished my brother, *I liked* the marquis a lot also; love and fraternal tenderness had finally made between the two of them the sweetest compromise]. Together, Saint-Elme and Santa-Colomba seem to create the perfect partner. However, Clémentina ultimately finds both love and friendship in one person: the marquis of Santa-Colomba.

Significantly, the only happy ending in my corpus occurs in the novel that features an intersexual, whose body is arguably deemed the most non-normative by the medical world. Even after her marriage to the marquis, Clémentina continues to present as both a man and woman. The texts in my corpus whose conclusions maintain stricter masculine/feminine rapports—where one character out of the couple is expected to remain on the feminine side while the other takes advantage of being masculine—depict relationships that fail. In the end, Paul, Astolphe, and Raoule attempt, whether deliberately or subconsciously, to place Aline-Ali, Gabriel, and Jacques in the position of woman while they assert themselves as men. Not only do the relationships fall apart in these three novels, but one individual dies out of each couple. Death therefore appears to

be the only possible way to escape controlling and abusive heteronormative relationships. Perhaps, as is the case for Jacques and Gabriel, death is the only possible outcome for transgender bodies at this time; even in the fictional, literary world, there is ultimately no place for their bodies that so radically disrupt gender norms.

Despite the fact that *Clémentine* concludes happily with the marriage of an intersex individual and her husband, the ending both challenges and upholds traditional narratives featuring a husband and wife. Cuisin's novel upsets heteronormativity by removing reproduction from marriage. Clémentina cannot have children, yet she and her husband are content with their life together. Clémentina explains: "Amour *sans but*, tendresse *sans résultat*, telle était ma situation pénible avec le marquis: mais combien le cœur d'une épouse, ingénieuse à multiplier les moyens de plaire à son époux, est fécond en ressources!!... Attentive à ses moindres désirs, le marquis n'avait pas le temps de former un souhait" (2: 244, emphasis in original) [Love *without objective*, tenderness *without result*, such was my difficult situation with the marquis: but how much the heart of a wife, ingenious to multiply the means of pleasing her husband, is fertile with resources!!... Attentive to his smallest desires, the marquis didn't have the time to form a wish]. According to Pateman, men control women's bodies in order to gain the conjugal right over reproduction; the relationship between Clémentina and Santa-Colomba clearly escapes this heteronormative dynamic. At the same time, however, Clémentina fulfills the feminine role of pleasing the man, which plays into the very heteronormative rapport that Suzanne critiques in *Aline-Ali*. While the marquis might actively attend to Clémentina's desires, she does not write that he does, and so it may very well be assumed that he does not. Clémentina therefore continues to adhere to certain gender norms while eschewing others.

Significantly, Clémentina's dual gender identity remains present in her relationship with Santa-Colomba. She loves her husband "avec la force réunie des deux sexes" (2: 245) [with the united strength of both sexes] and he "chérissait en [elle] plusieurs êtres qui cependant ne faisaient qu'une seule personne" (2: 245) [cherished in her many beings that nevertheless made up one single person]. Furthermore, Clémentina does not conceal her masculine side. On the contrary, she cultivates it, much to the delight of her husband: "Voulait-il, par exemple, la société enjouée ou érudite d'un aimable étourdi?.. Clémentina, reprenant ses habits de Cadix, allait à la chasse, faisait des armes avec son *ami*" (2: 245, emphasis in original) [Did he want, for example, the cheerful or erudite company of a nice, absent-minded person?.. Clémentina, putting on her Cadix clothes, went hunting, shooting, with her *friend*]. Clémentina's dual gender identity permits Santa-Colomba and her to embrace their friendship and fraternal bond in addition to their romantic and more traditional heteronormative love.

### Part Three

#### Upsetting Notions of Heterosexual Desire

We have seen how the protagonists either play into the idea of the heterosexual couple in which possession and inequality are the norm or try to invent new relationship dynamics. This section will examine how *all* the characters complicate the concept of assumed heterosexual desire. I argue that the novels destroy pre-conceived notions of opposite-gender attraction. While this is not to equate transgender with gay,<sup>38</sup> I do wish to consider briefly how gay and lesbian

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<sup>38</sup> After all, we cannot assign to the "cross-dresser" the identity of gay or lesbian since gender presentation and sexual orientation are two completely different things (Garber 5); furthermore, we cannot restrict female masculinity to lesbianism for the same reason (Halberstam 46).

couples have been understood historically in comparison to the straight couple since they are the most obvious examples of couples that undermine heteronormativity.

Michel Foucault, in *Histoire de la Sexualité: La Volonté de savoir* (1976), explains that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Western social system, already centered on marriage between a man and a woman, underwent two modifications. The heterosexual, “legitimate” couple had the right to more privacy and those whose sexual activities went “contre nature” [against nature] had their actions interrogated and policed (Foucault 53, 54). The interdiction of certain acts assured the implantation of “tout un disparate sexuel” (Foucault 71) [a sexual disparity]; significantly, heterosexuality emerged once homosexuality was defined. Foucault explains that in the 1870s, “[l]’homosexualité est apparue comme une des figures de la sexualité [...] [L]’homosexuel est maintenant une espèce” (59) [homosexuality appeared as one of the figures of sexuality. The homosexual is now a species]. This new species consequently brought into being the solidification of the heterosexual as the norm. At this point, certain sexual acts were transformed into sexual identities. Further, Foucault “demonstrat[es] that society and modern Western culture have placed sexuality in a more and more distinctly privileged relation to constructs of truth, identity, and knowledge” (Sedgwick 3). This speaks directly to the idea of a “true” sex attributed to one’s body from Chapter One, thereby linking sexed body and sexual orientation and/or practices to essential notions of a “real” identity. According to Foucault, in Western society, “c’est dans l’aveu que se lie la vérité et le sexe, par l’expression obligatoire et exhaustive d’un secret individuel” (82) [it is in confession where truth and sex link themselves, by the obligatory and exhaustive expression of an individual secret]. Sedgwick points out that secrets later become attributed to homosexuality (74); one has only to think of the popular phrase

“coming out of the closet” to see how confession is linked specifically to being gay. Even though heterosexuality and homosexuality appear to be counterparts, Sedgwick underlines the fact that they are not equals. Rather, homosexuality is a subset of dominant heterosexuality. They cannot be accepted as a strict binary since homosexuality is an inferior component of the entire heteronormative system.<sup>39</sup>

It is futile to debate whether or not sexuality is natural or constructed. These debates, explains Sedgwick, “take place against a very unstable background of tacit assumptions and fantasies about both nurture and nature” (40); this then leads to a conceptual deadlock between opposing views. Sedgwick therefore offers minoritizing and universalizing as alternatives to essentialist and constructivist arguments. A minoritizing view considers that there is a distinct population of people who are gay, while universalizing views posit that sexual desire is “an unpredictably powerful solvent of stable identities” (Sedgwick 85). Consequently, universalizing views consider both identity and sexuality to be fluid, while minoritizing views hold them as fixed. Furthermore, gender inversion, explains Sedgwick, is the traditional understanding that masculine is attracted to feminine, and vice versa. In other words, it grounds itself in the assumption of essential heterosexuality, assuming that individuals’ desire will be heterogendered (Sedgwick 87). For instance, gender inversion posits that two individuals in a relationship could not both identify as feminine women; one would have to identify as a masculine woman and the other a feminine woman. Masculine would thus attract feminine and vice versa. Gender separatism, in comparison, accepts the notion that people of the same gender can experience

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<sup>39</sup> In part one of this chapter, I discussed how Cixous argues that the binary man/woman structures Western thought. If we follow Sedgwick’s lead, this couple cannot be a strict binary since man is superior to woman. In this instance, woman is the inferior component to the entire patriarchal, even fraternal, system.



mutual sexual desire: feminine can attract feminine and masculine can attract masculine (Sedgwick 87). Gender separatism theorizes that there is no link between how one identifies his or her gender and whom he or she desires.

At first glance, it appears that the majority of the novels in my corpus privilege gender inversion when it comes to understanding desire. Paul and Astolphe are attracted to the feminine aspects of Ali and Gabriel, respectively. For instance, Paul calls Ali “beau comme une femme!” (246) [handsome like a woman!] Astolphe comments on Gabriel’s “menton lisse comme celui d’une femme” (52) [smooth chin like that of a woman] and confesses: “Je voudrais avoir une maîtresse qui lui ressemblât. Mais une femme n’aura jamais ce genre de beauté, cette candeur mêlée à la force, ou du moins au sentiment de la force” (52) [I would like to have a mistress who resembled him. But a woman will never have this genre of beauty, this innocence mixed with strength, or at least the impression of strength]. Astolphe searches for and identifies the feminine characteristics of Gabriel but, importantly, reveals an attraction to him based also on his masculine characteristic of strength. Nevertheless, Astolphe grounds his desire first and foremost in heteronormativity by claiming that he would like to find a mistress who looks like his cousin. As earlier indicated, a female-version of Gabriel would be his ideal woman:

J’ai dans l’imagination, j’ai dans le cœur une femme idéale! Et c’est une femme qui te ressemble, Gabriel. Un être intelligent et simple, droit et fin, courageux et timide, généreux et fier. Je vois cette femme dans mes rêves, et je la vois grande, blanche, blonde, comme te voilà avec ces beaux yeux noirs et cette chevelure soyeuse et parfumée (74) [I have in my imagination, in my heart, an ideal woman! And it is a woman who resembles you, Gabriel. An intelligent and simple being,

decent and fine, courageous and timid, generous and proud. I see this woman in my dreams, and I see her tall, white, blond, like you here with these beautiful black eyes and these silky and perfumed locks]

By highlighting Gabriel's feminine qualities, Astolphe maintains the idea that desire, even if not strictly heterosexual, is based on gender inversion. By finding a female-bodied, feminine woman who resembles Gabriel, Astolphe would be able to situate his desire firmly in heterosexual and heterogender territory. Finally, similar to Paul and Astolphe, Raoule and Jacques also reproduce heteronormative notions of desire. Raoule reveals to Jacques: "je ne puis te voir sans devenir fou [...] parce que ta divine beauté me fait oublier qui je suis et me donne des transports d'amant [...] Tu es belle... Je suis homme, je t'adore et tu m'aimes!" (184) [I cannot see you without going mad because your divine beauty makes me forget who I am and gives me the emotions of a lover. You are beautiful... I am a man, and I adore you and you love me!] As the masculine subject, Raoule desires her feminine object Jacques with a fiery passion.

In these instances, Raoule, Paul, and Astolphe are masculine men attracted to a feminine woman (Jacques) and feminine men (Gabriel, Ali), respectively, which appears to support the notion of gender inversion. However, as I already established, Gabriel also exhibits masculine characteristics and he considers his masculinity necessary to his existence. Astolphe is thus attracted to a person whose primary gender identity is masculine, not feminine. Further, Ali's feminine qualities, in particular his "main de femme" (107) [woman's hand], do not stop Paul's friends from saying that Ali will make victims of the "belles rêveuses du faubourg Saint-Germain!" (107) [beautiful (feminine) dreamers of the Saint-Germain neighborhood!]

Referencing the swooning women suggests that presumably feminine women will be attracted to a feminine man, thereby undermining the notion of gender inversion.

*Clémentine*, *Gabriel*, *Aline-Ali*, and *Monsieur Vénus* ultimately privilege gender separatist views of desire despite their inclusion of some moments that align with gender inversion. Subverting heteronormative and heterogender notions, these novels also follow universalizing views by portraying desire as a continuum that fluctuates depending on particular instances. Significantly, “[t]he most common terms we use to label or classify our erotic desires depend on identifying the gender of the person toward whom our desire is directed [...] These terms also depend on our understanding of our own gender” (Stryker 16). As I showed in Chapter One, the gender identities and gender presentations of the four protagonists vacillate throughout each novel. Ali and Paul may therefore participate in a homoerotic attraction while the desire between Aline and Paul would be accepted as heterosexual. While Astolphe desperately wishes Gabriel would embrace his feminine side and be happy living as a woman—consequently establishing a heterosexual rapport between them—Gabriel cannot simply remove his masculine identity in the same way he takes off his masculine clothing. This situates the relationship between Astolphe and Gabriel as one between two men. Further, Prasad suggests that in the “domain of desire, *Gabriel* presents possibilities beyond the realm of exclusive heterosexuality, such as Astolphe’s first homoerotic attraction towards the ‘masculine’ Gabriel” (345). Astolphe admits to Gabriel: “j’éprouve pour toi une passion enthousiaste, craintive, jalouse, chaste” (85) [I feel for you an enthusiastic, fearful, jealous, and chaste passion]. Gabriel and Aline-Ali can therefore be seen as being involved in both gay and heterosexual relationships throughout each text even though the object of their affection remains the same. While it can be

argued that Astolphe and Paul never change their gender identity—they always identify as men—their sexual orientation does indeed fluctuate as they desire both Gabriel and Gabrielle, and Ali and Aline, respectively.

The sexual fluidity of the characters illustrates the possibility of variety within desire and attraction. Because of this, I conduct a queer reading of my corpus. Although some tend to conflate queer and gay, queer is not the opposite of heterosexual; rather, Gantz explains that the notion of queer is “best illuminated in juxtaposition to the term ‘straight,’ suggesting a similarly inclusive category of that which is prohibitive, oppressive, and static about culturally-dictated definitions of ‘normative’ sexuality” (115). Therefore, transgender and intersex individuals can be described as queer since they disrupt ideas of normative sexuality, as we will see in greater detail. By virtue of their very existence and practices, both of which privilege notions of gender fluidity, intersex and transgender individuals complicate ideas of fixed and essential gender identities. This gender fluidity then challenges normative sexuality through its dismantlement of the gender binary. After all, as Gantz points out, “queerness works against binarism” (115). Clémentina, situated outside the binary, is always already queer.

Clémentina’s gender identity, as we saw in Chapter One, fluctuates between masculine and feminine depending on her mood and her clothing choice. Just as she is both masculine and feminine, she has masculine and feminine lovers. Significantly, the gender non-normative protagonist becomes the object of desire for other characters. Both Santa-Colomba and Nina Vernon are attracted to Clémentina when she presents as a man, and Nathalia, Santa-Colomba, and Saint-Elme are attracted to Clémentina when she presents as a woman. Clémentina’s sexual orientation therefore vacillates depending on her current gender identity and that of her love

interest. In either case, thanks to this fluidity, there is a queer component to Clémentina's relationships.

In Cuisin's novel, intersexuality presents itself as prescribing a non-normative sexual identity. For instance, Nathalia says that if she were intersex, both men and women would be attracted to her (1: 81). Clémentina confesses that, at age eighteen, "à la vue d'une jolie femme, [s]es sens frémissaient; à celle d'un bel homme, une amoureuse mélancolie s'emparait de tous [s]es esprits" (1: 97) [at the sight of a pretty woman, her senses trembled; at that of a handsome man, an amorous melancholy took possession of all of her spirits]. Even though different parts of her being are affected differently by both men and women—it appears her body is more affected by women and her mind more by men—Clémentina is nevertheless attracted by individuals of both genders. Cuisin also writes: "et la même main capable de porter un vigoureux coup d'épée, l'est aussi de presser avec tendresse la main d'un amant, ainsi que la main d'une maîtresse" (xj) [and the same hand capable of landing a vigorous blow of the sword is also capable of tenderly holding the hand of a masculine lover, as well as the hand of a mistress]. Clémentina thus appears to have bisexual qualities, which can fall under the umbrella term "queer" since bisexuality works against normative sexuality. Her intersexuality makes her a possible match for a woman or a man and encourages her fluidity. Furthermore, her intersexuality justifies, if not excuses, her bisexuality by basing it in her "natural" biology as indicated by Cuisin's reference to Clémentina's body.

Clémentina nevertheless grapples with the fact that she is attracted to both men and women. She guards this desire like a dark secret, similar to the secret of her body. Clémentina confesses: "j'éprouvai que mes sens, enflammés par un foyer secret, mus de toutes parts par des

désirs qui, jusqu'alors, m'avaient été inconnus, savouraient un attrait criminel dans les bras de mon amie!... Amante et amant en un jour, la nature serait-elle assez bizarre!" (1: 76) [I felt that my senses, ignited by a secret hearth, moved all over by desires that, until now, had been unknown to me, savored a criminal attraction in the arms of my (feminine) friend!... (Feminine) lover and (masculine) lover in one day; would nature be so bizarre!] Once more, Clémentina establishes her lust as a natural phenomenon, thereby almost removing herself of any accountability. Additionally, knowledge of her intersexuality does not detract from the affection of Saint-Elme, of Santa-Colomba, and of the Countess. Instead, it appears that her intersexuality contributes to their attraction.

Since Clémentina's sexuality and gender identity are presented as fluid, I argue that this text provides a radical examination of both biology and heteronormative desire. It shows Clémentina, presenting as a woman, engaging in homoerotic acts with women, specifically Nathalia and the Countess. For instance, referencing Nathalia, Clémentina writes: "je la serrai dans mes bras, je pressai mon sein sur son sein soulevé avec violence" (1: 46) [I took her in my arms, I pressed my bosom against hers that was rising and falling with violence]. Additionally, Clémentina describes: "Se retirant à pas lents, puis revenant se jeter dans mes bras, [Nathalia] m'embrassait avec une ardeur... avec une passion...; en vérité, je crois bien qu'en fermant les yeux, son amour naissant prenait déjà un baiser imaginaire sur les lèvres de Saint-Elme" (1: 75) [Removing herself with slow steps, then throwing herself back in my arms, Nathalia was kissing me with ardor... with a passion...; truthfully, I believe that by closing her eyes, her budding love already planted an imaginary kiss on the lips of Saint-Elme]. Even if Clémentina serves as the surrogate lips of Saint-Elme for Nathalia's fantasy, there nevertheless exists some degree of

desire between these two women. It is for this reason that Clémentina “[s]e dégagea[...] brusquement des caresses de Nathalia, en la suppliant à genoux, de fuir... de ne pas porter de nouveaux assauts à [s]a vertu, et de ne pas [la] rendre davantage un objet d’horreur à [s]es propres yeux” (1: 76) [abruptly removed herself from the caresses of Nathalia, begging her on her knees, to flee... to not bring new assaults to Clémentina’s virtue, and to not make her a further object of horror in her own eyes]. Even the doctor, Nathalia’s father, “avait de violentes inquiétudes sur les visites que [...] faisait sa fille [à Clémentina]” (1: 107) [had violent worries over the visits that his daughter made to Clémentina]. In the eyes of the doctor, Clémentina, whose primary gender he believes to be feminine, and his daughter, also feminine, dabble dangerously in non-heteronormative activity. Later, Clémentina confesses her involvement with the countess:

nous oubliant toutes deux, la comtesse son rang, son sexe, et moi *les miens*, nous nous étions livrées aux plus fortes étreintes de l’amitié; l’innocence même présidait à nos baisers de douleur, et quoique nos lèvres se fussent involontairement rencontrées, aucune chaleur coupable ne s’était mêlée à leur vivacité; lorsque la comtesse paraissant reculer d’horreur devant un précipice ouvert sous ses pas: Ah! Clémentina, que fais-tu, tu me subjugues de tes prestiges... Retire-toi, retire-toi, criait-elle, en se dégageant avec terreur de mes bras, et va porter ailleurs le danger de tes séductions: Puis revenant à elle: non, Clémentina n’est pas coupable, moi seule je me livre à d’injurieux soupçons..... Revenez, revenez dans mes bras, malheureuse orpheline; c’est une mère qui y reçoit sa fille (2: 46-7, emphasis in original) [each forgetting ourselves, the

countess her rank, her sex, and me *mine*, we had partaken in the strongest embraces of friendship; innocence itself presided over our kisses of pain, and even though our lips involuntarily met each other, no guilty warmth mixed with their vivacity; when the countess seemed to recoil in horror in front of an open precipice under her steps, “Ah! Clémentina, what are you doing, you captivate me with your prestige... Go away, go away,” she cried, while removing herself in terror from my arms, “and take elsewhere the danger of your seductions.” Then, returning to herself: “No, Clémentina is not to blame, I alone am prone to injurious suspicions..... Come back, come back in my arms, sad orphan; I am a mother receiving her daughter”]

Once more for Clémentina, platonic friendship transitions into something she calls “stronger” that I would call “lust.” Clémentina is clear, however, not to label their embrace passionate. Rather, their kisses are filled with pain and longing; their embrace appears out of their control. Nevertheless, neither Clémentina nor the countess can ignore the kisses’ implicit connection to desire and sexuality. It is for this reason that the countess first blames Clémentina, and, one imagines, her intersexuality, for seducing her. Significantly, the countess attempts to rewrite their connection, changing it from one between lovers to one between a mother and daughter. While I would not cite this as an example of *amour maternel*, it provides an interesting contrast to lust. Furthermore, it restructures a romantic, same-gender attraction between two women into a platonic, same-gender embrace between mother and daughter figures. The homoerotic nature of the event remains nonetheless. These examples, in addition to the fact that, much to her



husband's delight, Clémentina often dresses up in men's clothes, contribute to the queer dimensions of *Clémentine*.

*Monsieur Vénus*, like *Clémentine*, provides a multitude of queer readings. Arguing that this novel is without question queer, Gantz establishes that Rachilde's text is a "literary mission meant to disrupt, to challenge, to provoke" (115). This mission, argues Gantz, encompasses the main tenants of queerness. I explore Rachilde's supposed mission in Chapter Four when I build upon Gantz's work by suggesting that Rachilde, along with the other three authors, creates a queer text thanks to her characters' intentions and transgender practices. For now, let us focus on the relationship between Jacques and Raoule. Hawthorne suggests that Raoule's claim that to be Sappho is to be everyone is "ambiguous. In the context of decadent literature, it is clear that the theme of homosexuality (though not lesbianism) was commonplace, and thus the return to romantic heterosexuality was—at least temporarily—a novelty" ("*Monsieur Vénus*" 165). Hawthorne continues, saying that the added significance of this statement is that Raoule does not just "hurt" homosexuality but also upsets the sex/gender system. I add that if everyone is Sappho in this framework, then homosexuality situates itself as the normative sexuality, making heterosexuality the queer alternative. Further, the relationship between Jacques and Raoule varies from heterosexual to homosexual, depending on how they each identify at a precise moment. Gantz suggests that when Jacques tells Raoule that men do not look at each other's bodies, the scene culminates in an "unprecedented moment of homosexual panic between a man and a woman" (123). However, in this example, Jacques establishes both herself and Raoule as men. The moment is homosexual (homogender) precisely because of how they identify themselves and the other person.

No matter how one considers their rapport, either heterosexual or homosexual, Raoule and Jacques do not abide by traditional gender and sex roles that position the male-bodied individual as the masculine controller and the female-bodied person as the feminine object. The normative relationship of the traditional male and female couple is consequently upset. However, because the gender hierarchy is maintained with masculine Raoule as dominator and feminine Jacques as dominated object, the queer element of *Monsieur Vénus* manifests itself less in the couple Raoule/Jacques and more in the involvement of Jacques and Raittolbe with both male and female lovers. Hawthorne writes that “Jacques becomes so accustomed to his feminized role that when he engages in the adulterous affair, he offers his attentions to another man rather than a woman” (“*Monsieur Vénus*” 168). Jacques’s affair with Raittolbe replicates her relationship with Raoule and should not be viewed as a departure; in both cases, Jacques establishes herself as the submissive woman while Raoule and Raittolbe are the masculine lovers. Nevertheless, the couple Raittolbe/Jacques upsets the notion of opposite-sex attraction (normative heterosexuality), while, as we have seen, the couple Raoule/Jacques separates sex from gender stereotypes. Further, Jacques’s involvement with both Raoule and Raittolbe underlines sexual, albeit not gender, variation. Jacques can be with Raoule or Raittolbe and is attracted to, and attractive to, each. Raittolbe, meanwhile, experiences attraction based in both gender and sexual fluidity: once enamored with the masculine Raoule to the point of asking her to become his lover, Raittolbe tells the dying, feminine Jacques that he loves her (206). Raittolbe had previously rejected the advances of Jacques, particularly when Jacques came to see him dressed as a woman (199), and Raittolbe even announced a desire to kill Jacques (199). Despite his multiple attempts to conceal his amorous feelings through fits of rage, Raittolbe ultimately confesses his love for Jacques.

Raittolbe's desire therefore falls on a sliding spectrum: following universalizing and gender separatist views, he is attracted to both masculine and feminine, male and female, and his attraction is unfixed and fluid.

The texts all depict homoerotic desire between the protagonists and other characters who may or may not be aware of the formers' transgender practices. Significantly, *Clémentine*, *Gabriel*, *Aline-Ali*, and *Monsieur Vénus* do not mock characters such as Astolphe and Paul for their same-gender desire of Gabriel and Ali. Gantz argues that “[u]ltimately, [*Monsieur Vénus*'s] greatest queer credential is its unapologetic assertion that there is nothing inherently natural—or, more importantly, unnatural—about human desire” (129). I would extend this claim to *Aline-Ali*, *Gabriel*, and, in particular, *Clémentine*. Our intersex heroine asserts that “notre organisation physique étant indépendante de nos désirs, il y aurait de la cruauté à se moquer des victimes des bizarreries du destin” (2: 81) [our physical organization being independent from our desires, there would be cruelty in mocking the victims of destiny's anomalies]. Desire is not tied to one's body or gender presentation; it is separate from the socially-sexed and socially-gendered body. In fact, Fausto-Sterling cites two doctors who used a failed sex reassignment case to dispute the idea that “healthy psychosexual development is intimately related to the appearance of the genitals” (70). Furthermore, rather than viewing it as a natural phenomenon, David Halperin “sees desire as a product of cultural norms” (Fausto-Sterling 15). Fausto-Sterling slightly modifies Halperin's claim by arguing that “sexuality *is* a somatic fact *created by* a cultural effect” (21, emphasis in original).

Regardless of the exact origin or make-up of sexuality, it, like the physical body, cannot be conceived of separate from social conditioning. Tim R. Johnston argues that we must move

beyond the rhetoric of nature when discussing sexual orientation. The “born this way” argument that situates sexuality as natural and pre-determined is ultimately unhelpful when advancing rights for LGBTQ people. In his 2015 article “Beyond ‘Born this Way,’” Johnston proposes that “we treat born this way rhetoric as a meaningful and important mythological foundation for many LGBTQ communities, while also remaining critical of its tendency to become a dogmatic and totalizing discourse. Born this way thinking is an unproven and unprovable certainty” (141). Johnson identifies three goals that treating “born this way” rhetoric as a founding myth would accomplish:

The first goal is shifting our focus away from protecting identities toward protecting everyone’s right to self-determination. The second is questioning homonormative narratives in order to respect diverse experiences and identities across the lifespan. Third and finally, recognizing this thinking as foundational mythology can help move us beyond the impasse between certain transgender people and certain trans exclusionary radical feminists. (141-142)

Importantly, accepting the idea that sexual orientation is not immutable allows people to change their practices as they see fit. The notion that one is born gay or straight establishes a fixed identity on that person and “places importance on protecting a set of narrowly defined and discrete identities, rather than on protecting everyone’s right to live the life they find most fulfilling” (Johnston 142). Destroying the heteronormative gender binary, of which heterogender desire is a subset, would provide the opportunity for people to live as they please, without worrying about passing as a certain, accepted gender or concealing a fluid sexual orientation. “Rather than saying that there are a discrete number of sexual orientations or gender identities

that are present from birth and therefore deserving of legal protection, why can't we argue that all human beings have the right to self-determination? [...] In short, it shouldn't matter if someone describes their identity as a choice, or as something outside of their control" (Johnston 142).

*Clémentine, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Monsieur Vénus* provide access into this world of self-determined gender identity and exploration of same-gender sexual desire. Thanks to the transgender practices of the protagonists that necessarily throw into question heteronormativity, the texts themselves consequently privilege queer elements by disrupting notions of fixed, straight desire and sexual attraction. They demonstrate that even heterosexuality can be upset. The novels show that traditional marriage between men and women establishes itself on oppression and domination rather than being grounded in differences of biological sex; as we saw in *Monsieur Vénus*, a female-bodied individual taking the place of man does nothing to alleviate the dominating role of "husband" that s.he is expected to play. Same-sex marriage becomes controversial in part due to the inability to identify which individual holds the power. Fassin gives an example of a French couple consisting of a transsexual woman and a transgender woman; the state refused to marry them based on their gender (both presented as women), not based on their sex (one was legally female and the other was legally male) (*L'Inversion* 58). In this instance that occurred before same-sex marriage was legalized in France, a marriage license was denied to the couple based on the same social position they each occupied: that of woman. The transgender protagonists of my corpus would have posed the same problem for the state. Would Gabriel, living in his preferred masculine attire, have been allowed to marry Astolphe? Or would their relationship have been rejected on the grounds that they share the same gender? The

novels thereby expose inconsistencies in how gender conformity is both understood and enforced.

In the next two chapters I suggest that the authors critique established social and political gender prescriptions and provide alternate modes of human existence. Chapter Three explores the transgender practices of George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde as they enter the supposedly masculine world of writing. Chapter Four examines how the characters' motivations within the novels render the texts themselves queer. By challenging scientific and medical discourse on women and gender non-conforming people, the protagonists disrupt dominant modes of discourse and offer their literary lives as a privileged queer space.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Social Critiques and Transgender Practices in Nonfiction and Autobiographical Texts of Cuisin, George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde

The authors of my corpus constitute this chapter's object of study. I argue that, like their protagonists, George Sand (1804-1876), André Léo (1824-1900),<sup>40</sup> and Rachilde (1860-1953) partake in their own *pratiques transgenres* by using male pennames and by writing and publishing in certain contexts. As defined in Chapter One, the term "transgender" can apply to any type of gender expression that falls outside the sex/gender binary, from nonbinary<sup>41</sup> identities to the rejection of traditional gender roles (Stryker 1).<sup>42</sup> Further, I propose that George Sand and Rachilde, by writing about their experiences cross-dressing in their respective autobiographical texts *Histoire de ma vie*<sup>43</sup> (1855) and *Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe* (1928), produce embodied self-writing that conveys their lived transgender practices. André Léo, who to my knowledge neither writes an autobiography nor depicts herself cross-dressing, inserts herself in contemporary political debates through her journalism. I suggest that, while the autobiographical texts of George Sand and Rachilde portray the authors' sartorial transgender practices as performed by their individual bodies in their own lives, André Léo's political

<sup>40</sup> Depending on the source, André Léo's birth year varies between 1824 and 1832, but most researchers agree on 1824 (Dalotel 6).

<sup>41</sup> An example of a nonbinary individual is someone who uses the pronouns "they/them" and sports a beard while wearing a dress. In other words, they cannot be categorized as either masculine or feminine; by appearing on both sides of the binary at once, they ultimately abolish it.

<sup>42</sup> These roles are, of course, dependent on a specific time and culture. Today in France and the United States, a woman wearing pants in public is most likely not seen as committing a transgender act.

<sup>43</sup> This text first appeared as a 138-part series, published in the newspaper *La Presse* between October 5, 1854 and August 17, 1855 (Brahimi and Pirot 8).

writings demonstrate how socio-political gendered bodies are categorized and pitted against one another in society at large. I consider André Léo's journalism representative of an abstract transgender practice—one based in political thought, not sartorial acts—through which the author both advocates for a rejection of traditional gender roles and situates herself as an example of someone crossing gender boundaries.

Although I do not argue that Cuisin (1777-1845?) partakes in transgender practices like the other three authors, I avoid situating him as a type of cis-gender control group against which to compare the works of George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde. Indeed, just as I propose that the works of George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde illustrate different ways in which the authors can be read as exhibiting transgender characteristics, I do not offer Cuisin as a stand-in representing the cis-community. He too is a complex individual whose diverse œuvre provides insight into his socio-political views. Finally, Cuisin's use of pennames helps nuance the reasons different authors employ them, whether these motives are related to gender or otherwise.

As was common practice in France before 1830 (Reid 117), Cuisin uses initials rather than his given name for the majority of his books: P. Cuisin, J. P. R. Cuisin, Monsieur C\*\*\*\*. In *Le Conjugalisme, ou L'art de se bien marier; conseils aux jeunes gens d'épouser jeune, belle et riche; aux demoiselles de s'unir à un joli homme... par le vicomte de S\*\*\** (1823), Cuisin uses the pseudonym Vicomte de S\*\*\*. Rather than being a transgender act, this penname serves as a transclass practice,<sup>44</sup> likely intended to establish Cuisin as a member of the nobility whose advice readers can trust. Cuisin's use of "S\*\*\*\*" obscures the individual author and emphasizes his supposed social class; the author remains practically anonymous and all that is evident is his

<sup>44</sup> See Chantal Jaquet's *Les Transclasses ou la non-reproduction* for a study on how certain individuals are able to improve their social status.



status as viscount. Reid reminds us that, before the July Monarchy, it was common for books to be written anonymously (117). In fact, anonymity was more common than the use of a pseudonym due to the fact that, in the early nineteenth century, pennames were regarded as less truthful than proper names and many people shared the perspective that “any departure from the original proper name [was a] shameful aberration bordering on the criminal” (Koos 199). Cuisin’s more frequent use of “(J.) P. (R.) Cuisin” and “Monsieur C\*\*\*\*” would therefore not have been unusual.

By comparison, George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde<sup>45</sup> each wrote during times that saw an abundance of pennames. “Le pseudonyme est pratique courante dans la presse, tout particulièrement à partir de 1830, où il peut d’ailleurs être varié à l’infini. Ce nom de plume, généralement masculin, peut être utilisé en même temps que le nom véritable” (Reid 117) [the pseudonym is common practice in the press, particularly starting in 1830, when it could be varied in infinite ways. This penname, generally masculine, can be used at the same time as a real name]. Whereas, in Cuisin’s time, initials were commonly used in place of first names, the “prénom fait son apparition via le pseudonyme (George Sand, Daniel Stern)” (Reid 117) [first name makes its appearance via the pseudonym (George Sand, Daniel Stern)]. According to people from John Stuart Mill to Michel Bréal, “the proper name is the richest of signifying structures because it is the most individual” (Koos 199). I therefore contend that the full pseudonym, as opposed to mere initials, provides the opportunity for authors to choose their own individual signifying structure in terms of gender, class, and, if they so choose, marital status.

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<sup>45</sup> Koos explains that most of the French writers involved in the Decadent Movement used a penname (200); among them, he points to Jean Lorrain (Paul Duval), and A. Meunier (Joris-Karl Huysmans), whom Koos says also modified his given name since Huysmans was christened Charles-Marie-Georges (211).

George Sand, André Léo, Rachilde, and Cuisin, when he presents himself as a viscount, therefore enjoy some control over their representations of self.

Part one of this chapter examines the use of the masculine pseudonym, specifically, by focusing on the notion that writing and publishing under a male penname are transgender acts. One's physical appearance and self-representation as they relate to autobiographical texts are topics of part two when I look at how George Sand and Rachilde depict their own cross-dressing. As I show, these authors' reasons to sartorially cross gender boundaries are grounded in their criticism of women's place in society. The topic of social critique carries on in part three, where I study the socio-political texts of Cuisin and André Léo.

## Part One

### Writing as a Transgender Act

Despite the fact that, in this section, I argue that the broad practices of women writing and using masculine pennames also constitute transgender acts, it was not actually unusual for French women to write during the nineteenth century. At this point in time, “la situation a changé, des femmes écrivent et publient en grand nombre, trop grand même, à en croire certains, et certaines” (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 10) [the situation changed; women write and publish in large numbers, too large even, believed some men, and some women]. Unsurprisingly, there was not one homogeneous kind of female writer. Individual authors varied in age, class, and marital status, and place of residence. “[L]eurs situations et leurs œuvres, comme il est aisé de l’imaginer, diffèrent considérablement de l’une à l’autre. Mais *la* femme auteur est un personnage, un *type*, où s’investissent les idéologies et les fantasmes du XIXe siècle, qui l’a inventée” (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 13, emphasis in original) [Their situations and their work, as it

is easy to imagine, differ considerably from one to another. But *the* woman author is a character, a *type*, invented by the nineteenth century and where it invested its ideologies and fantasies]. The (stereo)type of the woman writer therefore took on a life of its own during the nineteenth century, coloring the perception of actual women who wrote. Through this character that she accepts not as a historical reality but as an ideological and phantasmagorical construction that evolves throughout the decades, Planté studies the rapport between men, women, and their relationship to writing and literature (*La Petite sœur* 17). With the help of Planté's work, I employ this figure of the woman writer as a way to see how it influenced critics' perception of George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde.

Even though, or perhaps because, women writers were not scarce in nineteenth century France, they were ridiculed and belittled. André Léo notes the contempt for, and the refusal to recognize, women's intelligence in *La Femme et les mœurs* (1869): "On allègue, pour prouver l'infériorité intellectuelle de la femme, l'infériorité de sa production scientifique, littéraire et artistique dans l'humanité" (85) [One professes, to prove the intellectual inferiority of woman, the inferiority of her scientific, literary, and artistic production in humanity]. Planté suggests that the idea that women cannot produce artistic or creative work grounds itself in the cliché that "la femme *est* la poésie. C'est pour cela qu'elle ne peut en écrire" (*La Petite sœur* 190, emphasis in original) [woman *is* poetry. It is for that reason that she cannot write it]. This sentiment echoes the accolades of Paul and Astolphe who praise the idea of woman, making her appear valued, and yet are surprised when Aline-Ali and Gabriel suggest that women are equal to men.

Having their work dismissed as insignificant did not mean that women stopped writing. Women who persisted in the act were labeled *les bas-bleus* [blue-stockings],<sup>46</sup> which, under the July Monarchy, ultimately became the stereotype of the woman writer (Reid 47-48). This label served two functions: it categorized women writers into one homogenous group and functioned as a “manière de dévaloriser, pourfendre et critiquer la présence des femmes dans le domaine littéraire” (Reid 47) [way to devalue, fight against, and criticize the presence of women in the literary domain]. Women’s presence in the literary world was particularly threatening because it upset family order (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 48). After all, “écrivain et publiant, la femme échappe, en même temps qu’à son rôle, à l’espace familial et privé, dont elle est le pilier” (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 37) [writing and publishing, woman escapes her role at the same time that she escapes the private, familial space of which she is the cornerstone]. Women writers enter the masculine sphere, leaving behind the domestic sphere. This had profound effects on society in general since, simply put, “menacer la vie de famille, au XIXe siècle, c’est menacer les fondements de la vie en société, et l’humanité elle-même” (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 55) [threatening familial life, in the nineteenth century, is to threaten the foundation of life in society, and of humanity itself]. By leaving the private sphere to pursue a career in the public domain, the so-called *bas-bleus* upset the masculine/feminine social division. Furthermore, “si on lit bien les médecins et les hygiénistes, une femme qui se livre à des activités intellectuelles ne peut [...] mettre heureusement des enfants au monde. Le développement du cerveau semble toujours se faire au détriment de la matrice, et un soupçon de stérilité, comme de frigidité, pèse sur les bas-

<sup>46</sup> The term “blue stockings” has its origins in a late-eighteenth century literary club in England. One distinguished (male) member of this club wore blue stockings so often that “blue stockings” became his nickname. The term then started being used to reference literary clubs in general, eventually coming to mean literary and pedantic women (Reid 48).

bleus” (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 48) [if we properly read the doctors and hygienists, a woman giving herself up to intellectual activities cannot happily bring children into the world. The development of the brain always seems to occur to the detriment of the womb, and the suspicion of sterility, and of frigidity, weighs heavily on the *bas-bleus*]. In the views of these medical professionals, intellectual and feminine were mutually exclusive qualities and these specialists believed that the very pursuit of knowledge threatened women’s ability to reproduce.

Women writers’ perceived inability to give birth called into question their very femininity. Indeed, some critics advanced the notion that the *bas-bleus* were masculine or, at the very least, trying to be men (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 28). Writing was therefore seen as a way to eschew feminine roles and responsibility. André Léo, it should be noted, saw writing as an opportunity for women to emancipate themselves. She believed the *bas-bleus* signified women who no longer wanted to reduce themselves to being, according to her, “[des] gardiens convaincus du pot au feu” (*La femme et les mœurs* 41) [staunch guardians of traditional home-cooking]. André Léo therefore escaped the domestic sphere by establishing herself in journalistic and literary circles. Similarly, the genre of autobiography “is a way of writing that historically came to mark, and to be marked by, the (usually masculine) privilege of self-possession” (Cosslet et al 2). Following this attribute, George Sand’s autobiography indicates a degree of self-possession that would further disrupt the masculine/feminine dynamic. It situates George Sand on the side of the masculine, positioning her as an individual able to claim her own personhood instead of being an object possessed by men.

Unsurprisingly, critics labeled George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde *bas-bleus*. Jules Barbey d’Aureville refers to all women writers as pretenders to men’s power: “Elles ont

l'illusion et l'insolence de la force. Elles veulent être hommes, qu'elles soient traitées comme les hommes, ces lutteuses contre nous, qui croient nous *tomber!*" (L'Association André Léo 70, emphasis in original) [They have the illusion and the arrogance of strength. They want to be men, may they be treated as men, these women who fight against us, who believe they are bringing about our *downfall!*] Rhetoric surrounding the *bas-bleus* situated these writers as paradoxically striving to be men while trying to eliminate men altogether. Both scenarios spell disaster from the male point of view. Attacked by conservatives and socialists alike (Dalotel 4), André Léo elicits mocking comments from Barbey d'Aurevilly who undermines her claim to authority as a writer and a thinker. Barbey d'Aurevilly writes that she has, "comme écrivain, des prétentions à la raison, au caractère, peut-être au stoïcisme, qui sait?" (L'Association André Léo 70) [as a writer, claims to reason, to character, perhaps to stoicism, who knows?] His comments make light of André Léo's talent, minimizing the potential threat she poses as a feminine pretender to the masculine throne.

While Barbey d'Aurevilly insists that André Léo tries to pass as a man, Jules Vallès purports to find André Léo's femininity obvious. He asserts that her writing style and content betray her gender and that André Léo could never be mistaken for a male writer: "On devinera, à l'attitude et au caractère des personnages, que c'est une femme qui tient la plume; [...] elle profitera de la publicité, ou de sa popularité qui commence, pour recommencer encore le plaidoyer, discuter la question fatiguée du mariage" (L'Association André Léo 73) [One will surmise, from the attitude and personality of the characters, that it is a woman who holds the pen; she will thrive on the publicity, or on her emerging popularity, in order to start the plea again, the discussion of the worn-out question of marriage]. Vallès subscribes to the belief that one's

gender bleeds into one's writing and notes, with fatigue, educated women's discontent with the institution of marriage. One imagines that questions of gender inequality and women's rights figure prominently as other topics that Vallès is weary of hearing the *bas-bleus* discuss. In contrast to Barbey d'Aurevilly and Vallès, however, one critic has not yet discerned André Léo's gender; what's more, he does not appear concerned with finding it out. "Émile Deschanel, dans le *Journal des débats* du 20 janvier 1865, écrit encore, commentant *Les deux filles de Monsieur Plichon*: 'Homme ou femme, l'auteur est une âme généreuse, un esprit libre et un talent déjà très grand, qui est en train de croître encore'" (Dalotel 23, footnote 19) [Émile Deschanel, in the *Journal des débats* from 20 January 1865, writes, commenting upon *Les deux filles de Monsieur Plichon*: "Man or Woman, the author is a generous soul, a free spirit and a talent already quite great that continues to grow"]. Deschanel does not attribute one's talent to one's gender, thereby diverging from other popular critics of the time. However, his lack of concern for discovering André Léo's sex may lie in the fact that it is better to be uncertain than to have the work's genius undercut by learning its author is a supposedly inferior woman.

The reality for many women writers in the nineteenth century was that their gender could affect how their work was received. Even though female authors were not uncommon, successful authors known to be female were more rare. "Au XIXe siècle, il est difficile de se faire reconnaître en littérature comme en politique quand on est femme" (L'Association André Léo 3) [In the nineteenth century, it is difficult to make oneself be known in literature, like in politics, when one is a woman]. While it is true that the use of masculine pennames complicated the task of critics looking to diminish the quality of women's writing (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 23), we cannot attribute the success of George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde to their use of masculine

pseudonyms, particularly since they were known to be women. It is nevertheless important to examine more closely their use of pennames and how it relates to their successful careers.<sup>47</sup>

George Sand was born Amantine-Lucile-Aurore Dupin in 1804 in Paris (*Histoire de ma vie* 1: 12). She worked with Jules Sandeau under the name Jules Sand and she chose the first name George for the publication of her first solo-authored novel, *Indiana* (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 32). Rachilde's penname comes from more imaginative origins. Born Marguerite Eymery in 1860, Rachilde claimed to have contacted a sixteenth century Swedish male aristocrat named Rachilde during séances that she conducted as a young girl. She took the name as her pseudonym when she started publishing in the 1880s (Koos 202). Of the three authors, André Léo's penname has the most ties to traditional notions of femininity. André Léo was born Léodile Béra in Champagné-Saint-Hilaire in 1824. She took her penname from the first names of her twin sons, André and Léo. "Le choix de son pseudonyme est toutefois très important puisqu'elle abandonne ainsi le nom de son mari" (Dalotel 20) [The choice of her pseudonym is nevertheless very important since she abandons in this way the name of her husband]. André Léo's use of her penname severs her marital ties from her professional work, yet, at the same time, this pseudonym reinforces her link to the domestic sphere: "Son pseudonyme—écrit Descaves après d'autres—elle l'a trouvé 'dans son cœur de mère'" (Dalotel 20) [Her pseudonym—writes Descaves among others—was found "in her motherly heart"]. Barbey d'Aureilly too weighs in

<sup>47</sup> Both being successful female writers in a field that valued masculine genius, George Sand and André Léo were often compared (L'Association André Léo 3). For instance, the newspaper *Le Constitutionnel* (July 28, 1863), wrote that in André Léo's novel *Un Mariage scandaleux* (1862), "il y a des pages aussi belles que les plus belles de George Sand [...] même force, même ampleur et même simplicité: moins d'idéalité, de lyrisme peut-être mais un plan mieux conçu et une observation plus exacte" (Dalotel 22) [there are pages as beautiful as the most beautiful of those of George Sand. The same strength, same breadth, and same simplicity: less idealness, less lyricism perhaps, but a better conceived outline and a more exacting observation].



on André Léo's choice of pseudonym: "dans toute sa vie elle n'a eu qu'une jolie idée. Ce fut quand elle prit les deux noms de ses fils—André et Léo—pour s'en faire son nom d'écrivain. [...] c'est charmant" (L'Association André Léo 70) [in her whole life she had but one nice idea. That was when she took the two names of her sons—André and Léo—to make her writer's name. How charming]. Perhaps Barbey d'Aurevilly and others emphasize André Léo's maternal side to discredit her as a writer. After all, writer and mother are, according to "experts" of the time, antithetical. Despite her masculine penname, André Léo remains in their eyes first and foremost a mother; accordingly, her desire to be in the masculine realm of writing should be further condemned.<sup>48</sup>

Both André Léo's penname and her insistence on remaining in the literary world supposedly negate the feminine points she earns as a mother and betray her apparent desire to be masculine. Indeed, critics of the nineteenth century tended to see in a woman's use of a masculine penname a "tendance à la virilité qui aurait expliqué une puissance intellectuelle anormale chez une femme, le reniement d'une féminité déçue, ou un signe d'ambition et de jalousie" (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 34) [inclination toward virility that would have explained the intellectual and abnormal power in a woman, the denial of a failed femininity, or a sign of ambition and of jealousy]. Their understanding therefore reproduces the same rhetoric that writing is a masculine activity. Women, on the other hand, "dès le XIXe siècle et jusqu'aux études féministes contemporaines, y ont vu surtout l'expression d'une ambivalence, et d'un rapport problématique à la condition féminine et à sa propre identité" (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 34) [from the nineteenth century to contemporary feminist studies, see above all in the penname the

<sup>48</sup> After all, Barbey d'Aurevilly reminds us, writing diminishes a woman's maternal instincts (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 50).

expression of an ambivalence, and of a problematic rapport to the feminine condition and one's own identity]. While I appreciate the feminist critique, maintaining the masculine/feminine divide in terms of one's identity is no longer productive for my purposes here. Halberstam's concept of female masculinity provides a way to analyze the women writers' use of masculine personas without worrying that it erases or diminishes one's potential ties to the "feminine" (or "female") condition. Female masculinity acknowledges more expansive experiences and identities than those traditionally attributed to the social group "woman." Of course, for some individuals, the use of a penname might have very much indicated a desire to sever one's ties with his or her socially-assigned biological sex. I am therefore less concerned that my authors' use of masculine pennames presents a problematic rapport to the "feminine condition" and am more interested in exploring how these pennames problematized the gender divide at large.

I contend that the three authors' use of masculine pseudonyms can be read as a transgender practice due to the fact that George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde present their (literary) identity as masculine, regardless of how critics perceive them. In fact, the critics' insistence upon André Léo's maternal ties could have served as a way to mitigate the potential threat that her male penname posed. More specifically, Koos explains that

the nineteenth-century valorized the proper noun as the crowning element of its construction of selfhood, a given linguistic form that should remain unaltered as a testament to the authority of the past. But, [...] the counter-discursive threat presented by the invented name, the pseudonym, the fictitious name born outside of patriarchal authority yet indistinguishable from the true name, becomes increasingly viewed as a dangerous abnormality. (199-200)

An invented masculine name adopted by a female author has the potential either to strengthen the patriarchal hold by privileging the masculine or to reject patriarchal authority by blurring the gender divide. For the purposes of this study, and the fact that the authors in question used their power to complicate the gender hierarchy, I suggest that the pennames of George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde accomplish the latter. Furthermore, as Koos indicates, the penname blurs the line between truth and falsehood. There is, after all, the chance that the name one reads on the book cover is not the “real” name of the author. In this sense, the use of my authors’ pseudonyms echoes the clothed transgender bodies of their protagonists: the socially-assigned sex of each is obscured and the reader or spectator must accept this uncertainty as unavoidable.

Particularly during the Decadent Movement, “[p]seudonyms and transvestites both participate in a linguistic reconstruction of the self whose agency challenges the limitations of a passive acceptance of the received, while nonetheless depending on and profiting from the inherent ambiguity in textual or textile systems of signification” (Koos 200). Rachilde, for one, embraced this ambiguity, calling herself an “androgynous de lettres” (Bollhalder Mayer 192) [androgynous of letters]. This comment suggests that Rachilde was conscious of presenting multiple gender identities, not just the one assigned to her at birth by virtue of her body. Rachilde then takes this a step further, declaring herself a man of letters. Koos recounts that, following the publication and subsequent banning of *Monsieur Vénus*, Rachilde “carried the implications of her supposedly male pseudonym to their logical extreme by carrying a *carte de visite* that read ‘Rachilde, homme de lettres.’ She also requested permission from the local police to appear in male attire” (Koos 202-203). In this instance, both her attire and her calling card reading “Rachilde, man of letters” complete the masculine persona provided by Rachilde’s male

pseudonym. While Koos suggests that the pseudonym “forms the basis of the particular linguistic orientation that the transvestite must employ in order to begin and complete the gesture of transvestism” (203), Rachilde’s penname seems to come first in this “chicken and egg” scenario: having already claimed the male, aristocratic, and Swedish name Rachilde, she then has her calling cards and her dress complement her temporary transformation. Similarly, Bard notes that the

costume masculin de George Sand doit être rapproché de son choix d’un pseudonyme masculin [...] George Sand parle d’elle soit au masculin soit au féminin, et ses amis et amants font de même. Cette conscience de la bisexualité psychique a un lien très étroit avec la création. Selon Martine Reid, George Sand veut concilier ce qu’elle perçoit comme étant sa nature de femme [...] et une position d’homme (*Histoire politique* 166) [masculine suit of George Sand must be linked to her choice of a masculine pseudonym. George Sand speaks of herself either in the masculine or feminine, and her friends and lovers do the same. This awareness of the psychic bisexuality is closely tied to creation. According to Martine Reid, George Sand wants to reconcile what she perceives to be her woman’s nature and a man’s position]

In other words, the masculine pennames and masculine dress of both George Sand and Rachilde<sup>49</sup> indicate a reconceptualization of their own gender identity as neither fully feminine nor fully masculine, as shown through the disconnect between their socially-assigned sex (and its

<sup>49</sup> It should be noted that, despite the fact she does not write about it, André Léo too was said to have dressed in men’s clothes from time to time; for instance, Dalotel conveys the story that Léo would dress “en garçon” [as a boy] while hiking the Alps with her husband, practically passing for his son (15).

subsequent gender designation) and their adoption of masculine social status. This brings us to more tangible transgender practices of George Sand and Rachilde as they recount their own instances of cross-dressing in their autobiographical texts.

## Part Two

### The Sartorial Transgender Practices of George Sand and Rachilde

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and J. W. Goethe transformed the genre of autobiography<sup>50</sup> in the eighteenth century by producing works that centered on the individual and his behavior (Maynes 104).

Autobiography [...] was the literary expression of the individualism and the faith in an integrated and coherent personality so central to the bourgeois economic and political philosophy that was groping its way to preeminence even as the two literary giants revealed all that was of consequence to their personal growth. By describing their process of becoming, by deeming this story worth telling, the two philosophers and the genre they helped to reshape became part of the broader historical creation of the bourgeois personality. (Maynes 104)

George Sand therefore continues this newly-founded bourgeois tradition in her nineteenth century text.<sup>51</sup> While it is unquestionably significant that George Sand, a female-bodied

<sup>50</sup> Generally speaking, autobiography is traditionally understood as a “Western mode of self-production, a discourse that is both a corollary to the Enlightenment and its legacy, and which features a rational and representative “I” at its center” (Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography* 2). Scholars such as Françoise Lionnet (*Autobiographical Voices and Postcolonial Representations*) and Caren Kaplan (“Resisting Autobiography: Out-law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects”) have contested and challenged this Euro-centric reading of autobiography.

<sup>51</sup> George Sand also expands upon it by including the lives of her parents. In this sense, it becomes more than a single individual’s (auto)biography; this suggests that George Sand believes her family’s life story must be told in order to make sense of her own.

individual, considers her individual life story worth sharing, I instead concentrate on specific moments depicted in both *Histoire de ma vie* and Rachilde's autobiographical pamphlet *Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe* in order to examine how these two authors present themselves as cross-dressing individuals.

There is certainly a vast body of work on the genre of autobiography, and women's autobiography specifically,<sup>52</sup> that I do not claim to represent here. For instance, Leigh Gilmore wonders why it is that Western male authors such as Augustine and Rousseau have “come to signify coherence, stability, and rationality” (*Autobiographics* xi); she uses women's autobiographies to examine how truth is produced in autobiography and how certain subjects—namely women—are often viewed as less capable of presenting a “truthful” account of their lives.<sup>53</sup> Gilmore argues that

there are not so much autobiographies as autobiographics, those changing elements of the contradictory discourses and practices of truth and identity which represent the subject of autobiography. [...] [A]utobiographics avoids the terminal questions of genre and close delimitation and offers a way, instead, to ask: Where is the autobiographical? What constitutes its representation? (*Autobiographics* 13, emphasis in original)

Similar to Gilmore, instead of fixating, for example, on whether or not Rachilde “really” cross-dressed during her life, I use George Sand's *Histoire de ma vie* and Rachilde's *Pourquoi je ne*

<sup>52</sup> In the 1980s, Estelle Jelinek's *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism* (1980) and Domna Stanton's *Female Autograph* (1987) examined how women's autobiography disrupts the notion of a fixed genre or stabilized literary tradition. These early foundational feminist works tend, however, to suggest that there is an essential aspect to female autobiographical writing.

<sup>53</sup> Gilmore's current work focuses on how women's accounts of trauma, such as rape, are frequently considered less trustworthy in both society at large and courts of law.

*suis pas féministe* as a lens through which to pinpoint and examine how the authors (re)present their own transgender practices. I propose that the fact that George Sand and Rachilde include these acts in their autobiographical texts indicates what they consider important, or at least noteworthy, moments in their life. Indeed, George Sand recognizes that part of the task of writing an autobiography is to choose, “dans les souvenirs que cette vie a laissés en nous, ceux qui nous paraissent valoir la peine d’être conservés. Pour [s]a part, [elle] croi[t] accomplir un devoir, assez pénible même, car [elle] ne conn[âit] rien de plus malaisé que de se définir et de se résumer en personne” (*Histoire de ma vie* 1: 1-2) [in the memories that this life leaves us, those that seem to us worthy to be conserved. For her part, she believes to accomplish a duty, rather tiresome even, since she does not know of anything more difficult than defining oneself and summarizing oneself as a person].

Furthermore, with the writing of one’s life comes the “fictionalization of the self, i.e. the construction of a character” (Chanfrault-Duchet 67), and George Sand and Rachilde, to some extent, fictionalize themselves in the recounting of their memories. Instead of simply relaying past events, the instances of cross-dressing that George Sand and Rachilde choose to include in their autobiographical texts shape the constructed, summarized, and self-defined author-character and offer important information about their own understanding of the acts. How George Sand discusses her cross-dressing therefore becomes a critical element as I tease together the references to her transgender practices with her larger social critiques and motivations. In order to analyze this aspect of Rachilde’s life, I look to her representations of self in *Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe* as well as her correspondence—which contains autobiographic elements—as published in Bollhalder Mayer and Hawthorne’s biographies of Rachilde. The cross-dressing

memories George Sand and Rachilde choose to share will help to define dimensions of their life that embrace overtly transgender practices.

It should be noted that I do not claim that George Sand and Rachilde identify as, or even are, transgender. Rather, I look at how the authors depict transgender acts in order to see how these experiences may have shaped their novels and social activism.

Women's personal narratives can also provide a vital entry point for examining the interaction between the individual and society in the construction of gender. [...] Our reading of women's personal narratives suggests the need to understand the dynamic interaction between the two [social dynamics and individual agency].

(Personal Narratives Group 5)

Autobiography, or autobiographics, offers a way to understand an individual's position in relation to his or her familial, social, and political environments. "The autobiographical process uses not only facts and events, but also social representations and cultural values. A tension exists between self and society, which is resolved by the narrative presentation of a unique self which can be recognized by society" (Chanfrault-Duchet 61). I specifically examine the presentation of a unique self that commits a gender-bending act in order to see how it is presented in relation to a larger social context. The way in which George Sand and Rachilde write about their instances of cross-dressing will therefore expose the tension among themselves, their practices, and social expectations. The references to cross-dressing and gender-bending in the lives of George Sand and Rachilde can be understood as a refusal to comply with gender norms, thereby creating a link between the authors' portrayal of their own actions and those of their protagonists in *Gabriel* and *Monsieur Vénus*.



Women dressing in men's clothing was perceived to be such a threat to nineteenth century French society that on November 7, 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte issued an ordinance that forbade women from wearing trousers (Hawthorne, *Rachilde* 102). The decree, published by the Paris police, included the following stipulations:

Toute femme, désirant s'habiller en homme, devra se présenter à la Préfecture de police pour en obtenir l'autorisation. [...] Cette autorisation ne sera donnée que sur le certificat d'un officier de santé, dont la signature sera dûment légalisée [...] sur l'attestation des maires ou commissaires de police, portant les nom et prénoms, profession et demeure de la requérante. [...] Toute femme trouvée travestie, qui ne se sera pas conformée aux dispositions des articles précédents, sera arrêtée et conduite à la Préfecture de police. (Bard, *Histoire politique* 70)

[Each woman who wishes to dress as a man shall present herself to the prefecture of police to obtain authorization. This authorization will be given only under the certificate of a health officer, whose signature will be duly legalized under the attestation of mayors or commissioners of police, giving the name and first name, profession, and residence of the petitioner. Each woman found cross-dressing without having conformed to the stipulations of the preceding articles, will be arrested and brought to the police prefecture]

Men, Bard notes, were not included in this 1800 ordinance (*Histoire politique* 74). While this is not to say that men wearing dresses was not of concern to the authorities (Bard, *Histoire politique* 74), it does suggest a certain urgency in controlling women's attire and in ensuring that women did not assume a masculine persona. Even though cross-dressing "conveyed

transgressive connotations for both men and women,” Hawthorne explains that the regulation of dress has its roots<sup>54</sup> in the preservation of certain privileges for the *dominant* class (*Rachilde* 102). I suggest that this is the reason the 1800 dress ordinance focused solely on women: while men dressing as women was not permitted, it was not as severe an offense as women dressing as men since the latter involves assuming a certain level of privilege. In other words, pants mark men’s status as the superior gender, and, while a man wearing a dress certainly threatens the gender divide, he relinquishes some (or all) of his masculine power by presenting as a woman. A woman wearing pants, however, presents herself as a more powerful individual, which ultimately threatens the social order to a greater degree.<sup>55</sup>

By 1886, the abundance of female cross-dressers caused the police prefecture to remind the Parisian population of the old ordinance forbidding women to dress as men unless it was during carnival or they had special permission (Bard, *Histoire politique* 82). Citing a medical reason—excessive body hair, for instance—was the easiest way for women to be granted authorization from the police (Bard, *Histoire politique* 84). Since long dresses may prove hazardous in certain working conditions, women operating machinery could also receive permission to wear trousers. The permit was valid for six months and subject to renewal. As we shall see, Rachilde evokes other reasons for why she should be allowed to wear men’s clothing while George Sand never asks permission (Bard, *Histoire politique* 164 and Hawthorne,

<sup>54</sup> Sartorial laws originated in Europe as a way to “patrol class borders. In order to preserve visible class differences, the wearing of certain items (such as ermine) was declared the privilege of those who enjoyed a certain status” (Hawthorne, *Rachilde* 102). While the French Revolution challenged beliefs about class difference, “the class distinction was preserved in vestigial form through the gender system” (Hawthorne, *Rachilde* 102).

<sup>55</sup> Nowadays it could be argued that the opposite is true. Looking at the number of trans women who are killed, it appears that supposedly male-bodied individuals choosing to become women threaten the very essence of masculinity, so much so that violence ensues.

*Rachilde* 102). As an (in)famous, cross-dressing figure, George Sand paves the way for other influential, pants-donning nineteenth century women (Bard, *Histoire politique* 161).

George Sand's donning of masculine attire began early in her life. Her grandmother, an influential figure in George Sand's childhood, encouraged her twelve-year-old granddaughter to dress like a boy. After her grandmother's death, the father of George Sand's foster family, "d  cu de ne pas avoir eu de fils" [disappointed not to have had sons], had his four daughters and George Sand dress in pants and jackets (Bard, *Histoire politique* 162). In *Histoire de ma vie*, George Sand writes about how she ultimately did little to nurture her own (feminine) beauty: "durant toute mon enfance, j'annon  ais devoir   tre fort belle, promesse que je n'ai point tenue. Il y eut peut-  tre de ma faute, car    l'  ge o   la beaut   fleurit, je passais d  j   les nuits    lire et      crire.   tant fille de deux   tres d'une beaut   parfaite, j'aurais d   ne pas d  g  n  rer, et ma pauvre m  re, qui estimait la beaut   plus que tout, m'en faisait souvent de na  fs reproches" (2: 74) [throughout my whole childhood, I proclaimed to be a budding beauty, promise that I did not keep. It was perhaps my own fault, because at the age when beauty flourishes, I was already spending the nights reading and writing. Being the daughter of two beings of perfect beauty, I should not have degenerated, and my poor mother, who held beauty in the highest regard, would naively reproach me for it]. Significantly, George Sand provides reading and writing as an explanation for eventually not cultivating her beauty. In this passage, George Sand juxtaposes (feminine) beauty with the (masculine) activities of reading and writing. Instead of tending to her looks, she focuses on her talents. Despite her indifference to her own beauty, George Sand does not, however, eschew all things associated with femininity:

j'aime les bijoux surtout de passion. [...] J'aime à examiner les parures, les étoffes, les couleurs; le goût me charme. Je voudrais être bijoutier ou costumier pour inventer toujours, et pour donner, par le miracle du goût, une sorte de vie à ces riches matières. Mais tout cela n'est d'aucun usage agréable pour moi. Une belle robe est gênante, les bijoux égratignent, et en toute choses, la mollesse des habitudes nous vieillit et nous tue. (*Histoire de ma vie* 3: 314) [I love jewelry with a passion. I love to examine the sets of jewels, the intensity, the colors; good taste charms me. I would like to be a jeweler or a costumer in order to always invent and to give, by the miracle of taste, a sort of life to these rich materials. But all that is of no agreeable function for me. A beautiful dress is annoying, jewelry scratches, and in everything, the idleness of habits ages and kills us]

Placing importance on the act of creation, whether the end product is a text or an accessory, George Sand explains that she does not wish to passively adorn herself in such luxurious items since they suggest a lack of vitality. Furthermore, she later links the donning of fancy attire to the desire to please others, particularly men: “Je sentais bien que la stupide vanité des parures, pas plus que le désir impur de plaire à tous les hommes, n’avaient de prise sur mon esprit, formé au mépris de ces choses par les leçons et les exemples de ma grand-mère” (*Histoire de ma vie* 4: 92) [I felt that the stupid vanity of jewelry, no more than the impure desire to please all men, had not taken hold of my mind, already formed to despise these things thanks to the lessons and the examples of my grandmother]. Caring for physical beauty and cultivating one’s level of attractiveness are, suggests George Sand, frivolous pastimes. Once more, we see the influence of George Sand’s grandmother in shaping George Sand’s opinions regarding femininity.

In addition to believing that excessive adornment was both superfluous and vain, George Sand refuses to wear a corset. In fact, as a young girl, she would cut the laces of her corset and she once threw her corset into a “vieille barrique de lie de vin” (*Histoire de ma vie* 3: 418) [old barrel of wine sediment]. George Sand much prefers her masculine clothing, finding it “plus agréable pour courir, que [s]es jupons brodés qui restaient en morceaux accrochés à tous les buissons. [...] Il faut se souvenir aussi qu’à cette époque les jupes sans pli étaient si étroites, qu’une femme était littéralement comme dans un étui, et ne pouvait franchir décemment un ruisseau sans y laisser sa chaussure” (*Histoire de ma vie* 4: 335) [more agreeable for running than her embellished petticoats, pieces of which would get stuck to bushes. One should also remember that at this time skirts without pleats were so narrow that a woman was literally in a case and could not properly jump over a stream without leaving behind a shoe]. George Sand’s boys’ clothes provide her with a wider range of motion and aid her in her physical activities.

The adults in young George Sand’s life encourage her to embrace a more masculine lifestyle. In fact, George Sand’s tutor Deschartes was “pressé de la voir en homme, lui qui n’avait jamais élevé que des garçons, afin de pouvoir se persuader qu’elle en était un et l’accabler de son latin. Elle adopte donc avec grand plaisir le sarrau masculin, la casquette et les guêtres, pour des raisons de commodité” (Vierne 22) [eager to see her as a man, he who had only ever raised boys, in order to persuade himself that she was one and to overwork her with Latin. She therefore adopts with pleasure the masculine smock, cap and gaiters, for reasons of convenience]. Both her grandmother and her tutor play major roles in helping shape George Sand’s gender presentation as a child. Indeed, George Sand attributes her “non conformisme à l’idéal féminin à son éducation rendue un peu différente par les circonstances” (Vierne 18)

[nonconformism to the feminine ideal to her education that was made rather different due to circumstance]. Thanks to her unconventional upbringing and education, George Sand was free to explore other modes of dress and behavior than that traditionally associated with raising a young girl in early nineteenth century France.

In addition to reflecting her untraditional upbringing, George Sand's childhood rejection of feminine attire and accessories depicts a pragmatic response to the confining and objectifying nature of women's clothing. This sentiment then paves the way for George Sand to embrace gender fluidity. In a letter to her friend Émilie de Wismes, George Sand writes of her time presenting as a man: "pour chasser et monter à cheval je m'habille en homme [...] [Cette manière d'aller] pourrait paraître déplacée aux environs d'Angers, mais au fin fond du Berry, le peu de demoiselles qui l'habitent en font autant que moi, excepté que je me fais passer pour un *monsieur*, ce qui donne lieu à d'assez plaisantes bévues" (Vierne 23, emphasis in original) [I dress as a man for hunting and riding horses. This way of going might seem improper in the environs of Angers, but deep in Berry, the few young women who live here do it as much as me, except that I pass for a *monsieur*, which provides for rather amusing blunders]. While other women wear pants in order to ride astride their horse, George Sand takes this gender-bending act to the next level by passing as a man. She clearly finds amusement in playing with people's expectations and her transgender practice of cross-dressing transitions from being simply sartorial in nature to being affiliated with how others conceive of her gender identity.

George Sand's childhood transgender practices and aversion to traditional femininity continue into adulthood. Bard remarks that George Sand returns to cross-dressing at a pivotal point in her life, having separated from her husband and taking on a "véritable activité littéraire.

Elle vit plus souvent à Paris, sans beaucoup de moyens” (*Histoire politique* 162-163) [true literary activity. She lives more often in Paris without a lot of means]. George Sand describes the situation as follows:

Ayant été habillée en garçon durant mon enfance, ayant ensuite chassé en blouse et en guêtres avec Deschartres, je ne me trouvais pas étonnée du tout de reprendre un costume qui n’était pas nouveau pour moi. [...] Je me fis donc faire une *redingote-guêrite* en gros drap gris, pantalon et gilet pareils. Avec un chapeau gris et une grosse cravate de laine, j’étais absolument un petit étudiant de première année. Je ne peux pas dire quel plaisir me firent mes bottes [...] avec ces petits talons ferrés, j’étais solide sur le trottoir. Je voltigeais d’un bout de Paris à l’autre. Il me semblait que j’aurais fait le tour du monde. Et puis, mes vêtements ne craignaient rien. Je courais par tous les temps, je revenais à toutes les heures, j’allais au parterre de tous les théâtres. Personne ne faisait attention à moi et ne se doutait de mon déguisement. (*Histoire de ma vie* 4: 81) [Having been dressed as a boy for my whole childhood, having then hunted in overalls and gaiters with Deschartres, I did not find myself at all surprised to put this familiar outfit back on. I therefore had made for myself a grey fitted coat and matching pants and vest. With a grey hat and a thick woolen tie, I absolutely was a young first year (male) student. I cannot say what a pleasure I got out of my boots; with these small cobbled heels I was solid on the sidewalk. I flew from one end of Paris to the other. It seemed to me that I could travel around the world. And furthermore, my clothes feared nothing. I ran in all weather, I returned at all hours, I would go

to the standing-room part of all theaters. No one paid attention to me and no one suspected anything of my disguise]

George Sand's joy in returning to masculine garb, even that of a schoolboy, is apparent. References to feeling unrestrained and able to travel wherever she pleases permeate the quotation. Being "in disguise" allows George Sand complete freedom and, she claims, invisibility to do as she wishes. Bard explains that the "travestissement ponctuel mais régulier de George Sand s'est prolongé au-delà des premières années à Paris, plus longtemps qu'elle ne veut le reconnaître dans *Histoire de ma vie*" (*Histoire politique* 163) [temporary but regular cross-dressing of George Sand extended beyond her first few years in Paris, longer than she wants to admit in *Histoire de ma vie*]. Even so, it should be noted that "il ne s'agit pas d'un travestissement permanent, contrairement à ce que la légende de George Sand laisse accroire" (Bard, *Histoire politique* 163) [it was not a permanent state of transvestism, contrary to what the legend of George Sand leads us to believe]. In addition to George Sand's appreciation of masculine attire, she takes great care in her appearance when presenting as a woman. Indeed, George Sand "se préoccupe fort de la mode" (Vierne 14) [is very concerned with fashion]. Her attention to fashion trends indicates that she did not dismiss clothing, even that of women, as entirely frivolous and shows that she did not reject a feminine persona in favor of her masculine one.

On dépeint volontiers George Sand avec non seulement une allure masculine, mais portant habituellement pantalons et vêtements d'homme. [...] Il est vrai que George Sand romancière joue du pseudonyme qu'elle s'est choisi, et s'y est d'ailleurs si bien habituée qu'elle parle d'elle indifféremment au masculin et au



féminin—et que ses amis et amants eux-mêmes lui écrivent en employant affectueusement ou amoureuxment ‘*Mon George*’. Pourtant, il suffit de se référer à l’iconographie de ses portraits [...] pour avoir une vision toute différente, celle d’une femme vêtue à la mode de son temps, et parfois même parée de manière très ‘féminine’ selon les conventions, pour se poser quelques questions sur cette persistance de la légende. (Vierne 13, emphasis in original) [One likes to depict George Sand not only with a masculine allure, but habitually dressed in pants and men’s clothing. It is true that George Sand the novelist plays with the pseudonym she has chosen for herself, and is furthermore used to speaking indifferently of herself as either masculine or feminine—her friends and lovers also write to her using affectionately or amorously “*My* [masculine possessive] *George*.” However, it is sufficient to reference the iconography of her portraits to have a completely different vision; that of a woman dressed in the fashion of her times, and sometimes even adorned in a very “feminine” manner according to the conventions, in order to pose questions regarding the persistence of the legend]

Instead of bolstering the legend of the great George Sand, cross-dressing and cigar-smoking writer, my intervention highlights George Sand’s gender-bending practices. As the examples have shown, she embraces both masculinity and femininity, ultimately privileging gender fluidity.

George Sand’s autobiography, in addition to helping to represent and shape her gender identity, also provides George Sand with a way to understand where she has come from and who she has become. Anna Szabó offers that the “véritable enjeu de cette entreprise n'est autre chose

que de comprendre ce qu[e George Sand] appelle son propre 'mystère': celui de ses pensées, de ses croyances, de ses répulsions comme de ses instincts et de ses sentiments, bref tout ce qui fait son identité” (13-14) [the actual stakes of this enterprise are nothing less than understanding what George Sand calls her own ‘mystery’: that of her thoughts, her beliefs, her repulsions as well as her instincts and sentiments, in short, all that makes up her identity]. Further, George Sand’s autobiographical accounts provide reasons as to why she cross-dresses. In addition to her nontraditional upbringing, the explanations George Sand gives for her childhood distaste of feminine behavior and dress stem from the underlying belief that such things detract from more practical and productive activities such as reading, writing, hunting, and riding—in short, living actively. The recognition that women’s attire constrains women both physically and psychologically allows young George Sand to turn to men’s clothing and behavior in an emancipatory act. Similar to Aline-Ali, George Sand becomes a voyager in a new land, an active subject who observes rather than is observed. For instance, Bard notes that George Sand, as an adult in the “parterres des théâtres parisiens, [...] entend des propos qui ne sont pas destinés aux oreilles féminines et pénètre dans le monde des hommes” (*Histoire politique* 164-165) [standing-room of Parisian theaters, hears discourse that is not destined for feminine ears; she penetrates in the world of men]. One wonders if George Sand, like Aline-Ali, finds this world poisonous.

Despite the fact that I make no claims as to George Sand’s own gender identity—it is not for me to say whether or not she considered masculinity a part of her self-constitution—I argue that George Sand’s use of transgender practices, that is, her periodic masculine “disguise” as she calls it, provides her with certain benefits. While it may not illustrate an inner desire to be a man, her donning of men’s clothing allows her to be who, or what, she wants to be: an independent

person who can move freely throughout Paris. George Sand constructs a rather androgynous persona for herself, noting that “pour ne pas être remarquée en *homme*, il faut avoir déjà l’habitude de ne pas se faire remarquer en *femme*” (*Histoire de ma vie* 4: 82, emphasis in original) [in order not to be noticed as a *man*, you need to already have the habit of not being noticed as a *woman*]. This quotation opens itself up to different interpretations. It might be understood that George Sand epitomizes both gender roles to the extent that she is read as so masculine or so feminine that she blends in, unnoticed. Alternatively, the quotation could suggest that George Sand takes care to avoid overtly stereotypical masculine and feminine mannerisms, fostering gender ambiguity in her comportment. In either case, I suggest that George Sand as either the epitome of gender stereotypes or gender ambiguity has less to do with clothing than it does with behavior and actions. Furthermore, George Sand asserts her “appartenance aux deux sexes et construit son identité littéraire sur cette dualité, ou cette duplicité, fondamentale ” (Reid 76) [affiliation with both sexes and constructs her literary identity on this fundamental duality or duplicity]. George Sand’s own transgender practices—sartorial and behavioral—therefore play into and complement her famous literary identity.

Rachilde too enjoys complicating the masculine/feminine divide. At various stages throughout her life, Rachilde speaks of herself in the masculine (Bollhalder Mayer 191). At the age of thirteen, she asks God to change her into a boy:

Je demande au bon Dieu qu’il me change en garçon puisque mes parents ne m’aimeront jamais tant que je serai une fille! Je suis déjà tondue. (Les femmes de chambre me coupaient les cheveux pour s’éviter l’ennui de me peigner!) Je monte à cheval comme un soldat et je ne serai jamais belle, que dit maman, parce que je

ressemble trop à mon père, alors?... (*Pourquoi ne ne suis pas féministe* 40, ellipses in original) [I ask the good Lord to change me into a boy since my parents will never love me as long as I am a girl! My head is already shaved. (The maids cut my hair to avoid the bother of having to brush it!) I ride a horse like a soldier and I will never be beautiful, as Mother says, because I resemble my father too much, so?...]

Rachilde, as a young child, thus believes she is better suited to be a boy.<sup>56</sup> Even though she claims not to dress as a man until 1885—at the age of twenty-five she “se coupe les cheveux et prend l’habit masculin” (Bard, *Histoire politique* 175) [cuts her hair and puts on masculine clothing]—Rachilde, like George Sand, participates in traditionally masculine endeavors as a child. “La petite Marguerite se sent proche des animaux, se défoule à cheval, pratique l’escrime, écrit très jeune et lit beaucoup, assez librement pour découvrir le marquis de Sade avant ses 15 ans” (Bard, *Histoire politique* 175) [little Marguerite feels close to animals, unwinds by horseback riding, fences, writes very young and reads a lot, freely enough that she discovers the marquis de Sade before reaching the age of 15]. Her physical and literary pastimes reflect those enjoyed by many of the protagonists in my corpus; after all, Clémentina and Gabriel both fence and Raoule herself reads Sade at a young age. Finally, Rachilde writes that, “obligée, par devoir ou par goût, de vivre comme un homme, de porter seule tout le plus lourd du fardeau de la vie pendant [s]a jeunesse, il eût été préférable d’en avoir au moins les privilèges sinon les apparences [d’être un homme]” (*Pourquoi ne ne suis pas féministe* 6) [obliged, by duty or by

<sup>56</sup> Rachilde’s Jesuit tutor responds, it should be noted, that it would be best for her to “prendre le voile” (*Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe* 40) [take the veil]; his response draws parallels between those who told Clémentina and Raoule to join a convent rather than nurture their non traditional gender identities.

taste, to live as a man, to alone carry all the heaviest of life's burdens during her youth, it would have been preferable to have at least the privileges, if not the appearances, of being a man].

Rachilde thus recognizes the advantages that come along with masculinity, and intimates that she too can enjoy some of them by dressing as a man.

In 1884, a year before she claims to have started cross-dressing, Rachilde writes to the police precinct to request permission to do so. In her letter, Rachilde introduces herself as, “malheureusement, une femme de lettres” [sadly, a woman of letters] who is called “Marguerite Eymery dans la vie privée, Rachilde dans la vie des lettres” (Hawthorne, *Rachilde* 104-105) [Marguerite Eymery in private life, Rachilde in the life of letters]. She pleads her case: “Je désire, moi, m’habiller en homme [...] pour qu’il soit bien entendu que je suis *un écrivain* quelconque et pour qu’on s’adresse à ma plume et non à ma personne” (Hawthorne, *Rachilde* 105, emphasis in original) [I desire to dress as a man in order to make it understood that I am an ordinary *male writer* and so that people pay attention to my pen and not my person]. In this letter, Rachilde clearly differentiates between her private identity and her public persona, claiming to want to dress as a man so that readers focus on her writing and not on her gender identity. Strikingly, Rachilde implies that she will cause more of a scandal by *not* presenting as a man, since appearing to be a man will at least coincide with her masculine literary identity. Rachilde intends to relinquish her social ties to femininity and establishes herself as an “ordinary” male writer. Some nineteenth century women writers, explains Reid, claim to have no obligation to the sex to which they are assigned and this is “le cas de Rachilde” (77) [the case with Rachilde]. By hoping to appear legally as a man, Rachilde discards her socially-assigned

feminine gender and argues that her success in the literary world provides enough of a reason to adopt masculine gender expression.<sup>57</sup>

In *Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe*, Rachilde declares finally obtaining authorization to cross-dress. However, Melanie Hawthorne shared with me her suspicions that Rachilde did not actually get permission, but rather claimed to have received a permit in order to cultivate her persona and build up the scandal around her name.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, Rachilde lived during a period in which the “regulation of sartorial manifestations of gender was shifting from state policing to self-policing, from formal to informal regulation” (Hawthorne, *Rachilde* 104). In other words, while Rachilde would still need permission to dress as a man—after all, she wrote her letter in 1884 and it was in 1886 when the police reminded Parisians of the extant law forbidding women to wear pants—gender norms were becoming more self-regulated. Rachilde’s refusal to adhere to conventional femininity would have therefore indicated an inner state of social rebellion that runs deeper than one’s physical appearance.

George Sand serves as the quintessential gender-bending model from which Rachilde can take inspiration. Indeed, Rachilde’s contemporaries note her similarity to George Sand since both writers enjoy crossing gender boundaries. When they first meet, Rachilde’s future husband and director of *Le Mercure de France* Alfred Vallette asked Rachilde if she wears a man’s outfit to copy the famous author: “Est-ce George Sand que vous voulez imiter?” (Bollhalder Mayer 192)

<sup>57</sup> Rachilde appears to, overall, adopt a masculine identity. In her autobiography *Sur la route de Dieu on rencontre d’abord le diable* (1977), Maryse Choisy explains how she worked for *Le Mercure de France*, a periodical directed by Rachilde’s husband Alfred Vallette. Choisy quotes Rachilde declaring herself to be a man on three separate occasions (106, 112, 113).

<sup>58</sup> This comes from a discussion Hawthorne and I had in Spring of 2014. Hawthorne also writes: “in Rachilde’s case, [...] the degree of sartorial nonconformity has been exaggerated in order to represent the degree of perceived nonconformity” (*Rachilde* 102).

[Is it George Sand whom you want to imitate?] Like George Sand, Rachilde claims to dress as a man for financial and practical reasons (Bard, *Histoire politique* 175); it is cheaper and she can move about in public unnoticed and anonymous (Hawthorne, *Rachilde* 109). Furthermore, in a society in which “maleness confers privilege (suffrage, the right to own and inherit property, the right to enter into legal contracts, in short, full legal personhood), presenting oneself as a man signified a claim to certain rights” (Hawthorne, *Rachilde* 102). As earlier noted, Rachilde’s calling cards, proclaiming her a man of letters, reflect this assertion and complement her masculine dress.

However, in 1889 after her marriage to Vallette, Rachilde stops living as a man. She writes: “Quand je me suis mariée, très simplement je me suis habillée comme tout le monde et j’ai laissé repousser mes cheveux: *j’avais enterré ma vie de garçon*” (*Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe* 70-71, emphasis in original) [When I married, I quite simply dressed like everyone else and I let my hair grow out: *this was the end of my bachelor’s life*]. The phrase *comme tout le monde* [like everyone else] is indeed curious. I suggest that this statement does not emphasize others’ specific gender—note that Rachilde does not write that she dresses like other women—but rather their mindset. The underlying notion is that Rachilde dresses in accordance with gender conformity. Dressing like everyone else therefore indicates a falling in line with gender norms. Rachilde’s adoption of conventional dress also reflects her new role as a wife. Previously, Rachilde had not dressed “like everyone else,” which indicated her earlier rejection of traditional gender roles and behavior.

As shown by the reasons influencing the authors’ decision to cross-dress, the donning of masculine clothing provides George Sand and Rachilde with convenience and power. They feel

free to move around Paris and they enjoy being admitted into spaces reserved for men (for instance the *parterre* of the theater). Can it be argued that their sartorial choices express their political stances through visual means? It appears that, at least in George Sand's case, they do:

La relative sobriété du vêtement masculin qu[e George Sand] porte exprime également son rêve d'égalité sociale: républicaine dans les années 1830, elle devient socialiste dans la décennie suivante et le mot "communiste" la fait rêver, à condition qu'il ne fasse pas couler le sang. L'égalité, c'est aussi pour elle l'égalité des sexes, qui doit passer par la réforme de Code civil afin de libérer les épouses du joug marital, et par le droit au divorce. (Bard, *Histoire politique* 164) [The relative sobriety of masculine clothing that George Sand wears also expresses her dream of social equality: republican in the 1830s, she becomes socialist in the following decade and the word "communist" causes her to dream, on the condition that it does not make blood spill. Equality is also, for her, the equality of the sexes that must happen by reforming the civil code in order to liberate wives from marital oppression and by granting them to the right to divorce]

Wearing men's clothing reinforces her conviction that men and women are equal. Furthermore, in 1835 George Sand adopts "le costume des jeunes républicains appelés 'bousingots', du nom du chapeau de marin en cuir qu'ils affectionnent" (Bard, *Histoire politique* 163) [uniform of young republicans called "bousingots," from the name of the mariner's leather cap that they wear]. George Sand's clothing thus conveys her political affiliations and her support for women's rights. In June of 1848, George Sand writes in an open letter: "Je n'ai qu'une passion, l'idée d'égalité" (Bard, *Histoire politique* 164) [I have but one passion, the idea of equality].



George Sand achieves this equality, maintains Bard, by dressing as a man (*Histoire politique* 164). Additionally, through her “exercices transgenres, George Sand accumule de précieuses informations pour sa réflexion politique et son inspiration littéraire” (Bard, *Histoire politique* 164) [transgender exercises, George Sand gathers precious information for her political reflections and her literary inspiration]. George Sand’s experiences cross-dressing therefore shape her political convictions and her literary work, and vice versa.

The connection between Rachilde’s politics and her clothing is murkier than it is *chez* George Sand. Rachilde’s written work, argues Dauphiné, expresses “la volonté de prouver l’égalité de l’homme et de la femme par-delà le bien et le mal, la société et la religion” (68) [the will to prove the equality between men and women beyond the good and the bad, society and religion], yet, as the title of her autobiographical pamphlet suggests, Rachilde vehemently denies being a feminist. It should be noted, however, that she appears to equate feminist with suffragist. Rachilde writes: “Non, je ne suis pas *féministe*. Je ne veux pas voter parce que cela m’ennuierait de m’occuper de politique” (*Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe* 83, emphasis in original) [No, I am not a *feminist*. I do not want to vote because it would bore me to be involved in politics]. Furthermore, she claims that she only acts as an “*individu ne songeant pas à fonder une société ou à bouleverser celle qui existait*” (*Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe* 6, emphasis in original) [*individual* not dreaming of founding a society or of upsetting the one that existed]. Rachilde therefore denies promoting any specific cause and instead maintains the notion that she acts merely in her own best interest.

I nevertheless propose that even if Rachilde claims no interest in women’s political rights, her actions—more specifically her transgender practices as conveyed through her claim

that she wears men's garb and exists as a man of letters—promote social gender equality.<sup>59</sup>

Rachilde, as an individual whose body is deemed female, fights against these gender stereotypes and therefore, whether she intends to or not, becomes a gender-bending model for others to follow. Indeed, looking back on her life, Rachilde does recognize that her “esprit révolutionnaire” [revolutionary spirit] makes her, “malgré [elle], une des premières féministes de l'époque” (*Pourquoi je ne suis pas féministe* 8) [despite herself, one of the first feminists of the period]. What better way to have communicated this revolutionary spirit than through her publically asserted persona of “Rachilde, homme de lettres?”

The sartorial choices and transgender practices of George Sand and Rachilde, while significant in and of themselves, therefore reflect a larger statement: the promotion of social and political equality between men and women. Vierende points out that “[l]es pantalons de Mme Sand, si discrets et si peu provocateurs, contrairement à la légende, ne sont que le signe et le symbole d'une demande bien légitime: que l'on s'intéresse non à ce qu'elle porte, mais à ce qu'elle est” (38) [Madame Sand's pants, so discreet and un-provoking, contrary to the legend, are but the sign and the symbol of a legitimate demand: that one be interested not in what she wears, but in what she is]. I add that it is also important to consider what one does. In other words, the act of donning trousers promotes the broader women's rights movement in nineteenth century France. While the sartorial transgender practices of George Sand and Rachilde offer implicit critiques of women's subordinate place in society, André Léo's journalism provides more explicit denunciations of injustices facing the so-called weaker sex. Cuisin, on the other hand, does not

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<sup>59</sup> Bard too argues that Rachilde's literary work and her position as *écrivain* defend “la liberté féminine” (*Histoire politique* 176) [feminine freedom].

shy away from writing about politics but he generally avoids the subject of gender inequality and women's rights, as we see in the concluding section.

### Part Three

#### Social Commentary of Cuisin and André Léo

This section focuses on the social commentary of Cuisin and André Léo as communicated through their nonfiction. In particular, I examine André Léo's journalism of the 1860s and 1870s to show how she inserts herself into politics. Planté notes that the very fact that André Léo writes about political matters “redouble[...] en quelque sorte [sa] transgression première qui réside dans le simple fait d'écrire” (*La Petite sœur* 228) [doubles in some way her first transgression that resides in the simple act of writing]. Writing—an activity already established as masculine—about the male-dominated world of politics strengthens the idea that André Léo participates in a transgender act, or, at the very least, an act deemed unladylike. Further, journalism provides André Léo with an effective way to disseminate her feminist and socialist ideas to the masses.

While Cuisin also writes about politics, he does not advocate for gender equality or criticize how poorly women are treated in society. Instead, his political texts focus overwhelmingly on the despotic regime of Napoleon Bonaparte. When Cuisin writes about women, he most often upholds traditional ideas about gender roles instead of advocating for equal rights as André Léo does. It should be noted that even though I do not claim that Cuisin partakes in transgender practices like the other three authors, his oeuvre is vast and covers a plethora of subjects. While André Léo crosses into traditionally masculine territory and in this way transcends gender expectations by participating in and writing about politics—thereby

committing a transgender act twice over—Cuisin engages with such a variety of topics that, literarily speaking, he moves with a certain authorial fluidity, crossing from genre to genre (from poetry<sup>60</sup> to instructional texts<sup>61</sup>), from audience to audience (from citizens to novice hunters), and from topic to topic (from equestrian education to marital advice). I therefore do not intend to situate Cuisin’s nonfiction as repetitive or single-minded, nor do I wish to position Cuisin as an uncomplicated author whose nonfiction merely serves as a counterpoint to André Léo’s feminist notions. Instead, I will examine how Cuisin treats the social issues he feels are most pressing, paying particular attention to his treatment of women, before moving on to André Léo’s political critiques. I suggest that, overall, Cuisin views society as a fixed structure that individuals must engage with for better or for worse, while André Léo advocates overhauling social and political underpinnings.

The reign of Napoleon Bonaparte constitutes the subject of three of Cuisin’s nonfiction texts: *Crimes et péchés de Napoléon Bonaparte* (1815), *Crimes secrets de Napoléon Buonaparte; faits historiques, recueillis par une Victime de sa tyrannie* (1815), and *Jugement dernier de Napoléon Bonaparte, ex-empereur, par M. C\*\*\*\*, membre de plusieurs sociétés académiques* (1815). Cuisin’s name does not appear on the title page of *Crimes secrets*; Cuisin is simply a “victim” of the oppressive regime, and this position implies that he is of a certain authority to convey to his reader how the emperor infringed upon his personal rights. In *Jugement dernier*, while Cuisin’s name is not fully spelled out, the inclusion of *membre de*

<sup>60</sup> For instance, *Les Lunes poétiques des Deux-Mondes: Contemplations philosophiques, historiques, morales et religieuses* (1836, 1840).

<sup>61</sup> For instance, *L’École du chasseur, suivie d’un traité sur l’oisellerie, la pêche, et les nouveaux fusils de chasse à piston* (1822) and *Le Parfait Maréchal-Expert, ou L’art de connaître les chevaux* (1824).

*plusieurs sociétés académiques* [member of several academic societies] establishes Cuisin's involvement in the academic community, suggesting that he is qualified to critique Bonaparte's political policies. Being a member of academic society bolsters Cuisin's credibility as he demonstrates why the former emperor's reign did not benefit the people of France.

Cuisin forcefully condemns Bonaparte in his three texts. He declares that “de tous les tyrans que l’histoire nous offre comme oppresseurs des peuples, tels que Néron, Caligula, Tibère, Denys, et tant d’autres qui font honte à l’humanité, il n’en est aucun qui puisse être comparé à Bonaparte” (*Crimes et péchés* 2) [of all the tyrants that history offers us as oppressors of the people, those such as Nero, Caligula, Tiberius, Dionysius, and many others who bring shame to humanity, there is none who can be compared to Bonaparte]. Cuisin calls upon his fellow countrymen—emphasis on men—to accept just how horrible Bonaparte's reign was:

Français, qui avez gémi sous sa cruelle oppression, vous fûtes témoins des événements qui se passèrent sous ce despote; mais vous ignorez combien il se rendit coupable: et vous aussi, qui, abusés par le sentiment d’une fausse gloire, cherchez à pallier ses torts, vous qui fûtes ses premières victimes, songez qu’il ne dut sa renommée qu’à votre courage, et non à ses talents [sic]. Revenez enfin de votre erreur, en lisant le récit véridique des crimes dont s’est souillé cet oppresseur du genre humain, et alors vous vous criez: *CREDEBAMUS INVENISSE HOMINEM, ET MONSTRUM INVENIMUS: Nous croyions avoir trouvé un homme, et nous trouvons... un monstre!* (*Crimes et péchés* 3-4, emphasis in original) [You Frenchmen who have moaned under his cruel oppression, you were witness to events that transpired under this despot; but you

are ignorant as to how guilty he is: and you too who, abused by the sentiment of a false glory, look to cover up his faults; you, his first victims, realize that he owes his reputation to your courage, and not to his talents. Come back at last from your error by reading the truthful account of the crimes of which this oppressor of the human race sullied himself, and cry out: *CREDEBAMUS INVENISSE HOMINEM, ET MONSTRUM INVENIMUS: We thought we had found a man, and we found... a monster!*]

Cuisin's book aims to combat ignorance and while Cuisin does not gloss over the average individual's complicity in Bonaparte's ascension to power, he does emphasize his belief that knowledge will best arm the reader from being deceived again. If Cuisin's *Clémentine* showed a supposed monster to be a lovely heroine, *Crimes et péchés* pulls away Bonaparte's "masque" (6) [mask] to reveal not just a man "dans toutes sa foiblesse [sic]" (6) [in all his weakness], but a monster as well. Cuisin's text sheds light on Bonaparte's crimes, educating readers about his transgressions so that they do not find themselves and their country in a similar situation in the future. Despite the clear political critique embedded in *Crimes et péchés*, much of the book focuses on Bonaparte as an individual since Cuisin uses Bonaparte's biography as a way to understand the tyrant's rise to power (*Crimes et péchés* 6). Rather than analyzing how existing social structures affect the average individual, Cuisin's critique therefore centers on how a specific person affects social justice.

Similarly, Cuisin's book on marriage does not critically examine the political or social underpinnings of the establishment. Instead, *Le Conjugalisme* centers on the individual's place within the system, offering the reader advice on how to successfully navigate the existing social

institution in order to form a happy union. Cuisin does seek to give his readers a wider perspective on the institution of marriage by providing a somewhat comprehensive look at different marriage customs across the globe, including their political and religious implications. Nevertheless, the majority of *Le Conjugalisme* aims to help the reader make the most of what Cuisin assumes to be an inescapable destiny, for better or for worse:

On ne finirait jamais si l'on voulait [...] esquisser toutes les infortunes conjugales, et ma tâche, ici, est moins de les peindre que d'indiquer les moyens d'y obvier; c'est pourquoi mettant des bornes à ces RÉFLEXIONS PRÉLIMINAIRES, entrons de suite dans le développement *classique* de nos LEÇONS MATRIMONIALES, et sous le double attrait de l'ANECDOTE et de l'exemple, efforçons-nous de présenter un livre qui réunisse aux avantages de l'utilité, les grâces de l'enjouement, le mérite de l'intérêt, et, s'il se peut, le charme du style.

(xii, emphasis in original) [One would never finish if one wanted to sketch all the marital misfortunes, and my task here is less to paint them than to indicate ways to avoid them; this is why, having marked the boundaries of these PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS, let us enter in the *classic* development of our MATRIMONIAL LESSONS, and under the dual attraction of the ANECDOTE and the example, let us try to present a book that combines the advantages of usefulness, the graces of cheerfulness, the merit of interest, and, if it can be done, the charm of style]

Cuisin does not try to paint marriage as a union in which living happily-ever-after is an automatic given. Instead, he makes light of it when he can and, when he cannot, hopes to help his reader turn his or her impending vows into something advantageous.

As the title indicates, Cuisin's book on marriage addresses both men and women. While he attempts to remain an "[i]mpartial écrivain pour les deux sexes" (*Le Conjugalisme* 266) [impartial writer for the two sexes], Cuisin plainly affiliates himself with male readers. For instance, he writes that marriage has the potential to make "our" whole life either joyous or miserable, "Messieurs" (*Le Conjugalisme* ix) [Sirs]. Further, nothing I have found suggests that Cuisin was a woman; all of Cuisin's books present the author as masculine. In *Le Paria Travesti*, the by-line reads "P. Cuisin, Auteur de divers Romans" [P. Cuisin, (male) Author of diverse Novels] and he dedicates this book to his mother, signing the dedication "Ton Fils respectueux" (viii) [Your respectful Son]. Furthermore, *Les Lunes poétiques des Deux-Mondes* includes a blurb that describes author Cuisin as an "Ancien militaire, homme de lettres, auteur de divers romans et ouvrages d'éducation, [...] et conservateur du célèbre cabinet d'anatomie Dupont" [Former soldier, man of letters, (male) author of diverse novels and educational works, and (male) guardian of the famous Dupont cabinet of anatomy]. Since I have no reason to believe otherwise, Cuisin's masculine gender identity aligns with how the world would perceive him as a male-bodied individual. Consequently, as opposed to the cases of George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde, I have no evidence to argue that Cuisin crosses any gender boundary in his work or in his life.

Even though Cuisin does not wish to appear biased toward men—he does not hesitate to point out that they are "remplis de défauts, des pieds à la tête" (*Le Conjugalisme* 266) [full of



faults, from their feet to their heads]—*Le Conjugalisme* does not champion women’s emancipation. Rather, it reproduces rather sexist rhetoric, expounding on traditional ideas about the ideal woman being young and beautiful. For instance, Cuisin cautions men against marrying an older woman, framing his reasoning as follows:

Voilà pourtant ce que vous gagnez, avarés et cupides spéculateurs [...] en épousant de vieilles Messalines qui veulent encore faire croître les roses de la volupté au milieu des neiges de leurs nombreux hivers!... Non, n’ambitionnez point la richesse à ce prix: en outre que tout le monde vous méprise, vous montre au doigt, il est des souffrances, des épreuves *nocturnes* dont l’idée seule fait frémir.... (*Le Conjugalisme* 261-262, emphasis and suspension points in original)

[This is what you win, miserly and greedy speculators, by marrying old Messalines who still want to cultivate the roses of delight in the middle of the snowfall of their numerous winters!... No, do not hope to gain wealth at this price: in addition to everyone despising you and pointing fingers at you, there are certain throes, certain *nocturnal* ordeals of which the very idea makes one shudder....]

Cuisin identifies the desire for financial gain as a motivating factor for younger men marrying older women who, he suggests, wish to regain their youth and passion. According to Cuisin, older women’s fixation on the rekindling of physical desire should be enough to turn off the men from acquiring wealth in such a manner. As a counter example, André Léo, in *Une Vieille fille* (1851), features as her heroine an older woman who marries a younger man; the two live happily together and become proud parents—Cuisin might have argued that this heroine had not yet entered the “winter stages” of her life and their marriage was therefore less objectionable.

Regardless, as compared to André Léo's novel, Cuisin's advice appears overall more traditional and more socially acceptable.

To his credit, Cuisin also discourages younger women from marrying older men. He explains: "le *vice versa* existe aussi, et si j'ai esquissé l'agonie d'un pareil hymen pour un jeune homme, mes pinceaux sont encore tout chargés de couleur pour une jeune personne qui a le malheur de s'unir aux rumathismes [sic] et aux quintes d'un vieillard" (*Le Conjugalisme* 262) [the *vice versa* also exists, and if I sketched out the agony of such a marriage for a young man, my brushes still have enough color left to paint a similar picture for a young person who has the misfortune to unite with the rheumatism and fits of an old man]. Cuisin adheres to the belief that everyone, male and female, should marry within their age group in order to create compatible matches. It should nevertheless be noted that Cuisin places at the forefront of his justification the older woman's level of attractiveness as one of the reasons a younger man should not marry her; after all, Cuisin suggests that having to engage in "nocturnal activities" should be enough of a reason to run away. For younger women marrying older men, however, Cuisin cautions less about lack of attraction and more about the couple's incompatibility in terms of mental and physical health.

Nevertheless, in Cuisin's own charming way, he urges both men and women not to marry purely for financial gain. He incites his reader to make a match based on some level of compatibility, whether it be physical or intellectual attraction. Cuisin explains how men and women can prevent possible "calamités conjugales" (*Le Conjugalisme* 272) [marital calamities] and he hopes the reader, having read his book, will say: "À TRAVERS BEAUCOUP DE FOLIES, CET AUTEUR NOUS ENSEIGNE BEAUCOUP DE VÉRITÉS UTILES, ET SA

LÉGÈRETÉ NE S'ÉCARTE JAMAIS DES PRINCIPES D'UNE SAINTE MORALE!" (*Le Conjugalisme* 286 emphasis in original) [THROUGH MUCH MADNESS, THIS AUTHOR TEACHES US MANY USEFUL TRUTHS, AND HIS LIGHTNESS NEVER MOVES AWAY FROM THE PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHY MORALS]. Cuisin therefore positions himself as a model (or anti-model) after whom both men and women can fashion themselves in order to make the best of their seemingly unavoidable nuptials. He leaves the reader with the following words of encouragement:

apprenons en résumé dans cette espèce d'*adieu*, à tous les célibataires *masculins* et *féminins*, *garçons* et *filles* à marier du siècle, quelle est la route la plus courte, la plus prompte pour pénétrer dans le charmant sanctuaire de l'hymen: cette route, il est vrai est semée d'épines et de ronces, il faut surmonter bien des difficultés, bien des rivalités, des jalousies, des obstacles, des anonymes, des propos calomnieux; mais athlètes *conjugalistes*, ne vous rebutez jamais dans la carrière, affrontez tous ces périls. (*Le Conjugalisme* 281-282, emphasis in original) [as a summary in this form of *adieu*, to all the *masculine* and *feminine* single people, *boys* and *girls* who will marry this century, let us learn what is the shortest and quickest route for penetrating the charming sanctuary of marriage: this path is, it is true, sown with thorns and brambles and one needs to surmount many difficulties, many rivalries, jealousies, obstacles, anonymous people, and slanderous discourse; but *matrimonial* athletes, do not ever be discouraged in this career, face all these perils]

Cuisin encourages the individual reader, the “matrimonial athlete,” not only to take part in the tradition of marriage, but also to triumph, making it the best for him or her. Ultimately, however, Cuisin does little by way of advocating for a change in the social institution’s underpinnings; he does not, for example, contest the traditional gender roles associated with marriage.

Likewise, when Cuisin condemns prostitution, he critiques it as a morally reprehensible occupation that corrupts society instead of as a result of social inequalities that render prostitution a fairly easy source of income for poor and disenfranchised people. In *Les Nymphes du Palais-Royal; Leurs mœurs, leurs expressions d’argot, leur élévation* [sic], *retraite et décadence* (1815), Cuisin writes that he aims to “indiquer le mal, en désirant sincèrement sa destruction” (38) [indicate the evil, sincerely desiring its destruction]. This evil that he wishes to eradicate is, according to him, the frequenting and abundance of “femmes publiques” (*Les Nymphes* 39) [public women]. While Cuisin does include the story of one prostitute—“j’ai cru devoir la mettre sous les yeux du lecteur, comme l’histoire succincte et résumée des prostituées en général, ainsi que de leur décadence inévitable” (*Les Nymphes* 112) [I believed I needed to put it under the eyes of the reader, as a succinct and summarized story of prostitutes in general, as well as their inevitable decline]—his text focuses on how prostitution harms society and men, and it paints the greedy seductress as the main reason for this social evil, for “*ce mal nécessaire*” (*Les Nymphes* 114, emphasis in original) [*this necessary evil*].

However, by calling prostitution a necessary evil, Cuisin argues, men’s virtue is diminished. Men are made out to be more lascivious and deceitful than he believes they actually are. In other words, according to Cuisin, the very existence of prostitutes renders men weak and it is not their weakness that calls for the existence of brothels. Cuisin thus explains:

[les hommes qui fréquentent des prostituées] ne sont souvent libertins que comme un grand nombre de joueurs, seulement par circonstance, [et ils] ne succomberaient pas à la tentation, ou beaucoup plus rarement, si l'on n'avait pris le soin meurtrier d'entourer leurs pas d'écueils, dans tous les quartiers de la capitale! (*Les Nymphes* 118-119) [men who frequent prostitutes are often libertines only due to circumstances, like a large number of gamblers, and they would not succumb to temptation, or at least much more rarely, if one had not taken deadly care to surround their steps with pitfalls in all of the neighborhoods of the capital!]

Cuisin therefore situates men as one of the primary victims of the abundance of brothels in Paris. He does not discuss the possible conditions that drive women to prostitution and, aside from the aforementioned short story of the prostitute who laments her life choices, he depicts the prostitute as conniving. Respectable women, according to Cuisin, also fall victim to the wily seductress: “L'épouse, l'amante, la mère, la sœur, inquiètes sur l'absence, sur le retour tardif d'un mari, d'un amant, d'un fils, d'un frère, ayant trop lieu de craindre qu'une prostituée ait su profiter d'un moment de faiblesse pour ravir à l'hymen, à l'amour, à l'amitié” (*Les Nymphes* 121) [The wife, the lover, the mother, the sister, worried about the absence, about the late return of a husband, of a lover, of a son, of a brother, having all too much reason to fear that a prostitute knew to profit from a moment of weakness in order to ravish the marriage, the love, the friendship]. While Cuisin accords men moments of feebleness—he suggests that they are, overall, pure of intention—he portrays the prostitute as lying in wait, eager to destroy relationships and spread immorality.

After having described the evils of prostitution, Cuisin, “comme par devoir de citoyen” (*Les Nymphes* 42) [as by citizen’s duty], proposes possible solutions to this social problem. He suggests: “Qu’une maison de prostitution soit secrète, cachée, mystérieuse et reléguée dans un quartier éloigné et obscur, puisqu’il faut absolument en tolérer, entourez-la d’obstacles et surtout d’ignominie, de suppôts de police, de surveillance et des formes les plus importunes” (*Les Nymphes* 136) [That a house of prostitution should be secret, hidden, mysterious, and relegated to a removed and obscure neighbor, since it absolutely must be tolerated, surround it with obstacles and, above all, disgrace, of accomplices of police, of surveillance and of the most bothersome forms]. Furthermore, Cuisin advocates certain punishment of prostitutes and those who did not succeed in raising moral women. Cuisin writes: “Que la mère, que le père d’une prostituée soient déshonorés aux yeux de la loi et dans l’opinion publique; que les *filles* aient un costume particulier et une marque éclatante de leur prostitution; que tout enfin repousse en elles l’homme à qui il reste quelque pudeur et qui serait tenté de s’associer à leur infamie” (*Les Nymphes* 137, emphasis in original) [Let it be that the mother, that the father of a prostitute are dishonored in the eyes of the law and in public opinion; that the *daughters* have a particular costume and a glaring mark of their prostitution; that everything in her repels the man in whom there still remains some modesty and who would be tempted to associate himself with their infamy]. Strikingly, Cuisin proposes no punishment for the man who frequents the prostitute; indeed, he may believe that the very act of engaging with a prostitute is punishment enough for the otherwise respectable citizen who was led astray. By targeting the prostitute and her parents, Cuisin frames the issue of prostitution as a result of a failed moral upbringing. He does not consider that the woman in question may be an orphan, forced to provide for herself, or that her

mother or father do not earn enough to support the family. In other words, Cuisin seemingly blames the individual as opposed to a social structure that both permits this occupation and perpetuates poor living conditions that make prostitution a viable way for women (and men) to make a living.

André Léo, in contrast, is quick to draw connections among women's pay discrepancy, their inferior social status, and the decision to turn to prostitution. In *La Femme et les mœurs*, André Léo uses prostitution as a starting point for critiquing women's place in society. She writes: "le salaire de la femme est insuffisant. [...] Comment vivent-elles donc? [...] par l'inconduite, par la prostitution: quelques-unes s'en tirent par le suicide" (48) [the salary for a woman is insufficient. How do they live then? By bad behavior, by prostitution: some even got away by suicide]. While certain critics, including Cuisin, claim that prostitution symbolizes the threat of society's moral decline—"On l'a dit, on l'a répété, on le crie: les mœurs sont en décadence. Le concubinage dans les villes est devenu la règle, le mariage l'exception" (André Léo, *La Femme et les mœurs* 49) [It has been said, it has been repeated, it is cried: morals are in decline. *Concubinage* in the city has become the rule, marriage the exception]—André Léo demonstrates how the structure of society has rendered women objects to be bought or possessed. She explains: "Par la dépendance matérielle où elle est tenue, écartée de presque toutes les fonctions sociales autres que serviles, et réduite à un salaire insuffisant, on la force, ou de se vendre dans le mariage en échange d'une protection souvent illusoire, ou de se louer dans des unions temporaires: —On en a fait un objet" (*La Femme et les mœurs* 51) [By the material dependence in which she is held, diverted from almost all social functions other than servile, and reduced to an insufficient salary, one forces her either to sell herself in marriage in exchange for

an often illusionary protection or to rent herself in temporary unions: —One has made an object of her]. André Léo therefore draws a parallel between marriage and prostitution, as we saw Raoule do in Chapter Two, and maintains that prostitution is a result of how women are treated and educated. Dishonoring the parents and shaming the prostitute with physical marks of her occupation will not remove this social problem, nor will relegating brothels to hidden parts of town. Instead, the continued cycle of insufficient salaries, poor working conditions, and women's inability to pursue the same career opportunities as men will ensure that prostitution, either through marriage or "temporary unions," remains a common way for women to survive.

Discussing woman's need to couple herself with a man in order to live allows André Léo to call into question the feminine condition, "qui est en fin de compte insupportable" (Dalotel 25) [which is in the end unbearable], and to critique women's subordinate status. Not only are these themes common in her novels as we see with *Aline-Ali*, but André Léo's journalism conveys the same message: the need to restructure the social order in order to establish equality for all people. "Si André Léo a exposé ses thèses pour une société nouvelle dans de nombreux romans, elle ne pouvait manquer d'utiliser, avec succès, le journalisme pour participer à la lutte menée par la presse de gauche dont sa sensibilité politique la rapprochait" (L'Association André Léo 9) [If André Léo exposed her theses for a new society in numerous novels, she could not miss the opportunity to use, with success, journalism in order to participate in the fight led by the leftist press whose political sensibility was close to her own]. In her many articles, André Léo focuses on two main critiques pertaining to women's social condition: women's inferior education and the fact that women were considered intellectually weaker than men. It comes as no surprise, argues André Léo, that society therefore minimizes the value of women's social, political, and



literary contributions. In her work, André Léo uses the French socialist movement in order to argue for the creation of an egalitarian society.

André Léo staunchly supports access to education for both girls and children of the working class. During the nineteenth century, secondary schooling was available primarily to the bourgeoisie and was segregated by sex (R. Rogers 3). Boys of the bourgeoisie had the option of attending either private or public institutions, which then prepared them to take the *baccalauréat* exam to enter university and/or professional life. Bourgeois girls looking to obtain secondary education, on the other hand, could attend only private institutions until the Camille Sée Law of 1880.<sup>62</sup> At this point in time, worried in part about the Catholic Church's influence over young girls' minds,<sup>63</sup> the state created a national public system of secondary education for girls (R. Rogers 199).<sup>64</sup>

Before the Camille Sée Law, Catholic nuns were often instructors of bourgeois girls' secondary education. In her novels and journalism alike, André Léo advocates for the separation of education and religion: "il s'agissait [...] de critiquer l'enseignement religieux, catholique, tel

<sup>62</sup> Although, the minister of education set up secondary education courses for girls at the Sorbonne in 1867; this option lasted only briefly, however.

<sup>63</sup> André Léo too argues for the necessity of breaking ties with the Church. In *Coupons le câble!*, she writes: "Ce qu'il faut à la République, ce sont des citoyens et citoyennes, qui aiment leur Patrie, leur famille, et qui cherchent la vérité, de toute leur raison et de tout leur cœur. Il ne peut donc être permis aux républicains de patronner le Catholicisme" (75) [The Republic needs male and female citizens who love their homeland, their family, and who searches for the truth with all their reason and all their heart. It cannot be permitted for republicans to patronize Catholicism]. More forcefully, she continues: "Le Catholicisme est devenu la peste de l'Humanité et sa ruine" (77) [Catholicism has become Humanity's plague and its ruin].

<sup>64</sup> Even though these new institutions did not "embrace the more radical feminist propositions, such as coeducation or a rigorously equivalent curriculum between girls and boys" (R. Rogers 199), conservatives called these secondary schools "pépinières de bas-bleus" (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 46) [nurseries of the *bas-bleus*]. The option of secular secondary education for girls clearly caused concern that girls' education had the potential to turn them into radical and masculinized *mini-bas-bleus*.

qu'il était donné à cette époque, et de promouvoir des expériences d'un système éducatif où les élèves pourraient apprendre à réfléchir" (Dalotel 33) [it had to do with criticizing the religious, Catholic education, as it was during this period, and promoting experiences of an educational system where students could learn to reflect]. In her July 10, 1869 article "L'École primaire démocratique," which appeared in the newspaper *Droit des femmes*, André Léo explains her vision for an "école nouvelle" [new school] in the new society that she envisions:

Le nœud de toutes nos difficultés et la fin de toutes nos luttes c'est un enseignement nouveau pour la société nouvelle. Ceux qui [...] protestent contre l'injustice des lois à l'égard de la femme, devraient comprendre cette vérité. L'œuvre qu'ils ont choisie est *l'école*, et, pour commencer naturellement, l'école primaire. Mais une école faite pour préparer des citoyennes et non des sujettes; pour développer la raison, non pour l'égarer, pour aider l'initiative de l'enfant au lieu de la combattre; une école où la nature sera écoutée, la liberté respectée, dont l'égalité sera le dogme, et où la fraternité n'aura pas besoin d'être prêchée, parce qu'elle sera devenue facile et naturelle. De pareilles pratiques sont si éloignées de l'ordre de choses actuel qu'elles semblent chimériques à beaucoup d'esprits. (Dalotel 33-34, emphasis in original) [The crux of all our difficulties and the end of our struggles lie in a new educational system for the new society. Those who protest against the injustice of the laws regarding women should understand this truth. The place they chose to start is *school*, naturally primary school. But a school made for preparing (female) citizens and not (female) subjects; for developing reason, not for losing it, for helping the child's initiative instead of

fighting it; a school where nature will be listened to, liberty respected, where equality will be the dogma, and where fraternity will not need to be preached, because it will be easy and natural. Such practices are so vastly different from the actual order of things that they seem chimeric to many]

Similar to her characters Suzanne and Aline-Ali, André Léo sees education as a key component in transforming the sexist and unequal social order. André Léo identifies primary school as the place where children start being conditioned to fulfill their social roles. Education and instruction become obvious places to start implementing the notion of equality among the genders and classes. André Léo therefore notes the necessity of incorporating the republican values of liberty, equality, and fraternity into schooling since students will grow up to be citizens of the new society. I highlight the mention of an assumed fraternity in children's education—André Léo says fraternity will come so naturally that it will not have to be preached—since this relates to Aline-Ali's quest to gain access to the fraternal bond. If children learn from a young age that everyone, regardless of sex, gender, and class, is equal, then no one will be excluded from the fraternal bond. In fact, the bond would cease being fraternal (perhaps it would be replaced by a maternal love as discussed in Chapter Two?). André Léo “milite donc bien pour une école réellement populaire qui ne soit pas une machine à exclusion, et elle doute à ce sujet de l'honnêteté de certains républicains” (Dalotel 36) [therefore fights for a school truly for the people, a school that is not a means of exclusion, and she doubts certain republicans' integrity on this subject]. Indeed, just as Dalotel acknowledges André Léo's suspicion that not everyone in belonging to one political party aspires to the same political goal, her quest for a new school is

“quasi ‘utopique’” (Dalotel 34) [quasi “utopic”]. André Léo’s utopic vision stems from her yearning for a socialist society, which leads her to join the socialist party.

André Léo believes that a social restructuring provides the only way individuals can achieve liberty and equality. “Il ne s’agissait que de retourner la société! Œuvre immense! [...] Car il faut pour cela retourner aussi l’enfant, l’éducation, la femme, l’homme, les institutions, tout!” (André Léo, *Coupons* 46) [It only had to do with overturning society! Immense work! Since in order to do so we need to also transform children, education, woman, man, institutions, everything!] She maintains that the people of France “ne pourra s’entendre qu’en se groupant en de grandes familles, ou petites communes, qu’il gouvernera par lui-même [...] après avoir aboli les monstres qui ont jusqu’ici dévoré l’humanité: l’*autorité* et la *guerre*; et jouissant de la vie, dans la paix et la liberté” (*Coupons* 14-15, emphasis in original) [will not be able to get along unless they group themselves in large families, or small communes, that they govern themselves after having abolished the monsters who have until now devoured humanity: *authority* and *war*; and they will enjoy life, in peace and liberty]. Following her convictions, André Léo enters the socialist party after 1865 (Dalotel 37) and she devotes “toutes ses forces de romancière et de journaliste au socialisme” (L’Association André Léo 4) [all her energy as a novelist and journalist to socialism]. On February 27, 1869, the Swiss newspaper *L’Égalité* labels André Léo “[u]n des premiers écrivains socialistes de France” [one of the most prominent socialist writers of France] and is proud to announce her as one of the newspaper’s new collaborators (L’Association André Léo 13). A few days later, in the March 2, 1869 edition of *L’Égalité*, André Léo writes: “La justice, en un mot, n’a qu’une base, qu’une définition: l’égalité” (L’Association André Léo 19) [justice, in one word, has but one basis, but one definition:

equality]. Social justice, according to André Léo, thus involves achieving equality for everyone, regardless of class and gender. She fights against the power of Napoleon III and becomes an active member of the Paris Commune of 1871, “où elle milita en faveur d’une démocratie auto-autoritaire” (L’Association André Léo 4) [where she fights in favor of a self-governed democracy]. Furthermore, André Léo’s speech “La Guerre sociale” [The Social War] is perhaps “la première grande défense publique de la Commune par un de ses membres” (L’Association André Léo 51) [the first major public defense of the Commune by one of its members]. André Léo uses her words as a tool for promoting, and defending, her political beliefs.

It comes as no surprise that writing, in André Léo’s view, is linked to social justice. In *La Guerre sociale*, she condemns the “bourgeoisie libérale” (L’Association André Léo 60) [liberal bourgeoisie] for turning a blind eye to the atrocities the government commits against the Commune. André Léo writes: “La bourgeoisie a la plume, la parole, l’influence. Elle pouvait se faire l’organe des revendications du peuple égorgé, opprimé, vaincu. Elle n’eût été en cela que l’organe de la justice” (L’Association André Léo 60) [The bourgeoisie has the pen, the word, the influence. It could have made itself the organ of the claims of the people, slaughtered, oppressed, vanquished. By doing so, it would have been nothing more than the organ of justice]. Unlike other members of the bourgeoisie, André Léo uses her power and her journalistic talents to speak up on behalf of the Commune and social justice.

André Léo staunchly supports the Paris Commune in part because she believes it provides the opportunity to realize her dream of establishing the new school mentioned earlier. “Avec la Commune, André Léo essaya de mettre en place une véritable ‘réforme’ avec ce type d’écoles, saisissant l’opportunité de cette séparation de l’Église et de l’État de 1871” (Dalotel 35)

[With the Commune, André Léo tried to put in place a real “reform” with this type of schools, seizing the opportunity of this 1871 separation of Church and State]. In addition to advocating equal education for both genders, André Léo takes a particular interest in promoting the educational rights of the “paysannerie” (L’Association André Léo 4) [rural farm workers] since children of the lower classes attended, at most, elementary school (R. Rogers 3). In her 1871 manifesto *Au Travailleur des campagnes*, André Léo writes: “Paris [la Commune] veut que le fils du paysan soit aussi instruit que le fils du riche” (L’Association André Léo 31) [Paris (the Commune) wants the son of the peasant to be as educated as the son of the wealthy man]. By addressing the country laborer directly, André Léo attempts to garner his support for the Commune and uses educational equality as a main piece of her persuasion.

Even though the Paris Commune does indeed champion class equality, gender inequality persists. André Léo heavily critiques socialists for adhering to the particular social order that fixes “la femme au foyer. Et sur ce point, le mouvement socialiste français [...] rest[e] très discret” (L’Association André Léo 5) [woman to the home. And on this point, the French socialist movement remains very discreet]. The movement refuses to address gender inequality and remains complacent in perpetuating sexist ideology. In *La Révolution sans la femme* (May 18, 1871), André Léo brings to her readers’ attention women’s crucial involvement in establishing the Paris Commune.<sup>65</sup> Directly addressing one of the Commune leaders, André Léo

<sup>65</sup> Women, Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray writes in his 1876 history of the Commune, “were the first to act [...] They surrounded the mitrailleuses, apostrophised the sergeant in command of the gun, saying, ‘This is shameful; what are you doing there?’” (79). Communarde Louise Michel also writes that it was not “la mort qui nous attendait sur les buttes où déjà pourtant l’armée attelait les canons [...] mais la surprise d’une victoire populaire. Entre nous et l’armée, les femmes se jettent sur les canons [...] les soldats restent immobiles” (*La Commune* 164) [death that waited for us on the hills where the army was already harnessing the cannons but rather the surprise of a

asks: “Savez-vous, général Dombrowski, comment s’est faite la révolution du 18 mars? Par les femmes” (L’Association André Léo 47) [Do you know, general Dombrowski, how the revolution of March 18 was done? By women]. After all, women were the ones convincing the soldiers to put down their weapons and join the people’s cause. Rather than appreciating the women’s effort, many men in the party have only, explains André Léo, “détrôné l’Empereur et le bon Dieu [...] pour se mettre à leur place. Et naturellement, dans cette intention, il leur faut des sujets, ou tout au moins des sujettes” (L’Association André Léo 49, ellipses in original) [dethroned the Emperor and the good Lord to put themselves in their place. And naturally, in this intention, they need subjects, or at least female subjects]. André Léo thus employs the same logic used by her character Suzanne when condemning the husband-master’s control over his wife-subject. Having demonstrated women’s involvement in the Commune, André Léo asks the general and, by extension, the reader, to recognize that the Revolution “est la liberté et la responsabilité de toute créature humaine, sans autre limite que le droit commun, sans aucun privilège de [...] sexe” (L’Association André Léo 50) [is liberty and the responsibility of all human creature, without limits other than common rights, without any privilege of sex]. André Léo therefore argues for the recognition that women already are involved in the social movement and that they need to be fully included as the Revolution moves forward.

Indeed, according to André Léo, political success cannot be achieved without the help of women. Just as women have already fought for the cause, they must be welcomed to fight alongside the communards. In *Toutes avec tous* (April 21, 1871), André Léo calls to her readers’ attention that women are needed in this fight since “la démocratie ne triomphera qu’avec elles”

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working-class victory. Between the army and us, women throw themselves on the cannons; the soldiers remain motionless].

(L'Association André Léo 37) [democracy will only triumph with them]. Working together is the only way to ensure the establishment of a true democracy filled with equal citizens. André Léo concludes *Toutes avec tous* with the following assertion:

Quand les filles, les femmes, les mères combattront à côté de leurs fils, de leurs maris, de leurs pères, Paris n'aura plus la passion de la liberté, il en aura le délire. Et ces soldats, ébranlés déjà, [...] seront bien forcés de reconnaître que ce qu'ils ont en face d'eux n'est pas un parti de factieux, mais un peuple entier, dont la conscience, soulevée contre une impression ignoble, crie par la voix de ses femmes aussi bien que de ses hommes, mort ou liberté, et dont les enfants, nés de parents animés d'un tel amour, grandiraient pour la vengeance. (L'Association André Léo 38) [When girls, women, and mothers will fight alongside their sons, husbands, and fathers, Paris will no longer be passionate for freedom, it will be delirious for freedom. And these soldiers, already shaken, will be forced to recognize that those who are in front of them are not a dissenting party, but a whole people, whose conscience, raised up against a disgusting impression, cries, with the voices of its women as well as its men, "death or liberty," and whose children, born of parents animated with such a love, would grow up seeking vengeance]

André Léo highlights the need to come together as a united front, as a whole people. Gender can no longer be a divisive factor and revolutionary men must not, according to André Léo, deny their feminine counterparts the opportunity to participate in the fight for social equality. Gender



inequality will only inhibit democratic progress. Referring to history as a guide, she ends *La Révolution sans la femme* with these final words:

On pourrait [...] écrire l’histoire depuis 89, sous ce titre: *Histoire des inconséquences du parti révolutionnaire*. —La question des femmes en ferait le plus gros chapitre, et l’on y verrait comment ce parti trouva moyen de faire passer du côté de l’ennemi la moitié de ses troupes, qui ne demandait qu’à marcher et à combattre avec lui. (L’Association André Léo 50) [One could write history since 1789 under this title: *History of the Revolutionary Party’s Inconsistencies*. —The question of women would constitute its largest chapter, and one would see how this party found a way to make an enemy of half of its troops who wanted only to walk and fight with them]

The Commune appears poised to commit this same grave error by reproducing the same exclusionary tactics based on gender. If society is to advance—if the Revolution is to succeed—all forms of discrimination and exclusion must be abolished, not just that of class. After all, the Revolution “dit: *tous les humains!*” (André Léo, *Coupons* 41) [says: *all humans!*]

By citing various traditionally feminine identities such as wives and mothers in *Toutes avec tous*, André Léo clearly argues that the social group “woman” can fight for social and political change in addition to fulfilling more conventional roles. For instance, André Léo, an activist and mother, demonstrates her ability to promote socialism through her writing. Did her career then come at the detriment of André Léo’s maternal duties, as we saw several critics suggest earlier? Dalotel notes that, after her husband Pierre Grégoire Champseix’s death in 1863, André Léo’s sons were “séparés et confiés à des mères adoptives pour permettre à la vraie mère

soit de gagner ‘leurs vies’ en écrivant, soit de poursuivre sa ‘carrière’ d’écrivain” (29) [separated and entrusted to adoptive mothers in order to allow their biological mother either to make their living by writing, or to pursue her “career” as a writer]. Regardless of her reasons for doing so, André Léo fulfills her parental duties by providing for her family. Furthermore, I highlight the intimate link between writing and education that Dalotel makes apparent when discussing how André Léo and her sons kept in constant contact through correspondence (29). Serving as an important component of her twins’ upbringing, “ces lettres apparaissent comme de véritables leçons de morale” (Dalotel 29) [these letters appear as true moral lessons]. Socialist lessons permeate their correspondence, as shown in André Léo’s reminder that “[t]out ce que nous partageons avec les autres est plus doux” (Dalotel 31) [all that we share with others is sweeter]. Interestingly, Dalotel remarks that with her sons, André Léo “ne leur a guère parlé de la question des sexes. [...] Elle était plus Léodile—‘L’ comme elle signait—que ‘maman’. Avant d’être mère elle voulait être un individu, une personne” (31) [spoke very little to them about the question of the sexes. She was more Léodile—“L” as she signed—than “Mother.” Before being a mother she wanted to be an individual, a person]. Rather than addressing gender inequality overtly with her sons, André Léo leads by example. She expects her sons to treat her as a person to be respected rather than as a feminine ideal to be glorified. We see more of this sentiment in Chapter Four.

Further, André Léo’s journalism and novels, while allowing her to support herself and her family, also educate her sons and her readers. If, “[s]elon André Léo, l’éducation comprend le développement de certaines qualités morales par la volonté—se rendre digne—et l’instruction ou la connaissance” (Dalotel 30) [according to André Léo, education entails the development of

certain moral qualities by will—making oneself worthy—and instruction or knowledge], then her letters and her texts serve as sources of instruction and knowledge. Dalotel notes that André Léo does not confuse work with pleasure and “ici on se pose la question de savoir si elle-même prenait du plaisir à ‘faire’ quelque chose, écrire notamment. On a envie de répondre non. Ses motivations sont ailleurs” (Dalotel 30) [here one wonders if she took pleasure in “doing” something, notably writing. One wants to respond no. Her motivations are elsewhere]. While I do wish to linger on the question of whether or not André Léo enjoyed writing—who but she can say definitively?—I do agree with Dalotel’s assessment that André Léo’s motivations lie elsewhere, namely in the hopefulness that her written work will be used as an educational tool to promote class and gender equality.

In conclusion, the sartorial choices of George Sand and Rachilde reflect larger social critiques of inequality between men and women. By donning pants (or at least claiming to, as is possibly the case with Rachilde) and by taking masculine pennames, they expand the categories of both man and woman, blending and deconstructing the differences between the two social categories. While not fully excluding themselves from the category of “woman,” George Sand and Rachilde also situate themselves in the category of “man,” suggesting, as we saw in Chapter One, that these identities are not fixed or determined by sex. They too can engage in supposedly masculine activities such as fencing and writing. By picking up their pens, George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde expand the stereotyped category of *écrivain* [male writer], contributing to the tradition of women writers whose quality of work rivaled that of contemporary male writers. Perhaps most importantly, the very act of writing for these authors, including Cuisin, is itself a form of activism; it is a way to bring about a new society and propose a new socio-political

order. While Cuisin's improved society—one that lacks overt prostitution and is free from tyrant's rule—may not be as radical as that proposed by, for instance, André Léo, I maintain that he nevertheless hopes his work will affect some degree of social change. This theme continues in Chapter Four, where I argue that socially-engaged novels constitute one of the major components of *pratiques d'écriture transgenre*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Pratiques d'Écriture Transgenre*

Before embarking on the fourth chapter of my dissertation, I would like to review the components that have led to this final section. I have examined how the gender non-conforming protagonists of my corpus have upended the idea that one's body holds an inherent truth based upon the idea of corresponding sex and gender identities. I have argued that these characters promote, for the most part, a rejection of the sex and gender binaries and, most importantly, offer examples for how one can escape the confines of cis-gendernormativity, existing beyond the sex/gender binaries. Chapter One focused on the individual protagonists and their bodies, while Chapter Two examined the power dynamics among characters involved in both amorous and platonic relationships. In these chapters, the characters and their relationships illustrated how traditional heterogender rapports promote masculine superiority while harming women. Chapter Three looked at transgender practices of George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde and how these acts critique women's place in society. All of the chapters focused on how these individual, relational, and social factors that question gender norms interact on a textual level through what I call *pratiques d'écriture transgenre*. The analyses of the previous chapters do indeed highlight literary techniques that can be understood as transgender writing practices and the present chapter will show *why* these techniques can be viewed as such. It will also introduce three more components of transgender writing practices thus far unexamined.

As noted in the Introduction, *pratiques d'écriture transgenre* are a theoretical framework that transforms the visual, behavioral, and mental aspects of gender fluidity and gender non-conformity into written language. Transgender writing practices are a useful vehicle for

constructing literary representations of gender-fluid identities and experiences that are most often communicated to the public in the “real world” via sartorial and physical choices. Referring to *Monsieur Vénus*, Christine Bard acknowledges that “le travestissement vestimentaire est aussi linguistique” (*Une Histoire politique du pantalon* 176) [the transvestism is also linguistic]. As seen in previous chapters, the fact that the French language has gender built into its very linguistic and grammatical structures underscores the connection between language and gender, which includes both gender presentation and gender assignment. In this chapter, I emphasize the deep-seated link between gender and language by arguing that the authors create their texts that privilege gender non-conforming characters through transgender writing practices.

Here I must pay homage to *écriture féminine*, a poetic and theoretical concept that looks to identify a way of writing outside the phallogocentric tradition. Hélène Cixous’ imagining of an *écriture féminine* “strive[s] in the direction of difference, struggle[s] to undermine the dominant phallogocentric logic, split[s] open the closure of the binary opposition and revel[s] in the pleasures of open-ended textuality” (Moi 108). According to Cixous, it would be “[i]mpossible de définir une pratique féminine de l’écriture, [...] Mais elle excédera toujours le discours que régit le système phallogocentrique” (“Le Rire de la Méduse” 45) [impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, but it will always surpass/infuriate the discourse that the phallogocentric system controls]. In addition, Cixous insists upon the connection between the body of a written work and the body of the female writer. She exclaims: “Écris! L’écriture est pour toi, tu es pour toi, ton corps est à toi, prends-le” (“Le Rire de la Méduse” 40) [Write! Writing is for you, you are for you, your body is yours, take it]. In other words, a woman’s corpus and *corps* [body] parallel each other since, according to Cixous, women were denied control over each.

In the spirit of *écriture féminine*, I draw a direct link between the transgender body and the body of the text. Each is shaped through the specificity of transgender writing practices. Indeed, *pratiques d'écriture transgenre* privilege and enable the creation of non-normative identities that complicate traditional archetypes of masculinity and femininity. Through their poetics and content, *Clémentine*, *Gabriel*, and *Aline-Ali* dismantle the gender binary while *Monsieur Vénus* flips it. Chapter One showed the way in which language establishes how other characters (and the narrator) view the protagonists in addition to how the protagonists see themselves. The protagonists' own thoughts, speech, and written correspondence shape their gender identity, thereby removing emphasis usually placed on the biological body in determining gender. For instance, Clémentina clearly writes herself as a woman, using feminine adjectives even when she presents as a man. Aline-Ali reminds Paul that s.he is still his “frère, [s]on ami” (268) [brother, his male friend], and Raoule asserts h.er masculinity in part through language—“Je suis *jaloux!*” (Rachilde 84, emphasis in original) [I am a *jealous man!*] Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule show that a supposedly female-bodied individual can exert masculinity and be accepted as someone belonging to the social category of man. Clémentina illustrates the possibility of sex and gender fluidity. In these literary instances, the characters' transgender acts and identities are established through the linguistic crossing of gender, or, more specifically, through what I call one example of the authors' transgender writing practices.

The importance in accepting physical bodies as unsexed and ungendered becomes clear when the protagonists' bodies are confronted with other discursive attempts to mark and categorize them. After all, secondary characters call the protagonists certain names and these labels are often a direct affront to the protagonists' own effort to present a self-determined,

gender non-conforming identity. For instance, some characters address Clémentina as *Monsieur* despite the fact that she presents as a woman at the time of the name-calling. Themselves a significant component of transgender writing practices, gendered nouns and titles used by both the protagonists and other characters contribute to the former's oftentimes contradictory and constantly evolving gender and bodily construction, thereby creating tension between the supposedly naturally sexed body and the gender-fluid body. Ellipses and the absence of labels also contribute to the open-endedness of the linguistically constructed body. With help from the narrative, the reader can fill in the gaps left by the ambiguity and fluidity of these poetic devices, or of these *pratiques d'écriture transgenre*, that ultimately privilege the physical body as a gender neutral canvas to be created as the person it belongs to sees fit.

In Chapter Two, I showed how the authors upset heteronormative notions of romantic and platonic relationships. Instead of advocating love, they use rhetoric of friendship and brotherhood to rework the dynamic between the social categories "man" and "woman." By naming the participants *amis* [male friends] and *frères* [brothers] and the relationships *amitié* [friendship] and *fraternité* [fraternity], the authors appropriate terms previously assigned to rapports among equals. If cross-dressing, that is, the act of dressing in clothing perceived to belong to someone of the opposite sex and gender, is a transgender practice, then a socially-assigned female individual assuming the status of *ami* or *frère* would also qualify as a transgender practice. The authors indicate the relationship transformations linguistically, through the label of *frère* for instance, thereby indicating the crossing from *amour* [love] to *fraternité* [fraternity].



Chapter Two also centered on the queer rapports of the protagonists and how their bonds upset heteronormative dynamics. In this instance, irony and contradiction, dialogue and correspondence, and names and labels serve as tools for the novels' rewriting of traditional gender relationships. In particular, descriptive nouns such as *ami*, *amie* [female friend], *frère*, and *sœur* [sister] establish either equality or inequality. In most cases, the protagonists enter the discursive world of brotherhood and attempt to maintain their newly found masculine privilege by asserting their right to be respected and treated as equals. Building upon Eve Sedgwick's observation that "the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms [...] other languages and relations" (3), I suggested in Chapter Two that using gender non-conforming language (such calling a female-bodied character *ami*) to describe the characters' (queer) relationships transforms our own understanding of human dynamics, romantic and otherwise. As we have seen, the manipulation of traditionally gendered language through unconventional gender assignments is a key component of *pratiques d'écriture transgenre*.

There are three other aspects of transgender writing practices, as they relate to my specific corpus, that I have not yet explored: using fiction writing to condemn traditional gender roles, utilizing character motivation to create queer texts, and crossing literary genres to construct transgeneric texts. The linguistic elements, the structural form, and the queer missions of the novels in my corpus weave together, constructing a framework of *pratiques d'écriture transgenre* that can then be applied to other literary works. Part one of this chapter focuses on the broader issue of how literature can make a powerful social statement while part two performs a close reading of the individual novels, which I suggest are queer texts that disrupt the status quo

of gender norms. The last section, part three, shows how some of the novels in my corpus cross and mix literary genres, thereby becoming transgeneric texts.

## Part One

### Writing *Romans Engagés* [Engaged Novels] as the “Act” in Activism

As discussed in Chapter Three, despite the fact that André Léo made a name for herself in journalism, many female authors found fiction writing an easier field to infiltrate. Planté notes that literary genres associated with the public sphere were essentially off limits to women; these included “religion, histoire, politique, tragédie, épopée, genres poétiques élevés [... et] aussi le théâtre, genre public par excellence” (*La Petite sœur* 228-229) [religion, history, politics, tragedy, epics, elevated poetic genres, and also theater, public genre *par excellence*]. Female authors were thus left with few options. According to Saint Simonian Émile Barrault, “l’œuvre de la femme, c’est le Roman; c’est là son épopée, son drame” (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 231) [the work of woman, is the Novel; that is her epic, her drama]. While fiction might have been broadly characterized as a feminine genre, explains Planté, there was nevertheless a hierarchical difference between *romancières* [female novelists] and *romanciers* [male novelists]. (Male) critics believed that the *romancière* did not create art and thus did not compare to great male novelists such as Balzac and Zola (Planté, *La Petite sœur* 231-232). Nevertheless, these female writers were more accepted and better tolerated than women who attempted to participate in political discourse. Literature therefore was a more accessible way for women to commit acts of social rebellion with which other women readers could engage.

Representing human existence through fiction can itself be considered a form of activism since a novel has the ability to critique the social conditions at the specific point in time in which

the author writes. George Sand, in the preface to the 1832 edition of *Indiana*, declares:

“L’écrivain n’est qu’un miroir qui [...] reflète [les inégalités], une machine qui les décalque, et qui n’a rien à se faire pardonner si ses empreintes sont exactes, si son reflet est fidèle” (37) [The writer is but a mirror that reflects inequalities, a machine that traces (but also combats) inequalities, and, if the prints are exact and if the reflection is faithful, the writer has no need to ask forgiveness]. Of course, the very act of writing reveals that the writer is not merely a passive mirror that simply reflects reality. Rather, she is an active subject who chooses to represent the world as she sees it while, in these instances, challenging its discriminations. Novels belonging to the realist vein can therefore depict, or reflect as George Sand puts it, injustices faced by specific populations and individuals. I do not believe that this trait is limited to novels grounded in realism. For instance, utopic texts ask readers, implicitly or explicitly, to compare their own reality to the imaginary world realized in the novel. How can social and political conditions be improved for groups of people? For individuals? Writing engaged literature is an important element of transgender writing practices, where the fictional text in question upends and challenges the idea that one’s sex and gender are fixed and unchanging and that they determine one’s value as both a human being and a member of society.

For the authors of my corpus, George Sand and André Léo in particular, socially-engaged literature becomes an invaluable way to criticize women’s subordinate position. Writing *romans engagés* [engaged novels] involves both a critical eye for social realities and the ability to tell a good story. In the preface to *Indiana*’s 1842 edition, George Sand writes passionately about “[n]’avoir] pour tout bagage littéraire et philosophique qu’un peu d’imagination, du courage et l’amour de la vérité” (43) [only having for literary and philosophical baggage a little bit of

imagination, some courage, and love of truth]. Truth and imagination are not mutually exclusive. Imagination has the power to open up creative modes of being while drawing upon actual states of existence, examining them for difficulties, and proposing possible changes to improve one's quality of life. In George Sand's case, critics claim that *Indiana* attacks the institution of marriage ("Préface de l'édition de 1842," 42) and George Sand does admit that she was motivated by "des sentiments pleins de force et de sincérité, qui débordèrent de là dans une série de romans basés à peu près tous sur la même donnée: le rapport mal établi entre les sexes, par le fait de la société" ("Préface de l'édition de 1842," 42) [sentiments full of force and sincerity, that overflowed in a series of books more or less all based on the same fact: society's poorly established rapport between the sexes]. George Sand further explains how this topic stayed with her, even after publishing *Indiana*. She writes: "Longtemps après avoir écrit la préface d'*Indiana* [...] je cherchais encore à résoudre cet insoluble problème: *le moyen de concilier le bonheur et la dignité des individus opprimés par cette même société, sans modifier la société elle-même*" ("Préface de l'édition de 1842," 44, emphasis in original) [A longtime after having written the preface to *Indiana*, I still searched to resolve this unsolvable problem: *a way to reconcile happiness and the dignity of individuals oppressed by this same society without modifying society itself*]. *Gabriel* was written during the time in which George Sand admits to writing a series of novels based on inequality between the sexes and this text also explores how to free oppressed parties without changing the social structure; as the reader finds, it is ultimately impossible for Gabriel to reconcile his happiness while living as an inferior being. Thanks to the small amount of relief he enjoys existing as a man, Gabriel experiences, however fleetingly, the possibility of equality. In the end, because society is not modified, *Gabriel* does not conclude

happily. The novel therefore calls for an overhaul of the sexist laws and institutions that structure society.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to promoting women's rights, *Gabriel* also encourages the reader to view what I call a transgender character in a new light. The text suggests that a socially assigned female-bodied individual can and should have a right to live as s.he pleases, presenting whatever gender s.he prefers. Thanks to George Sand's efforts to highlight such a character, trans visibility is central to the advocacy of *Gabriel*. Putting a gender non-conforming character in the position of power provides that individual with a platform on which to speak. George Sand further explains the author's role in privileging the marginalized:

Penché sur les victimes, et mêlant ses larmes aux leurs, se faisant leur interprète auprès de ses lecteurs, mais, comme un défenseur prudent, ne cherchant point trop à pallier la faute de ses clients, et s'adressant bien plus à la clémence des juges qu'à leur austérité, le romancier est le véritable avocat des êtres abstraits qui représentent nos passions et nos souffrances devant le tribunal de la force et le jury de l'opinion ("Préface de l'édition de 1842," 44) [Leaning over the victims, and mixing her tears with theirs, serving as interpreter to the readers, but, like a prudent defense attorney, not trying too hard to cover up the fault of her clients, and addressing the judges' clemency much more than their austerity, the novelist

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<sup>66</sup> This theme is prevalent throughout George Sand's œuvre. For instance, she explains that part of her motivation to write *Indiana* came from the "sentiment [...] profond et légitime, de l'injustice et de la barbarie des lois qui régissent encore l'existence de la femme dans le mariage, dans la famille et la société" ("Préface de l'édition de 1842," 46-47) [profound and legitimate sentiment of the injustice and of the barbarism of the laws that still regulate the existence of the woman in marriage, in the family, and in society].

is the real advocate of abstract beings who represent our passions and our sufferings in front of the tribunal of power and the jury of opinion]

In Gabriel's case, the abstract being embodies the even more abstract idea of gender fluidity. If one accepts the idea that an engaged novel is a court trial, with the character as defendant or plaintiff and the reader as a jury of peers, the novelist becomes a lawyer advocating to remedy the injustice experienced by her client who is either falsely accused of being a freakish monster (as in the case of Clémentina) or wrongfully harmed by gender norms (as with Gabriel). In these instances, the writer strives to gain the empathy of both jury and judge, and sharing stories encourages the reader to place herself in the situation of the protagonist.

According to George Sand, literature can serve as a form of education as well as a means through which to combat individual bias and prejudice, eventually contributing to the dismantlement of systemic inequalities. So explains George Sand: "Je n'avais point à faire un traité de jurisprudence, mais à guerroyer contre l'opinion; car c'est elle qui retarde ou prépare les améliorations sociales" ("Préface de l'édition de 1842," 47) [I did not have to make a treaty of jurisprudence, but rather had to war against opinion; because it is opinion that slows or facilitates social improvements]. One way to wage war against opinion is to work toward changing that opinion. For instance, Cuisin's text could cause a reader, perhaps previously of the belief that intersexuals are monsters, to look upon intersex people with empathy and compassion. Affecting each reader individually, a socially engaged novel gathers a community of readers who have the power to influence the environment in which they live.

Similar to George Sand, André Léo discusses how authors can bring injustices to light with the aim of improving society. Referring to André Léo, Dalotel writes: "Personne profonde,

c'est par la pensée ou plus exactement par la plume au service de la pensée qu'elle rejoint ceux qui critiquent alors la société établie—et ici, pour elle, la question de la femme a la priorité—et tentent de mettre en place, en particulier par la coopération les éléments d'une contre-société” (38) [Profound person, it is by thought or, more exactly, by the pen in service of thought that she joins those who critique established society—and, for her, the question of the woman takes priority—and attempt to put into place, particularly through cooperation, elements of a counter-society]. While André Léo may have seen journalism as one of the “moyens les plus efficaces de propager ses idées républicaines et socialistes” (L'Association André Léo 11) [most efficient means of disseminating her republican and socialist ideas], I add that her works of fiction also accomplish this ideological goal. Jules Vallès critiques André Léo's novels, complaining that “l'on croira entendre un avocat quand on désirait lire un romancier” (L'Association André Léo 73) [one would think he is hearing a lawyer when one would want to read a novelist], but this echoes George Sand's belief that the writer should argue for marginalized populations. As André Léo writes in her 1869 article “L'Égalité,” “[s]il était facile de transformer les esprits, les transformations sociales aussi seraient faciles, immédiates” (L'Association André Léo 22) [if it were easy to transform minds, social transformations would be easy and immediate]. Literature offers the opportunity to change the public's opinion, even if it is only one reader at a time. André Léo continues the notion that novels can encourage social progress in *La Femme et les mœurs*, published the same year as “L'Égalité:”

tout à coup le roman et l'utopie devinrent l'expression la plus accusée du mouvement intellectuel [et socialiste]; les romanciers furent les historiens de cette société trouble, mal à l'aise dans sa forme ancienne. Ils en exposèrent les plaies,

et furent mieux compris que les philosophes: parce qu'au lieu de spéculations, ils montraient des faits: la femme trompée, l'enfant sacrifiée, la misère [...] poussant au vol, au meurtre, et à la débauche [...] Aux grands cris des conservateurs, on attaqua la famille et la propriété, non pour les détruire, comme ils prétendent [...] mais comme on avait précédemment attaqué l'État, pour le transformer (42) [all of a sudden the novel and utopia became the most distinctive expression of the intellectual and socialist movement; novelists became the historians of this murky society, uneasy in its older form. They exposed its plagues and were better understood than philosophers: since, instead of speculations, they showed facts: the deceived woman, the sacrificed child, poverty pushing to steal, to murder, and to commit acts of debauchery. To the great uproar of conservatives, one attacked the family and property, not to destroy them, as they purported, but as one had previously attacked the State, to transform it]

Novelists, suggests André Léo, are able to present abstract ideas as literary fact, bringing into existence something that people otherwise turn a blind eye to or believe to be the topic of mere speculation. Furthermore, André Léo maintains that, by highlighting social injustices such as the family structure and women's place within it, novelists can transform the system. Through their writing, George Sand and André Léo shed light on the inequality facing women, advocating for their plaintiffs' rights.

Cuisin expresses similar viewpoints concerning literature's influential role in society.

Chapter Three showed how Cuisin uses nonfiction to engage his readers in both cultural



practices and political issues, and his preface to *Clémentine* demonstrates the same social consciousness. In it, he writes:

quelle sera donc, se demande-t-on encore, la situation d'un androgyne dans l'état civil ou religieux ? ... cet être douteux qui souvent éprouve dans la même seconde les sensations comme femme et l'outrage comme homme! Dans un cas criminel, comment sera-t-il ou *sera-t-elle* placée sous l'égide des lois? *est-il* ou *est-elle* exclue de la société, pour y avoir apporté une impudique surabondance? ... Toutes ces importantes questions, essayons de les faire marcher de front avec la partie historique de ces *Mémoires*, et nous efforçant de mêler adroitement le charme de la philosophie avec l'intérêt des incidens [sic] vraiment extraordinaires qui y abondent, tâchons d'offrir une lecture qui fasse du moins applaudir à nos efforts, si malheureusement ils ne sont pas couronnés d'un plein succès (xiv-xv, emphasis and ellipses in original) [what will therefore be, one asks himself again, the situation of an *androgyne* in the civil or religious state? ...this improbable being who often experiences in the same second sensations as a woman and outrage as a man! In a criminal case, how will he be or how *will she be* placed under the aegis of the laws? Is *he* or is *she* excluded from society, for having brought to it an indecent overabundance? ...Let us try to make all of these important questions work directly with the historic element of these *Mémoires*, and try to make us adeptly mix the charm of philosophy with the interest of these extraordinary incidents that abound, let us try to offer a reading that at least applauds our efforts if they are sadly not crowned with full success]

Before diving into a deeper examination of Cuisin's quote, I first point to his use of the feminine adjectives *placée* and *exclue*. In this instance, although Cuisin's subject is the neutral *androgyne*, the subject takes feminine adjectives, similar to Clémentina.<sup>67</sup> The reader can substitute Clémentina for the otherwise generic and hypothetical *androgyne* evoked by Cuisin. Further, Cuisin's question regarding the *androgyne*'s situation in society links his literary work, a product of his imagination, to the real world: how would a living, breathing Clémentina navigate her place in society, and how would the legal realm and public life affect and determine her fate? Cuisin reminds his reader not to relegate the intersex protagonist to an imaginary realm, but instead to consider her a person the reader could encounter on the streets. Cuisin's words place Clémentina in the social context and, significantly, situate literature as a medium that engages with other forms of social discourse instead of being an isolated art form.

Rachilde's motive in writing *Monsieur Vénus*, according to Gantz, is to provoke and disrupt (Gantz 115). Rachilde's apparent desire to disturb can be linked to the intention to upset and change the status quo. Consequently, it corresponds to the belief of George Sand, Léo, and Cuisin that literature can help transform society while also interacting with other forms of discourse that influence how people understand the human condition. Maurice Barrès, in his preface to the 1889 edition of *Monsieur Vénus*, "Complications d'amour," notes that Rachilde "écrit des pages sincères, uniquement pour exciter et aviver ses frissons. Son livre n'est qu'un

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<sup>67</sup> Eliane Viennot explains how, prior to the seventeenth century, one had the option of making agreement with whichever noun (masculine or feminine, singular or plural) was closest to the adjective or past participle; the masculine did not necessarily dominate. The rule that states that when you have two nouns, one masculine and one feminine, the agreement follows the masculine would have been well in place by the time Cuisin was writing. However, there is always the possibility that he models his writing after older styles, as was sometimes the case in the nineteenth century (Viennot).

prolongement de sa vie. Pour les écrivains de cet ordre, le roman n'est qu'un moyen de manifester des sentiments que l'ordinaire de la vie les oblige à refréner, ou au moins à ne pas divulguer" (17) [writes sincere pages solely for exciting and arousing her goosebumps. Her book is strictly an extension of her life. For writers of this order, the novel is solely a way to manifest sentiments that ordinary life compels them to restrain, or at least not to divulge]. According to Barrès, fiction writing allows Rachilde to express her own unseemly feelings that would repulse "ordinary" people; however, the fact that Rachilde's text is published indicates that others will participate in her scandalous fantasies. Barrès suggests that the moral of the story, or, rather, the after-effects of Rachilde's tale, is that certain readers will wish to be unsexed in order to avoid the downfall of each sex: "[o]n verrait, avec effroi, quelques-uns arriver au dégoût de la grâce féminine, en même temps que *Monsieur Vénus* proclame la haine de la force mâle. Complication de grande conséquence! le dégoût de la femme! la haine de la force mâle! Voici que certains cerveaux rêvent d'un être insexué" (Barrès 19) [one would see, with terror, some coming to be disgusted by feminine grace at the same time that *Monsieur Vénus* proclaims the hatred of male strength. A complication with huge consequences! Disgust of woman! Hatred of male strength! Here certain brains dream of being an unsexed being]. Indeed, Rachilde pushes against the tide of social norms and acceptable social behavior to express what other people would shun. Her writing therefore has the power to both shock the readers who subscribe to social etiquette and to challenge the norms themselves.

Finally, while Barrès indicates that *Monsieur Vénus* may very well be an extension of Rachilde's own life, he also suggests that if it were a dream, "[ce rêve] témoignerait un état d'âme très particulier. [...] [C]es rêves-là sont extrêmement puissants. La femme qui rêve, qui

pleure, qui conte un amour qu'elle désirait avoir, ne tarde pas à le créer" (Barrès 17) [this dream would bear witness to a very particular state of the soul. These dreams are extremely powerful. The woman who dreams, who cries, who recounts a love that she would desire to have, does not hesitate to create it]. Barrès thus does not discount the powerful influence of the imagination in creating texts that ultimately disrupt social mores. Bollhalder Mayer, referring to Rachilde's destruction of love in *Monsieur Vénus*, points out that the text's undoing of social constructions "signifie non seulement la fin du sexe mais aussi, selon l'expression utilisée par Rachilde dans *La Marquise de Sade*, 'ce que les philosophes du siècle appellent la *décadence*, la fin de tout'" (96, emphasis in original) [signifies not only the end of sex but also, according to the expression used by Rachilde in *La Marquise de Sade*, "what the philosophers of the century call *decadence*, the end of everything"]. The act of writing therefore can undo existing social structures, essentially bringing to an end everything that people previously took for granted.

Each novel in my corpus recognizes the humanity of the protagonists as they incorporate transgender practices into their everyday lives. Having demonstrated the unjust treatment of these literary individuals, the authors put forth, through their writing, a call to change how gender expectations negatively impact people's lives. Literature therefore remains an important tool in bringing about social transformation. In *La Littérature en péril*, Tzvetan Todorov praises literature's value:

La littérature peut beaucoup. Elle peut nous tendre la main quand nous sommes profondément déprimés, nous conduire vers les autres êtres humains autour de nous, nous faire mieux comprendre le monde et nous aider à vivre. Ce n'est pas qu'elle soit, avant tout, une technique de soins de l'âme; toutefois, révélation du

monde, elle peut aussi [...] transformer chacun de nous de l'intérieur" (72)  
 [Literature can do a lot. It can extend a hand when we are profoundly depressed,  
 lead us toward the other human beings around us, make us better understand the  
 world and help us live. It is not that literature is, before everything, a way to  
 soothe the soul; however, revelation of the world, it can also transform each one  
 of us from the interior]

As mentioned earlier, influencing readers' opinions is deemed to have a profound effect on the evolution of society as a whole. Directly referencing George Sand, Todorov explains that she believed that "[l]e but de la littérature est de représenter l'existence humaine" (82) [the goal of literature is to represent the human existence]. By representing the human experiences of gender non-conforming individuals, the novels of my corpus can engender a recognition that validates powerful emotions in the reader, perhaps ultimately challenging his or her preconceived notions. As we see in the next section, the characters attempt to combat other producers of gender and sex knowledge by rendering the literary texts queer thanks to their own transgender acts.

## **Part Two**

### **The Novels as Queer Texts**

As Chapter Two explained, the term "queer" indicates fluid, non-binary states of gender and/or sexual orientation. In this sense, queering the heteronormative couple that I referred to in this chapter's introduction simply means disassociating desire from the idea that opposite genders attract each other—that masculine attracts feminine and vice versa. Similarly, a queer text exhibits a "literary mission meant to disrupt, to challenge, to provoke" (Gantz 115). The novels in my corpus become queer texts thanks to the protagonists' transgender practices that

disrupt the heteronormativity of their literary world. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner posit that queerness is “more about an individual’s *intended* trajectory than the path one leaves behind, more about one’s *motivations* than one’s particular essence or history” (Gantz 115, emphasis mine). Part one showed that the authors of my corpus consider fiction capable of leading to social change and this section explores how outside forces such as medical physicians and sexist conditioning drive the characters to criticize gender norms within the text. Chapter One covered at length the initial reasons why Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule present themselves as either masculine or feminine. Here I first examine how outside producers of knowledge attempt to shape the perception of women and intersexuals as inferior creatures before demonstrating how the characters’ speech and actions actually combat these forms of discourse that promote gender inequality. This section also shows how the protagonists privilege literature above other producers of knowledge; indeed, many of these individuals take inspiration from literature to construct their own (literary) identities that eschew traditional gender roles.

The protagonists are no strangers to the harmful effects of sex and gender ideology as established by religion and science and disseminated through education and literature. It is no secret that Christianity, among other religions, situates woman as inferior and secondary to man, with Eve as a byproduct of Adam, and nineteenth century scientists attempted to provide evidence for woman’s inferiority. In particular, explains Planté, biologists, naturalists, and doctors advanced the idea that humanity was composed of two sub-species: men and women (*La Petite sœur* 263). “Les discours des scientifiques naturalisent la femme, la décrivent, la dissèquent, la commentent comme on le ferait d’une espèce animale, lui assignent sa place dans l’ordre des espèces, en un lieu intermédiaire entre l’homme et l’animal” (Planté, *La Petite sœur*

263) [Scientists' discourse naturalize woman, describe her, dissect her, comment on her as one would do with an animal species, assigning her a place in the order of species, in an intermediary spot between man and animal]. Non-male bodies therefore become targets for scrutiny and inspection. Clémentina criticizes the medical field's role in creating social misfits and in making a spectacle out of individuals who do not fit into normalized categories. Gabriel concerns himself with women's status in society, aiming to create a more equal and just place for them by condemning discriminatory laws that are based on, and promote, the idea that women are naturally inferior. Both Suzanne and Aline-Ali are most vocal about feminine ignorance, arguing that rather than being a natural trait of women, ignorance is a result of the inferior education provided to them. Finally, Raoule's attempt to create a new love, controlled by someone socially deemed female and weak, motivates her actions and choices. By verbally challenging various forms of discourse, the characters offer their experiences as counterpoints. Significantly, the main characters promote their own literary lives as a way to privilege new ideas and modes of being that emancipate individuals from gender norms. The protagonists' words attempt to bring justice to subjugated groups. This motivation transforms the novels into queer texts.

Clémentina finds herself the unwilling object that the medical field hopes to examine and put on display. She receives a letter from Dr. Stareindorff requesting to exhibit her on a tour throughout Europe. In perhaps the only considerate gesture of his letter, the doctor addresses Clémentina as *Mademoiselle*. His respect for her preferred gender identity does not extend to his treatment of her body, which he views as an object to be both bought and observed. The doctor writes:

Les facultés de médecine de Madrid et de Cadix, avec lesquelles je suis en correspondance, en ma qualité de membre de plusieurs Académies savantes de l'Europe, m'ayant informé que vous étiez un des *plus beaux phénomènes* que la nature ait jamais créés, j'ai l'honneur de vous offrir *cent mille francs*, sous la condition, (par contrat bien expliqué), que je pourrais vous montrer pendant un an entier en France, en Angleterre et en Russie (2: 115-116, emphasis in original)

[With the medical schools of Madrid and Cadix, with whom I am in correspondence as a member of many scholarly academies of Europe, having informed me that you were one of the *most beautiful phenomena* that nature has ever created, I have the honor of offering you *one hundred thousand francs*, under the condition, (in a well-explicated contract), that I could show you off for one full year in France, England, and Russia]

The doctor first establishes his credibility, citing his association with the academy and medical field. He makes it clear that it is these authorities that have referred him to Clémentina. The medical institution therefore assumes a rather neutral role, apparently existing as a collective entity that produces seemingly objective information to be acted upon by individuals such as the doctor.<sup>68</sup> The medical faculties appear objective since their human quality is obscured by their authoritative status. In other words, a large, powerful establishment identifies Clémentina as a

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<sup>68</sup> Donna Haraway uses the term “god trick” (581) in reference to the way in which some knowledge is produced as though it was wholly objective, outside the influence of human subjectivity. She writes that this supposedly objective gaze serves to “distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power” (581). However, as Fausto-Sterling notes, “our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place” (3).



medical abnormality to be studied and the doctor intends to examine and promote her as such. Clémentina's status as medically "other" perpetuates itself thusly.

Explaining that the rapid development of medical science was one of the most powerful tools for modern social regulation, Stryker writes that "since the end of the eighteenth century, science has gradually come to replace religion as the highest social authority; since the middle of the nineteenth century, medical science has played an increasingly central role in defining everyday life" (36). As shown in the doctor's letter, the medical field certainly attempts to define Clémentina's identity. Its labels influence both Clémentina, as the individual affected, and the rest of society in terms of how people view and interact with her. According to Stryker, there is "an extensive medical and psychological literature that treats transgender phenomena as a personal (and pathological) deviation from social norms of healthy gender expression" (2). Despite the fact that Clémentina's intersexuality is framed as natural phenomenon, the medical establishment's fascination with her magnifies her difference. Even the term "phenomena" that the doctor himself uses implies that Clémentina's physical state is extraordinary. She may be a product of nature, but she is not normal. "By helping the normal take precedence over the natural, physicians have also contributed to populational biopolitics. We have become, Foucault writes, 'a society of normalization'" (Fausto-Sterling 8). Clémentina's perceived abnormality, as identified as such by the medical world, adds to her value as a specimen fit for display.

The fascination surrounding Clémentina's body detracts value from her lived experience and situates her as an object whose worth is determined by professionals. The medical community claims to hold more authority over the production of knowledge surrounding

Clémentina's body than she does. The claim that she lacks knowledge about herself gives Clémentina the distressing impression that her agency is limited. She laments:

Je ne m'appartiens plus; je suis la propriété bizarre des savans [sic]: on va jusqu'à m'offrir un salaire pour acheter ma pudeur; et bientôt sur des tréteaux honteux, un crieur me proposera de prostituer les raretés indécentes de ma personne !!! ... Ce coup, je l'avouerai, fut le plus sanglant que j'aie jamais reçu [...] je me meurtrissais le sein, je m'arrachais les cheveux (2: 118) [I no longer belong to myself; I am the bizarre property of scientists: they go so far as to offer me a salary to buy my modesty; and soon on the shameful stage, an announcer will propose that I prostitute the indecent rarities of my person!!! ... This blow, I will admit, is the bloodiest that I have ever received. I bruised my breast, I pulled out my hair]

If Clémentina's body belongs to the *savants*, she will attempt to destroy their property in order to dissolve their influence. Her self-harm is also a way to regain control over her being. While Clémentina battles with herself and her body, her real enemy lies in the medical field that assigned her the status of other. As a result of their classification, Clémentina cannot live as an equal member of society.

The scientific and medical communities, while purporting to admire Clémentina's difference, ultimately allow others to criticize her for being supposedly abnormal. The spectacle of her non-normative body lies in its monstrosity, as we saw in Chapter One. Clémentina writes that "la communauté souffrait de [s]a présence et voulait se débarrasser du *monstre*" (1: 87, emphasis in original) [the community suffered from her presence and wanted to rid itself of the

*monster*]. As in this case, individuals bond over the menace of the “other.” The “other” is even more threatening when one cannot identify it as foreign. Indeed, the rumor circulating in Clémentina’s village after her shipwreck claims that she is “un monstre que la mer a vomit sous les traits séduisants [sic] d’une jolie femme” (1: 24) [a monster, under the seductive traits of a pretty woman, that the sea vomited]. According to the villagers, this monster poses a major security threat by being able to infiltrate their community. The parallel between monstrous predator and a foreign, unidentifiable trans or intersex body is striking, particularly in light of present-day issues that I will discuss further in the Conclusion.

Claims to Clémentina’s monstrosity resurface when she is an adult. In particular, *madame la Supérieure* receives a letter accusing her of harboring “un monstre, sous les traits d’une femme” (2: 41-42, emphasis in original) [*a monster, under the features of a woman*]. The letter continues, speaking directly to *madame la Supérieure*: “vous n’avez fait que recéler dans votre sein un serpent infernal qui, sous une double physionomie, vous perdra vous-même” (2: 42, emphasis in original) [you have harbored in your bosom an infernal serpent that, under a double physiognomy, will be your end]. While *madame la Supérieure* has treated Clémentina with friendship, her own biases concerning Clémentina’s physical state come to light. She says to her charge, “Relevez-vous, Mons... Clémentina” (2: 45, emphasis in original) [Stand up, Mons... Clémentina]. *Madame la Supérieure*’s language thus betrays her thoughts and her near slip demonstrates the pervasive nature of normalization culture. It is not entirely clear which word sat upon the tip of her tongue: *Monsieur* or *Monstre*. Each would conflict with Clémentina’s own gender presentation since Clémentina is not dressed as the handsome cavalier and, further, she does not consider herself a monster. While Clémentina does grapple with what she perceives to

be her curse, the fact that she writes herself as a human subject erases any doubt that may have entered her own mind about being a monster.<sup>69</sup>

Since monstrosity piques the interest of readers and spectators alike, Clémentina's life story can capitalize on this attention, transforming readers' morbid fascination into empathy and compassion. Stryker insists upon the importance of establishing the humanity of gender non-conforming individuals: "Because most people have great difficulty recognizing the humanity of another person if they cannot recognize that person's gender, the gender-changing person can evoke in others a primordial fear of monstrosity, or loss of humanness" (6). Clémentina has been under the watchful, curious, and dissecting eyes of doctors, who up until now have held authority over her. Writing her memoirs becomes a way for Clémentina to reclaim herself and her body. She takes control of the situation in which she was asked to sell and disseminate her body and transforms it into one where she publishes the body of her work—her memoirs—as a way to be understood by readers. Restoring her humanity is indeed one of Clémentina's aims. She explains: "[Ce] sont les vains discours qui ont mille fois frappé mon oreille, et qui m'ont peut-être déterminée, en grande partie, à donner au public, après ma mort, ces Mémoires, dans lesquels on ne saurait me refuser, je pense, les tristes honneurs d'une supériorité d'infortune" (1: 2) [It is the shallow discourse that hit my ear a thousand times and that perhaps made me determined, in large part, to give to the public, after my death, these *Mémoires*, in which one would not know how to refuse me, I think, the sad honors of superiority in misfortune]. Clémentina identifies the

<sup>69</sup> It should be noted that Clémentina compares her situation to that of a monkey—what she calls a "monstre imitateur" (1: 47) [monster imitator]—by referring to the monkey as "une *dégradation humaine*" (1: 47, emphasis in original) [*human degradation*] and to herself as a feminine degradation (1:47). Clémentina does not suggest that she is the equivalent of a monkey and therefore does not establish herself as less than human; instead, she thinks of herself as less than feminine, or as a flawed imitation of woman.

useless and harmful discourse that surrounds her being and intends for her memoirs to challenge and disrupt it. She hopes her journals will present her as a heroine suffering nobly over the unlucky circumstances of her life, dispelling any myth that she deserves to be ridiculed; if anything, she deserves to be commended for how she has dealt with her misfortune.

Additionally, this stance returns Clémentina's humanity to her since it suggests that any unlucky person could find his or herself in Clémentina's position. No longer is she automatically rendered "other" or "monster." The difference between putting her body on display and sharing her life story is that the former would have created an object out of Clémentina and the latter makes her a subject. Indeed, going on tour with the doctor would have perpetuated the belief that Clémentina's body defines her, turning her into a *monstre*, and Clémentina's life story would have been hidden under the physical spectacle of her anatomy.

In addition to her journal that serves as an antidote to the medical discourse that creates knowledge about intersex individuals, Clémentina also rebels against the medical field by refusing to adhere to the expectation that she choose between living as a man or living as a woman. Usually, the "individual him/herself shared with medical and legal experts the right to decide which sex prevailed but, once having made a choice, was expected to stick with it" (Fausto-Sterling 36). Based on Clémentina's memoirs, one can presume that her feminine gender prevails, even if only marginally so. Nevertheless, while Clémentina may choose to live the majority of her life as a woman, she also embraces a certain amount of gender fluidity. At the end of her memoir, Clémentina still periodically presents as a man. This small yet significant act of deviation rebels against medical attempts to normalize a supposedly abnormal body.

While the medical field would put Clémentina on display, the religious community would isolate her, confining her to the cloisters as we saw earlier. Clémentina therefore laments the fact that “[il n’y a] aucun lieu de la terre où [elle] puisse éviter les persécutions du sort!” (2: 118) [there is no place on Earth where she can avoid persecutions of fate!] I propose that Clémentina finds shelter neither on Earth nor in Heaven, but rather through the act of writing and in the world of literature. She explains: “en vain la religion, la morale, la pudeur, me prêtaient leur secours; je réfutais légèrement leur doctrine en homme; et brûlais en secret de succomber en femme, ou de me livrer sans remords au libertinage en libertine. L’étude me servait [...] d’un puissant auxiliaire; j’écrivais exactement le journal de ma vie.” (1: 97-98) [in vain, religion, morality, and modesty lent me their aid; I lightly refuted their doctrine as a man; and burnt in secret of succumbing as a woman, or of delivering myself without remorse to libertinism as a libertine. Studies provided me as a powerful stand-in; I was writing exactly the journal of my life]. Writing, and writing her life story, proves an important component of her self-discovery.<sup>70</sup> To aid her in her quest, Clémentina decides that the one place on Earth that might welcome her is “la France, asile des lumières et de la philosophie[. La France] sera son refuge” (2: 52) [France, sanctuary of Enlightenment thinkers and of philosophy. France will be her refuge]. Clémentina

<sup>70</sup> Even before writing her memoirs, Clémentina imagines her own life to be depicted in a novel: “je sentais confusément encore que *le roman de ma vie*, si je puis m’exprimer ainsi, n’était pas tout à fait clos” (2: 159, emphasis in original) [I vaguely still felt that the *novel of my life*, if I can express myself thusly, was not exactly closed]. Therefore, that Clémentina has the impression that her life is a book in the process of being written provides an element of hope that her story is worthy to be shared. Her life figuratively unfolds before her as a novel and her life literally becomes a story to be shared with others after her (literary) death.

believes that philosophers and libertines, as opposed to doctors and priests, will have an easier time accepting her for who, not what, she is.<sup>71</sup>

By rejecting both scientific and religious beliefs about her body, Clémentina turns to other models through which to understand her identity. Before writing the journal of her life, she first takes refuge in literature, which she finds to be both a useful diversion and a way to shape own personhood. Clémentina underscores books' educational potential:

pouvant d'ailleurs puiser dans une très-riche bibliothèque, j'avais donc eu recours à ce moyen en étudiant, dans la froideur du cabinet, les littérateurs allemands et anglais, traduits par les meilleurs auteurs français; je me plaisais à délirer avec *Corinne* (1: 55) [having access to a very rich library, I made use of it by studying, in the chilliness of the study, German and English literary texts, translated by the best French authors; I enjoyed *Corinne* to the point of delirium]<sup>72</sup>

*Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807) by Madame de Staël provides literary role models for Clémentina to follow and she compares her own impossible relationship with Saint-Elme to that of Corinne and Oswald: “[Saint-Elme] était pour moi ce qu'Oswald était pour Corinne” (2: 86) [Saint-Elme was for me what Oswald was for Corinne]. Here, Clémentina identifies with Corinne, a figure that also bends gender expectations by being a female genius. Clémentina's fictional role model is therefore anything but stereotypically feminine. Strikingly, when she presents as a man, Clémentina imagines herself to be practically a parody of masculinity: “je vis que mon tour était

<sup>71</sup> As Italian feminist Adriana Cavarero emphasizes, each person is unique and thus there is no universal identity (92); she also argues that a discourse of the “who” would focus on the life story of an individual.

<sup>72</sup> The sentence could also be understood as “I enjoyed going crazy with *Corinne*.” In either case, Clémentina's pleasure in reading *Corinne* is evident.

d'entrer en scène, un pistolet à la main, l'épée de l'autre, je me précipitai dans l'appartement d'une marche fanfaronne et furieuse, et telle à peu près que le plus illustre des chevaliers errans [sic] de la Manche attaqua des moulins à vent" (2: 76) [I saw that it was my turn to enter the scene, pistol in one hand, sword in the other, and I dashed into the apartment with a boastful and furious step, close to that of the most illustrious of wandering knights of the Manche, attacking windmills]. While Clémentina's female role model, Corinne, symbolizes a more complex blend of masculine and feminine characteristics, thereby providing depth to someone deemed "woman," Clémentina's male model reproduces hyper-masculine notions of what constitutes a man: brave, adventurous, armed. Significantly, however, it is difficult not to draw parallels between Don Quixote's illusions and the fantasy of a particular masculinity inherent to all men. In other word, her masculine role model suggests that Clémentina presents as a man by attempting to replicate a certain manliness that ultimately is not based on any ordinary gender and instead parodies the very idea of one (Butler 175). Even so, the fact that Clémentina does indeed perform both masculinity and femininity throughout her life indicates that she finds a way to express a variety of gender identities, however hyperbolic, or not, they may be.

Gabriel's masculinity, like that of Clémentina, often draws upon over-exaggerated notions of manhood. Indeed, the young prince was conditioned to be so masculine as to, one assumes, destroy any indication of his supposedly biological femaleness. Gabriel's upbringing therefore establishes the idea of feminine inferiority, a bias Gabriel later contests. His tutor explains to Gabriel's grandfather:

Dès sa plus tendre enfance [...] [Gabriel] a été pénétré de la grandeur du rôle masculin, et de l'abjection du rôle féminin dans la nature et dans la société. [...



P]artout la femme esclave, propriété, conquête, n'essayant de secouer ses fers que pour encourir une peine plus rude encore, et ne réussissant à les briser que par le mensonge, la trahison, les crimes lâches et inutiles (13-14) [From his most tender childhood, Gabriel was penetrated by the grandeur of the masculine role and of the abjection of the feminine role in nature and in society. Everywhere the enslaved woman, property, conquest, trying to shake off her chains only to experience an even harsher punishment, and only succeeding in shattering her chains through lies, treachery, and cowardly and useless crimes]

It is noteworthy that the tutor chooses the adjective *pénétré*, an adjective associated with the masculine, to describe Gabriel's conditioning. Gabriel's gender, which social norms would have declared feminine, has been "penetrated" by masculinity at the grandfather's behest. Further, Gabriel's impressions of men and women have been figuratively penetrated by the prejudiced notion that each occupies a different social position. While the tutor and, by extension, Gabriel recognize the status of woman as an enslaved object conquered by man, woman is nevertheless presented as a wretched creature who must cheat her way to some semblance of equality. Man, on the other hand, appears to exude grandeur.

Unsurprisingly, Astolphe shares the same view as the tutor and young Gabriel. Gabriel's cousin claims that "des filles honnêtes" [honest girls] are "de nature vaniteuse, par conséquent vénale; dépravée, par conséquent hypocrite" (74) [of a conceited nature, consequently corrupt; they are of a depraved nature, consequently hypocritical]. Just as the tutor believes that a woman must lie to break her chains of slavery, Astolphe accuses supposedly chaste, righteous women of also being conniving and manipulative. No matter what women do, Astolphe believes them to be

of a lesser, dangerous nature. Astolphe's vitriol against women's purportedly "natural" disposition threatens Gabriel's physical and mental well-being. Reflecting upon the deterioration of his relationship with Astolphe, Gabriel remarks:

Aujourd'hui son amour n'est plus qu'un orgueil sauvage, une soif de vengeance et de domination [...] Il est homme! une vie toute d'amour et de recueillement ne pouvait lui suffire. Cent fois dans notre solitude il a rêvé, malgré lui, à ce qu'eût été son rôle dans le monde si notre grand-père ne m'eût substitué à lui; et aujourd'hui, quand il songe à m'épouser, quand il songe à proclamer mon sexe, il ne songe pas tant à s'assurer ma fidélité qu'à reconquérir une place brillante dans la société, un grand titre, des droits politiques, la puissance (179-180) [Today his love is nothing more than a savage pride, a thirst for vengeance and for domination. He is man! A life of love and of contemplation was not to have sufficed. One hundred times in our solitude he dreamed, despite himself, about what would have been his role in the world if our grandfather had not substituted me for him; and today, when he dreams of marrying me, when he dreams of proclaiming my sex, he dreams less about assuring himself of my fidelity than of reconquering a brilliant place in society, a grand title, political rights, power]

Chapter Two showed that this new "love" is nothing more than a rapport fueled by jealousy, possession, and hubris. The transformation in the cousins' relationship begins when Astolphe sees Gabriel as Gabrielle for the first time and they can no longer continue interacting as two *amis*, as two *frères*. While Chapter Two focused on the evolution of their interpersonal relationship, resulting from Astolphe's conviction that Gabriel's "real" identity is feminine, this

quote brings to light the political and legal implications of the change. In Astolphe's eyes, he has suffered an injustice since Gabriel's "true" sex situates Astolphe as the rightful male heir to their grandfather's kingdom. As Gabriel notes, the biases against women on both a legal and supposedly natural level have a direct effect on individual relationships. He affirms: "cette transmission d'héritage de mâle en mâle est une loi fâcheuse, injuste peut-être. Ce continuel déplacement de possession entre les diverses branches d'une famille ne peut qu'allumer le feu de la jalousie, [...] forcer les pères à détester leurs filles, faire rougir les mères d'avoir donné le jour à des enfants de leur sexe..." (26-27) [this hereditary transmission from male to male is a disagreeable law, even unjust. This continual displacement of possessions among different branches of a family tree can only light the fire of jealousy, force fathers to detest their daughters, make mothers blush to have given birth to infants of their sex...] Gabriel therefore criticizes the very structure of his society, showing how established traditions privilege individuals who are lucky enough to be born with certain traits and devalue those who do not share the same characteristics. Through his intention to upset the status quo, Gabriel renders George Sand's text queer. Through his transgender acts and through his condemnation of women's subordinate social position, Gabriel shows that a body deemed female is just as significant and can be just as "manly" as one considered male.

Astolphe, on the other hand, believes Gabriel's biological sex justifies his resentment toward his cousin for having taken from Astolphe a life of luxury and power. Indeed, as a result of the unjust and sexist law that favors male heirs, Astolphe believes himself warranted in reclaiming what he believes to be rightfully his. I include Gabriel and his body among the things that Astolphe feels entitled to since Astolphe treats Gabriel like his property to be handled in a

way that benefits him. Gabriel explains: “[Astolphe] veut m’appeler devant un tribunal, devant une assemblée d’hommes; et là, devant les juges, devant la foule, faire déchirer mon pourpoint par des sbires, et, pour preuve de ses droits à la fortune et à la puissance, dévoiler à tous les regards ce sein de femme que lui seul a vu palpiter!” (183) [Astolphe wants to call me in front of a court, in front of an assembly of men; and there, before the judges, before the crowd, have my bodice torn away by henchmen, and, for proof of his rights to fortune and power, unveil before the gaze of everyone this woman’s breast that he alone has seen beat!] Respecting neither Gabriel nor Gabriel’s body, Astolphe would use their intimacy as a weapon against his cousin in order to further his own gains. Astolphe would create a spectacle of his cousin for the purpose of establishing his own supposed legal right. While Gabriel’s grandfather hoped that Gabriel would avoid this inequality by having him raised as a boy, Gabriel ultimately cannot escape the toxic discourse surrounding women that permeates society and law. He therefore chooses to die as a man rather than to live as a woman, as we will see in part three.

As seen in Chapter Three, André Léo’s nonfiction addresses how political and scholastic systems disenfranchise women and the lower classes. For instance, she writes that while republicans do not want a king, they still expect men to rule domestic partnerships: “les démocrates ne voient dans le mariage d’autre garantie d’ordre et de paix que l’obéissance. Ils s’écrient: il faut bien un chef, une direction, qui décidera?” (*La Femme et les mœurs* 110) [democrats see obedience as the only guarantee of order and peace in marriage. They exclaim: a chief, a direction are needed, who will decide?] By highlighting the hypocrisy of rejecting a monarchy in public yet instituting one in private, André Léo engages with the works of influential thinkers who believe a woman should be subservient to her husband. Rousseau, for

example, writes that “[d]ans l’union des sexes chacun concourt également à l’objet commun, mais non pas de la même manière. [...] L’un [des deux sexes] doit être actif et fort, l’autre passif et faible: il faut nécessairement que l’un veuille et puisse, il suffit que l’autre résiste peu” (466) [in the union of the sexes, each contributes to the common objective, but not in the same manner. One of the sexes must be active and strong, the other passive and weak: it is absolutely necessary that one must want and be able to, and it is sufficient that the other resists little]. Rousseau’s statement echoes what we saw in Chapters One and Two concerning the supposed difference between men and women and how they should interact within a marriage. In both *La Femme et les mœurs* and *Aline-Ali*, André Léo challenges Rousseau’s notion that “[l]a femme a plus d’esprit, et l’homme plus de génie; la femme observe, et l’homme raisonne” (Rousseau 507) [woman has more spirit, and man more genius; woman observes and man reasons]. André Léo’s political tract uses sound arguments to counter Rousseau’s observations while her fictional work presents an array of characters that embody both sexist and emancipatory ideas concerning women.

Some of André Léo’s characters subscribe to the belief that women are inferior while others champion women’s rights. For instance, Aline-Ali’s former fiancé Germain parrots Rousseau; recall from Chapter Two that Germain believes women are spirit and men reason (*Aline-Ali* 81). The characters Aline-Ali and Suzanne stand as Germain’s counterpoint in this literary discourse. Suzanne struggles with the lack of women’s political and social power and attempts to open her sibling’s eyes to these injustices. She forcefully states:

L’homme, chef de la femme [...] croit à son empire et le veut garder. Tout l’ordre qu’il a bâti repose sur cette base, et il y tient comme un roi à son royaume [...] Né

sur le trône de la suprématie masculine, l'homme a le vice, l'infirmité secrète de la souveraineté; il peut déclamer sur la liberté des discours sublimes, il peut écrire sur l'égalité des traités superbes, il redevient despote en rentrant chez lui (46) [Man, in charge of woman, believes in his empire and wants to keep it. The whole order he built stands on this basis, and he holds it as a king to his kingdom. Born on the throne of masculine supremacy, man has the vice, the secret disability of sovereignty; he can write on equality in superb treaties, he returns to being despot when he goes home]

Like André Léo, Suzanne highlights the hypocrisy of white<sup>73</sup> men who claim to value freedom while refusing to extend these basic rights to women. Importantly, Suzanne points to the role of discourse in the pursuit of liberty. While men may write about the importance of equality for (some) men, they neither write nor circulate discourse on women's rights.

Through the character of Suzanne, André Léo's novel challenges pervasive rhetoric about women's inferiority. *Aline-Ali* therefore counters other disseminated works that produce knowledge about the feminine condition. Instead of promoting women's rights, traditional thought, asserts Suzanne, champions very precise models of femininity. She examines how this rhetoric, along with inferior education, shapes young girls: "Il s'agit donc avant tout de persuasion et de rhétorique. Et les livres sur la femme abondent, écrits par des hommes" (47) [It has to do, above all, with persuasion and rhetoric. And books on women are plentiful, written by

<sup>73</sup> Unlike many nineteenth century American advocates for women's rights who also supported abolition of slavery, André Léo and George Sand do not link issues of gender and race in *Aline-Ali* or *Gabriel*. The novels of my corpus, for the most part, include only white characters and avoid discussions of race. However, this too speaks to racial dynamics as I will discuss in the Conclusion.

men]. Suzanne's observation that many books about woman's nature are in fact written by men underscores the idea that women are passive objects to be studied by men who, in turn, are active subjects. Furthermore, it could imply that women constitute a problem to be written about; by disseminating prejudicial information about women in the form of authoritative books, male authors encourage and mold a certain model of acceptable femininity, one that might solve the problem of the female condition. This prescribed femininity is both idealistic and harmful. Fairy tales, for example, provide young women with unrealistic expectations. Indeed, the story of her life that Suzanne tells her sibling stands in stark contrast to a fable:

élevée, comme toutes les jeunes filles du grand monde [...] soigneusement tenue à part de tout contact des réalités vulgaires, l'esprit orné de légendes, en guise d'instruction [...] une nuit, sans m'avoir dit où j'allais, à la suite d'un bal, on me jeta dans le lit d'un homme, d'un débauché. J'étais marquise de Chabreuil. [...] la nuit des noces est le réveil le plus horrible et le plus brutal de ce rêve que, grâce aux perfidies de notre éducation, nous composons de sublimités et de poésies. Ce fiancé respectueux et discret dont le plus grand privilège [sic] était de baiser notre main, cet amant présenté par un père et dont la recherche emprunte à l'approbation de la famille un caractère chaste, grave et pieux..., cet homme, type de noblesse, de convenance, de cœur, le masque tombé, n'est plus qu'un satyre. Au rebours des contes de fées, ce n'est pas la bête, spirituelle et bonne, qui se change en un beau prince... hélas! non; c'est le beau prince qui se change en bête (27) [raised, as all young girls of high society, carefully kept apart from all contact of vulgar realities, mind decorated with legends, in the guise of

instruction, one night, without telling me where I was going, after a ball, they threw me in the bed of a debauched man. I was Marquise de Chabreuil. The wedding night was the most horrible and most brutal awakening from this dream that, thanks to the betrayals of our education, we compose with sublimity and poetry. This respectful and discrete fiancé whose biggest privilege was kissing our hand, this lover presented by a father and whose search for borrows from the family approval a chaste, serious, and pious character..., this man, noble, decent, good-hearted, when the mask is fallen, is nothing but a satyr. Contrary to fairy tales, it is not the beast, spiritual and good, that turns into a handsome prince...  
 Alas! no, it is the handsome prince who changes into a beast]

The stories told to girls disillusion them, keeping them in a state of blissful ignorance. Their education does nothing to dispel these myths and the rhetoric to which young women are exposed contributes to the harmful conditioning that occurs in place of a meaningful instruction. Suzanne also argues that the role of upper-class girls' education is to create ignorant objects that will grow up to fulfill the role of wife and mother, where women will defer to their husband just as they deferred to their fathers during their childhood. Suzanne describes her level of knowledge before marrying Monsieur de Chabreuil at the age of eighteen:

Je savais la musique, l'histoire superficielle du passé, fort peu de la nature, et rien de la vie. J'acceptai le mariage, parce que l'opinion l'impose; M. de Chabreuil, parce que mon père me le présenta. J'étais une enfant, et toute mon éducation avait eu pour but de me laisser telle. Mineure, incapable de disposer de mes biens, on me fit disposer de moi-même et de ma vie toute entière (26) [I knew music, a



superficial history of the past, very little of nature, and nothing of life. I accepted marriage because opinion required it; M. de Chabreuil because my father presented him to me. I was a child, and my whole education was designed to keep me as one. Minor, incapable of disposing of my belongings, one made me dispose of myself and of my whole life]

Suzanne laments the fact that, had she received a well-rounded education, she would have held greater control of her person and of her future. She regrets not having been given the same opportunities as men and attempts to educate Aline-Ali so that her sibling will take advantage of Suzanne's hardships and forge a better life for herself.

Suzanne believes that education holds the key to creating strong women, and she uses her platform as both a literary character and Aline-Ali's sister to promote her convictions. Suzanne does not see why ignorance is associated with women's nature and poses the following question:

Pourquoi séparer comme ennemies la chasteté et la vérité? Si l'on élève les filles pour le cloître, à la bonne heure; mais si pour la vie, de quoi servent ces fausses notions et cette ignorance, laborieusement tramée? Si j'avais été mère d'une fille, mère véritable, c'est-à-dire libre d'élever moi-même mon enfant, je lui aurais simplement et chastement enseigné la réalité. En éducation, comme en toute chose, il n'y a d'utile et de bienfaisant que le vrai (28) [Why separate chastity and truth like enemies? If one is raising girls for the cloisters, fine; but if one raises them for life, to what end serve these false notions and this ignorance that is laboriously woven? If I had been the mother to a daughter, a true mother, that is to say free to raise my child myself, I would have simply and chastely taught her the

reality of the situation. In education, as in all things, there is nothing more useful and more beneficial than truth]

Suzanne points to the disconnect between instructing young women as though they were going to live secluded lives as nuns while at the same time expecting them to be good wives. Although she does not outright say it, Suzanne alludes to the fact that, by keeping women ignorant about their marital duties, they remain dependent on their husbands. In other words, lack of (sexual) education for young women disempowers them. Suzanne insists upon the importance of being honest when instructing children. Rhetoric that hides reality accomplishes nothing. Here I suggest that there is a difference between fiction and a work that presents itself as fact yet spreads false or misleading information. The former offers itself as a creation of the author's imagination while still being able to provide insight into how society and human beings function. Despite the fact that the latter passes as objective nonfiction, it can nevertheless perpetuate discriminatory or harmful ideas such as those on women's inferiority.

Suzanne believes that by receiving the same education as boys and by questioning biased rhetoric, girls will grow up confident and informed. She therefore contests the declarations of those who believe women should not have the same rights or upbringing as those of men since the two groups are "naturally" different. Rousseau, for instance, implores the judicious mother not to make "de [sa] fille un honnête homme, comme pour donner un démenti à la nature" (474) [of her daughter an honest man, as this would refute nature]. He also writes that fathers do not interfere in the education of their daughters and that no one "empêche les mères de les élever comme il leur plaît" (473) [prevents mothers from raising them as they please]. Suzanne, however, directly challenges this claim by despairing over the fact that her husband takes control

of their child's education and excludes her entirely (20). Maternal power is therefore superficial and symbolic and mothers hold little power over educating their children.

Suzanne maintains that since mothers cannot teach their sons the way they would like, boys tend to learn about women from outlets that perpetuate prejudiced information. If they do read work that praises the female sex, it is likely both biased—championing women for their gentle feminine traits—and created by men. For instance, in *La Femme et les mœurs* André Léo writes: “[o]n exalte à l’envi le rôle de la mère et le génie maternel: la littérature a exploité cette veine avec enthousiasme” (96) [one glorifies ad infinitum the role of the mother and of the maternal genius: literature exploited this vein with enthusiasm]. However, the flowery description of women in literary texts does not correspond to the stark reality of women's lack of rights: “en réalité, dans la vie intime et de tous les jours, la mère n’en est pas plus respectée. Elle ne l’est pas, parce qu’elle ne saurait l’être; parce qu’en dépit de la rhétorique la logique a ses droits, et que lorsque les faits contredisent les mots, les mots ont tort” (André Léo, *La Femme et les mœurs* 96) [in reality, in private and everyday-life, the mother is not at all respected. She is not, because she could not know how to be; because despite rhetoric, logic has its rights, and as the facts contradict the words, the words are wrong]. Simply put, as Suzanne recognizes, actions speak louder than words. Furthermore, one of the recurring themes in André Léo's novel is Aline-Ali's insistence that pride must be taught to women in order for them to gain, and expect, respect. Aline-Ali asserts that the first virtue of women must be “l’orgeuil” (86) [pride] and s.he declares that s.he “en aur[a]!” (86) [will have some!] Pride, Aline-Ali suggests, is not innate but rather learned and acquired. Women must learn to respect themselves and learn to demand respect in order to be equal participants in society.

Sons, according to both Suzanne the character and André Léo the writer, are encouraged to withhold respect from their mothers and to despise them instead. A son gives his mother “l’affection un peu dédaigneuse, dont le père lui-même donne l’exemple; on accepte ses soins et ses gâteries comme chose due [...] car la femme a des besoins de tendresse à satisfaire; on méprise ses avis; on raille ses inquiétudes; la mère entend le nom de *femme* tomber avec dédain de la bouche de son fils” (*La Femme et les mœurs* 97) [affection that is a little disdainful, of which the father himself sets the example; one accepts her care and her spoiling as something deserved because the woman must satisfy needs of tenderness; one despises her advice; one mocks her worries; the mother hears the name of *woman* fall from her son’s mouth with disdain]. Suzanne perfectly embodies this quote from André Léo’s political text. She wishes to educate Gaëtan in her own way, providing a model of feminine strength and fostering in her son respect for women. Suzanne thus dreamed that her son “ne serait l’agent de la dégradation d’aucune femme” (31) [would not be the agent of any woman’s degradation]. However, Suzanne’s worst nightmare, that her son “dev[ient] semblable à son père!” (60) [becomes like his father!], materializes in the final pages of *Aline-Ali*. Suzanne’s plea for equal education and treatment for both girls and boys goes unheeded by her husband and by those in positions of power, resulting in what the reader can identify as bitter irony. Motivated by a sense of urgency to ensure that her sibling not follow in her footsteps, Suzanne works hard to demonstrate gender inequality to Aline-Ali and, by extension, the reader. Her intention to change the fabric of society therefore helps mold André Léo’s novel into a queer text. Suzanne’s son, however, seemingly aims to undo his mother’s efforts.

At the end of the novel, the reader is reunited with Gaëtan, now a grown man who not only despises women, but also intends to educate other men about women's supposedly evil nature. When speaking, for instance, of courtesans, Gaëtan declares that the next day "*le Canard illustré* publiera une vaine diatribe de plus contre ces viles courtisanes, qui ne se donnent pas pour rien aux hommes d'esprit" (382) [*le Canard illustré* will publish yet another useless diatribe against these vile courtesans who do not give themselves to men of spirit for nothing]. Gaëtan therefore considers periodicals a useful way to disseminate his prejudiced views, even if he fears the diatribe will be useless against courtesans' power. Léon Blondel, the journalist with whom Gaëtan converses, is influenced by the written word of the Bible; he references the holy work's prevailing views on women, citing them as though they were fact. Blondel exclaims: "L'Écriture a raison [...] quand elle regarde la femme comme la source de la perdition et du péché! [...] Vaine, frivole, oisive, ignorante, sensuelle, ses caresses nous énervent [...] Le plus puissant ennemi du progrès en ce monde, c'est elle" (381-382) [The Scriptures are right when they regard woman as the source of perdition and of sin! Vain, frivolous, idle, ignorant, sensual, her caresses get on our nerves. She is the most powerful enemy of progress in this world]. Despite the fact that literature, written by a diverse and varied authorship, can greatly contribute to understanding the complexities and nuances of the world, Blondel uses the canonic religious text to paint all people (women) with one generalizing and sexist brush. On a meta level, by providing new models of femininity and masculinity, André Léo's novel actively combats the religious and philosophical texts that Blondel, Gaëtan, and Aline-Ali's former fiancé hold in such high regard.

Through her characters Suzanne and Aline-Ali, André Léo provides role models for women (and others) to follow. She suggests that women are socially conditioned to be inferior

and that they are not born so. Just as André Léo writes that “[e]n abaissant pour elle, systématiquement, le niveau de l’instruction, en lui interdisant, et par l’empire du préjugé, et par le refus des moyens, les hautes études, on l’a contrainte de rester, en général, intellectuellement inférieure—de descendre du rôle de sujet à celui d’objet” (*La Femme et les mœurs* 51-52) [by systematically lowering the level of instruction, by forbidding her, through prejudice and through the refusal of means, higher education, one has confined woman to stay, in general, intellectually inferior, to descend from the role of subject to the role of object], lack of female main characters also can relegate women to the role of romantic object or evil villainess who brings about man’s downfall. At the very least, having a strong protagonist such as Aline-Ali who is socially assigned female breaks up the discourse on women as divinely maternal and presents a female character that is intellectually equal to men. Further, *Aline-Ali* rejects the archetype of feminine characters, breaking with the tradition of fairy tales. For instance, Paul never rescues Aline-Ali and the novel does not end after Paul’s death as a romantic tragedy might. The protagonist Aline-Ali upsets any preconceived idea of what a supposedly female character should be and how she should act. Suzanne encourages her sibling to disrupt dominant discourse surrounding women—to “perce[r] les ballons de cette rhétorique bouffonne, dans laquelle se plaisent nos dupeurs et nos dupes” (60) [pierce the balloons of this farcical rhetoric in which our dupers and our duped please themselves]. The character, by fighting against stereotypes of woman, accomplishes what her sister had hoped.

Aline-Ali continues to burst the rhetoric surrounding women’s inferiority by dedicating her life to teaching working and lower class women to become informed human beings who respect themselves. She states: “en attaquant l’ignorance, j’attaque la cause de tout mal; c’est là

que se porteront mes efforts” (*Aline-Ali* 310) [by attacking ignorance, I attack the cause of all evil; it is there I will exert my efforts]. Indeed, “‘Donnons de la lumière’ est son mot d’ordre. Elle se consacre surtout aux femmes” (*Aline-Ali* 366) [‘Give light’ is her motto. She focuses above all on women]. Shedding light on gender inequality is one of the first steps to changing women’s condition. Aline-Ali combats ignorance through education and shows women that they have a right to be respected by teaching them pride. S.he explains: “j’enseigne l’orgueil! [...] Oui, c’est par l’orgueil, par le sentiment de la dignité personnelle, que je cherche à relever ces âmes écrasées par le dédain de l’Eglise” (374) [I teach pride! Yes, it is through pride, through the sentiment of personal dignity, that I attempt to raise these souls crushed by the scorn of the Church]. Pride and personal dignity factor heavily in the cultivation of people who may have thought themselves undeserving of respect. Similar to Clémentina, Aline-Ali sees the Church’s discourse as both harmful and counterproductive to those deemed inferior. By stripping women and intersex individuals of their dignity, religious and medical discourses relegate them to a status that is less than human. Fostering pride for oneself is critical in the fight to end inequality.<sup>74</sup> André Léo’s novel, by planting the seed of knowledge in the minds of the readers, encourages their pride to grow, thereby continuing the teachings of Suzanne and Aline-Ali.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> In *Les Associations à Nantes* (May 1867), André Léo writes that “l’amour propre révolté suffit pour faire haïr la tyrannie” (*L’Association* André Léo 16) [revolted self-love suffices for making one hate tyranny]; since self-love and pride are very similar, tyranny cannot be sustained if the oppressed rise against it by believing themselves to be deserving of equality.

<sup>75</sup> In an interesting parallel to Aline-Ali, who sees pride as a positive trait, Barrès cites this quality as one of Rachilde’s (possibly dangerous) characteristics. He writes: “La maladie du siècle, qu’il faut toujours citer et dont *Monsieur Vénus* signale chez la femme une des formes les plus intéressantes, est faite en effet d’une fatigue nerveuse, excessive et d’un orgueil inconnu jusqu’alors” (19) [The malady of the century, that one always needs to cite and that *Monsieur Vénus* signals in woman in one of its most interesting forms, is made in effect by a nervous, excessive fatigue and by a pride until now unknown].

The readers of the text have the potential to experience an awakening similar to that of the protagonists.

In *Monsieur Vénus*, an unnamed book incites Raoule's own rebellion against social norms. One day, Raoule, as a girl "courant les mansardes de l'hôtel[,] découvrit un livre, elle lut, au hasard. Ses yeux rencontrèrent une gravure, ils se baissèrent, mais elle emporta le livre... Vers ce temps, une révolution s'opéra dans la jeune fille. Sa physionomie s'altéra, sa parole devint brève, ses prunelles dardèrent la fièvre, elle pleura et elle rit tout à la fois" (26) [running through the hotel's attic, discovered a book; she read it randomly. Her eyes, encountering an engraving, lowered themselves, but she took the book... Around this time, a revolution occurred in the young girl. Her physiognomy changed, her words shortened, her eyes shined with fever, she cried and laughed at the same time]. This book drastically influences Raoule's development and conception of the world. She draws inspiration from both literary role models and her father, a fan of the Marquis de Sade (Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus* 25). Commenting on the constitution of Raoule's character, Koos writes: "Hysteric, sadist, transvestite, emasculating femme fatale, female dandy, reader of scandalous fiction, [Raoule] belongs to and at times seems to parody an extensive body of literature produced in the late nineteenth century in which traditional gender-specific elements of representation were disintegrating, reversing, and polarizing" (208). It therefore appears that Raoule both absorbs and personifies the Decadent movement, which I will discuss later on in this chapter. Indeed, in the cultivation of her masculine identity, Raoule imagines herself to be like a literary hero: "Devant la glace, qui lui renvoyait l'image d'un homme beau comme tous les héros de roman que rêvent les jeunes filles, elle passa sa main[...] dans ses courts cheveux bouclés" (176) [In front of the mirror that reflected the image of a man



handsome like all the heroes of novels that young girls dream of, she ran her hand through her short curly hair]. If Raoule is the handsome masculine protagonist, then Jacques is the young woman who dreams of her hero.

Just as Raoule compares herself to the hero of a novel, s.he longs to write h.er own story. In fact, s.he considers books authored by others the same way s.he views masculine lovers: they can teach h.er something, but s.he will never fully control them. S.he explains: “Il est certain [...] que j’ai eu des amants. Des amants dans ma vie comme j’ai des livres dans ma bibliothèque, pour savoir, pour étudier... Mais je n’ai pas eu de passion, je n’ai pas écrit mon livre, moi!” (70-71) [It is certain that I have had male lovers. Male lovers in my life like I’ve had books in my library; to know, to study... But I have never had passion, I have never written my book!] If masculine lovers are like books, with each lover containing his own life story, then Raoule can collect them as s.he does books in a library. S.he can take each amorous encounter and learn from it, studying the lover as s.he does a book. Raoule draws a parallel between never having experienced passion and never having written a book; interestingly, Raoule equates passion with writing, not reading. In other words, it appears that Raoule finds passion neither in her love affairs with men nor in reading books. As Chapter Two showed, Raoule does not find traditional love empowering to women—after all, s.he claims both prostitutes and wives are victims of men. Raoule also seems to experience passivity by reading a story whose content has already been determined by another person.

To experience passion would be for Raoule to write h.er own book, to take command of h.er own life’s plot, and to become a lover instead of a passive object. This is Raoule’s aim, the latter of which s.he attempts to accomplish by being the dominant, masculine person in h.er

relationship with the feminine Jacques, and the former of which s.he achieves tangentially, thanks to the fact that h.er story is indeed written. In the text itself, Raoule does not write h.er own story in the way that Clémentina does, but s.he is able to live life as s.he pleases and, in this sense, is the author of h.er own life (and of that of Jacques). Just as Clémentina finds refuge in the literary world, Raoule creates a similar imaginary sanctuary for h.erself and for Jacques. S.he explains: “ce pays est celui des fous [...] Dans ce pays, on rêve, et cela suffit pour exister” (61) [this country is that of crazy people. In this country, one dreams, and that suffices for existing]. I contend that this land is that of a novel, a world that exists purely thanks to imagination. If Raoule and Jacques cannot belong to each other in society because of gender and class differences, then they can be together in the literary land. Jacques falls asleep dreaming of this distant place and notices that her body disappears (62). Jacques hears “les chants d’un amour étrange n’ayant pas de sexe et procurant toutes les voluptés” (62) [the songs of a strange love that had no sex and that procured all delights]. This land, a metaphor for literature and fantasy, allows the physical, sexed body to disappear, thereby shedding its importance and social significance. A strange love thrives in this land, a love that knows no gender or sex and yet exists just as voluptuous as anything in reality; in fact, considering the poisonous turn the love between Raoule and Jacques takes, this love is even better than the love in Jacques’s reality.

My corpus’ importance lies in its ability to access the strange land briefly inhabited by Jacques and Raoule. Indeed, all four novels privilege the creation of such an environment in which gender non-conforming subjects can exist in all their uniqueness. The characters’ rebellions, words, and actions that challenge gender stereotypes render the authors’ texts queer, and the characters respond to other forms of discourse by offering new ways of being in order to

influence others. Within the texts, the protagonists' intention to disrupt gender norms constitutes an element of the authors' transgender writing practices. The next section explores the connection between the transgender body and the transgeneric text, the final component of *pratiques d'écriture transgenre* that I discuss.

### Part Three

#### The Novel and Transgeneric Texts

In this section, I first examine the link between genre and gender before looking specifically at the genre of novel, which I attempt to define. Despite the fact that the genre of novel is notoriously difficult to delineate (Bakhtin 3), I argue that the structural form of *Clémentine* and *Gabriel* pushes the texts' genre further into hybrid territory, thereby causing them to become overtly transgeneric texts. *Aline-Ali* and *Monsieur Vénus*, while not transgeneric, nevertheless illustrate how the already loose definition of novel allows André Léo and Rachilde to mold their texts as they desire, without conforming to any strict expectations regarding language, style, form, or content.

Genre and gender share several similarities in terms of how they both function as a means of categorization. Literary genres, writes Marielle Macé, “offrent en effet des outils d'organisation de la production littéraire que nous observons à chaque fois que nous entrons dans une librairie ou que nous feuilletons un supplément littéraire” (13) [effectively offer tools of organization for the literary production that we observe each time we enter a bookshop or browse through a literary supplement]. Macé further underscores the idea that literary genre is a construct implemented to facilitate organization when she asserts that “[a]ucun écrivain, aucun lecteur n'a cependant besoin de croire à la vérité ou à la réalité des genres, ni même de savoir les

définir pour les mobiliser. Il n'est pas nécessaire qu'ils 'existent' pour qu'ils s'opèrent" (15) [no writer, no reader needs to believe in the truth or in the reality of genres, nor does she or he need to know how to define them in order to put them in action. It is not necessary that genres "exist" in order for them to take effect]. I therefore propose that literary genres operate in a similar fashion to gender. Not only are the two words the same in French—*genre*—but Stryker notes that the "English word 'gender' is derived from *genre*, meaning 'kind' or 'type'" (11). While literary genre organizes different bodies of texts into various groups, gender socially categorizes different types of bodies of people. Furthermore, just as Macé suggests that literary genres do not have to be "real" in order for them to have an impact, gender too does not have to be "real," natural, or essential in order for it to nevertheless function as a part of people's everyday lives.

While literary genres exist to catalogue written work, the stipulations regarding what constitutes a text belonging to the genre of novel is difficult to outline. "Tous les écrivains [...] ont réclamé avec persistance le droit absolu, droit indiscutable, de composer, c'est-à-dire d'imaginer ou d'observer, suivant leur conception personnelle de l'art" (Maupassant, "Le roman" 207) [All writers have demanded with persistence the absolute right, the indisputable right, to compose, that is to imagine or to observe, according to their own personal conception of the art]. Indeed, the definition of a novel varies depending on the individual. In addition to being difficult to define, the genre of novel, asserts Mikhail Bakhtin, is the "sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted" (3). Very loosely speaking, a novel is an extended fictional narrative in prose form (Shroder 291). At the core of this fictional prose narrative is "personal experience and free creative imagination" (Bakhtin 39). The genre of novel, by embracing continual development and the possibility for a multiplicity of personal perspectives,

provides the perfect opportunity for gender non-conforming characters to have their voices heard. Furthermore, Bakhtin suggests that the novel itself tends to “parod[y] other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure” (5). I liken this to Butler’s assertion that *all* gender performance parodies the idea of an original gender (179). While all novels, according to Bakhtin, parody to some extent other genres, I argue that by being a fictional memoir and a “roman dialogué” (Hart xv) [dialogic novel], respectively, *Clémentine* and *Gabriel* emulate the genres of autobiography and theater in the same way a cross-dresser or a transgender person play with gender expectations: the former pair overtly presents their (literary) genres as different from the ones categorically assigned to them just as the latter pair expresses their gender as opposite the one socially-assigned to their bodies. This analogy is not meant to minimize one’s gender identity nor is it to suggest that a transgender person parodies the “real” gender performance of a cisgender individual. Instead, just as there is no “natural” gender, and just as a trans person highlights the ability for one to reject socially-imposed gender identities, so too do the transgeneric texts *Clémentine* and *Gabriel* show that the genre of novel is not fixed and can include other genres, ultimately demonstrating how all literary genres are constructed. Since there is no “true” form of a novel, the two texts overtly play with the idea that a novel can incorporate autobiographical and theatrical elements in the same way the characters of my corpus show that there is no “true” way to perform masculinity or femininity, thereby embracing the notion that gender expression can encompass a range of identities.

Significantly, the hybridity of *Clémentine* and *Gabriel* intertwines with the hybridity of the characters' genders and bodies. The transgeneric texts create and shape the transgender protagonists and vice versa. As I show, the structure of *Clémentine* plays with ideas of truth and fiction and the text's form echoes the socially constructed and vacillating body of Clémentina. *Gabriel*, containing only dialogue, stage directions, and character names, appears to build its own narrative with no interference from a narrator. In this sense, it reinforces the idea that Gabriel's body is originally neutral and free from imposing ideas. However, the text and Gabriel's body do both get molded throughout the narrative. Finally, I include at the end of this section a discussion of the relationship between the narrative form of *Aline-Ali* and *Monsieur Vénus* and the corporeal form of their protagonists. Even though I do not argue that these texts exhibit transgeneric qualities, they perfectly illustrate how the genre of novel is generally free of constraining literary rules. *Aline-Ali* and *Monsieur Vénus* serve as two examples of the variety of forms a novel may take, indicative of the many ways a person can portray his or her masculinity or femininity.<sup>76</sup>

As stated in part two of this chapter, Clémentina's memoir allows Clémentina to disseminate her life story in a way that respects her as a person. Part of her motivation for publishing her life story stems from her desire to reclaim her body and present it on her own

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<sup>76</sup> I have proposed that the structures of *Clémentine* and *Gabriel* parallel a trans person's explicit subversion of gender expectations. To continue this comparison with *Aline-Ali* and *Monsieur Vénus*, I suggest that these texts play with the genre of novel in the same way a cis-gender person can play with gender stereotypes: while he or she may rarely sartorially defy gender expectations, he or she likely embraces a mix of masculine and feminine traits and thus undermines, to some extent, traditional gender roles and stereotypes. In other words, just as a cis-gender person is not restricted to one specific way to perform femininity or masculinity, so too the genre of novel does not confine *Aline-Ali* or *Monsieur Vénus* to a set of rules delineating what constitutes a novel. Each has room to navigate what it means to be feminine, masculine, or, in the instance of the texts, what it means to be a novel.

terms. I shall now examine how Clémentina's memoir situates her body not as an unusual object to examine but rather as a component of her own subjectivity. While Clémentina's memoirs serve as an antidote to rhetoric that positions her as a monster, they also have the potential to further objectify her. Indeed, Cuisin recognizes that a "HERMAPHRODITE est sans doute, même pour un penseur profond, un sujet difficile à traiter" (1: v-vi) [HERMAPHRODITE is without a doubt, even for a profound thinker, a difficult subject to treat]. Importantly, Cuisin treats his subject in such a way as to limit her objectification. He neither takes credit for her story nor suggests that he, as author, knows more about the subject of his novel than the subject herself. Furthermore, note that Cuisin uses the word "subject" and not "object." Contrary to other gender non-conforming literary characters—such as Latouche's Fragoletta and Gautier's Madeleine/Théodore—Clémentina's life is shared through her own voice and not through that of a cis-gender narrator. Significantly, Cuisin privileges Clémentina with the position of subject, thereby providing her with a platform on which to speak: "Venons donc aux faits, en laissant parler lui-même le principal personnage de ces Mémoires" (1: 7) [Let us arrive at the facts, by letting the principle character of these Memoirs speak for itself].

Although Cuisin ends up giving the floor to his protagonist, he first establishes for his readers his protagonist's credibility as subject of her memoir. He writes: "À la suite de ces digressions préparatoires par lesquelles j'ai voulu en quelque sorte identifier le lecteur avec mon sujet, traçons quelques lignes sur la moralité et l'utilité de ces Mémoires: *moralité*, par les épreuves terribles que subit notre héroïne, et dont sa haute vertu triompha à la fin" (1: xviii, emphasis in original) [Following these preparatory digressions by which I wanted to familiarize the reader with my subject, let us trace a few lines over the morality and the utility of these

*Mémoires: morality*, by the terrible trials our heroine suffers, and whose high virtue triumphed in the end]. One wonders if the reader would have respected Clémentina without having first been reassured of her virtue by a “normative” authorial figure such as Cuisin. Once Cuisin establishes his character’s morality, the reader is then invited by Cuisin to enter this world: “C’est un autre monde dont l’entrée vous est ouverte, et qui, vous faisant oublier les banalités de celui-ci, captive à chaque pas votre esprit insatiable de connaître toutes les passions qui peuvent se concentrer avec enthousiasme sur un aussi rare sujet” (1: vij) [It is another world whose entrance is open to you, and that, making you forget the banalities of this world, captivates with each step your mind that is eager to know all the passions that can enthusiastically focus on such a rare subject]. Cuisin establishes a dynamic between reader and subject where the former is expected to feel honored for being trusted with insight into a unique individual’s life. In this sense, the reader enters the story with an accepting and insatiable mind rather than being prejudiced with preconceived notions of the character’s supposed monstrosity.

Cuisin believes his novel will ultimately achieve the greater good of communicating a personalized account of an intersex individual’s experiences. He writes:

Ici il ne s’agit plus, comme dans ma jeunesse, de ces heureuses fictions, de ces mensonges romanesques, qu’on développe commodément, [...] le hasard [sic] seul conduit sans le secours d’aucun plan mûri sagement dans l’esprit de l’auteur; mais dans cette circonstance épineuse, il faut exprimer avec justesse les abstractions les plus épineuses; étudier en quelque sorte *un nouveau cœur humain* dans un être que la nature semble n’avoir pas pétri du même limon que ses autres créatures (1: iv-v, emphasis in original) [Here it no longer is about, as it was in



my youth, these happy fictions, these fictional lies, that one develops easily; chance is the only thing that drives without the safety of any plan wisely matured in the mind of the author; but in this difficult circumstance, it is necessary to justly express the most difficult abstractions; study in some way *a new human heart* in a being that nature seems not to have shaped from the same silt as its other creatures]

Rather than being objectively “true,” in the sense that Clémentina was not a living person who wrote her memoirs, Cuisin suggests that his work gives justice to his unique subject and in this way is more “true” than his earlier works of fiction that he calls *mensonges romanesques* [fictional lies]. The fact that this text is fictitious—not a “real” autobiography—removes the question of credibility; the author has license to use his imagination without being accused of falsely portraying a “true” event. While autobiography “makes trouble: it is difficult to define as a distinct genre, on the borderline between fact and fiction, the personal and the social, the popular and the academic, the everyday and the literary” (Cosslett, et al 1), Cuisin’s text traverses further into the fictitious realm while unabashedly presenting itself as a nonfictional life story. Even though it is invented, fiction nevertheless has the power to tell greater truths and to situate as heroine someone otherwise called a monster. Cuisin’s novel therefore presents as a *nouveau cœur humain* [new human heart] a gender non-conforming subject whose world the reader can enter with an open mind.

Through her position as protagonist of her own life story, Clémentina creates a new subjectivity that she embodies through her body and through written language. Clémentina’s body is intricately connected to her understanding of self. She first wonders, however, if her

body does in fact make her a monster unworthy of compassion and understanding. She asks herself: “N’es-tu pas toujours l’infortunée Clémentina? ou plutôt tu n’es *rien*, tu n’es qu’un objet repoussant que les hommes étonnés regardent avec un secret mépris, que les superstitieux redoutent, et que les cloîtres rejetteraient peut-être” (1: 128) [Are you not still the unfortunate Clémentina? Or rather you are *nothing*, you are but a repulsive object that stunned men view with secret disdain, that superstitious people fear, and that the cloisters would perhaps reject]. While Cuisin clearly situates Clémentina as *sujet* and *héroïne* in his preface, Clémentina first sees herself as a valueless object.

It is important to note that it is language, not her physical body, that makes Clémentina feel “other.” She tells of the first time she learned of her intersex condition: “la belle Clémentine est .....*dite*: (ce fut cette dernière syllabe que j’entendis à peine de ma retraite)” (1: 18) [the beautiful Clémentine is .....*dite*: (it was this last syllable that I barely heard from my hideaway)]. Before this utterance, Clémentina had no concept of her body being different from that of others; the word itself renders her body an object foreign to her. As we recall from Chapter One, Clémentina’s intersexuality materializes through language when she looks the word *hermaphrodite* up in the dictionary. The syllable *dite* follows Clémentina throughout her life, evoking her condition through a short linguistic enunciation: “J’avais oublié entièrement pendant quelques heures d’une parfaite félicité, mon opprobre et mon malheur, et cette chère amie ne savait pas qu’une seule syllabe avait fait saigner vivement toutes mes plaies” (1: 73) [With perfect happiness, for several hours I had completely forgotten my disgrace and my sadness, and this dear friend did not know that a single syllable had caused all my wounds to bleed profusely]. For such a small syllable, it is remarkably powerful and it symbolizes the

significant impact language has on shaping Clémentina's subjectivity and formation of self. Without this word, Clémentina's body would have been a nameless, perhaps even sexless, entity that caused her no distress, as was the case before she overheard the men speaking. That is, of course, until the next time other members of society discursively call out her body for its physical difference.

Clémentina must ultimately appropriate the power of language when writing herself and her body on her own terms. In doing so, she comes to realize the position of subject that she does in fact occupy. Clémentina then constructs her own identity outside that of *monstre*. She establishes herself as a woman even when presenting as a man; for instance, dressed in her cavalier clothes, Clémentina asks Macellina: "Quel mal vous ai-je fait, si ce n'est de m'être *amusée* un peu de vos sottises prétentions" (2: 78, emphasis mine) [What wrong did I do to you, if only to have *amused* (here Clémentina uses the feminine form of the past participle) myself with your silly expectations]. Clémentina asserts her gender through her use of feminine language, and her body, her language, and her life cannot be separated from one another. When *madame la Supérieure* questions Clémentina's identity—"Dieu! serait-ce un hom..., s'écria-t-elle un moment, d'un accent étouffé! puis, voyant les contours de mon sein s'élever avec violence, elle retombait dans toutes ses perplexités" (2: 4) [God! Would it be a ma..., she said with a muffled cry! Then, seeing the contours of my breast rising with violence, she fell back into all of her perplexities]—Clémentina offers her life story as a way to explain *madame la Supérieure*'s confusion: "voulant la satisfaire avec un entier abandon, je lui racontai toute ma vie" (2: 4) [wanting to satisfy her with complete abandon, I recounted my whole life to her]. In other words, Clémentina mitigates *madame la Supérieure*'s struggle to categorize her by sharing her own

experiences. To reveal everything to *madame la Supérieure* is to bare Clémentina's body and history; one cannot go without the other. The same can be said for Clémentina's memoirs in which her body is constructed through the very writing of her life. Symbolically, Clémentina "est..... dite" (1:18) [is ..... dite] in the sense that she is dite [spoken] through her own words. Clémentina orally tells her life story to *madame la Supérieure* and she commits it to paper for the reader.

Indeed, Clémentina overtly references the actual writing of her life story. She often speaks directly to the reader, "cher lecteur" (1: 19) [dear reader], and even refers to the time in which she writes. For instance, "Ainsi, au moment où j'écris [...]" (2: 249) [Thus, at the moment when I write], and "Mais je dois laisser reposer ici ma plume, qui a besoin de toute son énergie, pour donner à mes lecteurs la peinture de ces nouvelles catastrophes d'un genre bien plus douloureux que toutes les précédentes" (1: 56-57) [But here I must put down my pen, which needs all of its energy to give my readers the painting of these new catastrophes of a genre much more painful than the preceding ones]. This auto-referential element to Clémentina's memoirs serves, among other things, two important purposes. First, it lends credibility to the idea that Clémentina really is the one telling her own story like Cuisin insists in his preface. Second, it humanizes the subject by granting the reader direct access into her life. The reader can visualize what Clémentina is doing as she puts the words on paper. To return to the syllable that haunts the heroine, Clémentina is not merely dite [spoken], she is also écrite [written]. Most importantly, she insists upon writing herself.

Cuisin's fictional memoir consequently opens up the possibility for a gender non-conforming individual to be privileged by both author and reader alike, with the intersex

character forming her own selfhood. If the medically-dominated discourse on transgender people were dismantled, writes Stryker, we could move away from the idea that to be transgender is to be “duplicitous, dupes of the patriarchy, or mentally ill. All genders—all genres of personhood—would be on the same plane” (129). The transgeneric structure of Clémentina’s memoirs provides this opportunity. Clémentina is not read as duplicitous because the reader accepts her as a fictional character in a literary world not constrained by the limits of what the reader perceives to be “real” life. In her text, Clémentina exists beyond the confinement of medical categories and flourishes as a complete literary subject. By refusing to be fragmented by fixed identities, Clémentina recuperates her personhood and establishes her undivided subjectivity that exists amid its paradoxes and contradictions. Literature allows for the fluidity that the medical field rejects.

Cuisin’s work is composed of different elements in addition to Clémentina’s *je* [I]. The inclusion of voices and writings of other characters contributes to the text’s hybridity. For instance, Saint-Elme constructs poetic verses (2: 89) and part of a chapter is devoted to Clémentina’s mother, the Countess, who tells her life story through first-person narration (2: 176-192). The *je* of the Countess adds depth to Clémentina’s own story. Furthermore, Clémentina and Saint Elme write letters to each other, which adds an epistolary component to the memoirs. The various characters and events in Clémentina’s life help shape her formation as a person, which is reflected in both the text and her body. Just as Fausto-Sterling claims that experiences shape a physical body, they also shape the textual body. More specifically, the story of Clémentina’s mother shapes the reader’s understanding of Clémentina’s history as well as helps Clémentina realize that her intersexuality does not shame her family. Cuisin therefore

weaves together a story that throws into question the notion of complete objectivity. Clémentina rejects the supposedly scientific ideas surrounding her body and identity and she embraces a much more subjective way in which to share her experiences. The inclusion of other characters' voices indicates further rejection of one lone perspective, even in a singular life story.

While George Sand's *Gabriel* recounts the life of its protagonist, it makes no claims to being an autobiography. In fact, George Sand situates her work squarely in the realm of fantasy. In the 1854 "Notice" to *Gabriel*, she writes: "*Gabriel* appartient, lui, par sa forme et par sa donnée, à la fantaisie pure. Il est rare que la fantaisie des artistes ait un lien direct avec leur situation" (5) [*Gabriel* belongs, by its form and by its data, to pure fantasy. It is rare that fantasy of artists has a direct link to their situation]. This claim should not, however, be accepted at face value.<sup>77</sup> As George Sand's prefaces to *Indiana* showed, this author believes in the link between writers and social change. Further, that a text belongs to the realm of fantasy does not mean that it bears no relevance to everyday life; "if such a link is not direct, it remains indirect" (Hart xii). Despite the fact that the fantasy of an artist may not have a direct connection with his or her situation, the fantasy may nevertheless depict how the artist hopes to influence society. Since George Sand says that it is rare, not impossible, that one's work of fantasy has any connection to the artist's situation, the possibility exists that *Gabriel* does in fact contribute to George Sand's larger vision for social progress. Indeed, *Gabriel* argues for many of the same things George

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<sup>77</sup> I tend to agree with Kathleen Robin Hart's theory that George Sand downplays the relation between her works and her personal life in an attempt to avoid "[h]ostile male critics [... who] were inclined to denigrate George Sand's character and talent in the same breath and to insinuate that her novels were thinly veiled accounts of her own depraved amorous adventures. [...] At stake was her reputation as a serious artist" (xii).

Sand does elsewhere despite the fact that the “Notice” situates the text as an isolated look at a character’s fictional life.

That *Gabriel* is a dialogic novel complicates its seemingly straightforward nature. The characters’ dialogue provides insight into the significance of the character names and stage directions, and these three narrative elements contribute to and shape how the reader approaches the text. While one might believe stage directions and character names to be objective notations, they too, like the characters’ dialogue, vacillate in how they portray Gabriel’s gender. The reader therefore experiences Gabriel’s gender identity differently than a spectator would if *Gabriel* were performed as a play. Thanks to the form of this dialogic novel, the reader visually observes the character’s name alter between Gabriel and Gabrielle<sup>78</sup> and sees the character’s pronouns vacillate between *il* and *elle* in the stage directions.

The list of characters provided before the prologue clearly establishes the character Gabriel as a masculine being. He is presented as “Gabriel de Bramante, [le] petit-fils [du Prince Jules de Bramante]” (6) [Gabriel de Bramante, the grandson of Prince Jules de Bramante]. Gabriel continues being presented as masculine throughout Act One. When Gabriel dresses as a woman for Astolphe in Act Two, the stage directions read: “*Gabriel, en habit de femme très élégant*” (69) [*Gabriel, in very elegant women’s clothing*]. Here, the stage directions specifically mention women’s clothing, whereas earlier Gabriel was simply dressed “*en habit de chasse*” (11) [in hunting clothes]; it is assumed that the reader will think the hunting clothes were men’s since that is consistent with the character’s masculinity. The character’s designation as Gabriel does not last throughout the text, as Gabriel changes to Gabrielle in Act Three. The action lines

<sup>78</sup> It is noteworthy that when Gabriel presents as a woman, his names ends in *elle* [she], symbolizing the gender change.

change accordingly, and while masculine pronouns were used for Gabriel, feminine pronouns are now used for Gabrielle. The text, however, does not adhere to this strict division. Rather, in Act Five, the character lines read “GABRIEL,” yet the stage directions vacillate between *il* and *elle*. For instance, “GABRIEL” is “*en homme [...] Il agrafe son manteau*” (143) [*dressed as a man. He hangs up his coat*], while three scenes later, the character line still reads “GABRIEL,” but the stage direction says “*Elle fait un pas et s’arrête*” (166) [*She takes a step and stops*]. Moreover, during a scene in which the tutor and Astolphe discuss Gabriel’s future, the tutor’s dialogue spells Gabriel’s name as “Gabriel” while Astolphe’s dialogue reads “Gabrielle” (153); it should be noted that the tutor’s dialogue does transition to “Gabrielle” toward the end of their discussion, but the last time the tutor speaks Gabriel’s name, it is spelled in the masculine form. The fluctuating character names and pronouns reflect the current state of Gabriel’s own identity crisis as his identity vacillates between the one that Gabriel prefers and the one that Astolphe forces upon him.

The internal conflict of Gabriel’s identity takes place on an external battleground—that of his body—with words serving as weapons wielded by the characters and the narration alike. As alluded to earlier, the dialogue, stage directions, and character names both complement and contradict each other, fleshing out George Sand’s text. The vacillating portrayal of Gabriel suggests that the notion of an objective sex and/or gender identity is turned upside down in *Gabriel*, just as it is in *Clémentine*. Appropriately, at the very center of the text’s disruption of the existence of a “real” sex and/or gender is the protagonist’s physical body. The hybrid form of George Sand’s novel, through dialogue, character names, and stage directions, is shaped by, and shapes, Gabriel’s experience with gender. The stage directions affect how the reader understands



the character, and Gabriel's given gender, as determined by himself or by other characters at a particular moment, also influences the language used by stage directions. There is therefore a mutual exchange between the body of the protagonist and the body of the text, and they work together to shape both Gabriel and *Gabriel*.

The contradiction between the character names and the gender pronouns used in the stage directions mimics the confusion and hopelessness felt by Gabriel. At one point, the character the text labels "GABRIEL" threatens self-mutilation, asserting: "je déchirerai cette poitrine, je mutilerai ce sein jusqu'à le rendre un objet d'horreur à ceux qui le verront, et nul ne sourira à l'aspect de ma nudité [...] J'échappe avec peine à la tentation du suicide!" (184) [I will tear this chest, I will mutilate this breast until I make it an object of horror for those who will see it, and no one will smile at the aspect of my nudity. I barely escape the temptation of suicide!] While it is "GABRIEL" who speaks, the stage direction, however, uses *elle*: "*Elle se jette à genoux et prie*" (184) [*She throws herself to her knees and prays*]. The stage direction therefore plays the role of the antagonist who considers Gabriel a female being. Just as the stage directions contradict the character name and rejects Gabriel's desire to be seen as masculine, Gabriel feels that his body has been taken from him, forced to be feminine, and he would rather destroy his body than be laid bare for others' enjoyment.

At the end of George Sand's novel, it is through death that Gabriel finds freedom from feminine expectations. He tells his assassin: "Je demandais la liberté, et tu me l'as donnée. (*Il tombe*)" (186) [I asked for liberty, and you gave it to me. (*He falls*)]. Gabriel's death scene serves as his final transgender practice. It was Gabriel's wish to die and the action line "*Il tombe*" preserves Gabriel's masculinity. The entire death scene therefore solidifies Gabriel's identity as a

free, albeit fatally wounded, man: “je me sens... libre! (*Il expire*)” (188) [I feel... free! (*He dies*)]. Thanks to the narrative structure of *Gabriel*, the character Gabriel goes from masculine to feminine and/or masculine and back to masculine, where he exits the story as the person he wished to be.<sup>79</sup>

Despite not being a transgeneric text, the novel *Aline-Ali* shares similar qualities with *Gabriel*. Like *Gabriel*, *Aline-Ali* presents at first glance a seemingly objective telling of Aline-Ali's life. An omniscient narrator offers what appears to be a reliable presentation of the events since the reader has access to Aline-Ali's thoughts and feelings. While not formally transgeneric, the text does take on a hybrid quality thanks to the mix of this omniscient narrator and the first-person narrator who is introduced at the end of André Léo's novel. Indeed, in the last chapter, the reader is exposed to a new perspective of Aline-Ali's character due to the change in narrative voice. The reader is removed from Aline-Ali's thoughts and it is through the eyes of the masculine stranger that the reader receives his or her final impressions of Aline-Ali. The new narrator's own bias informs the narrative and Aline-Ali is presented as a feminine character whose gender is never questioned: “une *femme* entra [...] Grande, mince et pâle, vêtue d'un costume noir” (366, emphasis mine) [a *woman* entered. Tall, thin and pale, dressed in a black

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<sup>79</sup> I must acknowledge the fact that the tutor uses feminine pronouns the last time he mentions Gabriel in the text. Before learning of Gabriel's death, however, he refers to the prince using both the masculine form of his name and masculine pronouns (189). Finding Gabriel's dead body, the tutor cries out: “Et ici un cadavre!” (190) [And here a corpse!] I suggest this is a pivotal moment for the tutor, when Gabriel ceases being Gabriel, a living, masculine subject, and is instead quite literally reduced to a (dead) female body. The tutor then uses feminine subject and object pronouns to describe Gabriel, now represented solely by his femaleness: “emportons-la. Nous la déposerons dans le premier couvent” (192) [Let's carry her. We will leave her in the first convent we come across]. In other words, Gabriel no longer exists since he exited (died) as a man in the previous scene; all that remains is a supposedly female body of which the other characters must dispose.

outfit]. The narrator does not hesitate in labeling the person standing before him a woman, indeed because that is how s.he presents h.erself. The reader nevertheless has insight into Aline-Ali's gender fluidity and previous sartorial transgender practices thanks to the preceding chapters. The narrator, and consequently reader, then takes leave of Aline-Ali in the final pages. Deciding to people-watch on the Champs-Élysées, the narrator observes Aline-Ali's nephew, whom he overhears speaking to a journalist. Similar to the symbiotic relationship of the two gender facets of Aline-Ali's identity, the two narrative elements of the text work together to create a story that begins with Suzanne's worry that her son will regurgitate sexist notions about women and concludes with her fear realized. The middle part, and bulk of the novel, offers the *homme nouveau* Aline-Ali as the key to stopping this toxic cycle.

An invisible, omniscient narrator recounts *Monsieur Vénus* and privileges the perspective of Raoule, or, as I have argued, the most masculine main character in the text. Rachilde's text is informed, according to Natalie Rogers, by its "contenu érotique et parti pris d'aller à rebours de toutes les conventions sociales et de tous les codes moraux [...] Ce parti pris est incarné dans le personnage féminin qui domine tout le récit par ses actions mais aussi par son point de vue qui coïncide le plus souvent avec celui de l'instance narrative" (240) [erotic content and bias of going against all social conventions and moral codes. This bias is incarnated in the feminine character that dominates the whole story by its actions but also by its point of view that coincides most often with that of the narrative voice]. Expanding upon Rogers' assertion that Raoule actually embodies the bias of this Decadent text, I add that the bodies of both Raoule and Jacques

incarnate Decadence<sup>80</sup> by establishing irreverence for traditional gender conventions through their dress and gender presentations. While the text may indeed follow Raoule's point of view, Jacques's body figures prominently as an object of fixation for Raoule, and the text itself both informs and is shaped by Raoule's manipulation of Jacques's body. Natalie Rogers suggests that "Raoule écrit le corps de l'autre, afin de s'écrire elle-même" (261) [Raoule writes the body of the other in order to write herself]. This further establishes a link between the text itself and the bodies of the characters. In other words, it appears that Raoule was able to create the body s.he desired, and that of Jacques, through linguistic means. After all, explains Rogers, "l'échange de la textualité pour la sexualité est d'ailleurs affirmé clairement" (N. Rogers 261) [further, the exchange of textuality for sexuality is clearly affirmed]. The fact that Raoule never claims to have written *Monsieur Vénus* does not necessarily undermine Rogers' statement. Her assertion merely establishes Raoule as creator of Jacques's body within the narrative world.

However, Barrès's preface to *Monsieur Vénus* supports the notion that this text contains auto-fictional dimensions.<sup>81</sup> Barrès writes: "Non, ce n'est pas une polissonnerie que cette *autobiographie* de la plus étrange des jeunes femmes" (20, emphasis mine) [No, it is not a farce this *autobiography* of the strangest of young women]. Rachilde herself even admitted, in a letter from 1896, that the "mythe Monsieur Vénus fut son histoire" (Bollhalder Mayer 193) [Monsieur

<sup>80</sup> As discussed in the Introduction, common themes of Decadent novels often include transgressive sexuality and (gender) artifice. See, for instance, Diana Holmes' *Rachilde: Decadence, Gender and the Woman Writer* (2001) and *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence* (1999), edited by Liz Constable, Denis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky.

<sup>81</sup> His belief could also be explained by Planté's assertion that nineteenth century critics read women authors' novels as "disguised autobiography" in order to view their literature as something other than art (*La Petite sœur* 233). In this sense, women's novels of the nineteenth century may always already be transgeneric in the sense that critics of the day considered them both fiction and autobiographical.

Vénus myth was her story]. If these claims were indeed true, both *Clémentine* and *Monsieur Vénus* would share the transgeneric aspect of being fictional and fictionalized memoirs. While I am not suggesting that Rachilde's memoir takes the form of *Monsieur Vénus*, it is nevertheless intriguing to take her novel as a metaphor for her desires. It is even more intriguing to think of a (male) outsider such as Barrès believing *Monsieur Vénus* to be the realized fantasies of its (female) author, as this puts Barrès's own preconceived notions in full light. He believes Rachilde's text to be a (feminine) work created organically, as though Rachilde's young female talent could exist only as an instinct and not as a developed skill: "Rachilde, à vingt ans, pour écrire un livre qui fait rêver un peu tout le monde, n'a guère réfléchi; elle a écrit tout au trot de sa plume, suivant son instinct. Le merveilleux, c'est qu'on puisse avoir de pareils instincts. [...] Rachilde n'a guère fait que se raconter soi-même" (Barrès 14) [Rachilde, at twenty years old, writing a book that makes everyone dream a little, did not much reflect upon it; she wrote, trotting along with her pen, following her instinct. The wonder is that one could have such instincts. Rachilde merely recounted herself]. By suggesting that Rachilde simply writes herself, Barrès diminishes the artistry of her work and situates the author as the object in question, not the text itself.

While Barrès seems to establish Rachilde as the central character in *Monsieur Vénus*, and while the narration itself privileges Raoule, I propose that, unlike the stories of Clémentina, Aline-Ali, and Gabriel, neither Rachilde nor Raoule are at the center of *Monsieur Vénus*. Rather, it is the body of Jacques that is intricately intertwined with Rachilde's literary text. For both Raoule the character and Rachilde the author, Jacques's body figures prominently at the core of their respective creations. More specifically, after having turned Jacques into her mistress in life,

Raoule creates a mannequin out of Jacques's cadaver, turning Jacques's body into her own desired object in death. For Rachilde, Jacques's body is at the center of her literary work and is featured through Raoule's (masculine) gaze. In this Decadent novel, the greatest corporeal artifice is not the idea of a sexed and gendered body but the revived construction of the dead body at the end. This artifice—not the deconstruction of gender norms since they ultimately remain intact—is at the heart of Rachilde's work.

In conclusion, Cuisin, George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde create literary spaces for their gender non-conforming characters to occupy, thereby countering and challenging (cis-) gendernormativity. Since Bakhtin stresses the flexibility and constantly evolving nature of the novel as genre, it is fitting that all four texts use the form of the novel as a way to showcase characters whose genders also evolve and flourish in their own plasticity and unfixed nature. *Pratiques d'écriture transgenre*, from the queering of texts to the crossing and mixing of genres and genders through linguistic means, privilege these characters, presenting them as active subjects, and use literature as a tool to influence social structures and to elicit compassion from readers. Importantly, *Clémentine*, *Gabriel*, *Aline-Ali*, and *Monsieur Vénus* are not homologous texts. The novels' different literary constructs and stylistic choices reflect uniqueness among transgender individuals and among people in general. Each text creates new subject positions for traditionally marginalized individuals.

*Pratiques d'écriture transgenre* are certainly not restricted to producing texts that belong to the genre of novel or to nineteenth century France. As I discuss in the Conclusion, the framework I have established can be applied to most any form of literary creation, including autobiographical texts that, as Gilmore points out, also embrace fluidity by “recognizing the

shifting sands of identity” (*Autobiographics* 13). As Todorov writes, “le champ de la littérature s’est élargi [...] puisqu’il incluait maintenant, à côté des poèmes, romans, nouvelles et œuvres dramatiques, le vaste domaine de l’écriture narrative destinée à usage public ou personnel, l’essai, la réflexion” (15) [the field of literature has widened since it now included, next to poems, novels, short stories, and dramatic works, the vast domain of narrative writing destined to the public or personal usage, the essay, the reflection]. All these forms of writing provide a subjective, personalized response to absolute claims regarding human identities that have been made by scientific and medical communities; furthermore, they can challenge and/or nuance the latter’s production of sex and gender knowledge. I maintain that the genre of novel, and any literary genre that privileges constantly evolving and unfixed structure and content, easily facilitates transgender writing practices by refusing to confine the creator to one fixed set of rules or expectations.<sup>82</sup> The open-endedness allows for nontraditional subjects to exist in alternate, literary worlds while rebelling against hegemony. Freedom of style and expression also enables the writer to play with readers’ expectations and pre-conceived notions, exposing them to other modes of being and thinking. Todorov perhaps puts it best when he sums up literature’s purpose: “la littérature aspire à comprendre [...] l’expérience humaine” (73) [literature aspires to understand human experience]. This human experience encompasses *all* genres of people whose gender identities may be already formed or still in the process of being imagined and realized.

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<sup>82</sup> Of course, it is possible for one to work within a set of rules in order to critique and rebel against the very establishment. I think, however, that it would be difficult for a scientific text to illustrate transgender writing practices, which is a topic I broach in the Conclusion. This nonliterary text would have to privilege as subject a gender non-conforming individual and avoid the use of language that affirms binary states. It would need to embrace a certain amount of fluidity, recognizing that a person’s gender identity and body are not fixed, pre-determined, or quantifiable. Furthermore, the scientific text would have to include an element of advocacy for changing how gender identity is understood and implemented socially.

## CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I have claimed that calling certain literary characters that wear clothing attributed to the opposite gender “cross-dressers” and/or “androgynous” erases the significant ways in which they refuse traditional gender identities as determined by sex and cross from one side of the gender spectrum to another. By analyzing their sartorial choices and social behaviors as transgender practices, I have shown how Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule eschew sex and gender norms and forge their own identities as complex and at times contradictory subjects who cannot be reduced to limited labels such as “man” and “woman.” Indeed, my corpus suggests that the sexed body is not essential or natural and that “man” and “woman” constitute social, hierarchical categories prone to deconstruction. Further, I have argued that transgender writing practices facilitate the creation of these literary characters that partake in transgender practices.

The aspects of *pratiques d'écriture transgenre* that I have outlined, particularly in Chapter Four, are not fast rules. Instead, I contend that one of the only absolutes of transgender writing practices is the privileging of gender non-conforming subjects, whose literary representations depict gender fluidity and/or a rejection of the traditional sex/gender binaries. While I do maintain that transgender writing practices will necessarily embody a social critique of gender norms, I do not believe this needs to be intended or even recognized by the author. I think there is nevertheless a strong probability that the author who actively privileges a gender non-conforming subject will be aware of his or her social engagement. Privileging such a character does not, however, mean that the character is depicted in a positive light—Raoule certainly is not. It simply means that the character is a complex, multi-dimensional person whose



story is at the forefront of the work. Consequently, I propose that the nature of privileging such a protagonist will most likely result in the creation of a character motivated to challenge and disrupt the status quo of gender norms, thereby transforming the text into a queer work whether the author is cognizant of this or not.

The manner in which an author could go about actually creating a text that privileges gender non normative characters reflects the various ways an individual could partake in transgender practices. My corpus suggests that one such way is the use of gendered language in non-traditional, gender-bending manners (for instance, calling a supposedly female-bodied individual a man). Indeed, the manipulation of traditionally gendered language is one area in which texts promoting gender-bending practices will likely converge. If we are to open up, even destroy, the categories “man” and “woman,” we have to first change how language is used and understood. This includes expanding definitions of traditionally gendered categories; for example, expanding the definition of man to include people whose bodies are not viewed as male as well as including male-bodied individuals who choose to present as feminine but still identify as a man. In other words, the dismantlement of gender/sex binaries will ultimately result in the dismantlement of gendered categories and labels (man, woman, son, daughter, brother, sister). In the meantime, transgender writing practices can continue complicating these definitions.

The other aspects constituting transgender writing practices in my corpus—for instance, the creation of transgeneric texts as well as the use of ellipses and the absence of certain labels that ultimately promote gender fluidity—will not necessarily be present in all texts that illustrate *pratiques d'écriture transgenre*. Indeed, *Aline-Ali* and *Monsieur Vénus* are not transgeneric. The structure and genres of texts produced through transgender writing practices will therefore vary. I

have focused on literary productions, and while I believe that literature is one of the more accommodating ways to promote stories of non-normative individuals, it is possible that scientific or medical texts could be written with transgender writing practices. No one doubts the scientific need to offer concrete facts, empirical evidence, and, perhaps, definitive conclusions (for instance: “The subject has XY chromosomes.”); however, *interpretations* drawn from raw data run the risk of being presented as objective, unchangeable realities that confirm previous beliefs (“The subject with XY chromosomes exhibits masculine characteristics, including strength, body hair, and male sexual organs.”). More specifically, by interpreting data and drawing conclusions without interrogating the male/female binary itself, scientific and medical writers could perpetuate dual states based on their own subconscious assumptions and thus end up furthering the existing social and political hierarchies.<sup>83</sup> Since transgender existence flies in the face of traditional, binary understandings of biology, more openly subjective forms of written expression may be better suited for embracing the complexities, contradictions, and nuances of trans identities.<sup>84</sup> However, Planté points out that

le progrès des connaissances scientifiques nous fournit aujourd’hui de nouveau éléments qui poussent non seulement à combattre les hiérarchies injustes, mais à nous interroger sur le principe même du classement des êtres humains en hommes et femmes, et sur sa portée. Comme cet ordre binaire structure la vie

<sup>83</sup> For instance, see Emily Martin’s “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles” (1991) for an analysis of how biological processes such as fertilization have been represented through feminine and masculine stereotypes; specifically, Martin shows how the egg is presented as passive, to be acted upon, or “rescued,” by the aggressive, “manly” sperm.

<sup>84</sup> Indeed, it may well be said that attempting to objectively study human behavior and existence in general will be an effort in futility due to the complexities of people’s minds and lives.

individuelle, familiale, sociale et nos représentations du monde, dans un système apparu à l'époque moderne mais que beaucoup de gens tendent à confondre avec une nature humaine éternelle, on comprend qu'une telle interrogation puisse être perçue comme un bouleversement menaçant ("Pour ne pas conclure" 323-324) [the progress of scientific knowledge today provides us with new elements that push not only to combat unjust hierarchies, but also to question ourselves on the very principle of classifying human beings into men and women and on its impact. Since this binary order structures our representations of the world as well as individual, familial, and social life, in a system that appeared in the modern era but which many people tend to confuse with an eternal human nature, one understands how such a questioning could be viewed as a threatening upheaval]

In this instance, literature can work in tandem with science as individual stories lend credence to scientific findings and vice versa. As my corpus demonstrates, the disruption of sex/gender binaries started, at the minimum, over a century before the scientific elements that Planté cites come into play. Indeed, I propose that it is thanks to the subjective, unique, yet not isolated, experiences of gender non-conforming individuals as shared through literature, journals, and word of mouth that the idea of nonbinary sex and gender identities first permeated the social consciousness, ultimately resulting in a recognizable shift in how people in the scientific and medical fields are beginning to approach such topics.

My research on and theorization of *pratiques d'écriture transgenre* encourages other work to be done on similar fronts, including that of French and Francophone Studies and Gender

and Women's Studies. I have contributed to existing scholarship on the variety of gender identities as presented in nineteenth century French literature and have shown that transgender experiences of the twenty-first century are not isolated from the past. I have no doubt that other texts, for instance those featuring so-called cross-dressers, would shine further light on understanding present-day gender identities when analyzed through the lens of transgender writing practices. Herculine Barbin's memoir *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.*, for example, proves a fascinating case study in terms of how Barbin creates her literary, intersex self in her memoirs. A comparison to *Clémentine* may well be in order. *L'Enfant de sable* (1985) by Moroccan author Tahar Ben Jelloun is an example of a twentieth century text of which an analysis framed by transgender writing practices could open up new ways of comprehending Ahmed's story, as told through a plurality of voices. Further, *L'Enfant de sable* provides ample opportunity for examining the connections among race, gender, identity, and (post) colonization in a francophone context.

Indeed, further study of transgender writing practices is needed with particular attention paid to both class and race. As the theory of intersectionality<sup>85</sup> has shown, it is impossible to talk about gender inequalities without also addressing injustices pertaining to race and social class.

The novels in my corpus feature white characters;<sup>86</sup> this does not of course mean that race is

<sup>85</sup> See, for instance, Kimberlé Crenshaw's work "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989) and "Mapping the Margins" (1991).

<sup>86</sup> Despite the Arabic connotations of the name "Ali," Aline-Ali is depicted as white and French: "On devinait en [Aline] les élégances de l'éducation unies aux *finesses de la race* [...] Deux bandeaux ondulés de *cheveux châtain*s encadraient son front poli" (*Aline-Ali* 5, emphasis mine) [One perceived in Aline the elegance of education united with the *delicacy of the race*. Two headbands interwoven with *chestnut-brown hair* framed her polished forehead]. Additionally, Aline-Ali's father highlights his own nationality when introducing himself and Ali to Paul and his friends: "Monsieur de Maurion, de Paris, ancien magistrat, et son fils Ali" (99) [Monsieur de

absent from the novels. Instead, it highlights how whiteness is the norm and implicitly depicts the erasure of people of other races. Class privilege, as opposed to that of race, is highlighted more explicitly in my corpus. For instance, Clémentina lives a life of luxury and for this reason does not need to sell herself and her body as a public spectacle. Much to Astolphe's jealousy, Gabriel enjoys the position of heir to his grandfather's kingdom. Aline-Ali attempts to use her class privilege to educate working class women, while Raoule uses hers to further dominate impoverished Jacques, the artificial flower-maker. Therefore, while my protagonists are considered inferior based on their assigned biology, they all benefit from being white and wealthy. A study of literary texts privileging gender non-conforming working or lower class characters of color would illuminate how *pratiques d'écriture transgenre* function on a more intersectional level and would also explore how a variety of transgender identities are constructed and represented in a literary manner. For instance, what happens when an individual does not have the resources to pass "successfully" in society? How is that person's gender identity conveyed and communicated both by him or her within the narrative and by the author on a textual level? The fact that, as we will see, transgender women of color are currently the most vulnerable individuals in the LGBTQ community makes it even more imperative that their stories, both fictional and autobiographical, are told, shared, and studied.

Before jumping to a discussion of present dangers facing trans men and women, let us first bridge the gap between the nineteenth century world of my protagonists and today. The

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Maurion, of Paris, former magistrate, and his son Ali]. While the name "Ali" may have been chosen (by Aline, by Léo) not for its Arabic association but rather for the fact that it is a recognizable male name that also happens to be a shortened version of "Aline," an analysis of the Arabic connection is nevertheless in order. Such a study could further tease out the relationship between transgender practices and transnationality.

1800 ban forbidding Parisian women to wear pants without permission was officially lifted in 2013 even though, as Bard notes, the ordinance had long been obsolete (*Histoire politique* 380). As I am sure readers can attest, trousers have become everyday attire for many women. No longer are they the mark of rebellion against gender roles for women in Western societies. In fact, Bard argues that wearing a skirt can be an act of resistance to social expectations; wearing pants, for instance, has become “obligatoire pour les adolescentes, manière d’éviter la sexualisation du corps féminin enjuponné [...] La fille en jupe, comme hier la fille en pantalon, aura mauvaise réputation. Porter une jupe, c’est ‘allumer,’ ‘chercher’ le regard” (Bard, *Histoire politique* 372-373) [obligatory for adolescent girls, a manner of avoiding the sexualization of the skirt-clad feminine body. The girl in a skirt, like yesterday’s girl in pants, will have a bad reputation. To wear a skirt is to “excite,” to “look for” the gaze]. Some people may view the skirt as a symbolic way to claim one’s body, arguing that women should be able to dress as they please without fear of sexual harassment. Others, however, might see the skirt as representative of patriarchal objectification of women’s bodies. At this moment, I do not believe it is productive to debate whether or not the skirt is a sign of feminine rebellion or oppression. Rather, I would like to focus on one instance in which the skirt makes an undeniably powerful social statement and speaks to the issues I have discussed throughout this dissertation: when someone with a male-assigned body wears it.

While most people pay pants-clad women little notice in Western societies, a man wearing a skirt or a dress would most likely draw the attention of the average passerby. French website and activist group “Hommes en jupe” was established in 2004 by Jérôme Salomé and advocates for cultural acceptance and normalization of men wearing skirts. His website offers

moral support and advice to men interested in expanding their wardrobe options and provides them with a sense of community. Additionally, the group is politically and socially active. Salomé has written letters to former French presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy requesting a “texte qui autorise hommes comme femmes à porter jupes comme pantalons sans qu’un employeur ne puisse les en interdire” (“Récapitulatif des actions menées”) [text that authorizes men, like women, to wear skirts like pants without an employer forbidding it]. During Strasbourg’s fashion week, May 24-28, 2016, “Hommes en jupe” urged men to join their cause and attend their organized event whose description reads: “Les féministes américaines ont jeté leurs soutien-gorges dans les années 60, vous jetterez vos pantalons pour symboliser la libération de l’homme d’une mode trop triste, uniforme, et inconfortable!” (Vivien) [American feminists threw off their bras in the 1960s, you will discard your pants to symbolize the liberation of man from a fashion that is sad, homogeneous, and uncomfortable!] While wearing pants symbolized the political and social liberation of women during the nineteenth century, here it appears that wearing a skirt frees men from the constraints of twenty-first century gender expectations. It should be noted that the two actions do not exactly parallel each other in terms of power dynamics. By wearing pants and therefore rendering themselves more masculine, nineteenth century women brought themselves up a level on the hierarchical gender ladder; in comparison, “[u]n homme qui adopte un vêtement féminin descend la même échelle, perdant volontairement un peu de son pouvoir, en s’approchant du statut féminin” (Bard, *Histoire politique* 374) [a man who adopts feminine clothing goes down the same ladder, voluntarily losing some of his power by approaching the feminine status]. Nevertheless, Bard argues, the “universalisation de la jupe, après celle du pantalon, serait un signal fort de réduction de la différence des sexes” (*Histoire*

*politique* 374) [universalization of the skirt, after that of pants, would be a strong signal of the reduction of the difference of the sexes]. The ability for anybody, with any *body*, to wear a skirt without facing ridicule lies contingent on the eradication of any perceived differences between men and women's social status as indicated through supposedly sexed bodies.

As I argue in the pages that follow, the continued belief in different and “natural” sexes and sexed bodies remains one of the biggest fundamental issues facing transgender people today. Even people who support the rights of transgender individuals appear fascinated by their supposedly “wrong” bodies. Here I return to the June 9, 2015 podcast episode “Paroles de transgenres” that I mentioned briefly in the Introduction. Going so far as to suggest that the word “trans” [transgender] references “transformation,” podcast host Pascale Clark continually asks about her three transgender guests’ corporeal changes despite being told repeatedly that they do not appreciate framing their experiences in terms of *transformer* [to transform] or *devenir* [to become]. One of Clark’s guests, H  l  ne Hazera, explains: “J’ai pas transform   de l’un    l’autre. J’ai toujours   t   l’autre” [I did not transform from one to the other. I’ve always been the other]. Clark nevertheless continues with this same line of questioning, asking guest Coline, “Vous   tes n  e gar  on il y a 36 ans; je peux le dire comme   a ou   a vous choque?” [You were born a boy 36 years ago; can I say it like that or does that shock you?] Coline corrects Clark, explaining that she was *assigned* the identity of a boy when she was born. Even though Coline points out that it is more important to talk about the social status of trans people rather than the condition of their sexed bodies, Clark asks her third guest, Edi Dominique Dubien, if he was “n   dans un corps de fille?” [born in a girl’s body?] Hazera suggests an elegant way of completely avoiding this topic by saying simply that she is “une femme trans.   a suffit” [a trans woman. That suffices].



Clark's word choices of "born in a girl's body" and "born a boy" suggests that the body's appearance and "real" state—in other words, the presence or absence of certain genitalia—provide the key to understanding someone's identity. It is because of this line of thinking that Clark continually refers to her guests "transforming" from one sexed identity to the other. Hazera, Coline, and Dubien patiently and repeatedly suggest that their identities never actually changed from one thing to another and that their socially-assigned sexed bodies had little to do with who they were. If anything, changing their bodies was a way for society to finally accept their various identities. As this example demonstrates, discourse on the trans experience focuses largely on one's physical body and on either discovering the "truth" that lies beneath one's clothes or, to refer to the "born in the wrong body" rhetoric, on fixing nature's "error" through surgical means.

Janet Mock, American writer, television host, and transgender rights activist, elaborates upon the danger in believing that people's biological bodies hold an unchanging truth about their identity. She writes: "Many cis people assume that trans women, whether we 'pass' as cis or not, are pretending to be someone we are not, and often expect us to disclose that we are trans to all we meet. Disclosure should be an individual personal choice based on circumstances such as safety, access, and resources" (161). Disclosure is necessary only because of the importance society places on the physical body. As I pointed out in Chapter One, once we sever the ties between physical attributes and the notion of a fixed, "real" gender identity, trans individuals will no longer be seen as having anything to reveal or confess. In the meantime, those who reject the idea that the body holds an inherent truth become targets for harassment and violence. When "disclosure occurs for a trans woman [...] she is often accused of deception because, as the

widely accepted misconception goes, trans women are not ‘real’ women (meaning cis women); therefore, the behavior (whether rejection, verbal abuse, or even severe violence) is warranted” (Mock 161). In other words, since cis-gender is not only the norm but also viewed as the “true” way for humans to exist, trans individuals are considered an inferior and threatening subset whose bodies and lives are considered flawed and therefore less valuable than those of cis people.

The cheapening and degrading of trans lives results in devastating consequences. There were at least 23 trans women and gender non-conforming people murdered in the United States in 2015—more murders than in any other recorded year—and most of them were transgender women of color (“Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence” 2). In fact, 72% of hate crimes against LGBTQ people in 2015 were against trans women (“Stop Trans Murders”). Transgender people of color are six times more likely than their non-transgender LGBQ peers “to experience physical violence from the police, 1.5 times more likely to experience discrimination, 1.5 times more likely to face sexual violence and 1.8 times more likely to experience bias-based violence in shelters” (“A National Crisis: Anti-Transgender Violence” 2). “At a time when transgender people are finally gaining visibility and advocates are forcing our country to confront systemic violence against people of color, transgender women of color are facing an epidemic of violence that occurs at the intersections [sic] of racism, sexism and transphobia” (“Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence” 2). Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign, stresses that it is imperative that explicit non-discrimination laws are passed at the state and federal levels in the United States and that law enforcement improves training and responses to anti-transgender crime (“Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence” 2). Further, law enforcement needs to be held

accountable for its own role in perpetuating discrimination; while 22% of transgender people who interacted with the police in 2011 reported bias-based harassment, “transgender people of color report[ed] much higher rates of bias-based harassment” (“Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence” 31). Unsurprisingly, “[n]early half of transgender people surveyed said that they were uncomfortable turning to police for help” (“Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence” 31).

In addition to being at risk for harassment by both individuals and law enforcement, the transgender population faces further discrimination from the state in both the United States and France. Up until 2016, the physical and sexual violence facing trans people in French society, explains podcast guest Coline, was reinforced by refusal on behalf of the state to recognize their gender identity. In the United States, 33% of transgender individuals surveyed in 2011 had not been able to update any identification documents to match their affirmed gender (“Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence” 32). On May 15, 2015, the Association Nationale Transgenre [National Transgender Association] released a press statement declaring that the rights of transgender individuals had not improved since the twentieth century:

Le refus de changer l'état civil des personnes transgenres à moins qu'elles ne prouvent leur totale perte de fertilité (c'est-à-dire leur stérilisation) devant les tribunaux est la quintessence d'un système pervers, honteux, mis en place depuis 1992, et qu'aucune volonté politique gouvernementale n'est venue depuis remettre en cause” (“Communiqué de presse du 15 mai 2015”) [The refusal to change the civil state of transgender people unless they prove their complete loss of fertility (in other words, their sterilization) before a court is the quintessential

marking of a perverse, shameful system in place since 1992 and not challenged politically since then]

Up until this year, there was no law that allowed French transgender (as opposed to transsexual) people to change their civil state or their name on official documents (“Europe: La Souffrance des personnes transgenre”); in order for trans people to legally change their gender identity in the eyes of the law, they had to submit their bodies to invasive surgery, sterilization, hormone treatments, or psychiatric examinations (“Europe: La Souffrance des personnes transgenre”). Furthermore, by not undergoing treatment, transgender people “risquent de subir des discriminations dès qu’elles doivent présenter des documents mentionnant un nom ou des informations liées au genre qui ne correspondent pas à leur identité de genre et à son expression” (“Europe: La Souffrance des personnes transgenre”) [risk facing discrimination as soon as they must present documents mentioning a name or information linked to a gender that does not correspond their gender identity and their gender expression]. Coline explains that for a long time, she did not have any “papiers d’identité qui correspondaient à [s]on identité sociale” (“Paroles de transgenres”) [identification that corresponded to her social identity].

On May 19, 2016, the French National Assembly passed legislation allowing transgender people to change their gender identity without providing proof of an irreversible and medical physical transformation (Prigent). They nevertheless must furnish evidence of a desire to live continuously as someone of the opposite gender. Stéphanie Nicot, president of the French LGBT federation, criticized this legislation, saying that while removing medical proof as the *only* way to change one’s official gender identity is imperative, the changes to the law—specifically that one still needs to provide a “réunion suffisante de faits” (Prigent) [sufficient collection of

facts]—do not go far enough. Nicot explains: “‘Réunion’ implique qu’il y a plusieurs critères, ‘suffisante’ implique que la décision est soumise à un juge et ‘de faits’ implique que des preuves sont exigibles” (Prigent) [“Sufficient” implies that the decision is subjected to a judge, “collection” implies that there are several pieces of criteria, and “of facts” implies that proof is required]. On July 12, 2016, the National Assembly adopted a new version of the law that specified what kind of criteria is needed in order to change one’s gender (Dupont). Additionally, this revised legislation completely demedicalizes the process by removing medical treatments from the list of acceptable evidence one can provide (Dupont). However, petitioners still need to appear before a court of law in order to have their gender change approved. Transgender associations criticize this stipulation, arguing that people should be able to change their gender through a simple declaration in front of a civil servant (Dupont); this would allow the individual to make his or her own decision, based on “auto-détermination” (“France: Un tournant pour les personnes transgenres?”) [self-determination], without needing to appeal to a court that may or may not confirm his or her choice. A further criticism of the law is that, with the exception of emancipated minors, it does not extend to people under the age of 18 (Fae). While this legislation undoubtedly moves in the right direction, it does not let transgender individuals claim full control over their bodies and their identities; they remain subject to outside scrutiny. Whether facing individual harassment or state-enforced inspection, trans bodies are at risk of suffering discrimination and violence, and they bear the burden of either assimilating to what society and the state expect of them, or facing severe and dangerous consequences for not conforming.

The constant threat of social violence and harassment coupled with the burden of “proving” one’s gender identity understandably leave many trans people mentally and physically

exhausted. This struggle can lead to feelings of despair and/or depression. Rates of suicide and attempted suicide among the transgender population in the United States are staggering. 41% of more than 6,000 respondents to the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey reported ever attempting suicide (Haas, Herman, and Rodgers 3). Of the trans women-identified respondents to the 2014 National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 42% said they had attempted suicide; 46% of the respondents who identify as trans men had attempted suicide, and 44% of female-assigned cross-dressers (those presenting as women) had attempted suicide (Haas, Herman, and Rodgers 8). According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, “[n]o complete count is kept of suicide attempts in the U.S.” (“Understanding Suicide: Facts and Figures”), but the Centers for Disease Control estimates that between 2008 and 2009, 0.5% of the U.S. adult population reported attempting suicide during the year (“Violence Prevention. Suicide: Facts at a Glance, 2012”). Representative of the way social, political, and legal issues facing trans people are far too often overlooked, the CDC’s “Facts at a Glance” page lists gender and racial disparities among people who complete or attempt suicide yet gives no mention of trans individuals and how suicide affects them disproportionately. In 2011, 15.8% of American high school students surveyed reported attempting suicide during the past year (“Violence Prevention. Suicide: Facts at a Glance, 2012”). This can be compared to LGBTQ youth, of whom more than 30% reported at least one suicide attempt within a year (“Statistics about Youth Suicide”). “More than 50 percent of Transgender youth will have had at least one suicide attempt by their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday” (“Statistics about Youth Suicide”).

In light of the emotional and corporeal violence facing transgender people today, a restructuring of society and of people’s notions of sex and gender is crucial. Griffin writes that in

addition to changing social policies to protect transgender people, “we must continue to do more to change hearts and minds” (“Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence” 2). As demonstrated by my corpus, literature has the power to alter the reader’s way of thinking and the novels in my corpus encourage the reader to embrace the gender non-conforming characters. “The work begins by each of us recognizing that cis people are not more valuable or legitimate [...] We must recognize, discuss, and dismantle this hierarchy that polices bodies and values certain ones over others. We must recognize that we all have different experiences of oppression and privilege” (Mock 237). As my dissertation has shown through its study of the novels by Cuisin, George Sand, André Léo, and Rachilde, sex and its significance are just as much of a social construct as gender; “natural” bodies come in a variety of forms. No one body is more authentic than another, just as no one form of gender expression is more legitimate than another. While the battleground may change—in the nineteenth century, clothing was one of the symbols of rebellion while public restrooms in the United States have now become contested sites—transgender and gender non-conforming people today are fighting the same war waged by Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule. Just as the villagers read Clémentina’s difference as a reason to suspect her of malicious intent, so too does North Carolina’s “Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act,” or “bathroom bill,” and others like it, promote discrimination and ignorance through the rhetoric of protection and public safety.

As I have argued, one way to dispel myths and to combat ignorance is through the exchange of life stories. Mock relays how she first told her partner about being transgender by sharing her past experiences with him: “In mere moments, through the intimate act of storytelling, I’d shattered the shell and replaced it with the truth, and I witnessed Aaron’s

awakening to the reality of me” (245). Like that of Mock, the stories of Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule are conveyed to the reader. Each novel opens up the possibility for gender non-conforming characters to present themselves as they desire to be seen. While Gabriel may be a literary equivalent of a trans man who passes successfully in society today, I consider Clémentina as the model for more radical, hyper-visible genderqueer individuals who proudly reject the gender binary. For instance, Clémentina could be the nineteenth century precursor to Jacob Tobia, a genderqueer advocate, writer, and artist who uses the pronouns “they, them” and often sports a beard along with lipstick, earrings, and a skirt. Tobia writes that people have gone from assuming they are a “really gay” man to assuming they identify as a woman (“I’m Genderqueer”). Tobia explains that it is as though people “don’t believe that being genderqueer is a *real* thing—that [Tobia’s] identity is a phase, and one day [they will] realize that [they are] really just a woman” (“I’m Genderqueer,” emphasis in original). Tobia explains that they will not be transitioning to a woman in the traditional sense. Specifically, Tobia’s “transition has not been from one gender identity to ‘the other.’ Rather, it has been from the well-understood categories of man and woman to an identity outside traditional notions of gender” (“I’m Genderqueer”). Indeed, society is so fixed on the notion of two genders and sexes that genderqueer people are paradoxically both hyper-visible and overlooked as individuals who have yet to realize what or who they “really” are. Alok Vaid-Menon, trans artist of color who partners with Janani Balasubramanian to form the performance art group Darkmatter, writes:

It’s not an accident that nonbinary people have been so thoroughly erased from the collective imagination, from political and social movements, from the historical archive. [...] This situation is the result of a series of calculated



equations, decisions, and histories. Including “nonbinary” in a mission statement isn’t enough. Understanding that nonbinary people exist isn’t enough. Exceptionalizing us and regarding us as anomalies isn’t enough. Push further. [...] How did trans politics come to be about trans people “gaining rights” and not everyone divesting from gender to begin with? How are we upholding institutions, rituals, cultures, politics, and ideas that further entrench the gender binary and facilitate violence against nonbinary people? How did gender become so essential that it has become required for humanity? These questions are not rhetorical. They have answers. And nonbinary people have been on the frontlines of providing them.

Like today’s trans activists, Clémentina, Gabriel, Aline-Ali, and Raoule are on the frontlines of their stories, throwing into question the very necessity of gender and sexed identities. The authors’ transgender writing practices raised these questions, albeit perhaps rhetorically, planting seeds of resistance in readers’ minds. It is up to the readers to set forth and, if they so choose, join the ranks of nonbinary and genderqueer advocates in dismantling the social significance of sex and gender. To paraphrase Cuisin, another world exists and its entrance is open to you. I invite you to walk through the door.

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# VITA

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### ARTICLES

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"Faire des hommes nouveaux: L'Education féminine dans *Aline-Ali* (1869) et *La Femme et les mœurs: Monarchie ou liberté* (1869) d'André Léo." *Women in French Studies*. Forthcoming.

### GRANT (selected)

Research and Graduate Studies Office, The Pennsylvania State University, Dissertation Support Funding

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### PRESENTATIONS (selected)

"*Pratiques d'écriture transgenre: Transgenre Writing of Transgender Characters in Gabriel and Clémentine, orpheline et androgyne.*" Women in French (Gettysburg, PA. June 2016).

"Discours sur l'hermaphrodite, discours de l'hermaphrodite: Les Mémoires d'une travestie dans *Clémentine, Orpheline et androgyne.*" Association Canadienne des Études Francophones XIX Siècle (Ottawa, Canada. May 2015)