

**Bachelors, Bastards, and Nomadic Masculinity:  
Illegitimacy in Guy de Maupassant and André Gide**

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This dissertation is a thematic exploration of bachelor figures and male bastards in literary works by Guy de Maupassant and André Gide. The coupling of Maupassant and Gide is appropriate for such an analysis, not only because of their mutual treatment of illegitimacy, but also because each writer represents a chronologically identifiable literary movement, Realism and Modernism, and each writes during contiguous moments of socio-legal changes particularly related to divorce law and women's rights, which consequently have great influence on the legal destiny of illegitimate or "natural" children. Napoleon's Civil Code of 1804 provides the legal (patriarchal) framework for the period of this study of illegitimacy, from about 1870 to 1925. The Civil Code saw numerous changes during this period. The Naquet Law of 1884, which reestablished limited legal divorce, represents the central socio-legal event of the turn of the century in matters of legitimacy, whereas the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the First World War furnish chronological bookends for this dissertation. Besides through history, law, and sociology, this dissertation treats illegitimacy through the lens of various branches of gender theory, particularly the study of masculinities and a handful of other important critical theories, most importantly those of Michel Foucault, Eve Sedgwick and of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Bachelors and bastards are two principal players in the representation of illegitimacy in Maupassant and Gide, but this study considers the theme of illegitimacy as extended beyond simple questions of legitimate versus illegitimate children. The male bastard is only one of the “counterfeit” characters examined in these authors’ fictional texts. This dissertation is divided into three parts which consider specific thematic elements of their “bastard narratives.” Part One frames the representation in fiction of bachelor figures and how they contribute to or the roles they play in instances of illegitimacy. Part Two springs from and develops the metaphor of the “counterfeit coin,” whether represented by a bastard son, an affected schoolboy, a false priest, or a pretentious *littérateur*. Part Three explains the concept of “nomadic masculine” practices; such practices include nomadic styles of masculinity development as well as the bastard’s nomadism.

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## PREFACE

I would like to thank all of my friends and family for their support during the writing of this dissertation and all the years leading up to its completion. I also extend my gratitude to the Department of French and Italian at the University of Pittsburgh, and everyone, past and present, who belongs to it for their years of support and the opportunity to write this dissertation. It was an honor to spend an important part of my life among such wonderful people and great scholars.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

“L’enfant naturel a en général les mêmes droits et les mêmes devoirs que l’enfant légitime dans ses rapports avec ses pères et mères... Il entre dans la famille de son auteur.” (Code civil, 1972, loi de 3 janvier)

When the law of January 3, 1972 was passed in France, it assured the legal equality of legitimate and illegitimate children alike. This law expresses the juridical end of illegitimacy as a basis for the long-standing privation of inheritance, financial support, and basic needs, suffered by illegitimate children in France. Of present importance is the law’s reference to a child’s “author” (*auteur*). While the illegitimate child’s rights and duties are explained to be equal to that of a legitimate child, specifically in relation to both that child’s male and female relatives (“ses pères et ses mères”), the “family” to which the child belongs is specifically that of the child’s *auteur*, the father. With this consideration of the family as specifically that of the *father*, the importance of a person’s biological sexual identification remains capital for their role within the traditional family, even while the law provides for equality between legitimate and illegitimate children of unspecified gender. Because of the inherent patriarchal nature of the law’s language, one may consider the privileging of the father-son relation in family law and custom as one that began with Roman law, and continues even today thanks to the law presently discussed<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Yvonne Knibiehler’s *Les pères aussi ont une histoire* (Mesnil-sur-l’Estrée, France : Éditions Hachette, 1987) provides pertinent descriptions of the origins and evolution of modern French fatherhood, beginning with ancient Roman paternity, and specifically how this was the basis for French concepts of the ideal family structure.

The appellation “bastard,” despite its generally negative connotation throughout French history in reference to bastard blood and impure lineage, is used throughout this dissertation in reference to children born of unwed parents. Another important term used in French for illegitimate children is *enfant naturel*; this expression, which has less of a negative connotation, is often found in both literary and legal texts, whereas “*bâtard*,” when referring to a child, is less commonly found in legal discourse. The various “bastard” characters to be discussed in the following chapters are all male; there are a few reasons for this choice. Firstly, the system of male-centered primogeniture prevalent throughout French history inherently values male children over females, thereby making the question of illegitimacy of more consequence for male bastards than for female bastards. This is not to say that illegitimate daughters did not have their share of problems due to their legal familial status; in the nineteenth century, for example, an illegitimate daughter was much less likely to have a proper dowry (generally provided by the father) than a legitimate daughter. Many of the material disadvantages of being an illegitimate child were suffered equally by male and female bastards, particularly the disadvantages related to being raised in poverty by a single mother. But because even legitimate French daughters lacked many of the legal rights also denied to bastard sons, illegitimacy quite simply represented a greater drawback for sons than for daughters.

Secondly, the study of bastardy, with specific attention paid to the illegitimate son, allows me to analyze different ideals of masculinity associated with legitimate sons of different classes, as well as how those ideals are often viewed in literature as unrealized and “bastardized” in the illegitimate son. While there is undoubtedly work to be done in the study of illegitimacy as it pertains to female bastards, I choose to incorporate, not only gender-based methodologies used for feminist criticism, but also critical work specific to the study of masculinity. “Men’s

studies,” or more accurately here, the study of masculinities, presently encompasses a wide number of critical methodologies used in anthropology, sociology, criminology, and literary criticism, to name only some of the most prevalent fields for such study. This dissertation is meant to be, in its own way, a contribution to this branch of gender studies.

Questions of il/legitimacy in France during the period from about 1870-1914 are uniquely important in social debate for a handful of reasons, stemming mostly from social, economic and historical events such as industrialization, and the Franco-Prussian War (1870), and from the socio-legal transformations caused by improved women’s rights and the legalization of divorce (1884). According to Annelise Mauge, it is also during this period that masculinity in France finds itself “in crisis.”<sup>2</sup> Part of this perceived crisis is the social evolution that accompanied industrialization in Western Europe; the employment of women in industry and the increasingly migratory nature of labor together contribute to a devaluation of traditional family structures for the interest of production. This economic current is directly opposed, however, by national social pressure following the Franco-Prussian War to procreate within marriage in order to repopulate the decimated nation following 1870. Because bio-politics is so essential to understanding the spirit of this time period, both bachelors and bastards, in their exclusion from the structure of the legitimate family, are of prime interest and provide important insights into the fragility of such supposed legitimate institutions.

The French bachelor during the period was considered a transitional figure in society, a man in formation, temporarily free and expected to eventually join the ranks of married French men and fathers; when bachelors put off marrying or refused to do so, however, another problem

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<sup>2</sup> Annelise Mauge’s *L’identité masculine en crise au tournant du siècle* (Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 2001).

is posed. Katherine Snyder describes the gender problematic of the bachelor, a social type with important ties to illegitimacy, with relation to social change in the late nineteenth century:

This explosion of popular bachelor discourse attests to the uneven developments that cultural ideologies and institutions of marriage and domesticity were undergoing during this era of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and modernization. Bachelors were a troubling presence within and beyond the already troubled world of the bourgeois family home.

Bachelor trouble was, fundamentally, gender trouble. While they were often seen as violating gendered norms, bachelors were sometimes contradictorily thought to incarnate the desires and identifications of hegemonic bourgeois manhood.<sup>3</sup>

This contradiction is not as paradoxical as it might seem, and considering the bachelor figure as an incarnation of hegemonic bourgeois masculinity is, in fact, misleading; the desires and identifications embodied in the bachelor must be specified, and are not exclusively those of the bourgeoisie, nor of any single social class. According to Snyder, the bachelor in French society was troublesome to the institution of marriage as well as to gender norms, while at the same time exemplifying in some way, “hegemonic bourgeois manhood,” although I would argue that the identifications of the bachelor cannot be strictly limited to bourgeois variants of masculinity. The hegemonic masculinity in question would have much more to do with the bachelor’s violation of publically established gender norms than with his desire and freedom to act upon it. Bourgeois gender norms limiting male promiscuity via the dictates of the institution of marriage are often at odds with seemingly “natural” sexual desire. Desire, being irreducible to an expression of hegemonic (masculine) gender identity, must rather be considered as a universal.

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<sup>3</sup> Katherine Snyder’s *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850-1925* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3-4.

Any discussion of “bachelors” and what this word designates among different social groups is problematised by various factors beyond etymology, namely law and social norms pertaining to gender and sexuality. Most mentions of “bachelors” as such in historical and sociological texts depart from an image of the bachelor as a young man who has not yet been committed to a heterosexual marriage and destined to fathering as many legitimate children as possible. This is why the heteronormative definition of marriage and the resulting definition of the bachelor are problematic to the term’s use as a categorizer for all unmarried men. Nevertheless, I persist in using the term “bachelor” for any unmarried man, while remaining conscious of the social realities that force homosexual men to remain life-long bachelors, in a legal sense, except for those who marry a woman, whatever the motivation. The identifications of the bachelor must be defined in contrast to his opposite, the married man; the bachelor is relatively unbound, independent from familial and conjugal restraints, and is more or less free to express his desire as he wishes. Social reality allowed this, if social norms did not, and the relative sexual liberty of young unmarried men creates nostalgia in married men of any class for this life stage. The bachelor, quite simply, embodies the behaviors other men might wish for themselves, yet are prevented from displaying.

Since the bachelor and bastard figures are both defined by their place within or without the institution of marriage, one might say that they are “fictions,” artificially created and maintained by a patriarchal social order; bachelors can still be genuine fathers, if not legitimate, after all, and bastards are still sons. The compelling nature of these two fictionalized figures assures them crucial roles in modern French literature. Questions of paternity, legitimacy, and authenticity infiltrate numerous literary and social discourses of the late nineteenth century, as we will see in detail. If one retains the metaphor of the above-mentioned law which equates the

“father” with the “author,” one may extend the comparison to equate the “son” with the “text”; this overlying metaphor will serve as a thematic key for much of this dissertation. The “illegitimate” son in literature, then, may be considered as representative of wider discourses concerning “textual paternity.”

While the law of January 3 purports to dissolve the stigma of the bastard child, the legislation’s rather late arrival attests to the fact that conceptions of “illegitimacy” in French families carry with them centuries of social custom and prejudice that would not be completely discarded in the thirty-seven years since the ruling. The question of illegitimacy before 1972 is tied to a number of other subjects of social and legal debate, perhaps most closely to divorce and women’s rights. Discourses of il/legitimacy provide a unique lens with which to analyze literary, cultural, sexual and political discourses as well. In the following dissertation, I consider a wide variety of illegitimacies, counterfeits and bastards, primarily in works of French fiction from roughly the period 1880-1925.

### **1.1 Maupassant and Gide: Unlikely Bed-Fellows**

I limit my primary textual sources to what I refer to as the “bastard narratives” of Guy de Maupassant and André Gide, for a number of reasons; the two writers, contemporaries yet representatives of very different literary styles and periods, depict bastards in drastically different ways and in different milieus, each author with his respective focus and artistic investment.

Before detailing the foundations, structure, and content of the chapters to follow, I am compelled to explain in more detail the reasons and motivation for including these two writers in particular in what may seem at first to be a comparative research study. Firstly, although the comparisons that will be drawn between by Maupassant and Gide are not intended to be merely

biographical or stylistic, the two men do have in common complicated personal experiences with regard to illegitimacy, paternity and the family in general. Gide, for example, lost his father at age eleven; his mother in turn heaped her every attention on the boy, and her love, as George D. Painter comments, “closed round him with a domination and apprehension she had neither needed nor dare show towards her husband.”<sup>4</sup> Gide’s paternal grandfather, Tancrède Gide, who helped to raise young André after his father’s death, provided an austere and pious model of masculinity for his grandson: a model that was no longer compatible with nor desirable for André, especially after his (homo)sexual awakening during his time in Algeria, his first trip there occurring in 1893.

Maupassant’s often-absent father, on the other hand, is widely considered responsible in great part for his son’s particular views of cuckoldry and adultery. Critic A.H. Wallace reiterates the importance of Maupassant’s father (or at least his absence), in the young writer’s opinions of paternity:

A strong paternal influence in [Maupassant’s] life would certainly have affected his attitude toward husbands and fathers. As it turned out, it is fortunate for us and for the son that the father did not excel in the paternal role. Maupassant’s quest for a father was an important aspect of his career.<sup>5</sup>

Whether or not Maupassant’s father’s failings were “fortunate” for the son is perhaps up for debate, but it is certain that issues of paternity, (failed) fathers and (cuckolded) husbands provide the material for many of the writer’s greatest works.

Despite their similarities, the two writers differ drastically in other ways; Maupassant (1850-1893), while only nineteen years older than Gide (1869–1951), recalls a much different

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<sup>4</sup> George D. Painter’s *André Gide: A Critical Biography* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 5.

<sup>5</sup> A.H. Wallace’s *Guy de Maupassant* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1973), 15. Wallace’s book includes an enlightening chapter on cuckolds in Maupassant’s fiction.



literary tradition than the latter. Maupassant received his formation as a writer among the Médan group, and was of course mentored by his stand-in “father figure,” Gustave Flaubert, himself a representative of the end of French Romanticism and the rise of French Realism.<sup>6</sup> Maupassant never professed his allegiance to any school of literature, nor to any ready-made ideology, although he is now widely considered a Naturalist, a label he would have most likely rejected; many of Maupassant’s bastard narratives, however, reflect a clearly Naturalist sensibility. His friend Émile Zola’s brand of *experimental* Naturalism never effectively attracted Maupassant, the latter preferring to detail his own literary philosophy without ever feeling the need to give it a novel label.<sup>7</sup> It is in the preface of Maupassant’s novel, *Pierre et Jean*, that the author expresses his views on literary production, in a short essay criticizing the seemingly mandatory classification of contemporary works of fiction, as well as certain aspects of Realism: “Le réaliste, s’il est artiste, cherchera, non pas à nous montrer la photographie banale de la vie, mais à nous en donner la vision plus complète, plus saisissante, plus probante que la réalité même.”<sup>8</sup> Both Gide and Maupassant express identifiable traits of historic literary schools through their bastard narratives; Maupassant’s treatment of illegitimacy reflects his particular understanding of Realism, and Gide’s bastards and bachelors embody the Modernism practiced by that author.

In Gide’s *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, for example, Édouard, a writer, implies that the novel as a genre exists outside of rules and legality, describing it in the following manner:

Est-ce parce que, de tous les genres littéraires, discourait Édouard,  
le roman reste le plus libre, le plus *lawless*..., est-ce peut-être pour

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<sup>6</sup> Zola’s Médan group published *Les Soirées de Médan* in 1880, a collection of short stories by several members of the group, including most notably: Zola, Maupassant, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and Paul Alexis. Maupassant contributed his story “Boule de Suif,” which would jumpstart his career and become his best-known *nouvelle*.

<sup>7</sup> In his *Le Roman Experimental* (1880), Zola details his views on literature and the novel, particularly his conception of Naturalism.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxix.

cela, par peur de cette liberté même (...) que le roman, toujours, s'est si craintivement cramponné à la réalité ?<sup>9</sup>

Édouard's question is an accusation of the Realist novel, suggesting that the Realist author is frightened by the novel's propensity for "lawlessness." In claiming that the novel is the most free and lawless literary genre, he implies that the Modernist novel represents such lawlessness better than does the Realist novel, which in contrast implies fearfully strict adherence to the representation of reality. To interpret this passage in relation to bastardy, I suggest that Modernism within the genre of the French novel, as it is represented by Gide, holds a position similar to that of bastards within the social hierarchy; both challenge hegemonic conventions and may be considered "outlaws" in various senses. While this comparison can only be taken so far, Modernist literature represents a clear yet complex example of "bastard language," language that exists beyond the rules of realism and with which Modernist writers, Gide for example, seek to supplant literary realism as dominant style. As the Modernist novel gains in legitimacy, it is reterritorialized onto a space of literary acceptance, of institutionalized legitimacy. We will see Gide's bastard Bernard for example, who has access to a similar sort of freedom as that of the novelist in that he is allowed to reterritorialize, to remain tied to a social collective, making a new space within a canon of traditional norms. One of the central suppositions of this dissertation is that the literary bastard's transformation and eventual valorization, particularly in Gide, mirrors a shift from pre-Modernist to Modernist French literature. Jean-Joseph Goux discusses the metaphor of the counterfeit coin in Gide, and of realist language as "gold language": "the basis for realist and expressive mechanisms of classical representation, has been succeeded by the present age of "token-language" with its vanishing frames of reference and

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 1080.

floating signifiers.”<sup>10</sup> He posits modernist language in the position of “token language,” having no intrinsic value, representing nothing. In Gide’s case, the questioning of the legitimacy of “gold coins” such as pre-modernist language, law, patriarchy and religion, helps to define the Modernist novelist and the bastard hero, and will eventually lead to their acceptance as “good money.” Gide’s bastards represent both social outsiders as well as a new brand of modern individual, relatively free from strict prejudices and rigid social norms when compared to legitimate sons.

## 1.2 Themes in Theory

The variety of themes treated in the three parts of this dissertation requires equally varied theoretical treatments from a handful of disciplines and methodologies. Each section employs an interdisciplinary approach; the theme of each principle section alludes to the respective interdisciplinary methodology employed to treat it. In Part I, for example, “Bachelors, Bastards and Seduction,” the focus on the bachelor figure, and his implications in instances of illegitimacy, is most importantly inspired by Charles Stivale’s work on Maupassant and the “bachelor machine,” as well as by the theoretical works of Deleuze and Guattari that influenced it. Part II owes its title to André Gide’s novel, *The Counterfeiters* (*Les Faux-monnayeurs* 1925), but its initial theoretical approach to Jean-Joseph Goux’s book on the same novel, *The Coiners of Language* (1994). In this study, the “coining” metaphor is translated to treat an array of types of illegitimacy. Part III of my dissertation focuses on the bastard’s freedom from the imperatives of the hegemonic social order, particularly the bastard’s tendency toward a “nomadic” existence

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<sup>10</sup> Jean-Joseph Goux’ *The Coiners of Language* (Trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 4.

outside of the institutions of the State which favor “legitimate” families and regulate morality and sexuality. Deleuze and Guattari provide a theoretical frame for this particular discussion with their chapter on “nomadology” in *A Thousand Plateaus*.<sup>11</sup> Ben Knights and Wolfram Schmidgen provide the concepts of “male narratives” and the bastard’s “liminality” respectively, contributing to my argument concerning the bastard’s freedom and the possibility of a practice of “nomadic” masculinity.<sup>12</sup>

Difficult to narrowly categorize, this research project is of course foregrounded by existing work in gender studies from numerous sources and sub-disciplines. My treatment of illegitimacy is, overall, greatly informed as well by socio-historical work by individuals such as Rachel Fuchs, by socio-cultural analyses like Robert Nye’s book on male honor in France, and Howard P. Chudacoff’s work on bachelorhood in America, and by research in sexual ethnology by Edward Shorter and others. Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, a recurring source in my research, provides an essential socio-sexual and biopolitical framework for the whole of my research.

Important to my research project are a handful of terms which are given very specific meanings and connotations by the theorists and writers who frame this discussion. Certain theoretical concepts applied specifically to the areas of law, philosophy, gender studies, and other critical theories, will be employed in this dissertation. Here I present the most central terms and their theoretical context. Firstly, my use of Michel Foucault’s work in this study is based primarily on *The History of Sexuality*; the term “degenerescence” and the concept of “the deployment of sexuality” are used here with the same meaning as he employs. Eventual

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<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Wolfram Schmidgen’s “Illegitimacy and Social Observation: The Bastard in the Eighteenth-Century Novel” (The Johns Hopkins Press, *ELH* [English Literary History] 69.1 (Spring 2002), 133-166).

references to the “war-machine” or “bachelor-machine” are made in the context of *A Thousand Plateaus*, but also with regard to Charles Stivale’s book, *The Art of Rupture*, a skilful treatment of Maupassant and his work, thematically based on Maupassant’s *chronique*, “L’art de rompre.”<sup>13</sup> The “art of rupture” is the prospective theory, anticipated and called for by Maupassant, according to which men may remain safe and free from the traps of marriage and of commitment to clingy, demanding lovers, the most dangerous of which are represented by Maupassant as the real-life women, married or not, who raised a roar in Parisian society in the 1880s by throwing acid, “vitriol,” in the face of unfaithful lovers and their consorts. Stivale develops this “art of rupture” into a methodological device for examining a variety of narratives by Maupassant: “Maupassant’s discourse of rupture thus presents the male-female relationship as a constant struggle, one in which male pleasure, comfort, and, above all, freedom are of utmost importance.”<sup>14</sup>

References made here to “homosociality,” or “homosocial” rapports or activities, are understood as they are used in Eve Sedgwick’s classic work, *Between Men*.<sup>15</sup> Sedgwick discusses “homosociality” as the way that same-sex social bonds lead to one man or woman helping or promoting the interest of a member of the same sex. The mutual desire to help another of the same sex is, according to Sedgwick, related to feminism for women, and to patriarchy for men. References to “triangulation” and “triangles of illegitimacy” are made to and adapted from very recent research by Todd Reeser from his forthcoming book, *Masculinities in*

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<sup>13</sup>Charles Stivale’s *The Art of Rupture: Narrative Desire and Duplicity in the Tales of Guy de Maupassant*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Stivale, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Eve Sedgwick’s *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) is a foundational text for the critical study of masculinities.

*Theory*.<sup>16</sup> Reeser, drawing inspiration from Sedgwick's *Between Men*, considers same-sex social relationships, or "homosocial" relationships, as they contribute to the dynamics of "love triangles." I relate Reeser's reading of triangulation to "triangles" of illegitimacy in which two male elements, one representing a State apparatus and one an agent of a bachelor machine, are put into relation with each other through their shared link with a woman, the mother of a natural child. I will focus on the development of this conception of triangulation, and how it is put into dialogue with certain aspects of male honor, specifically how honor codes dictate perceptions and performances of bourgeois masculinity in the domain of sexuality. In the preface to his book, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France*, Robert Nye defines honor as a "masculine concept":

[Honor] has traditionally regulated relations among men, summed up the prevailing ideals of manliness, and marked the boundaries of masculine comportment. Its codes sprang from the social and political arrangements of male-dominated warrior societies in which the possession of honor, together with its wealth and perquisites, was essential for elite status.<sup>17</sup>

The bourgeois class of the nineteenth century, in its quest for "elite status" as Nye puts it, adopted codes of honor similar to those of the dissipating noble class. The poorer classes no doubt had their own honor systems, but the bourgeois had its own code appropriate to its particular reproductive and social strategies. The wealth accumulated by the newly dominant middle class had to be coupled with some manifestation of traditional honorability in order to legitimate, sustain and augment its social and economic superiority. Since commerce replaced war as the primary vocation of the prevailing social class, it was more commonly in this public

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<sup>16</sup> Todd Reeser's *Masculinities in Theory* (Forthcoming from Blackwell).

<sup>17</sup> Robert Nye's *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Preface, vii.

realm that bourgeois men asserted their masculinity, rather than on the battlefield. A man's sexuality, however, remains a vehicle for masculine performance and duty in private life well into and beyond the nineteenth century. Moreover, sexuality was and remains essential to masculine identity regardless of social rank.

Michel Foucault discusses what he calls “a *deployment of alliance*: a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions,” which existed universally prior to the eighteenth century (Foucault's emphasis).<sup>18</sup> Foucault then details what he calls the “deployment of sexuality” beginning to supplant the former system in the eighteenth century in Western societies. Rather than simply maintaining and reproducing social and power relations, as did the system of alliance, the deployment of sexuality “engenders a continual extension of areas and forms of control.”<sup>19</sup> This expansion was accomplished, in his view, by a special focus on the body and sensation, the family being its primary agent. Foucault argues against the idea of a repression of lower-class sexuality by the bourgeoisie, implying that the deployment of sexuality was implemented by the bourgeois family on itself as a means of creating “a ‘class’ body with its health, hygiene, descent, and race: the autosexualization of its body, the incarnation of sex in its body, the endogamy of sex and the body.”<sup>20</sup>

With this “deployment” came a fixation on heredity: not merely the importance of marriage alliances, economics and inheritance, but the hereditary dangers posed by defects in the family line, both real (disease) and presumed (bad morals). Sexuality, then, had to conform to this project by maintaining and reproducing heirs who were reliable, healthy, and legitimate. Robert Nye points out that “[b]ecause their fortunes were dependent not simply on inheritance,

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<sup>18</sup> *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 106

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

but on viable and talented *inheritors*, there was much more at stake in marriage and reproduction for bourgeois families than there had been for Old Regime nobles.<sup>21</sup> So the capacity for not only reproduction, but the reproduction of capable offspring, was paramount for the prosperity, reputation and honor of a family.

Sexuality for the bourgeoisie, in its many manifestations, also has the potential to undermine popular morality, provoking behavior which can damage the bourgeois social structure, and thereby male honor. The class endogamy described by Foucault makes marriage between social classes unthinkable, but leaves little reason to believe that inter-class sexual relations might stop. In fact, bourgeois reproductive strategies, while preventing inter-class marriage, promote illegitimacy within the lower classes with the help of French law, specifically divorce law, and the abolition of the law allowing *recherche en paternité*.<sup>22</sup> Yvonne Knibiehler points out how the Civil Code guarantees that all children born into a legal marriage are considered legitimate, thus liberating men (and their reputations) from the potential consequences of a wife's adultery: "En affirmant tranquillement que l'enfant né dans le mariage a pour père le mari, le Code civil confirme, consolide, l'émancipation de l'homme par rapport au dire féminin, émancipation que le mariage chrétien avait déjà instituée."<sup>23</sup> Paradoxically, this law also legitimated bastards, unless a husband wished to contest his own paternity, a practice which was facilitated for men if not for women.

In these bourgeois reproductive strategies, combined with the double standard of a contradictory toleration of male promiscuity, one uncovers the oppositional yet cooperative rapport between State sanctioned male sexuality (moderate, within marriage, and focusing on

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<sup>21</sup> Nye, 9.

<sup>22</sup> This law practice allowed mothers to seek "reparations" and sustenance from a biological father for a child born out of legal marriage. It was abolished by the *Code Napoléon*.

<sup>23</sup> Knibiehler, 183-4.



reproduction) and the rebellious sexuality characteristic of the bachelor (immoderate, outside of marriage, and centered on male freedom). Two stories will be examined that treat two extremes of male sexuality which are central to understanding bourgeois masculinity: sterility and promiscuity, both of which are problematized by Maupassant particularly. While one extreme is medical and the other is behavioral, both represent aspects of sexuality which can bring dishonor to a family, and each has varying effects from one social class to another.

The importance of moderation as a “masculine” virtue will become apparent as we look closely at texts where sexual immoderation, whether toward excess or toward deficit, appears as a negative and sometimes feminizing state of being. Todd Reeser’s *Moderating Masculinity* (2006), discusses moderation as a philosophically-endorsed necessity to belonging to a privileged “masculinized moderate class” developing throughout the Renaissance.<sup>24</sup> Reeser describes the nuanced meaning of “moderation,” pointing out its variants in French and Latin:

The mean or *le moyen* (*medium* in Latin) technically refers to a virtuous point that was often assumed to be some kind of fixed or mathematically determined middle. But *la moderation*, *la mediocrité*, *le meilieu*, and *la moyenne mesure* in French, and *moderatio*, *mediocritas* and *medietas* in Latin can denote a less clearly defined state of being whose existence is predicated solely on its location between the vices of excess and lack.<sup>25</sup>

This conception of moderation is very pertinent to my discussion of illegitimacy and the extremes of male sexuality; moderate men and women in literature are rarely the parents of bastard children. While Reeser discusses masculine moderation in a context specific to the period of the Renaissance, my discussion of masculine moderation, particularly in Maupassant, is back grounded and defined quite specifically a nineteenth-century French model. Sterility

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<sup>24</sup> *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 88.

<sup>25</sup> *Moderating Masculinity*, 12.

represented a barrier to the reproduction of the bourgeois family, whereas promiscuity, an important performance of masculinity in homosocial male relations, is often counterproductive to bourgeois social reproduction. Promiscuous behavior threatened the very blood of the family through the possible degeneration, Foucault's "degenerescence," manifested in the threats of venereal disease and the fathering of illegitimate children, especially by bourgeois men with women of the poorer classes.<sup>26</sup> For male sexuality, these two extremes reveal transgressions against the bourgeois rule of reproduction through sexual moderation, always within marriage.

### 1.3 Three Thematic Views of Illegitimacy

Part I of my dissertation extends the discussion of illegitimacy to include the study of bachelorhood and the role of bachelors in seduction, particularly in "bastard narratives." This study is particularly framed within a socio-economic context that simultaneously encourages marriage and values the bachelor as a mobile worker. Bachelor sexuality is double in that his refusal to marry and procreate, at least legitimately, makes the bachelor a threat to social reproduction and to the legitimate family in cases of adultery, but his sexual liberty and tolerated promiscuity reflect another masculine ideal, that of the virile "lady-killer." The bachelor's performance of an aggressively sexual masculinity is often key in Maupassant's fiction, whereas Gide's bachelors embody a somewhat anachronistic pederastic ideal, demonstrating Gide's views of homosexuality. For Maupassant in particular, notions of masculinity and its performance, particularly through sex, contribute at times to a strengthened family structure, and at other times to the noncommittal male behavior involved in Stivale's understanding of Maupassant's "art of rupture." Seduction is an essential factor in both of these possible opposed

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<sup>26</sup> *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 118.

outcomes for the French male during the time period studied in this present work. While the act of seduction may have a member of either sex as its object, the majority and most problematic cases in Maupassant's *œuvre* are instances of male seduction of a victimized female. In Gide, however, the privileged form of seduction is much different, as will become clear. Motives of seduction include pure desire, the pursuit of a marriage partner, social advancement, revenge, as well as many others and combinations of several. What remains undeniable is that seduction is central to the "art of rupture," greasing the wheels of the "bachelor machine." Stivale's important book on the "art of rupture" and aspects of it as "functions of a *war machine*" will generously inform my study of illegitimacy and masculinity. In this work, he incorporates previous exploration of the "bachelor machine" via the work of Jean Borie, Michel Carrouges and Deleuze and Guattari.<sup>27</sup> Stivale discusses the "bachelor machine" particularly in its reference to a new social class of men:

This concept allows us to envisage the diversity of artistic and literary relations within the staging of "class as entertainment" in a manner that may enrich our understanding of the multiplicity of subject-positions located in this socioeconomic and sociosexual field of representation.<sup>28</sup>

Every person is a cog in the bachelor machine, then playing a role in the "staging of 'class as entertainment.'" The social diversity of Maupassant's narratives therefore provides an ideal staging ground for Stivale's illustration of the "bachelor machine."

It is essential to frame Part I of my dissertation with a clear idea of what is inferred by the word "seduction," and how the forms of seduction will vary from instance to instance. The etymological Latin root of the word, *seducere*, is defined as to "lead away" or to "lead astray."

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<sup>27</sup> Jean Borie's *Le célibataire français* (Paris : Le Sagittaire, 1976) ; Michel Carrouges' *Les machines célibataires* (1954. Paris: Chêne, 1976).

<sup>28</sup> Stivale, 147.

In most modern uses, seduction carries an overwhelmingly sexual connotation. More classical instances of seduction, or rape in the older sense of “carrying away” (Latin *rapere*), such as the famous historical abduction of the Sabine women, may not have directly sexual implications, but often imply a later if not immediate sexual aspect. The instances of seduction discussed in Part I will fall into all possible categories: its modern connotation of incitement to sexual intercourse, and its less current meanings of “leading away,” and “corrupting.” While seduction in Maupassant is overwhelmingly sexual, Gide’s bachelors perform types of seduction that are much more tied to the meaning of “carrying away,” in a less obviously sexual manner.

What Stivale’s examination of bachelors lacks is any consideration of the homosexual bachelor. Stivale defines the bachelor machine as one that “serves to link an array of duplicitous male celibatory practices that provide further insight into the deployment of the art of rupture in Maupassant’s fiction.”<sup>29</sup> “Male celibatory practices” involve essentially male/female relations, generally with at least some degree of sexual activity. Stivale’s conception of the bachelor machine as an illustration of Maupassant’s art of rupture also does little to treat the different types of bachelors, namely the bachelor as a life stage and the bachelor as a character type. For Gide, it is often a question of the “confirmed bachelor,” a common if now dated euphemism for a male homosexual. Such nuances, relatively unimportant and unnecessary for Stivale’s treatment of Maupassant, will prove crucial to the following treatment of André Gide’s work.

The first part of my dissertation will also invoke and apply an original concept to the study of bastardy and paternity: triangulations of illegitimacy. My main objectives are: to elaborate the different manifestations and roles of the narrative (and narrating) bachelor in Maupassant and Gide’s fiction, to demonstrate how the embodied bachelor, as agent of a

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<sup>29</sup> Stivale, 14.

bachelor machine, may produce (and even embody) illegitimacy, and how the seductive behaviors associated with it hinder “normalized” paternity in these works. Finally, I will reveal how the bachelor figure may in fact abstain completely from the production of illegitimacy while taking up a father or mentor role, remaining unaffiliated with the “bachelor machine” as laid out by Stivale.

In the second part of my dissertation, I will explore the metaphor of the bastard as “counterfeit,” and the wider application of comparisons between counterfeiting and other sorts of forgeries, between passing false coins as genuine, and passing bastard children as legitimate. Gide’s novel *Les Faux-monnayeurs* sets the stage for my treatment of coining. Jean-Joseph Goux’ book, *The Coiners of Language*, considers the “coining” metaphor used in Gide’s 1925 novel and its wider implications in discourses of both monetary exchange and Modernist versus Realist literature. The opposition of the concepts “legitimacy” and “authenticity” are key to my argument considering the advantage, even superiority of the “willfully authentic” bastard, even over legitimate sons. The terms “willful authenticity” and “willfully authentic” are my own conceptualizations which oppose the passive nature of legitimacy and factual authenticity. To illustrate, a legitimate son is legally authentic by no action of his own; he is born legitimate. The authentic or biological son is authentic by his blood, shared with his mother and father, again by no choice of his own. The willfully authentic son, regardless of biology or law, chooses to be what he considers a son is meant to be. Willful authenticity is not meant to refer merely to father-son relationships, however. It provides a third possible concept of authenticity, which as we will see is similar to the authenticity discussed throughout André Gide’s fiction. This opposition between willful authenticity, legitimacy and factual authenticity leads to my treatment of the “legitimizing” quality of clothing, a discussion framed by Michael Rowland’s treatment of

“clothing” in *Les Caves du Vatican* as well as by Thomas Carlyle’s farcical *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34), the latter of which influenced Gide considerably, and which appears explicitly in Gide’s *Les Faux-monnayeurs*.

When it becomes clear how Gide’s characters transgress the laws of “legitimate” authority, the practice of questioning legitimacy will then be applied to works by Maupassant, whose bastards are on the whole less willfully authentic, and more passively subject to circumstance. While this author’s work often exposes the hypocrisy and falseness of people in general and Parisian *société* specifically, the questioning of legitimacy will serve as a starting point in the analysis of a selection of Maupassant’s bastard narratives. Although the coining metaphor is not specifically presented in Maupassant’s work, the *passing off* of a bastard as legitimate is central to certain of his bastard narratives. One novel, *Pierre et Jean*, and several of his short works will provide the examples needed, although he and Gide bring to light different sorts and uses of counterfeits and dissimulation.

While the passing off of bastards as legitimate sons is a common theme in the fictional works I treat, the bastard figure provides unique opportunities to represent non-traditional gender roles as well. Masculinity is one of several aspects of the bastard that is manifested as a “nomadic” practice. Part III of my dissertation shows how bastards and fatherless sons, due to their status as such and thereby lacking immediate masculine models and ties to normalized bourgeois (and working-class) identity, are not only freed from rigid traditional social and moral imperatives, but also have access to unique and diverse forms of social and gender identity, allowing the bastard to create and perform a new “hybrid” masculinity by transgressing social custom and even law. While in Gide these instances of transgression, when not excessive, are

found to be generally positive challenges to a monolithic social order, in Maupassant the bastard often transgresses law and custom, not to challenge the social order, but to avenge himself against those he blames for his exclusion from the legitimate familial and social structures. For both writers, these acts of “free will,” whether self-creating or self-destructive, may come in the form of performances of “nomadic” masculinity, which are translated through different types of counter-cultural, subversive, and occasionally sociopathic behavior.

While my views of nomadic masculinity are greatly influenced by Deleuze and Guattari’s work on “nomadism,” I also draw inspiration from Ben Knight’s views of masculinity as formed and conveyed through “male narratives.”<sup>30</sup> In *Writing Masculinities*, Knights develops the concept that masculinity is not passively received in a monolithic form, but rather it is “achieved”: “My working assumption is that masculinities are not given but achieved through a constant struggle with countervailing tendencies.”<sup>31</sup> His view of an active masculinity which is “achieved” suggests quite clearly that gender in all forms, and masculinity in particular, is not “natural” in the sense of being innate and effortless. I deviate from Knights’ presumption that masculinity is “achieved,” preferring to consider gender formation as never entirely achieved or finished; I explore the ways in which gender through performance remains mutable and in constant flux.

Wolfram Schmidgen’s conception of a “liminal” bastard figure also corresponds well with Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of a nomad war machine.<sup>32</sup> Schmidgen points out the

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<sup>30</sup> Ben Knights’ *Writing Masculinities: Male Narratives in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999) treats “male narratives” by James Joyce, Joseph Conrad and D.H. Lawrence.

<sup>31</sup> Knights, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Wolfram Schmidgen’s “Illegitimacy and Social Observation: The Bastard in the Eighteenth-Century Novel” (The Johns Hopkins Press, *ELH* (English Literary History), Volume 69, Number 1, Spring 2002, 133-166) attributes to the “liminal” figure of the bastard a unique role as “social observer.”

overwhelmingly negative portrayals previously made of the bastard in the British novel, which began to change, however, already in the eighteenth century. There emerged what he calls the “bastard as hero” character, an appellation borrowed from Michael McKeon.<sup>33</sup> The bastard in that literary tradition has multiple functions as a symbol and social type, but Schmidgen remarks that “one central function of the bastard figure was to threaten the patrilineal transmission of status, wealth, and power by challenging the rules that govern such descent and by exposing the notion of legitimacy.”<sup>34</sup> This view of the bastard as a challenger to patriarchy is a remarkable way of describing him as a positive figure in gender discourses. Challenging the rules of legitimate descent is by and large considered as positive only during times of national crisis, particularly when disapproval of the established order is widely felt; this was evidently the case in eighteenth-century Britain. The threat to patrilineal transmission represented in the bastard is a clear link between illegitimacy and feminist concerns. This positive view of the bastard “hero” in literature is very much problematized in both Maupassant and Gide, however. Their fictional bastards, while “liminal” or “threshold” figures in their own ways, are also mobile, oscillating among mainstream and fringe groups of society; they are transformational. As we will see, both writers offer bastard narratives in which the illegitimate are not generally “heroic” in the least, although it will become quite clear that both pose a challenge to received ideas about “patrilineal transmission of status, wealth, and power” in their respective works.

The bastard in nineteenth-century French literature may indeed represent the same challenge to the hegemonic social structure, but this challenge was interpreted much differently in a society defined by the 1804 Code Civil, by which women were again regarded as perpetual minors, first in the house of the father and later in that of the husband. The *puissance paternelle*

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<sup>33</sup> Michael McKeon’s *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*.

<sup>34</sup> Schmidgen, 133.



regained much of the force it had lost during the Revolution. Napoleon's legislative reinforcement of the family structure made of illegitimacy a symptom of a transgression of the law, and punished it accordingly. Even after the fall of Napoleon, much of the Civil Code remained, only slowly changing throughout the following century and a half. Historical events and circumstance, such as war and the rule of patriarchal regimes, often served to maintain the respect for the existing familial structures and other social institutions. The eventual changes in social mores and in family and divorce law, particularly the Naquet law of 1884, influence and are illustrated in much of the literature of the time.<sup>35</sup>

While these historical and juridical sources all provide useful tools for analyzing social structures and literary texts, my method will take a slightly different angle in the following section, synthesizing various elements of previous work. Ben Knights focuses on "male narratives" of the twentieth century, his example being "the construction of the male reader and of the male as subject and as actor through the discourse of texts."<sup>36</sup> While the male narratives I consider are by and large bastard narratives, I will consider expressions of masculinity in these works as an essential part of the literary exchange that occurs through the reading of the text. As Knights states: "[a] narrative, even when it is written – or, for that matter, read – in isolation, is a form of social exchange."<sup>37</sup> This social exchange in the bastard narrative, may present a pitiful view of an illegitimate child, as in Maupassant's "Un fils," or the exchange may offer a new and essentially hopeful (if admonishing) view of the bastard as free subject, as in the case of Gide's Lafcadio. Knights' work not only informs my methodology in reading male (bastard)

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<sup>35</sup>Jean Elisabeth Pedersen's *Legislating the French Family: Feminism, Theater, and Republican Politics, 1870-1920* (Rutgers, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003) provides pertinent illustrations of theatrical representations of illegitimacy around the turn of the century in France.

<sup>36</sup> Knights, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 16.

narratives, but is also the basis for my analysis of Maupassant's "L'orphelin," in which the main character's reading material may well be his only source of masculine influence. The greatest step away from Knights' vision of "masculine narrative" will be my focus on certain such narratives both as "bastard narratives" and as sources for gender modeling by fictional characters in the texts under study. Illegitimacy in "male narratives" provides another aspect of gender representation. I show how bastard characters are not only influenced by literary models of masculinity read by those characters, but also how they perform original masculinities themselves through the fictional text.

For Schmidgen's part, considering the bastard as a "threshold figure" allows one to appreciate the role of the bastard as social observer. He is then free to move throughout different ranks of society with an ease unknown to the legitimate bourgeois male. To better illustrate the "liminality" of the bastard, Schmidgen explains the following:

Because he or she is both inside and outside society, the bastard is excluded from participating in the established ways of social and cultural reproduction, but able to disclose these established ways *as such*—that is, as conventions by which society maintains itself. By virtue of this rigorously awkward position within and without the social, the bastard figure is able to collect, reflect, and even embody that which constitutes the social.<sup>38</sup>

While Schmidgen treats mostly eighteenth-century English literature in his work on the bastard, the cultural and literary models employed reveal a methodology which may be extended to French literature of the nineteenth century. The conception of the "liminal" bastard will be most significant when I return to my treatment of works by Gide; Bernard's grasp on the reality of things and his position as observer, nearly made voyeuristic through his invasive reading of

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<sup>38</sup> Schmidgen, 141.

Édouard's journal, reflect a similarity to Schmidgen's descriptions of the bastard as social observer. Schmidgen details the bastard's ability to "collect, reflect and even embody" the social, an image that will support my argument for hybrid bastard identities, stitched together by the natural son from diverse sources: male relatives, the mother's lover(s), and literary models of archetypal masculinity, to name only a few.

Deleuze and Guattari frame their discussion of the State and the war machine with previous work by Georges Dumézil on Indo-European mythology, and Pierre Clastres in political anthropology, among others. Their work in *A Thousand Plateaus* facilitates my analysis of the bachelor's role in illegitimate pregnancy, particularly in Maupassant's tale "Un million." Using certain ideas of Dumézil, Deleuze and Guattari develop and illustrate a model for conceiving of a State apparatus in opposition to a war machine, which precedes and is exterior to it. The State apparatus and war machine are built into a metaphor with the games of Chess and Go respectively. Deleuze and Guattari associate Chess, "a game of State," with "striated" space, and the game "Go" with "smooth" space, for example.<sup>39</sup> The State apparatus and the war machine are not easily defined or explained. In order to understand such abstractions, a few examples are in order. The formation of a State apparatus requires a certain "degree of economic development," and "level of political differentiation."<sup>40</sup> The State is "defined by the perpetuation of or conservation of organs of power. The concern of the State is to conserve."<sup>41</sup> The State controls and regulates power, making "the distinction between governors and governed possible."<sup>42</sup> It establishes an inside, outside of which the war machine necessarily exists:

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<sup>39</sup> *A Thousand Plateaus*, 352.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

The State-form, as a form of interiority, has a tendency to reproduce itself, remaining identical to itself across its variations and easily recognizable within the limits of its poles, always seeking public recognition (there is no masked State). But the war machine's form of exteriority is such that it exists only in its own metamorphoses; it exists in an industrial innovation as well as in a technological invention, in a commercial circuit as well as in a religious creation, in all flows and currents that only secondarily allow themselves to be appropriated by the State. It is not in terms of independence, but of coexistence and competition *in a perpetual field of interaction*, that we must conceive of exteriority and interiority, war machines of metamorphosis and State apparatuses of identity, bands and kingdoms, megamachines and empires.<sup>43</sup>

War bands, commercial organizations, and religions can all develop as war machines, according to Deleuze and Guattari. This does not exclude the possibility of a war machine being irrevocably appropriated by a State however. While war bands such as that of Genghis Khan are represented as war machines for Deleuze and Guattari, modern mercenary outfits are often appropriated by states and kept on payrolls. Commercial organizations, in a similar way, have evolved from being the target of anti-trust movements, in early twentieth-century United States for example, to becoming appropriated by States, with businessmen becoming politicians and vice versa. As for religion being conceptualized as war machine, one need only consider early Christianity, when followers of Jesus of Nazareth roamed as landless nomads, preaching against the Roman Empire and avoiding persecution. The later appropriation of Christianity by the Roman Empire, and the eventual incorporation of the Catholic faith into the French monarchy witness the changing nature of this particular religion, begun as a potential war machine and becoming assimilated into the State.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 360-61.

The bastard is shown to be an ideal foundation for Gide's argument in favor of authenticity, as opposed to a patriarchal system of legitimacy, and for Maupassant's condemnation of marriage as an institution. Paternity is then posited as a central theme in bastard narratives. The role of women and mothers, however, particularly single mothers, is both important and complicated in the works to be analyzed, and the "natural" children involved in these bastard narratives are often ignored until they reach adulthood, when they are expected to "territorialize" and attain a place in society. Women and small children are for the most part both "absentee" or evacuated from bastard narratives. Small children are either "lost" or reintegrated only within a tightly regimented pre-existing order. Women, although essential to the creation and the functioning of the "bastard" economy, are most often suppressed and even dismissed from the narratives.

There are exceptions to this generalization in Maupassant's fiction, but rarely any in Gide. Maupassant often proposes a sympathetic view of adulterous wives and single mothers, and the small children he depicts are, for the majority, passive victims of prejudice and circumstance, occasionally allowed to overcome their the obstacles posed by illegitimacy. In the vast majority of Gide's fiction, however, women remain underdeveloped characters, and his most memorable female characters may be classified as either villainous schemers or idealized maternal types. Gide tends toward the representation of a very male universe; the constitution of an all-male (homo)society is a clearly legible telos.

## 2.0 Part I: Bachelors, Bastards and Seduction

As I show in the following section, the “bachelor figure” in literature has an important role in questions of illegitimacy. Certain ideas, characteristics and strategies of the bachelor define his ontology and contribute to his importance in the mechanics of illegitimacy. Bachelors play a dual role in nineteenth century French society; at once, they provide a supply of marriageable husbands for unmarried women, and pose a threat to the family unit. Katherine Snyder, in her work on bachelor narrators in American and British literature, speaks similarly of the bachelor: “Bachelors were a necessary resource for the domestic institution of marriage, yet they were often seen by their contemporaries as disruptive to domestic life or sometimes merely extraneous to it.”<sup>44</sup> The male *célibataire*, considered as passing through an accepted life-stage for a young man, is tolerated in society and is able to wait longer than a young woman before taking a spouse. As Michelle Perrot writes in *Histoire de la vie privée*: “Peu de célibataires définitifs, au XIXe siècle, mais beaucoup de solitaires, surtout parmi les femmes, veuves tôt et longtemps.”<sup>45</sup> The period of bachelorhood is a widely accepted rite of passage for young men, considered an important stage of formation:

Provisoire ou permanent, le célibat est vécu de façon totalement différente par les garçons et par les filles. Pour ces dernières, c’est la blanche attente du mariage : Alain Corbin évoque, plus loin, le personnage de la jeune fille et sa réclusion. Pour le jeune homme, le célibat est un temps plein, valorisé, de liberté et d’apprentissage,

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<sup>44</sup> Katherine Snyder’s *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850-1925* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.

<sup>45</sup> Michelle Perrot in *Histoire de la vie privée, Tome 4*. Eds. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987), 290.

le mariage n'étant qu'un établissement, voire une « fin ». Époque joyeuse (du moins dans l'embellie des souvenirs) des amours passagères, des voyages, de la camaraderie et d'une forte sociabilité masculine au ton très libre [...]; temps de l'éducation sentimentale et charnelle où tout est permis. Il faut « jeter sa gourme » et que « jeunesse se passe ». Seule la peur de la syphilis inclinera, vers la fin du siècle, à plus de chasteté. Même dans les classes populaires, il existe une errance institutionnalisée (par le tour de France des compagnons) ou libre, façon d'apprendre le métier et la vie avant de se fixer.<sup>46</sup>

After a certain age, however, the image of the male bachelor changes; he may be reproached for his refusal to found his own family, and feared for his potential for seductive and adulterous adventures. He may also be recognized, justly or not, as a homosexual. In the period following the Franco-Prussian war especially, anyone in the Third Republic who impeded the reestablishment and growth of the French population faced inevitable public reproach. The growing fear of degeneration and depopulation during this time, fed by nationalism and the increasing influence of psychiatric theories of mental illness and hereditary defects, increased popular criticism of those (men especially) who abstained from marriage and legitimate procreation.<sup>47</sup>

As will be further clarified, the bachelor, in his liminal and paradoxical role, falling between accepted and unaccepted gender identity and sexual behavior, between illegitimate and potentially legitimate status, is in more than one way, very comparable to the bastard in his position as a “threshold” figure, as Wolfram Schmidgen calls him:

His essential doubleness [...] allows the bastard to cross hierarchical divisions and to enact a radicalized social mobility, but a mobility that remains curiously disembodied, simultameously

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>47</sup> Bénédicte-Augustin Morel's *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (1857).

traversing and leaving inviolate the boundaries of an uneven social space.<sup>48</sup>

Doubleness and inherent social mobility, traits shared by the bachelor, are what allow figures such as Maupassant's title character of *Bel Ami* (1885), a.k.a Georges Duroy (and Maupassant himself), to easily move between fashionable literary salons and cabarets, from upper class frequentations to brothels with impunity.

Katherine Snyder cites, in the United States and Great Britain, "a rise in average marrying age and a decline in the rate of marriage" during the second half of the "long" nineteenth century, as one reason for an increased interest in the bachelor figure.<sup>49</sup> In France however, the average age of marriage and rate of marriage remained relatively stable. Noël Bonneuil explains:

Le nombre de nouveaux mariés pour 1000 habitants, calculé par périodes quinquennales, reste toujours compris entre 14,4 et 16,3 sauf pendant les périodes troublées (il descend à 13,3 en 1870-1871, monte à 17,1 en 1811-1815 et à 17,6 en 1872-1875).

Le taux de célibat définitif reste assez élevé pendant la première moitié du siècle, puis il se réduit sensiblement [...] <sup>50</sup>

Bonneuil shows that along with a stable rate of marriage among the French population, there were for the generations born from 1871 to 1880 less definitive *célibataires* (9.9% of men, 10.9% of women), than for those born from 1831 to 1850 (12.4% for men, 13% for women). He also demonstrates that the average age of marriage remained constant for men, and actually lowered for women (from 25.9 years old to 23.9). Such statistics imply that widespread pressure

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<sup>48</sup> Wolfram Schmidgen's "Illegitimacy and Social Observation: The Bastard in the Eighteenth-Century Novel." The Johns Hopkins Press, *ELH* (English Literary History). 69.1, Spring 2002, 133-66.

<sup>49</sup> Snyder, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Noël Bonneuil in *La société française au XIXe siècle*, Jacques Dupâquier and Denis Kessler, eds. (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1992), 83.



to marry and reproduce was indeed effective. The stability of marriage, however, eradicates neither illegitimacy nor the bachelor from French society. Adulterers and bachelors could still father bastards.

## 2.1 Maupassant and Gide: Eternal Bachelors

Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) and most of his characters belong to the earlier generations described by Noël Bonneuil, before the drop in the number of definitive bachelors. André Gide was born in 1869, and may be said to belong to the generations more prone to marry at least once in their lifetime, according to Bonneuil's observations. Maupassant, who served in the military during the Franco-Prussian war and wrote some of his most celebrated works around the theme of that war, was not himself caught up in any nationalistic sentiments that would propel him into marriage and procreation for the 'good' of the nation. He was opposed to marriage, for himself in particular, especially indissoluble marriage, which is attested to in several of his journalistic *chroniques*.<sup>51</sup> Although it is generally accepted that he had illegitimate children of his own, whom he provided for without ever recognizing, the writer never sought to establish himself as a *père de famille*. He remained, almost identically to the earlier description given by Perrot, an eternal bachelor: travelling, and enjoying both homosocial camaraderie and more than his share of wild oat sowing.

André Gide, in his own way, can also be said to have lived a life of eternal bachelorhood, even during his chaste marriage to his cousin Madeleine Rondeaux in 1895. Bachelor behaviors may be embodied in married men in a variety of ways, and this is no more the case for married

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<sup>51</sup> "Le préjugé du déshonneur" (1881), "L'adultère" (1882), and "L'amour à trois" (1884), are just a few.

gay men than married heterosexual men. For Gide, living as a devoted (if celibate) husband and practicing homosexual involves a sort of sexual promiscuity often associated with bachelorhood. Charles Stivale implies that the bachelor machine may in fact include conjugal relations, citing Jean Borie's concept of "celibatory discourse" (*discours célibataire*), discourses expressing "bachelor" behavior and prizing male freedom.<sup>52</sup> Despite several intense relationships with young men, Gide never gave himself entirely or definitively to any single person, including his wife. His vocation as writer, as well as his own implacable individualism, contributed to his solitary existence as writer, paradoxical as everything about him. While Gide developed a close relationship with his own illegitimate daughter and members of his extended family, for whom he was the beloved *Oncle André*, he never made the transition to becoming a *pater familias*, an impossibility considering that daughter Catherine was conceived during Gide's marriage, and that he had only a deeply affectionate friendship for the much younger mother, Elisabeth van Rysselberghe. Gide and Elisabeth's arrangement was an early sort of surrogacy; Elisabeth was the daughter of Gide's close friend Maria van Rysselberghe, the wife of Belgian painter Théo van Rysselberghe. Gide's paternal relationship with his daughter contrasts with that of Maupassant with his illegitimate children who, while provided for, never got to know their biological father.<sup>53</sup>

The sorts of bachelorhood embodied by Maupassant and Gide are indeed reflected in their respective bodies of work: Maupassant's skirt-chasing "*viveur*," and Gide's older *célibataire*, developing mentor-protégé relations with young men and boys, often expressed as a pederastic relationship. As each text is considered, the default fictional bachelor in each case

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<sup>52</sup> Jean Borie in *Le Tyran timide* (1973).

<sup>53</sup> See Alan Sheridans' *André Gide: a Life in the Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), particularly pages 365-68.

will move further away from the (hetero)sexually charged Maupassantian figures, and finally be incarnated as the Gidean pederast. Along with the variety of bachelors to be treated in this section, it is accompanied by an equally diverse range of connections with illegitimacy, as will become apparent. While most of the “bastard narratives” included in this chapter are those of Maupassant, Gide’s *Les Faux-monnayeurs* will provide particularly excellent illustrations of a variety of bachelors and forms of seduction. Maupassant grants us numerous works concerning seduction, which is often simply rape, and the male agents of the “bachelor machine.” The workings as well as the malfunctions of the “bachelor machine” are strongly present in a number of his stories, notably in “Histoire d’une fille de ferme” and “Rencontre,” which will both be considered in this section. Other stories demonstrate the role of seduction in creating illegitimacy, often tied to or adulterating the “art of rupture,” namely “L’enfant” (1882), “Un fils” and “Un million,” of which the latter two will be examined. I argue that such examples adulterate Stivale’s understanding of the “art of rupture” because, in these cases, there is a departure from the art’s specific prescription. Stivale explains:

Maupassant’s discourse of rupture thus presents the male-female relationship as a constant struggle, one in which male pleasure, comfort, and above all, freedom are of utmost importance. However, these are ceaselessly threatened not simply by woman’s grasping demand for fidelity, but also by the man’s own desire to maintain these relations, to “keep them all.”<sup>54</sup>

While the art of rupture involves only the illusion of rupture in the man’s idealized view of the practice, the Maupassantian tales to be examined in the following pages show how this art is itself ruptured by an illegitimate birth, and the woman’s anger and/or despair at being abandoned

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<sup>54</sup> Stivale, 5.

is avoided by the culprit's definitive flight. To use Stivale's words, these "(s)exchanges" involve a "price to pay" for the woman, and in the following examples, this price is an *enfant naturel*.<sup>55</sup>

While most of these narratives illustrate the commonly studied victim-role of women within a patriarchal State apparatus, many prove much more complicated. These complications sometimes involve the various models of what I earlier referred to as "triangulations" of illegitimacy, in which women, whether intentionally portrayed as victims or not, perform key functions in the negotiations between (male) agents of a State apparatus of reproduction and those of a sexual war machine. What makes such triangulation one of illegitimacy is the involvement of a "natural child," caught between the biological paternity of an absent father and the presence of an adoptive or substitute father who in some respect represents the legitimizing nature of a State institution.<sup>56</sup> The injection of the illegitimate child into this 'love' triangle of sorts gives depth, quite literally, to the metaphorical form; rather than this triangulation being restricted to the two-dimensional and often banal figure of the triangle, the presence of the bastard adds another point to the figure, which logically shifts the image into a three dimensional pyramid. The very concrete concept of this pyramid carries especially figurative hermeneutic interest; the pyramid, unlike the two-dimensional square, allows all points to be connected with one another without tertiary mediation, while only three sides or points of this pyramid may be seen at once. This proves to be the case in most narrative instances examined here, where one element, one point must be eclipsed for another to be seen.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>56</sup> Todd Reeser, as mentioned in my introduction, particularly in his forthcoming book *Masculinities in Theory*, follows Eve Sedgwick's lead in *Between Men* (1985), discussing homosociality in triangles of desire beyond the classic man/woman/man configuration.

## 2.2 Rural Seduction and “*l’enfant naturel*”

In Maupassant’s “Histoire d’une fille de ferme,” which first appeared in 1881 in the *Revue politique et littéraire*, a young servant girl, Rose, is seduced by a transitory farmhand, Jacques, who promises the girl marriage only to flee the farm after learning that she has become pregnant. Rose hides the pregnancy and, while on a visit to her own dying mother, gives birth and leaves the newborn to live with another family. Her regular visits to see the child provoke a surge of maternal love in the servant girl. She then plunges herself into her work to earn more money for her beloved child. The farmer, her employer, recognizes the girl’s impressive work ethic and attempts to convince her to marry him. After much hesitation and the farmer’s aggressive sexual advances, Rose is forced to accept his proposal and become his wife. As time passes, the farmer is pleased with Rose’s work on the farm, which is prosperous, but remains perplexed that they have no children. The tale climaxes when the farmer, who has become angry and abusive, attempts to punish his wife by ordering her to stand outside in the rain. Rose refuses and angrily admits that she herself has a child, implying that the couple’s sterility is not her own. The tide shifts and the husband’s anger abates. He tells her to have the child brought into their home where they will raise him together. Calm restored in the household, here ends the tale.

The sorts of seduction and illegitimate birth described in this story are not uncommon. It is Maupassant’s telling of Rose’s struggle, to an audience that may not normally be privy to such unfortunate realities among the rural working class, that makes it such a compelling work. Maupassant’s portrayal of Rose as victim, however, was not unique, for at the time many other literary figures, Hugo and Zola for instance, were writing unwed mothers with similar sympathy. As historian Rachel Fuchs points out, efforts to regulate public morality at the time were not aimed at making fathers responsible for their illegitimate children, but rather, most of the legal

customs of the nineteenth century were designed to make women morally responsible through their sexuality, while custom tolerated single working-class mothers as a consequence of protecting the bourgeois family:

It was better, they asserted, to try to reform women's morality. The working-class woman's sexual morality was especially troublesome. Language and law granted her moral power while restricting her legal options. Her abstention from sexual relations before a civil marriage was supposed to help moralize the working-class family. But should the working-class woman bear children outside of marriage she became immoral; law and custom absolved the father of any responsibility and effectively prevented her from trying to form a two-parent family. Legislation and practice accepted the working-class mother-child dyad since naming the child's father might disrupt the bourgeois family.<sup>57</sup>

Such *filles-mères*, who for much of the century received nearly all of the blame for public “immorality” and illegitimacy, began to be represented, more widely through literature than in law, as victims of society, provided that they display appropriate maternal sentiments, which is indeed the case with Rose the farm girl. Single mothers certainly make for memorable characters.<sup>58</sup>

While in Maupassant's tale the driving force of the plot is Rose's newly discovered maternal “instincts,” the woman's fate, and ultimately that of her child, is decided by her seduction by a bachelor who is quite decided to remain so. Howard Chudacoff writes an enlightening book on American bachelors as constituting an identifiable subculture. He explains: “bachelors themselves constitute a nonconforming minority group because, by crossing the lines of acceptable individuality, they too do not accede to what is believed to be the natural

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<sup>57</sup> Rachel Fuchs, *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 956.

<sup>58</sup> Victor Hugo's pitiful Fantine, for example, from *Les Misérables* (1862) is of prime importance to that novel's plot and cathartic effect.

order of things.”<sup>59</sup> The bachelor’s supposed exclusion from “the natural order” of things is important to recall when we consider oppositions of Nature/Culture in “Histoire d’une fille de ferme” in particular.

The “bachelor figure,” as the male counterpart to the single working girl, is a rich character type for literary analyses of social and gender inequities; the bachelor also has complex connections with other categories of non-standard male social types, namely homosexuals and bastards, connections which will be explored in more detail later in this section. In the situation of Rose the farm girl, she is ultimately controlled by the men in her life and condemned to a series of complex negotiations to conform to social norms and expectations, while at the same time following her maternal “instincts.” Three themes will illustrate the importance of this servant girl in my discussion of illegitimacy: Woman as Nature, the sexual manipulation and commoditization of women, and Rose’s loss of agency when caught up in an illegitimate triangle. Beside these themes, a rich symbolic element is provided by the constant equivocation of human characters and animals (especially pertaining to their sexuality), as well as by the play between the concepts of agricultural fertility and sexual fertility.<sup>60</sup>

The beginning of the story establishes Rose as a lonely domestic figure, always hard at work, yet contemplative of her surroundings. Her work finished for the day, Rose watches a group of hens digging for worms in front of the kitchen door. Amongst them a cock shows himself. The description of the cock’s sexual conquest of the hens is quite symbolic in its similarity to human sexuality in the story:

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<sup>59</sup> Howard P. Chudacoff, *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 12. This excellent treatment of bachelorhood in America lays out many parallels with French bachelorhood during the same period as the focus of the present study, approximately 1880-1920.

<sup>60</sup> This period saw a surge of the use of fertility as a theme in both the visual arts and literature. Émile Zola’s *Fécondité* (1899) is one such work of note.

La poule se levait nonchalamment et le recevait d'un air tranquille, pliant les pattes et le supportant sur ses ailes; puis elle secouait ses plumes d'où sortait de la poussière et s'étendait de nouveau sur le fumier, tandis que lui chantait, comptant ses triomphes; et dans toutes les cours tous les coqs lui répondaient, comme si, d'une ferme à l'autre, ils se fussent envoyé des défis amoureux.<sup>61</sup>

The cock moves from partner to partner, while the chosen hen receives him tranquilly. The female then goes back to the manure pile to gather worms, while the male vaunts his conquest. Here the expression “faire la cour à quelqu'un,” originally meaning “être empressé auprès de lui pour gagner ses faveurs,”<sup>62</sup> takes on a rural and subverted significance. There is an implicit play of words with the word “cour,” usually referring to the court, a group seeking the favors of an individual, or the entourage of a sovereign. In this case the “cour” is the courtyard, and there is but a single cock that puts little effort into gaining the “favors” of the hens. So rather than reading the hens in the *cour* as favor-seekers, it is more apt to consider them as forming a farmyard harem, with the females working and the male interrupting for his pleasure.

Charles Stivale recognizes in Maupassant's art of rupture, “recourse to the fantasm of the harem,” in this case in the strategic and simultaneous pushing away and maintaining of relationships by a male *praticien* of the art of rupture.<sup>63</sup> While the harem and French royal court are distinct, the similarity in the way one individual commands a group of subordinates links both to the art of rupture. It is difficult to read this farmyard scene without recognizing the importance of the allusion to male sexual triumph and dominance, as well as the seemingly natural art of rupture as practiced by the cock, itself a fair representative of bachelor identity, all of which is telling for the pages to come.

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<sup>61</sup> Guy de Maupassant. *Contes et nouvelles*, Tome I. (Editions Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1974) 226.

<sup>62</sup> *Le Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé*, (<http://www.cnrtl.fr/>), expression established in 1539.

<sup>63</sup> Stivale, 5.



### 2.2.1 A Wild Rose: Linking Woman with Nature

Maupassant often uses detailed descriptions of nature and outdoors scenes in his fiction, whether as colorful visual elements or subtle symbolic hints, as he does here. In the story, Rose appears at first glance as an element of Nature, not necessarily inhuman despite the narrative moments likening her to an animal, but rather as separate from Culture. When using the very general term “culture,” I may variously be referring to “male” culture, agriculture, French rural culture, or occasionally the equally abstract idea of human culture, as opposed to the natural state of things before or without the presence of “civilized” or more accurately, State institutions or systems. Rose is only at peace when in nature and away from society. She remains on the farm for most of the tale, which covers over six years of her life. The farm itself is a compromise or hybrid of Nature and Culture, while it is indexically linked to the countryside and much closer to the “natural” world than is the city.

Rose’s only outings are to church, to visit her child, to her mother’s deathbed, and once to have the schoolmaster read a letter for her, being illiterate herself. Maupassant, who elsewhere writes educated and deeply cultivated women characters, here paints Rose as a seemingly perfect symbol of Woman as Nature, leaving all other (cultural or political) concerns to men and assuming an overwhelmingly passive role. What is more, when Rose becomes aware of her pregnancy, the male figures of institutional authority she encounters become a source of fear and anxiety. The *curé* is responsible for her soul (religion), but she fears that he will divine her sin. She even suspends her visits to the confessional during her pregnancy, fearing the priest’s power to read her thoughts:

À l'église elle se cachait derrière un pilier, et n'osait plus aller à la confesse, redoutant beaucoup la rencontre du curé, à qui elle prêtait un pouvoir surhumain lui permettant de lire dans les consciences.<sup>64</sup>

Rose must rely upon the local schoolmaster to read her the letter announcing her mother's illness. Her illiteracy thereby accentuates Rose's anxiety about her pregnancy; she fears the letter may be from Jacques, and hesitates to let anyone in on her secret:

Un matin, le facteur lui remit une lettre. Elle n'en avait jamais reçu et resta tellement bouleversée qu'elle fut obligée de s'asseoir. C'était de lui, peut-être? Mais, comme elle ne savait pas lire, elle restait anxieuse, tremblante, devant ce papier couvert d'encre.<sup>65</sup>

She equally relies upon the farmer, her employer, for her salary; her financial need is made greater by her child's needs, but she nevertheless finds it difficult to ask for a raise. Her resolution to work so hard as to merit a raise is appreciated, but left unrecompensed: "Cependant, le temps passait et ses gages restaient les mêmes."<sup>66</sup> She fears religion more than she is truly religious, she is uneducated, and her concern for money is only a means of supporting her child; these "man-made" institutional systems interest her only intermittently, superstitiously, and primarily when they are required to fulfill her maternal role. But Maupassant's storytelling is more than a banal rehashing of common gender stereotypes and binaries.

The traditional Woman/Nature equivalence in the sorts of binary oppositions found in myths, legends and classical texts, besides being important in post-structuralist criticism, is a topical target in many feminist texts. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément open Part 2 of their foundational text, *The Newly Born Woman (La Jeune Née)*, with an illustration of gendered binary oppositions:

Where is she?

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<sup>64</sup> CN I, 230.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 230-31.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 232.

Activity/passivity  
Sun/Moon  
Culture/Nature  
Day/Night

Father/Mother  
Head/Heart  
Intelligible/Palpable  
Logos/Pathos.

Form, convex, step, advance, semen, progress.  
Matter, concave, ground – where steps are taken, holding and  
dumping-ground.

Man

Woman

Always the same metaphor: we follow it, it carries us,  
beneath all its figures, wherever discourse is organized.<sup>67</sup>

“Nature” in its relation to “Woman” is a central theme in “Histoire d’une fille de ferme,” in which Maupassant presents a woman who is superior to men in several ways (physically, morally, and in her capacity for farm management), yet only lacks the necessary opportunities. The associations made by Cixous and Clément between “Woman,” “Mother,” and “matter, concave, ground” relay important connections to concepts of fertility and agriculture. Rose’s link to Nature is so strong that each contact she has with the “man-made” world, whether direct or indirect, results in her being relegated to the most inferior echelon of a masculine society, with little chance of rising. Church doctrine, socialized gender norms in marriage, sexual inequality in legislation concerning divorce, inheritance, and *recherche en paternité* (paternity suits), all contribute to the inferiorization of women in social institutions and practices, all of which are or could be factors in Rose’s situation, whether or not they are all mentioned explicitly in the narrative. At the time of the tale’s publication, divorce was still illegal, as it would remain until 1884. Women had no legal recourse to *recherche en paternité* and could not legally reclaim

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<sup>67</sup> Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément’s *The Newly Born Woman* (In *Theory and History of Literature*, Vol. 24. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 63.

inheritance or support for illegitimate children (unless recognized by the father) until the re-establishment of paternity suits by the law of November 16, 1912.<sup>68</sup>

Despite her imposed inferiority in these institutions, Rose manages to excel at her job on the farm, and later as a wife. It truly seems that Rose, a strong, talented, and hardworking woman, would simply dominate in the management of her husband's farm, if not for enforced institutionalized handicaps. Maupassant's tale shows both the reality of the broader social debate and a specific example of a woman who has the talent and physical potential to be equal or superior to men, yet hardly transgresses the rule of "the father," due to the obvious constraints imposed by religion, local law and custom, and Rose's concern for public opinion. Rose is kept subservient by the suppression of her mobility in a very patriarchal hierarchy. Her role as mother defines her as an individual, and this role's obvious link to the earth and fertility make her vocation of *fille de ferme* a natural one. Rose's greatest successes and qualities are all somehow linked to the outdoors and nature: her work on the farm, her physical strength, and her "natural" child. Rose belongs to the "natural" environment where she flourishes. The earth and fertility are two "natural" topoi associated with "Woman" in traditional gender binaries.<sup>69</sup> What can be problematic when considering Rose within such a symbolic framework is the fact that culture, or cultivation, may also be recalled in agriculture, to which Rose is evidently connected. Her very name reflects nature, but the rose is also one of the most widely cultivated flowers. In

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<sup>68</sup> See Rachel G. Fuchs' *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 22. The most practical function of this law, however, was effectively being practiced previously under other laws. Fuchs writes: "(u)sing Article 1382 of the Civil Code, which stipulated that 'anyone who causes damage to another is obliged to make reparations for that damage,' women sought *dommages-intérêts* for the wrong caused them by a broken marriage promise and fraudulent seduction."

<sup>69</sup> Sherrie B. Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" (In *Woman, Culture, and Society*, Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (eds.). Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974) is an early anthropological articulation of such gender binaries. Derrida and fellow deconstructionists question the stability of such systems of binary opposition. See Derrida's *Dissemination* (1981).

this way, she may be considered a wild rose being adapted to a cultivated garden; she replicates the ambiguous hybridity of the farm in its status as meeting place of Nature/Culture. Though Rose is granted a strong association with Nature, in each instance she is introduced into the realm of Culture or the State and social networks (agriculture, marriage, even religion), she excels, yet remains inferior: inferior to the literate schoolmaster, to her landowning husband, and to the pious *curé*.

It is nonetheless Rose's child who redeems the farmer, whose sterility reflects a fault in his masculine ego and male physiognomy. Rose herself is fertile, if not cultivated. Her fruit may therefore be likened to wild flowers. Her son, a "natural" child, is thereby comparable to a naturally growing plant on an uncultivated field. Social and cultural norms, in this case nearly interchangeable, and Rose's fear of transgressing them, introduce the conflict between Nature and Culture that makes her "natural" child truly illegitimate, since for the mother there is no recourse to un-codified natural law, but only to State law. When Rose is legally married, her bastard son becomes a weed of sorts. Rose's fear, then, is that her "wildflower" will be discovered and discarded, a *mauvaise herbe*. As classical playwright Euripides writes through the character Peleus in the play "Andromache," "Often dry soil is better than rich in its crop, and many bastards are better than legitimate children."<sup>70</sup> This agricultural reference is apt in Rose's case. Fortunately for her, her legitimate husband's sterility makes her and her child, although uncultivated and illegitimate, all the more valuable when Rose finally confesses to having a child. Rose may function and be interpreted as a fertile field, thereby putting her at the intersection of Nature and Culture.

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<sup>70</sup> Euripides' "Andromache." Trans. Michael Lloyd. (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips Ltd., 1994), 63.

Much of the overt symbolism in Maupassant's narrative, however, also equates Rose with an animal rather than a plant. Several animals, both wild and domestic, play important roles at key points in the story. Rose seems envious at one point of a galloping colt, herself torn between the desire to run or to stretch out and rest on the ground: "Elle aussi se sentait une envie de courir, un besoin de mouvement et, en même temps, un désir de s'étendre, d'allonger ses membres, de se reposer dans l'air immobile et chaud."<sup>71</sup> The colt's freedom to do either is what she envies. Contemplating this animal and her own desires, Rose is seized by a feeling of bestial well-being, "bien-être bestial," in the sense of "animal-like."<sup>72</sup> This is only the first instance where she is described in such terms. One of Rose's visits to her child is presented as a hunt, with Rose pouncing on the child like a predator: "Elle se jeta dessus comme sur une proie, avec un emportement de bête."<sup>73</sup> The scene with the colt recalls Rose's comfort in being out of doors, whereas the wild pouncing upon her baby evokes a natural, if savage, maternal instinct to care for the child.

Maupassant employs animal imagery when describing encounters between Rose, Jacques and the farmer. Early on, when the girl is about to fall asleep in the straw bed she had made in one of the farm buildings, Jacques approaches, like a wolf stalking a sheep:

Il travaillait ce jour-là dans la bergerie, et, l'ayant vue s'étendre à l'ombre, il était venu à pas de loup, retenant son haleine, les yeux brillants, avec des brins de paille dans les cheveux.<sup>74</sup>

The expression "mettre le loup dans la bergerie" comes to mind ("to put the wolf in with the sheep"); having been working in the sheepfold, the shepherd becomes the wolf, Rose his sheep.

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<sup>71</sup> CN I, 226.

<sup>72</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 227.

But the image is disrupted almost immediately, for when he tries to kiss the napping girl she slaps him, being strong like him, “forte comme lui.” Rose’s strength, rather than masculinizing her, makes her even more attractive to men in this rural farming community where the capacity for labor is so highly valued. Shortly after the first refusal, he acts upon his “idée fixe” once again, rubbing up against her as they converse; Jacques is “tout envahi par le désir,” completely “invaded by desire.”<sup>75</sup> This time, his kiss is met with a closed fist to the face, making his nose bleed. In this manner, Rose’s name is ironic; she is not a delicate flower, but she can draw blood. It becomes clear through Maupassant’s symbolic imagery how Rose is best understood through images of Nature, and how her power also comes from the natural world. Even when Jacques the wolf comes to prey on her, the sheep, Rose is able to immediately subvert their roles and overcome him with her strength. This bestial leitmotif continues later, after the farmer proposes marriage, causing her to fall into what is described as a delirium of sorts, and leading her to leave her bed one night to run through the fields.

### **2.2.2 Madness, the Moon, and Animality**

Maupassant’s description of Rose running through the fields is that of a madwoman. Rose is in terror, shaking, running her hands across her face, through her hair, and touching her body “comme une folle.”<sup>76</sup> As she slinks through the fields, hiding from any passersby, the moon is present, nearly disappeared. This quasi-universal symbol and origin of madness, and also of the feminine, illuminates the fields. Likened to a mare, she “trots” along, occasionally emitting a piercing cry, howling at the moon, so to speak: “Elle filait droit devant elle, d’un trot élastique et précipité, et, de temps en temps, inconsciemment, elle jetait un cri perçant.”<sup>77</sup> Hysteria, as a

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<sup>75</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 236.

supposed medical condition, previously described a state believed to be caused by abnormal flows of blood from the uterus to the brain. A contemporary of Jean-Martin Charcot, a prominent neurologist and “specialist” of hysteria, Maupassant is known to have attended Charcot’s lectures throughout 1885 and 1886.<sup>78</sup> Although “Histoire d’une fille de ferme” first appeared in 1881, it is likely that Maupassant was already at least familiar with the presumed psychological significance of the moon in mental disorders. So Rose’s behavior may be explained by the writer’s interest in madness or hysteria and their causes, a common theme in many of his later tales.<sup>79</sup>

In the same nocturnal pastoral scene, a nearby group of dogs hears Rose pass. All barking, one of them takes chase and tries to bite her, “mais elle se retourna sur lui en hurlant de telle façon que l’animal épouvanté s’enfuit, blottit dans sa loge et se tut.”<sup>80</sup> Her yell completes her transformation into a wild animal, a she-wolf. Her savage animality establishes her dominance, her temporary madness, her link to Nature. The imagery of madness persists as she encounters a family of hares:

Parfois une jeune famille de lièvres folâtrait dans un champs ; mais quand approchait l’enragée coureuse, pareille à une Diane en délire, les bêtes craintives se débandaient...<sup>81</sup>

Through such vivid details, Maupassant establishes Rose as more than a farm girl. She is a goddess, but a delirious one; she is Diana, goddess of the hunt, wild animals and the moon. Rose’s seeming madness, the looming moon, and common notions about hysteria, make this

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<sup>78</sup> Pierre Bayard, *Maupassant, juste avant Freud* (Paris: Minuit, 1998). Bayard discusses Maupassant’s interest in Charcot’s work.

<sup>79</sup> “Le Horla” (1886), recounts the tale of a man who claims to have encountered an invisible creature, “Fou?” (1882) is the *récit* of a man who, mad with jealousy, murders the lover of the woman he loves, and in “Sur l’eau” (1876), a *canotier* is driven mad by fear, if only temporarily, when a mysterious tapping on his boat by an unknown agent provokes a surge of panic and paranoia in the man.

<sup>80</sup> CN I, 236.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*.



scene a vivid illustration of a female illness (hysteria? menstruation?) provoked, it seems, by moon cycles.

With the breaking of day, the servant girl tires and her wild sprint ends: “quand le soleil perça l’aurore empourprée, elle s’arrêta.”<sup>82</sup> She is left contemplating the refreshing waters of a deep pond, eventually gripped by the desire to end her suffering in its depths: “Ce serait fini de souffrir là-dedans, fini pour toujours. Elle ne pensait plus à son enfant; elle voulait la paix, le repos complet, dormir sans fin.”<sup>83</sup> Her suicidal thoughts are interrupted, however, when she enters the pool and leeches cover her legs to the knees.<sup>84</sup> A passing *paysan* rescues her. The leeches, in a sense, return her to her senses by bleeding her. Her recovery is long, however, confining her to bed for fifteen days. Here, Maupassant combines ancient mythological references with contemporary medical opinion to re-present his character as a paradoxical one. Rose has a strong link to Nature, but one that also leads to her loss or lack of power. Her value, as worker, wife and mother, is constituted by Nature, but authoritative power is reserved for male-dominated institutions created within the State apparatus. Governments and other institutions of power are tied to the artifices of “civilization,” and therefore tend towards the exploitation of the “natural.” Rose’s natural, physical strength, while making her valuable, even desirable, is not sufficient to grant her true power and agency.

When Rose has somewhat recovered from her bleeding by the leeches, her *patron* reiterates his marriage proposal, and accuses her of having a lover, a reason for not marrying him. This time it is the farmer who is written as an animal, persisting despite Rose’s protests:

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<sup>82</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> Ibidem. See also Mary Donaldson-Evans, *A Woman's Revenge. The Chronology of Dispossession in Maupassant's Fiction* (1986). In Chapter 1, Donaldson-Evans explores the link between suicide and bodies of water in Maupassant.

<sup>84</sup> Suicide is a recurring theme in Maupassant’s short fiction, himself having attempted suicide in 1892: “Suicides” (1880), “Un lâche” (1884), and “L’endormeuse” (1889) provide other examples.

“Mais lui cherchait toujours avec son obstination de brute, grattant à ce cœur pour connaître son secret, comme un chien de chasse qui fouille un terrier tout un jour pour avoir la bête qu’il sent au fond.”<sup>85</sup> Following her night of “madness” and subsequent illness, Rose has lost her physical advantage over the men, if only temporarily. But she reveals nothing, swearing that she has no lover. That night, however, exhausted from work and still convalescing, Rose finds herself powerless when the farmer comes to her bed. Neither consenting nor resisting with much violence, Rose gives in to his brutal caresses, hiding her face in her hands with a “pudeur d’autruche.” After this, Rose’s second seduction, they live together and are eventually married.

The final bestial image detailed by Maupassant is that of Rose, as communicated via the farmer. When his marriage with the young woman produces no offspring, his humor turns sour. He explains his vexation in the only way he knows, as a farmer: “Quand une vache n’a point de viaux, c’est qu’elle ne vaut rien. Quand une femme n’a point d’éfant, c’est aussi qu’elle ne vaut rien.”<sup>86</sup> The cow, widely representative of maternity and fertility, must fulfill its essential role. But as the reader knows, it is not the wife that is infertile, but the “bull,” symbolic of virility and potency, which is at fault. Or he may simply be calling his wife a “cow.” So Maupassant pokes fun at gender assumptions, or perhaps at the men who do not live up to them, employing recognizable animal symbolism. While the wife is maternal, fertile, and symbolic of Nature, the husband is impotent, failing in his masculine function of reproduction, while blaming her for his own defect. At the same time as this irony exhibits the unstable nature of gender, Maupassant’s interwoven narrative commentaries on gender help to show a stinging criticism of the traditional family, marriage, and inequities based on sex. This last scene manifests another crucial theme concerning the criticism of social and gender norms in this tale: marriage as a function of rural

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 237-38.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 241.

capitalism, typified at the time by the privileged position of men, and women's inferior one, in marital and other legal matters.

### 2.2.3 Male Dominance through Seduction and Capitalism

Marriage in nineteenth-century France was motivated by many factors, the least of which was typically "love." As feminist historian Claire Goldberg Moses explains:

The young woman of the nineteenth century was still considered a chattel, and a valuable one at that. Marriages in middle-class and upper-class families were almost always arranged.<sup>87</sup>

In rural farming communities, however, such as the one in which Rose's story is framed, marriages were arranged differently than among the bourgeoisie. Peasants and farmers were collectively, obviously, less wealthy than aristocrats and bourgeois families, and thereby the dowry for a daughter's marriage was less and of less consequence. In these communities, people enjoyed a more general equality than in urban centers. Maupassant explains this in the following passage, coming after the farmer's initial marriage proposal. The farmer is confident that his offer will be accepted, considering that it makes good business sense for both parties:

Et il se dépêcha de s'en aller, très soulagé d'en avoir fini avec cette démarche qui l'embarrassait beaucoup, et ne doutant pas que, le lendemain, sa servante accepterait une proposition qui était pour elle tout à fait inespérée et, pour lui, une excellente affaire, puisqu'il s'attachait ainsi à jamais une femme qui lui rapporterait certes davantage que la plus belle dot du pays.

Il ne pouvait d'ailleurs exister entre eux de scrupules de mésalliance, car, dans la campagne, tous sont à peu près égaux : le fermier laboure comme son valet, qui, le plus souvent, devient maître à son tour un jour ou l'autre, et les servantes à tout moment passent maîtresses sans que cela apporte aucun changement dans leur vie ou leurs habitudes.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Claire Goldberg Moses' *French Feminism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1984), 34.

<sup>88</sup> CN I, 235.

The two elements that stand out in this passage are: the relative social equality among country folk, supposed by Maupassant's narrator, and the farmer's economic reflection that his proposal is an "excellente affaire" for him. After the birth of her child, Rose's superior work ethic earned her a reputation which would contribute to her value as a future spouse. It is this value, that of a hardworking wife and reproductive agent of the legitimate family, which allows Rose to be fully incorporated into the patriarchal structure. In this way, Rose's utility for Jacques in his function as a cog in Stivale's "bachelor machine" is opposed to her greater utility for the State and for the farm economy as a wife and legitimated mother. A marriage promise is called upon in this story twice, once as a means of seduction for Jacques, and later as an insurance of prosperity for the farmer. For Rose, however, marriage is the sole means of legitimating her child and escaping the consequences of her first seduction and pregnancy.

Love is never presented as a genuine factor in these proceedings. When Jacques first attempts to seduce Rose, her physical domination of the man forces him to fulfill his desires, pursuing his "idée fixe," by other than physical means. He slyly attempts to converse with her, discussing their work, their neighbors, their lives before coming to the farm. But this was not enough to lower her guard, as evidenced by his bloodied nose. He looks at her "avec admiration, pris d'un respect, d'une affection tout autre, d'un commencement d'amour vrai pour cette grande gaillarde si solide."<sup>89</sup> Although this nascent love will not last, Maupassant leads us to believe that it may. The reader is made to believe that Jacques' feelings for Rose are genuine, and when Rose proposes marriage herself, Jacques agrees blindly while feeling "repris d'envie,": "Alors, tu me veux bien en mariage? [...] Oui, je veux bien."<sup>90</sup> And then begins what Maupassant calls,

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>90</sup> Ibidem.

with disguised irony, “l'éternelle histoire d'amour.”<sup>91</sup> They begin to see each other regularly, meeting under the moonlight, behind haystacks, kicking each other under the dinner table, and so forth. Eventually, Jacques becomes bored with her: “Puis, peu à peu, Jacques parut s'ennuyer d'elle”: the “eternal” element to the Maupassantian love story.<sup>92</sup> He avoids her, but cannot do so indefinitely, especially when she remarks that she is pregnant. He laughs when she demands that he make good on his marriage proposal. Again, Rose asserts her physical superiority and seizes him by the throat and begins to strangle him, screaming that she is pregnant: “Quand Jacques comprit qu'elle était la plus forte, il balbutia: ‘Eh bien, je t'épouserai, puisque c'est ça.’”<sup>93</sup> He concedes, but flees the farm before having to marry her. So it is through artifice that Jacques is able to seduce the unfortunate servant. With the flight of the bachelor-father, Rose finds herself at the mercy of the juridical and social apparatus represented in the farm/er.

It is important to reiterate how Rose is physically stronger than, and in a sense superior to, the men who seek to seduce her, despite her lack of education and occasional naïveté. Her physical subversion of the traditionally gendered hierarchy of power leads Jacques to seek other means of obtaining her favors; in a very important way, Rose is more “masculine” than Jacques, who fails to overcome her physically. Judith Halberstam, in *Female Masculinity* (1998), claims that masculinity is tied to ideas of power as much as, if not more, than it is to biological “maleness.” Her claim is “that far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity.”<sup>94</sup> If one considers Rose's physical dominance and fertility, then, as performances of masculinity, the artificial and fragile façade of “traditional” masculinity begins to show some cracks.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>94</sup> Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 1998), 1.

Rose may very well have resisted the farmer's advances, if not for her weakened state after her bleeding by the leeches. It is in part Rose's strength and solid physique that attract men to her in the first place. Despite her resistance, it is conceivable that Rose may have otherwise accepted to marry the farmer, if not for her secret. The farmer is described earlier as a "brave homme," jovial and obstinate, and two times a widow. He is a landowner who could provide well for a family. Rose is also deeply concerned with her reputation in the small community, as well as with religious matters, albeit superstitiously. Her fear that people might discover her pregnancy, and her constant anxiety while hiding her growing belly, become obsessional. An eventual marriage could legitimate her child, and yet she fears the farmer's reaction, perhaps her banishment from the farm, leaving her unable to provide for her child. But his reaction is unexpected, providing a relatively happy ending; Rose will live with her child, who in turn will be provided for, and the farmer will establish his long-desired family, gain a worker and an heir, thereby resolving the problem of his sterility. The farmer sheds any concern for public opinion, for he could easily present the child as adopted from the church, as he had been trying to do. This is one of several possible options for explaining the appearance of the child on the farm.

It is also worth noting that the farmer's desire for Rose as a wife is motivated from the beginning by his capitalist sensibility. He does not try to hide this when he first proposes to her:

"Rose, dit-il, est-ce que tu n'as jamais songé à t'établir?" [...] "Tu es une brave fille, rangée, active et économe. Une femme comme toi, ça ferait la fortune d'un homme."<sup>95</sup>

This proposition is far from loving and romantic, but perfectly normal under the circumstances, and mutually beneficial. Rather than seducing her simply for pleasure, or marrying her for her dowry or a family alliance, he seeks to ally himself with her based purely on her own merits,

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<sup>95</sup> CN I, 234.

which in some ways is more legitimate and honest than many marriages, even among the upper classes. Once Rose has admitted to having an illegitimate child, this new marital arrangement can only improve her life and that of her child. Marriage and a child will stabilize her situation and guarantee the farmer's patrimony. The farmer attributes to Rose's labor, and potential for labor, a great value, making her an invaluable asset were she his wife. The farmer tells everyone, "cette fille-là, ça vaut mieux que de l'or," compared to his later estimation that her childlessness rendered her worthless.<sup>96</sup> Even her maternal labor is eventually given a value when discovered. Before, it was a physical and financial hindrance to her. While the labor (in every sense) of a married woman and that of a single woman are similar, Maupassant shows that it requires legitimacy and adherence to societal expectations for maternity to carry much value in a "masculine" society.

#### **2.2.4 What Sort of Illegitimacy is This?**

The type of illegitimacy in question here is what writer and medical historian Edward Shorter would call "Hit-and-run" illegitimacy.<sup>97</sup> Considering this case with Shorter's clear categorization of the circumstances of illegitimacy will help to explain how Maupassant's treatment of Rose does more than tell a story with a "happy" ending. It shows how, despite his own avoidance of marriage, Maupassant reinforces a seemingly inevitable obligation to subscribe to the traditional customs and patriarchal family structures of his day, especially that felt by women. But it remains essential to note the inclusion of certain contradictions and ironies

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 232.

<sup>97</sup> Edward Shorter's "Illegitimacy, Sexual Revolution, and Social Change in Modern Europe" (*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, *The History of the Family*. Autumn, 1971, pp. 237-72) hypothesizes the reasons for the rise in illegitimacy from the mid-eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries throughout Europe. Shorter establishes a taxonomy of four types of illegitimacy, some more tolerated by society than others: True love, Hit-and-run, Peasant-bundling and Master-servant exploitation.

in gender stereotypes and society in general, here in the case of the farmer's sterility and Rose's dominant strength.

Shorter considers manipulative sexuality one that employs sex as a means to an end unrelated to sex acts themselves. The Hit-and-run illegitimacy of Rose's child is defined by the temporary nature of the parents' relationship, as well as by the non-manipulative sexuality which Shorter calls "expressive" sexuality. While this sort of illegitimate birth is common enough in rural communities where girls are seduced but not married, Rose has the opportunity to legitimate her child, and thereby regain her respectability and honor. This will occur if her new husband recognizes or adopts the child. There will be a shift in the type of illegitimacy following Rose's marriage and subsequent re-introduction of her child into her new family.<sup>98</sup> Since a legally recognized child, for all practical purposes, will be considered legitimate in the social context, the illusion of the farmer's paternity creates with it the illusion of another, more tolerable sort of illegitimacy. If the child is presumed to be that of the farmer, the child may be considered the fruit of "Master-servant exploitation," as Shorter terms it, since Rose was unwilling to have sexual relations with her employer, but was manipulated and physically forced to do so, most likely fearing what this man, her superior, might do if she were to continue resisting. Since Maupassant's tale ends before the reader learns how the child will be adapted into its new familial situation, one must hypothesize the eventual explanation for its sudden appearance. The child may be presented as adopted, or as the married couple's own child, conceived before their marriage, hidden, but then legitimized by their legal union. In such a

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<sup>98</sup> The mere illusion of legitimacy may suffice to make the child accepted in such rural societies where there was a relative tolerance of *concubinage* between "maître" and "servante." See Ariès, Philippe and Georges Duby (eds.). *Histoire de la vie privée, Tome 4* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987), 538.



case, the illusion of what Shorter calls a “True-love” natural child will be presented to the community, which is the most ideal situation for the family’s honor and the child’s welfare.

Despite the instances of sexual manipulation examined up to this point, perpetrated by a man, usually of a high social status, Maupassant demonstrates how this is far from being the only case in several tales, namely in his tales, “L’aveu” (1884), and “Rencontre” (1884). The illegitimacy in “L’aveu” is doubtlessly one caused by manipulative sexuality on the part of a woman, Claire Malivoire. As touched upon earlier, by “manipulative sexuality” Shorter infers the sort by which one uses sexuality “as a tool for achieving some ulterior external objective, such as obtaining a suitable marriage partner and setting up a home, or avoiding trouble with a superior.”<sup>99</sup> Mlle Malivoire becomes pregnant by a carriage driver with whom she is trading sex for free rides to town, where she sells her farm goods. This is surprising at first, since she and her mother are described as well-to-do, their social status well above that of Polyte the driver: “C’étaient de riches fermiers les Malivoire, des gens cossus, posés, respectés, malins et puissant.”<sup>100</sup> So contrary to the norm, it is a woman of superior social situation, Claire, who manipulates Polyte, who himself never attempts to force himself on the young woman. It is, nevertheless, Claire’s wealth and social status which allow her to commit this apparent act of manipulative sexuality, but which may mask an expressive nature, the motivation of which lies in her simple desire for sex, the expression of which remains prohibited outside of marriage according to contemporary social mores; this theme is left unexplored by Maupassant in the short format of his tale.

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<sup>99</sup> Shorter, 241.

<sup>100</sup> CN II, 193.

“Rencontre,” on the other hand, tells the tale of a noble couple, the baron of Étraille and his wife the baroness, who have quietly separated after the discovery of the latter’s adultery.<sup>101</sup> Six years after, the baron, much aged and less handsome than before, meets his wife on a train by “accident.” He finds her greatly changed and even more attractive: “Il la trouvait plus mûre, plus faite, plus femme, plus séduisante, plus désirable, adorablement désirable.”<sup>102</sup> He tells himself that he could, by right as her husband, take her back: “il n’avait qu’à dire, ‘Je veux.’”<sup>103</sup> He approaches her, they converse civilly, and the baron eventually expresses his desire for her, threatening to use the force of the law to compel her to come back with him. But the baroness explains to her estranged husband that in fact she had prepared their meeting on the train so that they might be seen together, for she fears herself to be pregnant. This ruse, as she explains, was to save appearances as per the baron’s own instructions: “Je vous disais tout à l’heure que, suivant en tous points vos recommandations, j’avais soigneusement gardé les apparences [...] Eh bien, c’est pour continuer que j’ai tenu à cette rencontre.”<sup>104</sup> The result of this charade, beyond avoiding scandal, would be to legitimate an eventual bastard child. Etienne van de Walle summarizes the French law of the nineteenth century on this point: “A child born within marriage was presumed legitimate. Disavowal by the husband was extremely difficult, even if the child has clearly been conceived before marriage or while the husband was absent.”<sup>105</sup> The baron, shocked at the prospect of his wife being pregnant, says nothing as she exits the train to meet her friend, the princess of Raynes. It does not seem that the baron would attempt to force his wife to go back to him, perhaps fearing scandal or the prospect of rearing his wife’s bastard:

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<sup>101</sup> This story was published in the *Gil Blas* on March 11, 1884, just four months before the passing of the Naquet Law, which allowed divorce in cases of adultery.

<sup>102</sup> CN I, 1235.

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 1238.

<sup>105</sup> Etienne van de Walle in *Bastardy and its Comparative History* (Peter Laslett, Karla Oosterveen, and Richard M. Smith, eds., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980. Ch. 10), 265.

“Il ne l’a jamais revue. Avait-elle menti? Disait-elle vrai? Il l’ignore toujours.”<sup>106</sup> In this case, the baroness is never even required to commit a sexual act in order to perform her sexuality in a feat of manipulation; her mere beauty and her husband’s desire are enough to make him approach her on the train, effectively fulfilling the goal of her strategy. These last two female characters, Claire and the baroness, are from entirely different social classes than Rose the farm girl, however. The latter will have an immeasurable disadvantage to the former two, who are both wealthy, and one of which is already strategically married.

### 2.2.5 Two Forms of Patriarchal Privilege

Rose is completely inferiorized by her social status, not to mention by her sex. One may say that she is sexually manipulative in her own way, seeking marriage and stability, but this assumption is quickly dispelled when one considers the nature of her seduction. Jacques’ marriage proposal is initially a justification for Rose to perform her sexuality, although she herself may have benefitted more than her seducer from the stability represented by an eventual marriage. Jacques, in his embodiment of a paradigmatic “bachelor machine,” was never intent on marriage and fatherhood, therefore his sexuality dominated that of Rose, since he accomplished his goal of having without being had. Contrarily to Maupassant’s “art of rupture,” however, the farmhand disengages completely from Rose. He is unable to take up Maupassant’s challenge to keep all the women he has relations with: “On les garde toutes, monsieur.”<sup>107</sup> Jacques is incapable of keeping Rose, and the latter’s physical dominance represents a physical threat similar to that of the jealous, vitriol-throwing lover described in Maupassant’s *chronique* on the “*art of breaking up*.” At the same time, Jacques does not fall “under the sway of possession,” as Stivale says of

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<sup>106</sup> CN I, 1238.

<sup>107</sup> “L’art de rompre,” in *Chroniques* (Ed. Gérard Delaisement. 2 vols. Paris : Éditions Rive Droite, 2003), 152.

Maupassant's own practice of the art of rupture.<sup>108</sup> He remains free, which is the essential goal of this "art." Part of Jacques' embodiment of the "bachelor" is his exclusion from "the natural order of things," as Howard Chudacoff puts it.<sup>109</sup> Jacques' flight from Rose and the farm reveals the itinerant worker's aversion to both Nature, as Rose embodies it, and to marriage and fatherhood (both social imperatives according to the Church and Civil Code).<sup>110</sup>

The farmer, for his part, embraces all things "natural," including Rose's "natural son." The man is sexually manipulative of Rose, seeking to make her his wife, and essentially rapes her as a means of shaming or scaring her into a marriage. Rose's sexuality, as expressed through her intercourse with the farmer, posits her in the same role as that of the hen who receives the cock without inviting it. Only the husband can truly possess Rose, however, while only Jacques the bachelor remains free from "the natural order of things."

So here are two mirror opposites, two very different manifestations of patriarchal privilege, the untouchable bachelor and the proprietary husband, mutually oppositional, yet both gaining advantage over Rose by their shared sexual identification. Just as Jacques is an agent of a bachelor (war) machine, the farmer is an agent of the State apparatus, to borrow a key point from Deleuze and Guattari: "As for the war machine in itself, it seems to be irreducible to the State apparatus, to be outside its sovereignty and prior to its law: it comes from elsewhere."<sup>111</sup> With this in mind, let us look more closely at how these two men can function as agents of a moralizing legal structure and a war machine.

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<sup>108</sup> Stivale, 3.

<sup>109</sup> Chudacoff, 12.

<sup>110</sup> It is of interest to point out that Article 161 of Napoleon's 1803 Civil Code upholds the incest taboo in law by forbidding marriage equally between members of the same "legitimate" or "natural" family.

<sup>111</sup> *A Thousand Plateaus*, 352.

Jacques, as an itinerant worker and determined bachelor, is exterior to the State apparatus as manifested in the farm (the “stable”) and in the institution of marriage as well, as we have seen. The farm is defined by enclosed space, and also, paradoxically, by its “natural,” out-of-doors associations. It consists of barns for keeping animals, silos for holding food, fences for enclosing property, and most often striated spaces for planting crops, purposefully arranged to avoid waste and resist exterior dissemination. The itinerant worker is appropriated by the farm, but is not irreducible to it, for the worker can move on to another job, or simply wander.

The farmer, on the other hand, is immobile. He is invested in the land which he *inhabits* and labors. The farm’s concern is production, and more specifically, the reproduction of the same crops on the same lands over extended periods of time. This goal leads to the farmer’s disconcertment with having no children; he is required to reproduce, both as a husband and father and through his function as agricultor. Agriculture requires consistent attention from generation to generation (legitimate heirs inheriting the land and its productive capacity), whereas itinerant workers are by definition, *en passage*, and therefore not expected to be permanent in any way. Itinerant or nomadic workers may be employed by a farm, but are never truly subject to the owner’s “sovereignty.” They may leave as they will. The idea that the war machine exists prior to the laws of the State is illustrated by the very concept of agriculture. Sedentary communities began practicing organized agriculture only after nomadic herding, hunting and gathering gave way to forms of subsistence dependent upon early models of a State apparatus, a community of interiority. In a sense, agriculture replaced the earlier nomadic war machine’s function of alimentary subsistence. The war machine then metamorphosizes, adopting other functions, relative to its wandering, exterior aspects, which are not only functions of war, as Deleuze and Guattari point out:

But the war machine's form of exteriority is such that it exists only in its own metamorphoses; it exists in an industrial innovation as well as in a technological invention, in a commercial circuit as well as in a religious creation, in all flows and currents that only secondarily allow themselves to be appropriated by the State.<sup>112</sup>

The itinerant work force, as a sort of war machine, "comes from elsewhere," from the outside, whereas the farm itself is pure interiority, a microcosmic socio-economic structure of its own, with its rules, structures and economy. Jacques' paternal function, when considered through such a lens, is similar to his function as farmhand. He may be incorporated into the farm as a permanent laborer, perhaps owning his own farm one day, or he may be deterritorialized and reassume his role as nomad. His activity on the farm, which contributes to (re)production, creates commodities which he has little interest in seeing mature and harvested. Jacques is invested in neither the crops nor the child he has contributed to producing, and in both cases it is the farmer that reaps the fruit of Jacques' labors.

Whether one thinks of Jacques and the farmer as simply two men or as representatives of a State apparatus or war machine respectively, the fact remains that Rose is disadvantaged and deprived of genuine agency in both contexts. Although it may be argued that Rose has more freedom in the realm of the war machine, of the natural, or of the outside, one must avow that she is deprived of her freedom when the consequences (the child) of her relation with a war/bachelor machine, a relation in which she functions as vanquished opponent, lead to her dependence upon the farmer (State), eventually resulting in their marriage. The uneven role of women in such negotiations with the seducer-bachelor and the State-husband is evident in several of Maupassant's tales, whereas the woman is also portrayed in others as a manipulative seductress herself. The majority of his stories imply the impassibility of socio-State institutions

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 360.

such as marriage and religion, particularly showing how women and illegitimate children are perpetually and completely at the mercy of patriarchy, and the desires of men. By no means a “feminist” writer, Maupassant nonetheless often creates narratives of illegitimacy in which women and their bastards only find happiness and prosperity (and in some cases, a means for survival), by seeking inclusion in or submitting to a patriarchal hierarchy, but also occasionally by adulterating it: Rose does this through marriage, others through submission to an unloved husband, as we will see in *Pierre et Jean*, or even through adultery, like in “Un million,” also to be analyzed later.

The relationship between legitimacy and the war machine is one of constant opposition. The war machine may provoke a change in a political regime, for example, completely redefining which is considered a legitimate ruling power. As for the bachelor machine as war machine, it remains relatively unconcerned with ideas of legitimacy, since its goal is not to reproduce, but to conquer a designated foe, as Deleuze and Guattari explain in detail. In the case of Maupassant’s bachelor, the practitioner of the art of rupture, this foe is not necessarily a woman, although she may be a casualty. Rather, the enemy is the potential entrapment that she represents, a threat to male freedom. Marriage and fatherhood simply run counter to his essential function in Maupassant’s representation of a bachelor machine, just as they will fulfill the farmer’s function within an apparatus of legitimate reproduction. These two men, when put in relation with Rose and each other, form a sort of triangular mechanic of power. This is not the only such example in Maupassant of a triangulation of State apparatus, war machine and Woman with an illegitimate child as their bond, the fourth point of a pyramid, as we will see in the next two tales.

## 2.3 Extremes of Male Sexuality in Bourgeois Codes of Honor:

### Triangulating Illegitimacy

In “Un million” and “Un fils,” Maupassant highlights the consequences of immoderate sexuality for one’s perceived masculinity, and for the affected children and single mothers, respectively; it seems, however, that sexual excess within the writer’s nineteenth-century fictional universe is more forgivable than is a lack of virility. I will first consider an instance of male sterility, and secondly a case of promiscuous male behavior which, given the fertility of the male subject, will result in an illegitimate birth. These extremes of male sexuality both deviate from the “moderate” masculinity that Reeser describes in *Moderating Masculinity*, as mentioned earlier.

Maupassant’s 1882 “Un million” recounts the trials and tribulations of a modest couple, Monsieur and Madame Léopold Bonnin. Léopold is a hard-working ministry clerk, his wife from a poor family, save for her aunt, who married rich. The couple expects to become wealthy by inheriting the fortune of Mme Bonnin’s childless aunt. Their hope for the future is to climb the social ranks from the petty bourgeoisie to the *haute* bourgeoisie through inheritance, rather than through M Bonnin’s advancement at the workplace. The problem is that the aunt’s will requires that the couple have a child within three years of her death in order to enjoy the inheritance, a problem for this childless couple, previously content to remain so. Just as the nobility and the poor are (generally) born into their class, the bourgeois must be active and industrious to achieve their social rank, and to advance within this class. The Bonnin family is not exempt from this condition, imposed by the aunt’s unfulfilled desire for motherhood.

The problematics of honor come into play for Léopold, who is first described as an *honnête homme* in a very mundane, yet hegemonically masculine and bourgeois manner:

Il avait avant tout la prétention d’être un honnête homme, et il le proclamait en se frappant la poitrine. Il était, en effet, un honnête



homme dans le sens le plus terre à terre du mot. Il venait à l'heure, partait à l'heure, ne flânait guère, et se montrait toujours fort droit sur la 'question d'argent.'<sup>113</sup>

*Honnêteté*, while translated in modern French-English dictionaries as “honesty,” “decency,” or “integrity,” in its older significations implies a wider range of meaning. In the 1959 Petit Larousse, to take one example, *honnêteté* is defined as: “Sentiment conforme à l’honneur, à la probité,” and “Bienveillance, délicatesse.”<sup>114</sup> “Honneur,” in turn, has an impressive list of possible meanings; it can be a feeling of moral dignity, glory or esteem accompanying virtue and talent, reputation, demonstration of esteem or respect, or “*en parlant des femmes*,” reserve or modesty (*pudeur*), or chastity. Here, *honnêteté* takes on a rather bourgeois significance; Bonnin is hard-working, punctual, and financially responsible. The couple is said to be calm and moderate, enjoying the quiet of a childless existence: “Leur appartement était propre, rangé, dormant, car ils étaient calmes et modérés en tout; et ils pensaient qu'un enfant troublerait leur vie, leur intérieur, leur repos.”<sup>115</sup> Léopold is shown as a man of both moderation and mediocrity. When driven to extremes, as we will see, he undergoes a physical crisis, an attack of sorts.

For the couple, the social prerequisite of procreation, the importance of heredity as we saw earlier in Foucault and Nye’s reflections, force them to confront and overcome their sterility for their inclusion in the upper echelons of bourgeois society. Unfortunately, sterility was a more formidable obstacle to pregnancy in the nineteenth century than it is today. The folk remedies recommended to the couple do not work. The consulted doctor contends that just as some couples separate for incompatible temperaments, others are sterile due to a physical incompatibility: “que le cas se présentait assez fréquemment; qu’il en est des corps comme des

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<sup>113</sup> CN I, 614.

<sup>114</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>115</sup> Ibidem.

esprits ; qu'après avoir vu tant de ménages disjoints par incompatibilité d'humeur, il n'était pas étonnant d'en voir d'autres stériles par incompatibilité physique. Cela coûta quarante francs.”<sup>116</sup>

Although the doctor does not attribute blame to either spouse, Mme Bonnin behaves as if the fault is wholly that of her husband, which proves to be the case. The wife begins to take out her frustrations on her husband, blaming him for their childlessness and insulting his less than glorious job at the ministry as a pencil pusher, “*monsieur le gratte-papier*”:

Enfin, à toute heure, en toute occasion, elle semblait reprocher à son mari quelque chose de honteux, le rendant seul coupable, seul responsable de la perte de cette fortune.<sup>117</sup>

From the moment when Léopold Bonnin's sterility threatens the couple's future inheritance, his manly worth is put into question, thereby menacing his sense of honor as well: in that his “*honneur*” may refer to his “*biens*,” his property, and his reputation among his colleagues, all perfectly aware of his need to produce an heir and his difficulty in doing so. Illustrating his physical feebleness, the narrator explains that upon receiving the terrible news of the aunt's will, Léopold falls ill and cannot work for eight days. Recovered, he then exhausts himself sexually through his renewed attempts at impregnating his wife:

Pendant six mois, il s'y acharna jusqu'à n'être plus que l'ombre de lui-même. Il se rappelait maintenant tous les moyens de la tante et les mettait en œuvre consciencieusement, mais en vain. Sa volonté désespérée lui donnait une force factice qui faillit lui devenir fatale. L'anémie le minait; on craignait la phtisie.<sup>118</sup>

To his weak constitution and dominated marital role is added his social vulnerability in the masculine sphere of the work place. At the ministry, he faces joking advice for fertility, as well

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 617.

<sup>117</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 615.

as mocking offers from coworkers to fulfill the clause in the will for him: “Les uns donnaient à Bonnin des conseils plaisants ; d'autres s'offraient avec outrecuidance pour remplir la clause désespérante.”<sup>119</sup> His injured masculine ego leads him to challenge one coworker to a duel, a practice Maupassant himself abhorred, despite its inclusion in several of his writings.<sup>120</sup> This particular colleague, Frédéric Morel, is depicted by the narrator as a ladies’ man, making the remark in reference to Léopold, that he could “le faire hériter en vingt minutes.”<sup>121</sup> Eventually these two settle their dispute without bloodshed, and, having exchanged mutual excuses, become best friends. The homosocial bond between Léopold and Frédéric is initiated by a code of honor, a conflict stemming from Léopold’s sterility. The resolution of their conflict occurs only after the specter of the duel is dissolved. This war-like challenge is essentially all that remains in bourgeois masculine identity of the former military vocation of the noble class. Although the two never meet in combat, the very possibility of the duel and its publicity help to salvage Léopold’s honor in a sense, although the problem that led to their conflict remains.

Later, the two coworkers make a concerted effort to act civilly toward each other. This eventually leads to a mutual understanding between the two, and then, to their friendship. In hopes of avoiding the now nightly disputes with his increasingly unbearable wife, Léopold invites his new friend Morel to dine at his home:

Les dîners, les soirées surtout devenaient intolérables. Ne sachant plus que faire, Léopold, un soir, craignant une scène horrible au logis, amena son ami, Frédéric Morel, avec qui il avait failli se

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 615.

<sup>120</sup> In *Bel-Ami* (1888) for instance, Maupassant’s novel about journalism, seduction and ambition in 19th-century Paris, Georges Duroy challenges another journalist in a duel. “Un duel” (1883) recalls a duel between a Frenchman, Monsieur Dubuis, and a Prussian during the Franco-Prussian War. Also, in “Un lâche” (1884), a man shoots and kills himself, rather than face the man he had challenged to a duel.

<sup>121</sup> CN I, 615. The name of this character is remarkably similar to Flaubert’s Frédéric Moreau, the eternal bachelor of *L’Education sentimentale* (1869).

battre en duel. Morel fut bientôt l'ami de la maison, le conseiller écouté des deux époux.<sup>122</sup>

Morel becomes a regular dinner guest in the Bonnin household, a friend to the couple whose presence seems to bolster Léopold's confidence, given that his regular attendance coincides with Léopold's taking on an aggressive attitude with his wife. It is worth pointing out that the company of another man, one depicted as sexually successful, a self-reliant and self-consciously virile bachelor, bolsters Léopold's confidence; Frédéric's 'manliness' seems to rub off on him. It is about at this time that the three-year limit established by the will has nearly been reached, and Léopold finally begins to criticize his wife, telling her that other men's wives know how to help their husbands to advance, and adds, "[d]ans la vie il faut savoir s'arranger pour n'être pas dupé par les circonstances." What does he imply by this? As the narrator asks, "Que voulait-il dire au juste ? Que comprit-elle ? Que se passa-t-il?"<sup>123</sup> These are all very good questions, but whose answers, while hinted at, are never explicitly revealed by the narrator.

Nonetheless, shortly thereafter Mme Bonnin announces that she is pregnant. Two months later this is confirmed and the inheritance is guaranteed. Then one evening, Mme Bonnin declares that she has asked M Morel never again to lay foot in their home, for his having been "improper" with her. The husband looks at her with a "sourire reconnaissant," and his wife throws herself into his arms: "ils s'embrassèrent longtemps, longtemps comme deux bons petits époux, bien tendres, bien unis, bien honnêtes."<sup>124</sup> Of course the couple had not been "united" in any perceivable way since the reading of the aunt's will. And the choice of the adjective "*honnêtes*" is difficult to interpret; it most logically refers to their appearance to the casual

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 617.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 618.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 618-19.

onlooker, who may perceive a respectable, loving couple, whereas the reader is perfectly aware that their fertility strategies were less than “honest” or “respectable.” So it is with great irony that Maupassant shows how Léopold simultaneously becomes rich and regains his (public) masculine honor by allowing and even suggesting his wife’s infidelity. He effectively asserts his male authority over his wife by tacitly commanding her to take things into her own hands and seduce a willing Frédéric, and by doing so, orchestrates the public illusion of his own sexual potency. In this case, the Civil Code provides a “palliatif à la stérilité masculine,” as Knibiehler writes, by making any child born into the Bonnin family legitimate.<sup>125</sup> Adultery is acceptable under such circumstances as a means of acquiring wealth and maintaining the happiness of the couple. In this case, infidelity is the only way to protect the husband’s “honor,” whereas in mostly any other situation it would be considered as dishonorable.

The tale ends with a reflection by the narrator: “Et il faut entendre Mme Bonnin parler des femmes qui ont failli par amour, et de celles qu'un grand élan de cœur a jetées dans l'adultère.”<sup>126</sup> Infidelity committed for love is unacceptable to this newly rich bourgeois woman, whereas such behavior functions as a strategic tool when implemented within a capitalistic social framework, where normalized bourgeois morality is secondary to, or perhaps even replaced by, ideals of wealth accumulation and social status. On the other hand, a more complex aspect of Léopold and Frédéric’s homosocial bond appears when Frédéric fulfills the function of genitor for the Bonnin couple. Here he steps into the role of bachelor-warrior, appropriated by the bourgeois apparatus of reproduction. The ensuing pregnancy is deliberate, and the bachelor-warrior, his function complete, is sent away. Frédéric the “ladies’ man” is unable to remain “inside” the Bonnin household, lest he destabilize the couple’s marriage. The homosocial bond

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<sup>125</sup> Knibiehler, 190.

<sup>126</sup> CN I, 619.

between the two men is broken in favor of the marital bond. Todd Reeser brings new dimensions to Sedgwick's conception of homosociality in his discussion of traditional representations of "love triangles" which are defined by female passivity:

One of the basic assumptions behind this model is that the shared female love object is a passive recipient of male desire, unable to function as a subject in this male-centered and male-dominated triangle. Along with the injunction against desiring or having sex with another man in this model is the underlying principle of women as "objects of exchange" between men.<sup>127</sup>

In a sense, Léopold and Frédéric follow the model described by Reeser; Léopold essentially gives his wife to Frédéric by implicitly sending her to him. There are in this case, however, irregular circumstances which affect the functioning of the homosocial system. Firstly, there is little chance that Frédéric seeks to emulate Léopold by seducing the latter's wife. It is rather Léopold who seeks to emulate "virile" men like Frédéric when the former exhausts himself through countless attempts to impregnate his wife. And rather than Mme Bonnin fulfilling the role of "passive recipient of male desire," it is she who seduces Frédéric. The homosocial bond between the two men indeed promotes the interest of male power, ensuring Léopold's fortune and viability as bourgeois husband, but the bond ends abruptly, terminated by the "object of exchange" herself. As a representative of the bachelor-war machine, Frédéric's departure is essential, not only to the preservation of the institution of marriage, but also to his own fundamental nature. The men's friendship, while instrumental in the recovery of Léopold's reputation and thereby his honor, must be sacrificed; in this case, social norms of reproduction, the desire for wealth and the institution of marriage trump the bonds of male homosociality in this case where Bonnin is obviously dominated by his wife. The male-bonding that occurs

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<sup>127</sup> *Masculinities in Theory*, Chapter 2.

between the two men in this story, while fated to be broken, is typical in its initiation. Reeser points out how “[m]ale bonding might be viewed as harmonious, either because it is perceived as without rivalry or as a harmless rivalry that replaces violent or high-stakes rivalry.”<sup>128</sup> When the threat of the duel is removed, Léopold and Frédéric bond without rivalry. When Mme Bonnin announces her pregnancy, however, Léopold’s need for Frédéric’s presence and example disappears; the introduction of the Bonnins’ now-assured fortune could foreseeably reconstitute a “high-stakes rivalry,” which is nipped at the bud by Frédéric’s dismissal by Léopold’s wife.

It may be argued that Léopold should be ridiculed for allowing his wife’s adultery, or that the tale simply demonstrates the opportunistic nature of morality, which can be adjusted according to necessity to preserve one’s honor and to advance in society. Either or both possibilities may be maintained, depending on how one interprets Maupassant’s rich use of irony. In either case, the meaning of honor and *honnêteté* changes within this particular narrative. Maupassant shows how honor (as wealth, reputation and manly worth) is restored in this bourgeois family, not through the duel, but through unconventional means. Here the Bonnin couple gains entry into a superior social class simply by the birth of a child, not through the production of “viable and talented inheritors,” as Nye would say, but any inheritor at all. The sexual prowess of the bachelor, manipulated and cast out, feeds the bourgeois familial structure. The problem posed by Léopold’s sterility is resolved by artifice, orchestrated adultery, which is equally upsetting to bourgeois convention as the sterility that provokes it, particularly since the adultery willfully committed is that of the wife.

In this illegitimate triangle, the presumed illegitimacy of the child is a non-issue since its acceptance into the family, and its being passed it off as legitimate are imperative to the goal that

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

prompted the pregnancy. Again, the birth of an *enfant naturel* is shown by Maupassant to be a fortunate event, although the reality of the child's siring must be hidden, and the strategy leading to the pregnancy is purposefully devised. The bastard child, like Rose's baby, is brought into a family where it does not legitimately belong in order to serve the greater good of the mother and adoptive, complicit father. The majority of illegitimate children in nineteenth-century France did not have such luck, and the acceptance of the two preceding bastards had much to do with luck and circumstance. This reality is reflected in other tales by Maupassant, in which the cruel and more common fate of illegitimate children is exposed, as in the following example.

### 2.3.1 Maupassant's "Un fils": the Wild Oats Defense

In Maupassant's "Un fils" (1882), we encounter two friends, both respectable, or at least *respected* men in positions of power: one a member of the French Academy and the other a senator. It is spring and the two men are walking in a flower garden discussing politics. As befits the very symbolic season, the discussion turns to nature, the fertilization of plants and its similarity with how men spread their 'seed.' What is surprising is how the two men can simplify and render natural the way in which men father illegitimate children and then abandon them. Standing before a laburnum tree, a *faux-ébénier*, the senator notes that the tree reproduces easily without worrying about its offspring, abandoning them without remorse. The senator remarks the difficulty in which his companion would find himself, the latter representing the legal system of the Republic, if he had to account for all of the children he had engendered:

" Ah! Mon gaillard, s'il te fallait faire le compte de tes enfants, tu serais bigrement embarrassé. En voilà un qui les exécute facilement et qui les lâche sans remords, et qui ne s'en inquiète guère."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> CN I, 417.



The academician points out that men do the same: “Nous en faisons autant, mon ami.”<sup>130</sup> He continues to explain that mostly every man has children of which he is ignorant, made in the same way as does the tree, “presque inconsciemment.” Speaking with a certain authority, he continues to give insight into the “reality” of bourgeois male conduct. He states that from the age of eighteen to forty men will have had sexual relations, “rapports intimes,” with between two and three hundred women. This statement may be exaggerated, but it underlines the supposed ease with which men could partake in such relations, and it certainly reflects the sexuality practiced by Maupassant in his lifetime. While moderation is prescribed for married bourgeois men, bachelors could easily be forgiven the sexual follies of youth. It is appropriate to briefly explain at this point that Maupassant was most likely the illegitimate father of several children, some cases of which are documented. Jacques-Louis Douchin devotes ten pages of his book, *La vie érotique de Guy de Maupassant*, to Maupassant’s mistress, Joséphine Litzelmann and her children, who all shared her family name: Lucien the eldest, Lucienne, and Marguerite, the youngest.<sup>131</sup> Citing earlier interviews with Maupassant’s children and others that he conducted himself with descendants of Maupassant, Douchin concludes that while never attempting to marry their mother, Maupassant did not fail to provide for the welfare of his natural children: “De son vivant, Guy de Maupassant n’a donc pas abandonné ses enfants, bien au contraire. Il subvenait – largement – à leurs besoins.”<sup>132</sup> Maupassant took care of his children’s material needs, and his narrator in “Un fils” seems perfectly aware of the miserable fate of abandoned children, who are invariably destined to lives of crime and sin. In a certain respect, the academician recognizes a collective responsibility for these rejects of society. Who are their

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<sup>130</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>131</sup> Jacques-Louis Douchin. *La vie érotique de Guy de Maupassant*. (Éditions Suger, 1986).

<sup>132</sup> Douchin, 166.

“*générateurs?*” he asks. “Vous, - moi, - nous tous, les hommes dits *comme il faut!*”<sup>133</sup> This plaintive admission is provoked by the man’s own guilt, which he explains through a story concerning a voyage he had made through Brittany at the age of twenty-five.

While traveling on foot through this region, the academician’s travel mate fell ill, and they were required to stay for a short time at an inn in the town of Pont-Labbé. The academician, during his friend’s convalescence, took an interest in the servant girl of the establishment. The latter is described as eighteen years old and good-humored, having pale blue eyes, and speaking only *breton*. The narrator describes his exchanges with the girl as playful, if limited by the language barrier. He briefly describes his nocturnal encounter with and subsequent rape of the young servant. What is perhaps most disturbing about the narration of this attack is the discourse taken on by the rapist, which he adopts to transform the obviously unjust act into a sort of sporting event. Meeting the girl in the hallway of the inn, just in front of his door, the traveler suddenly takes hold of her, jokingly and without thinking as he says, and quickly throws her into his room, locking the door behind. He describes the girl as she looked at him as “*effarée, affolée, épouvantée,*” not daring to cry out for fear of a scandal.<sup>134</sup> In perfect bad faith, he rids himself of responsibility for his actions by explaining that the desire to possess her “invaded” him, as with Jacques in “*Histoire d’une fille de ferme.*” Thereby transforming himself into a victim of desire, the rapist goes on to describe the scene as a sensual wrestling match:

Ce fut une lutte longue et silencieuse, une lutte corps à corps, à la façon des athlètes, avec les bras tendus, crispés, tordus, la respiration essoufflée, la peau mouillée de sueur. Oh ! elle se débattit vaillamment...<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> CN I, 417.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 419.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 420.

Here the victim of the rape is depicted as an opponent in a sort of erotic war game; she fought valiantly. They were like athletes, Olympic competitors. Nevertheless the rapist always poses himself as the dominant warrior in the battle: “moi l’attaquant, elle, résistant.”<sup>136</sup> When the girl eventually collapses from exhaustion, her attacker brutally rapes her on the floor: “Épuisée enfin, elle tomba: et je la pris brutalement, par terre, sur le pave.”<sup>137</sup> The girl then runs from the room and is hardly visible in the inn for several days. But late the night before the academician was to leave with his then recovered friend, the girl comes to see him in his room. The narrator explains how she threw herself into his arms, kissed and caressed him through the night, sobbing and expressing both tenderness and despair despite her ignorance of the French language. In face of this outpouring of sentiments which he does not share, the narrator explains how easily he forgot the girl, symbolically without a voice:

Huit jours après, j’avais oublié cette aventure commune et fréquente quand on voyage, les servantes d’auberges étant généralement destinées à distraire ainsi les voyageurs.<sup>138</sup>

Maupassant choice of the word “destinées” to describe the servant girls working in taverns implies an ambiguous and perhaps double meaning; the girls may be “destined” to have sex with travelers by either an inherently fated vocation or by external social constraints, but in either case the young women in question have little agency and no real options in Maupassant’s narrative. The academician’s opinion of this sort of “adventure” is representative of a wider identification for young men, one by which hegemonic masculinity is expressed through random sexual encounters with no consequences for the man, but often serious ones for the seduced women.

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<sup>136</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>137</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>138</sup> Ibidem.

Thirty years later, the narrator returns to Pont-Labbé. By then the reader finds him transformed from young traveler and sexual conquistador, into an established academician. Finding himself lodged in the same inn, he eventually recalls and inquires about the servant girl with whom he had had his *aventure*, citing the girl's pale blue eyes, her "*dents fraîches*," and that she was a "*gentille petite servante*."<sup>139</sup> The innkeeper, the son of the former owners, explains that the girl had died in childbirth not long after his guest's departure thirty years earlier. He points out the girl's orphan son working in the courtyard, a skinny limping fellow, cleaning up horse manure. The academician laughs and remarks that the fellow was not handsome, looked nothing like the mother and must certainly take after the father:

Et, tendant la main vers la cour où un homme maigre et boiteux remuait  
du fumier, il ajouta: " voilà son fils. "

Je me mis à rire. "Il n'est pas beau et ne ressemble  
guère à sa mère. Il tient du père sans doute."<sup>140</sup>

The attractive image of the young girl invoked by the academician is immediately contrasted with the tragic one of a dead mother lying alongside her orphaned child. This depiction of the servant, perhaps saddening to the reader, doesn't seem to affect the innkeeper's guest. His easy laugh at the ugliness of the girl's orphan just after learning of her death reveals a complete lack of concern and compassion. The innkeeper then explains that the identity of the child's father was never known, which will set off a series of questions and doubts in the mind of his guest.

Slowly piecing together the facts, the academician experiences a strange feeling, an unpleasant shiver and once again gazes out at the man in the courtyard. At this point, the academician begins to suspect that he may have fathered the pitiful stable hand, a predictable conclusion for the reader. But the mystery, or lack thereof, of whether or not this man fathered

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 421.

<sup>140</sup> Ibidem.

the stable hand is not the most significant aspect of the tale. It is the father's disconcertment over sharing a bloodline with such a miserable creature. The pathetic figure of the son is henceforth described as sub-human, a beast and an idiot:

J'eus une sorte de frisson désagréable, un de ces effleurements pénibles qui nous touchent le cœur, comme l'approche d'un lourd chagrin. Et je regardai l'homme dans la cour. Il venait maintenant de puiser de l'eau pour les chevaux et portait ses deux seaux en boitant, avec un effort douloureux de la jambe plus courte. Il était déguenillé, hideusement sale, avec de longs cheveux jaunes tellement mêlés qu'ils lui tombaient comme des cordes sur les joues.<sup>141</sup>

The innkeeper explains that the hopeless nameless charity case is worth little, having only been kept around out of pity, allowed to clean the stables and sleep among the animals.

That night and every night of his stay in Pont-Labbé, the troubled traveler is haunted by his suspicion, his fear, that this could be his son. He seeks out the stable hand's birth certificate to discover that the child had been born "*de père inconnu*" eight months and twenty six days after the academician's initial departure from the inn. Still determined to ignore this convincing piece of evidence, the academician's denial seems to stem from the man not wanting to have had such a pitiful and defective child. While the stable hand is once referred to as a "valet d'écurie," he is never called by a name, but is rather identified by words like "*brute*," "*goujat*" and "*gueux*," or at best simply "*l'homme*," and these by the man presumed to be his father! Nor is he ever referred to as an orphan, bastard or *enfant naturel*, although the legal and social status represented by these terms is the basis of his misery.

Significantly, only the martyred mother is given a name in the story: Jeanne Kerradec. The innkeeper, the senator and the academician have no proper names either, but are referred to by their vocations, both lending them a certain authority and establishing them as generalized

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<sup>141</sup> Ibidem.

type figures. Their younger selves could then be referred to by their function in the tale: the bachelors. The orphan, who would normally be given the name of the mother according to French custom at the time, is never called Kerradec. The bastard's lack of a family name, essential to his identity and heritage, and the fact that he is refused even the name of his *fillemère* in the text indicates his complete exclusion from any family lineage or masculine legacy, and even from the human race. Given the general lack of proper names in the text, the title of the story takes on a new meaning. As in many of Maupassant's stories, such as "Le petit," "Un enfant," "Un parricide," and others, the choice of either the definite or indefinite article is important. The title "Un fils," meaning "a son" and not "the son," could refer both to the discovery that the man had had a son, perhaps among many, or to the fact that the orphan is *one* son, one example, one of many such children abandoned or orphaned throughout France. This ambiguity and the fact that the other characters are referred to by their occupations allows one to read this story, not only ironically, but also allegorically, representing general types in French society in which bourgeois-class men commonly and easily abandon their children, knowingly or not, born to lower-class single mothers.

Likened to a prisoner or an animal in the way he must be kept in stable, this man is described as an idiot "*sans resource*," even by his presumed father.<sup>142</sup> His physique also resembles that of a beast, as in one scene where the academician attempts to communicate with his presumed son, where the latter stands holding his hat in hands, which are described as knotted disgusting paws: "*dans ses pattes noueuses et dégoutantes.*"<sup>143</sup> The beast-like imagery of the bastard orphan does not end with his encounters with the father, whose dreams are haunted by images of the stable hand chasing him, calling him "papa." He transforms into a dog and

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 424.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 422.

bites the dreamer in his calves. In these “*visions insupportables*” the academician finds his colleagues gathered together to discuss his fathering of the monster, one of them affirming: “C’est indubitable! Regardez donc comme il lui ressemble.”<sup>144</sup> This nightmare scene reveals some of the dreamer’s deepest fears which have not yet been openly addressed: the fear of being exposed as the unfortunate orphan’s father, and that of being in some way likened to him. This miserable savage born of a savage act represents his father’s crime and potential dishonor.

While the academic never admits that he may be the stable hand’s father, he does attempt to help by giving him money, which is immediately spent on a drinking binge. The guilty father then, who has wealth and most likely the habit of using it to solve problems, is powerless to sooth his conscience and redeem his hereditary legacy through his son. Here the father finds himself in a paradoxical situation. He is disgusted by the man he presumes to be his son, seeking to hide his relation to him, but at the same time he wishes to improve his condition. This paradox is easily resolved if one accepts that the academic does both of these things as acts of self-preservation employed to protect his own self-image and save himself from a perpetual guilt. The way this effort backfires, this gesture of supposed kindness, is definitive. His narcissistic strategies to protect his own self-image only cast doubt on his own potential for fathering a viable family. The orphan is lost to society; he is a hopeless drunk (*irréremédiablement ivrogne*) and an idiot. Doubt will continue to haunt the academic, and he will return to the inn every year. The fact that he fathered an idiot will torture him much more than the death of the servant girl, for which he takes responsibility along with the fate of the girl’s child:

Et je me dis que j’ai tué la mère et perdu cet être atrophié, larve  
d’écurie, éclore et poussée dans le fumier, cet homme qui, élevé  
comme d’autres, aurait été pareil aux autres.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 423.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 424.

He implies that his son may have been successful if raised like other children, but doubt remains. It is for this that he goes back to the inn every year, always wondering, seeking redeeming qualities and vainly trying to do something helpful for the miserable creature that he believes to be his son.

At his tale's conclusion, this respected member of the Academy is portrayed as guilt ridden and helpless, sitting for hours watching his son, a dirty, miserable cripple cleaning manure:

Et j'ai sans cesse un inapaisable et douloureux besoin de le voir ; et sa vue me fait horriblement souffrir ; et de ma fenêtre, là-bas, je le regarde pendant des heures remuer et charrier les ordures des bêtes, en me répétant : « C'est mon fils. »<sup>146</sup>

This appears as the culminating point of the story, the ultimate depiction of the man's guilt and the unfortunate situation of a bastard son become orphan. Here, Maupassant's central character, this *père manqué*, is in full realization of the consequences of his actions, fearing his inferiority as genitor, and regretting the fate of the victim of his blind lust and consequently that of his own offspring.

But the author does not end his story with these reflections. Absolute regret and guilt are dissolved by the reaction of the character's interlocutor, the senator. The latter murmurs his unpersuasive regrets : "Oui, vraiment, nous devrions bien nous occuper un peu plus des enfants qui n'ont pas de père."<sup>147</sup> This statement raises important questions. Why does he mention only children without fathers, especially since the orphan of the story was orphaned, essentially, of both parents? And when he says that we should take *a bit* better care of these children, who is

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 425.

<sup>147</sup> Ibidem.



the “we” in question? For the senator, a child without a father will have a more difficult time in life than a child who is lacking a mother, perhaps for the relative financial advantage of men over women, or because a single father could marry or remarry with more ease than a single mother. For whatever reason, he implies that the lack of a father would condemn a child to misery more so than the lack of a mother. The “we” which certainly refers to a wider public than just the two friends could mean “we the French people,” or given his position, “we the senators, the law makers who do so little for abandoned children.” Since French law at the time did not allow *recherche en paternité*, the servant girl, for reasons beyond her language handicap, could never seek out the father of her son, had she lived. Nor could the child, had his mental capacity allowed it, ever try to discover the identity of his father. The senator’s unconvincing moralistic musings do not occupy him for long, however, for the story ends with a gust of wind through the trees which surrounds the two old friends with an odorous cloud, recalling the conversation from the beginning of the tale. The senator adds the final phrase of the story, negating the lesson that would otherwise complete it: “C’est bon vraiment d’avoir vingt-cinq ans, et même de faire des enfants comme ça.”<sup>148</sup>

What can be said about this surprising way of ending a story that otherwise criticizes the siring of illegitimate children, and the rape of servant girls? The reality of male privilege makes any statement condemning the sexual exploitation of working-class women vapid at best; Rachel Fuchs, for example, provides insightful historical views of seduction and rape in nineteenth-century Europe, explaining the social toleration of such sexual exploitation.<sup>149</sup> The final words delivered by Maupassant’s senator seem to forgive these behaviors, making them seem like acceptable rites of passage for young men. This representative of the Law hears the lesson

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<sup>148</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>149</sup> Rachel Fuchs’ *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (2005), particularly pages 62-68.

implicit in his companion's story, yet forgets it almost immediately. His nostalgia for the adventures of youth, even the sexual victimization of women reflects what may very well have been a common opinion: men were permitted to be recklessly promiscuous in their youth, especially when these adventures concern lower-class girls with significant disadvantages in relation to their aggressors. Many of Maupassant's fictional narratives attest to this view, as do socio-historical studies of France at the time in question.<sup>150</sup> Older bourgeois husbands, while still enjoying the occasional visit to a brothel and taking mistresses, can no longer behave as recklessly as they did before, taking risks that may endanger their reputation. But these men can certainly forgive the mistakes of youth, the promiscuity they once enjoyed but had to leave behind as they adapted to social norms within marriage.

The positive concept of honor is never overtly discussed in this text, but the fear of dishonor is implicit in the story. The academician, as a young unmarried man, does not risk the same dishonor through his sexual behavior as he would later in his career, a view expressed in the senator's final reflection. The academician's fear of dishonor in the eyes of his colleagues, as revealed by his dreams, is not due to his having a bastard son, or even to the assault on the girl, but to his having fathered a monster: "Regardez donc comme il lui ressemble."<sup>151</sup>

"Un million" and "Un fils," illustrate by specific examples how both sterility and promiscuity can menace male bourgeois honor. Promiscuity resulting in illegitimate births, especially that of middle-class men with lower-class women, can undermine bourgeois hereditary practices. It can ruin reputations when publicized beyond homosocial groups of men who may approve of each other's sexual adventures. And in the second story examined here, it can also cast doubt on a man's virile capacity for producing healthy capable heirs. A couple's

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<sup>150</sup> See *Histoire de la vie privée, Tome 4*, for example, a detailed history of nineteenth-century French society.

<sup>151</sup> CN I, 423.

sterility brings social reproduction to a halt, but as seen in the first tale, the problem of a husband's sterility may be resolved or at least masked to preserve his male honor, thanks to a morally flexible ingenuity. The second of the two tales, however, manifests a much different sort of illegitimate triangle than those preceding it.

Unlike the bastard children of Rose and Mme Bonnin, the stable hand of the last tale is condemned to utter misery. In this case, the agents of both the State and of the bachelor machine are one and the same individual, only at different stages in his life. The academician forms a triangulation of illegitimacy between his present self, the deceased servant girl, and his younger self as sexual nomad. The conflict arising from this relationship is not easily resolved, since it involves an irrevocably lost time. Rather than there being an advantage for one or both male parties, the academician finds himself alone, facing a situation with no benefits for himself whatsoever. One obvious reason for the failure to resolve the problem of illegitimacy in this case is the fact that the State does not appropriate a bachelor machine, but rather its agent starts out as the bachelor himself. There is no legitimating function in the academic's role since he refuses to recognize his bastard child, and the thirty years that had passed proved to be too long a span to allow any form of redemption for the orphan, and therefore makes any legitimation, legal or otherwise, impossible.

#### **2.4 The Gidean Bachelor: Pederastic Pedagogue**

Although in Maupassant's fiction the bachelor figure is most often portrayed as virile and heterosexual, in constant pursuit of and flight from "*la femme*," or the feminine, the bachelor character is not everywhere presented in a like manner. The Gidean bachelor is often the homosexual bachelor, with his unique rapports with illegitimacy and seduction. Édouard of *Les*

*Faux-monnayeurs* is arguably the Gidean *célibataire par excellence*, while far from the only one. Gide's bachelors do not act on behalf of the same "bachelor machine" found in Maupassant; they have mostly nonsexual or rare sexual relations with women. The bachelor machine functioning through Gidean bachelors is most often presented as an extension of the ancient one expressed through the practice of pederasty, albeit with interesting variations, as we will see. Opposed to the precepts of the "art of rupture" as Stivale reads it in Maupassant's work, Gide's pederast bachelor does not attempt to "keep them all," but rather indulges in a cyclic system, trading one boy for another as they all grow too old and 'manly.'

Of course one must wonder whether one can refer to "bachelors" when discussing homosexual characters. This question likely stems from the legal and social impossibility of gay men marrying each other during the period in question. While I do state that bachelors such as Édouard represent Gide's neo-pederastic ideal, it is not to say that the older *erastes* is by necessity a bachelor, which simply denotes being unmarried. Michel of *L'Immoraliste* illustrates this perfectly. The term "bachelor" is used within social contexts where heterosexual marriage is the norm, one to which all bourgeois Frenchmen are expected to conform, sooner or later. Because this term refers to social convention, it can be employed in reference to all men, regardless of the object of their attraction, physical passion, or likelihood to be wed.

*Les Faux-monnayeurs*, the book that Gide referred to as his "first" novel in its dedication to Roger Martin du Gard, will serve as point of departure. The novel, published in 1925, is widely considered as one of Gide's most important works, as Gide himself also believed: "To write this book properly I must persuade myself that it is the only novel and final book I shall

write. I want to pour everything into it without reservation.”<sup>152</sup> The truth of these words is evident when one considers the variety of personal and historical sources employed in its creation.<sup>153</sup> My study of Gide’s work is neither biographical nor critical of his entire novel; others have provided ample and thorough works of the sort. But certain central figures from the novel, namely Édouard and Robert de Passavant in this chapter and Bernard in the last two, will be presented with the necessary personal and textual background. Earlier, I referred to Édouard as the Gidean bachelor *par excellence*; this is both true and problematic.

Gide himself was married; Édouard, also a writer, is not. Gide expressed his sexuality with fervor whereas Édouard is not directly portrayed as performing sexual acts of any sort: an absence quite arguably due, however, to the author’s self-censorship and reliance on well-crafted innuendo. Gide, in the “Journal of The Counterfeiters,” admits that he had lent much of himself to Édouard, but as with any Gidean character that resembles the author, one must keep in mind Gide’s letter to Francis Jammes, where he wrote: “Sans mon *Immoraliste*, je risquais de le devenir.”<sup>154</sup> In *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, one could propose that Gide wrote the character of Édouard to avoid a similar risk. The bachelor figures to be discussed here fall into two basic categories: the bachelor-mentor, who takes young men under his wing in a sort of apprenticeship, and the young men themselves, falling into the declined categories of bachelor, *bachelier*, and *bas chevalier*, as will be explained.

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<sup>152</sup> André Gide’s *Journal of the Counterfeiters*, published with *The Counterfeiters*, trans. Justin O’Brien. (New York: Randon House, 1973), 417.

<sup>153</sup> George D. Painter’s *André Gide: A Critical Biography* (1968), Justin O’Brien’s *Portrait of André Gide* (1953), are both excellent examples of critical biography, whereas Michael Lucey’s *Gide’s Bent* (1995) and Pierre Masson’s *Lire Les Faux-monnayeurs* (1990) provide biographical analyses of specific works by Gide.

<sup>154</sup> André Gide’s *Correspondance Francis Jammes et André Gide 1893-1938* (Mayenne, France : Gallimard, 1948), 199.

The (excessively?) complex and rich plot of the book includes young Bernard Profitendieu's discovery that he is a bastard and his subsequent flight from home, his meeting with Édouard and Laura, a repentant adulteress and close friend of Édouard, the trio's trip to Switzerland, and Bernard's eventual return to Paris to finish his *baccalauréat* examinations, in turn leading to his ultimate return to his father. Although the novel starts with the revelation of Bernard's illegitimacy, it quickly extends to include the personal dramas of the entire family of Bernard's friend Olivier Molinier, and a sizable cast of others, mostly connected in some way to the Pension Vedel-Azaïs, a Protestant boarding school for boys in Paris. The boarding school, often portrayed in turn-of-the-century literature as a privileged locus of homoerotic elements and sexual power games, will in fact play a central role in the plot, acting as the stage for most of the encounters between Gide's *personnages*.

Édouard is the half-brother of Olivier Molinier's mother, Pauline. After leaving his home, Bernard follows Olivier to the latter's meeting with Édouard at the Saint Lazare train station, where Bernard picks up Édouard's luggage claim ticket, carelessly tossed to the ground. Seeking a pretext for meeting Édouard in hopes of becoming the writer's secretary, Bernard claims the suitcase in which he discovers and reads Édouard's personal journal, which provides the narrative background of the novel's main plot points. Édouard has come back to Paris from England in part at the request of his desperate friend Laura, who though married to the bland Félix Douviers has become the mistress of Olivier's older brother Vincent. Vincent and Laura had met at a sanatorium in Pau, where both thought themselves (falsely) to be dying of tuberculosis. Laura became pregnant and is eventually abandoned by Vincent. Conflicted as to whether or not she should return to her husband, Laura accompanies Édouard and his newly-appointed secretary Bernard to Saas-Fée in Switzerland, where Édouard is to find and bring back

to Paris the little Boris, grandson of Édouard's old friend, the aging La Pérouse, an unhappily married piano teacher. Boris remains a secondary character of limited agency throughout the novel, but his importance to us will eventually become apparent. He is made an orphan by his father's death before his marriage to the boy's mother, dissolving any possibility of a future legitimization by . While Édouard succeeds in bringing Boris back with him to his grandfather in Paris, he must ultimately be considered as Édouard's failure, since the newly abandoned Boris meets his end at the boarding school, victim of a prank undertaken by the boy in order to prove his worth to his school mates. Édouard decides to not include the event of Boris' suicide in the novel he is writing, denying his own failure in a sense, correcting by omission.

Olivier, for his part, becomes the editor of a literary revue sponsored by his protector, the devious Robert de Passavant. In the third part of the novel, all of the main characters have returned to Paris. Bernard goes to work and study at the boarding school; Édouard reconnects with Olivier, spending a night of love following the latter's unsuccessful suicide attempt; a counterfeiting scheme is revealed, implicating many of the young men from the school, and the novel culminates with the "accidental" suicide of the little Boris. These are a mere handful of the events laid out in Gide's most modernist novel, narrated from several points of view through multiple narrative modes, packed with improbable and occasionally symbolist character names (Profitendieu, Passavant, Strouvilhou, Ghéridanisol), and fueled by an excess of dramatic events. But this should provide enough background to begin the analysis of *Les Faux-monnayeurs*' particular illustration of the pederast bachelor and his disciples.

#### **2.4.1 The Uncle and the Aristocrat, or "deux vieilles tantes"?**

Édouard is arguably the central character of the novel since much of its plot is relayed through the pages of his journal and through his meetings with others. Although the most momentous

events of the novel do not always involve him directly, he always finds himself either present for or confided in concerning each major event depicted in the book. There are two ways of describing Édouard that concern his status as, and reason for remaining, a bachelor: by analyzing Édouard's sexuality, and by considering his views on love and marriage in a more general sense. The first and most obvious reason for Édouard to not marry is that he feels physical desire for young boys. His relationship with Bernard, although instigated by the latter, is a form of seduction in the sense that he takes the adolescent away with him to Saas-Fée, and a form of pederasty in that he temporarily "adopts" Bernard and takes responsibility for him, providing a sort of apprenticeship. While there is no evidence of sexual intimacy between the two, this does not preclude a pederastic relationship, detailed elsewhere by William A. Percy, which does not necessitate a specifically sexual element.<sup>155</sup> Percy discusses one particular conception of pederasty that involves no sexual intimacy: "One school of ancients that still has adherents held that relations between pederastic partners were 'pure,' that is, nonsexual."<sup>156</sup>

While Bernard certainly benefits from his "apprenticeship" with Édouard, it is truly with the couple Édouard-Olivier that Gide's ideal of pederasty will be realized. Although these two are only brought together toward the end of the novel, the benefits and potential nature of their future relation together is alluded to throughout the work. To terminate the second part of the book, Gide himself narrates, judging his characters, already predestining Olivier for Édouard, describing the former's time spent traveling with the aristocratic and scheming pederast Passavant into a harmful postponement of fate:

Les événements se sont mal arrangés. C'est Olivier qu'aimait  
Édouard. Avec quel soin celui-ci ne l'eût-il pas mûri ? Avec quel

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<sup>155</sup> William A. Percy's *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

<sup>156</sup> Percy, 7.



amoureux respect ne l'eût-il pas guidé, soutenu, porté jusqu'à lui-même ? Passavant va l'abimer, c'est sûr.<sup>157</sup>

Even Pauline, Olivier's mother, recognizes Édouard's potential as a mentor for her son. She looks to Édouard to play a paternal role for her sons, admitting that their father knows them too little, and gives in to their whims too easily: "Elle déplore qu'il n'ait pas plus d'autorité sur les enfants."<sup>158</sup> It is not insignificant that Pauline looks to Édouard, the bachelor and pederast, to supposedly provide the authority that her husband, the legitimate father and magistrate, is lacking. She asks Édouard to speak with her youngest son, Georges, for she suspects him of theft and of veering toward trouble. Pauline also expresses her regret that Olivier did not go off with her half-brother rather than with Passavant. When Édouard brings her news of Olivier's illness (the result of his attempted suicide), she is worried but relieved to know him in the care of Édouard who she considers loves Olivier as much as she does: "Je ne le soignerais pas mieux que vous, car je sens que vous l'aimez autant que moi."<sup>159</sup> In a confessional plea to Édouard, perfectly in line with Gide's conception of pederasty, as through the voice of his Corydon, as a protective and formative arrangement, Pauline gives her maternal consent, if not her blessing, to his unconventional rapport with her son:

Il est certaines libertés de pensées dont les hommes voudraient garder le monopole. Je ne puis pourtant pas feindre avec vous plus de réprobation que je n'en éprouve. La vie m'a instruite. J'ai compris combien la pureté des garçons restait précaire, alors même qu'elle paraissait le mieux préservée. De plus, je ne crois pas que les plus chastes adolescents fassent plus tard les maris les meilleurs ; ni même, hélas, les plus fidèles, ajouta-t-elle en souriant tristement. Enfin, l'exemple de leur père m'a fait

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<sup>157</sup> André Gide's *Romans, Récits et Soties, Œuvres Lyriques* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1969), henceforth referred to as *Romans*, 1110.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 1154.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 1186.

souhaiter d'autres vertus pour mes fils. Mais j'ai peur pour eux de la débauche, ou des liaisons dégradantes.<sup>160</sup>

Pauline trusts Édouard to instruct her sons, especially Olivier, and to protect them from debauchery and degrading relations, which in the wider context of the novel manifest themselves in the person of Passavant, but also in the counterfeiting scam or the female brothel where Oliver and Georges both experience intimacy with prostitutes. Gide's Corydon also considers that pederasty can help to prepare a young man for marriage and prevents harmful behaviors such as visiting prostitutes. He equally implies that pederasty conserves the honor and chastity of 'honest' young girls and women, employing the example of the Greeks:

La jeune fille grecque était élevée non point tant en vue de l'amour, que de la maternité. Le désir de l'homme, nous l'avons vu, s'adressait ailleurs ; car rien ne paraissait plus nécessaire à l'Etat, ni mériter plus le respect, que la tranquille pureté du gynécée.<sup>161</sup>

This description of "acceptable" sexuality for young Greek women in view of maternity is contrasted with man's "désir." In other fictional works, Gide retains this idealized maternal archetype for his most important female characters.<sup>162</sup>

Martha Hanna suggests that Gide's use of the Greek model of pederasty does not necessarily apply to modern society, where there is a separation of strict heterosexuality or homosexuality, "unknown in ancient Greece,": "Gide understood this difference... but he failed to recognize that in trying to *legitimate* contemporary pederasty by appealing to the example of ancient Greece he was adopting an anachronistic cultural model of sexual identity."<sup>163</sup> Although Hanna may not agree with Gide's method in *Corydon*, she does attribute to his project the aim of

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 1187.

<sup>161</sup> André Gide's *Corydon* (Éditions Gallimard, 2001), 113.

<sup>162</sup> Marceline of *L'Immoraliste* (1902), Pauline of *Les Faux-monnayeurs* (1925), and Arnica Fleurissoire of *Les Caves du Vatican* (1914), for example, are all loyal wives whose sexuality is sometimes staged merely as a means of reproduction, but always occurs with the legal husband.

<sup>163</sup> Martha Hanna in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, eds. Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 214, my emphasis.

*legitimizing* pederasty. By considering Gide's project in *Corydon*, and also in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, in such a light, it quickly becomes clear how such an undertaking runs parallel with the legitimation of the *enfant naturel*; the author in fact questions the social stigmata faced by both the bastard and the homosexual.

Gide's reproposal of ancient pederasty as a paradoxical manner of protecting the honor of young women is echoed in *Les Faux-monnayeurs* as in other of his works; the denial of female sexuality becomes a rule in his works, one only violated by patently "immoral" women and excusable only for the sake of maternity. Laura's adultery with Vincent, her first and only source of sexual pleasure, is punished by her pregnancy and guilt. Lady Griffith repeats to Passavant details of Vincent's affair with Laura at the Pau sanatorium: "Mais là-bas... Je ne sais pas trop ce que Vincent a pu lui dire, mais le troisième jour elle lui avouait que, bien que couchant avec son mari et possédée par lui, elle ne savait pas ce que c'était que le plaisir."<sup>164</sup> The pleasure Laura knew with Vincent is only forgiven by her return to her husband, who, as Édouard later implies in his journal, most probably lacks the capacity for paternity:

Quelque illogisme dans son cas; il s'indigne que l'autre ait abandonné Laura. J'ai fait valoir que, sans cet abandon, Laura ne lui serait pas revenue. Il se promet d'aimer l'enfant comme il aimerait le sien propre. Les joies de la paternité, qui sait si, sans le séducteur, il aurait pu jamais les connaître? C'est ce que je me suis gardé de lui faire observer, car, au souvenir de ses insuffisances, sa jalousie s'exaspère.<sup>165</sup>

Like in Maupassant's "Un million," but in this case without knowing it, the husband supposedly benefits from both the seemingly innate virility of the bachelor, and the bachelor's inevitable flight from his lover as she begins to cling to him: "Vincent, mon amour, ah! ne me

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<sup>164</sup> *Romans*, 970.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 1201

quittez pas!”<sup>166</sup> As seen earlier in Maupassant, a woman’s sexuality is sacrificed for the sake of male desire and is only allowed as a means of reproduction.

In this novel, the bastards produced through adultery provide a source of “fatherless” young bourgeois men who capture the attention of Gide’s pederasts: Bernard is made available by the discovery of his illegitimacy. Olivier’s father, an adulterer, lacks paternal authority, at least in part due to his guilt, and thereby leaves a paternal void to be filled, first by Passavant and later by Édouard. Laura’s bastard child will be raised by the less than virile Douviers, who by all indications will prove to be a less than sufficient father, leaving the child deprived of paternal authority as well. And if the child happens to be male, he might be susceptible to the pederast’s (Édouard’s?) influence. This “pyramid” of illegitimacy is worth remarking, but little can be made of it since Gide himself makes little of Vincent, the father of Laura’s child, beyond his role as intermediary between Olivier and Passavant; once Vincent abandons Laura and meets Lady Griffith, he runs off to Monaco and remains absent for the remainder of the novel.

Opposed to Édouard is Robert de Passavant, the noble count, a writer like Édouard and notorious “corruptor” of young boys. Naomi Segal notes Passavant’s role as foil to Édouard: “The goodness of the good pederast, surely even more precarious than that of the child, has to be severally overdetermined by a series of moral binaries, chief of which is the contrast with Passavant.”<sup>167</sup> While not directly involved in the counterfeiting scam, Passavant does frequent a number of shady characters of questionable morality like himself, specifically Strouvilhou, the mastermind behind the false coin circulation, and Lady Griffith, Vincent’s cold and calculating lover, who eventually convinces him to forget Laura. Lady Griffith enumerates Passavant’s “qualities” as those of a man of letters: “vous êtes vaniteux, hypocrite, ambitieux, versatile,

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 955.

<sup>167</sup> Naomi Segal’s *André Gide: Pederasty and Pedagogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 264.

égoïste...,” at which Passavant is flattered.<sup>168</sup> These qualities are all illustrated in the novel. The death of Passavant’s father, which leaves him with the title of count, is far from being a traumatic or even saddening event in his life. Passavant, nearly forgetting to mention his father’s death to Vincent, speaks of it nonchalantly and at one point implies to Lady Griffith and Vincent that he had even forgotten he was in mourning: “Oui, je lui avais promis de rester en veston pour ne pas faire honte au sien, dit Robert. Je vous demande bien pardon, cher ami, mais je me suis souvenu tout d’un coup que j’étais en deuil.”<sup>169</sup> What seems to be a cold disregard for the memory of his father, Passavant dismisses as the inevitable result of the deceased count’s lack of love or compassion, pushing away the young Robert when the latter tried early on to show a seemingly artificial “amour filial sur mesure.”<sup>170</sup>

Robert de Passavant is disconnected from his family, shown as indifferent to both his father’s death and his younger brother Gontran’s grief. Passavant’s mother, who had died when he was about twenty years old, is only mentioned in reference to her own emotional suffering, caused by the late count. Gide evades the subject of the mother through a female accomplice, the maid servant Séraphine. When the young Gontran asks if his parents spoke much, Séraphine steers away from the question: “il vaut mieux ne pas trop remuer les souvenirs et laisser au Bon Dieu le soin de juger tout ça.”<sup>171</sup> Again, the mother is ignored and the father is found lacking: a commonplace in Gide’s universe, both in the bourgeois family and in the decadent remnants of the aristocracy. The implicit failure of the late Count of Passavant as a father simultaneously discredits the authority of the strict patriarch, and would have freed the son from any obligation to reproduce the aristocratic family structure even if Passavant’s sexuality had facilitated it, due

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<sup>168</sup> *Romans*, 968.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 973.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 964.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 966.

to his lack of faith in paternal/filial attachment. Despite Passavant's admiration for his father, he considers filial affection, which he lacks, as above all a childish occupation, leaving the grieving and tears to his younger brother: "Mais quant à jouer du mouchoir ... quant à extraire de moi des pleurs...non, je ne suis plus assez gosse pour cela."<sup>172</sup> This absence of any sentiment of belonging to a family (not merely a hereditary line) is a defining trait in Passavant's role in relation to Olivier. Rather than functioning as a "father" or mentor, he will rather treat his young charge as a doll of sorts, a plaything. In a sense, one could say that Passavant incarnates the "nomadic" bachelor as pederast in the most negative sense.

Passavant befriends Vincent essentially in order to be introduced to the young Olivier, whom he makes the editor of his new literary publication, introduces into the fashionable circles of Paris, and refits in dandyish clothing. In a letter to Bernard, Olivier describes his travels with Passavant, in which their "business" relationship is depicted as a (not explicitly sexual) pederastic relation in which Olivier is the younger *eromenos*, doted upon and essentially "kept" by the feminizing Passavant. They spend their days in Corsica swimming together and lying in the sun. The count starts calling him "Olive," "Dis, si ce n'est pas charmant?"<sup>173</sup> Passavant, "lui-même d'une élégance raffinée," takes Olivier shopping and dresses him to fit his own tastes.<sup>174</sup> Showering young boys with gifts may be a regular practice for Robert, who as Lillian mentions, "est très riche, mais il a toujours besoin d'argent."<sup>175</sup> Édouard initially admits that he dislikes Passavant's work much more than the man himself, whom he finds charming. Early on, Édouard describes in his journal what he considers Passavant's concept of art in terms that could also illustrate the count's role in his personal relations and presage his interest in Olivier:

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 964.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 1103.

<sup>174</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 1049.

« Pour Passavant, l'œuvre d'art n'est pas tant un but qu'un moyen. Les convictions artistiques dont il fait montre, ne s'affirment si véhémentes que parce qu'elles ne sont pas profondes ; nulle secrète exigence de tempérament ne les commande ; elles répondent à la dictée de l'époque ; leur mot d'ordre est : opportunité »<sup>176</sup>

Édouard sees the count's treatment of art much like his seduction of Olivier; the boy is a means to an end (Passavant's publication, aesthetic and perhaps physical pleasure), not the end itself. In the sense that Passavant is an *opportuniste*, Olivier represents another opportunity. Just as his artistic convictions are subject to the dictates of the present, of a fickle public, his interest in his young protégé will prove to be a passing one. Édouard expects public interest in the count's books to be equally transient, considering Passavant's worth as a writer to be tied to the superficiality with which he treats art (and other people).

While both Édouard and Passavant have an undeniable attraction to Olivier, they are equally concerned with keeping up appearances in a society where homosexuality is not generally acceptable. Édouard's homosexuality is apparent in the novel, but how often and with whom he indulges in sexual acts is only vaguely hinted at, left open for the sake of public acceptance; upon arriving in Paris from England, as Gide's narrator suggests, Édouard had been deprived of pleasure, "sevré de plaisir," and goes to visit a place of ill repute, "un mauvais lieu," the reason for him leaving his suitcase in consignment.<sup>177</sup> It may be considered that Édouard went to see a male prostitute, but this is implied rather than affirmed. Historical sources

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 990.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 985.

concerning the status of male brothels as well as important literary works show that they were very much present in Paris at the time.<sup>178</sup>

Passavant the noble dandy is often considered to be based upon the openly gay Jean Cocteau, who competed with Gide for the affections of Marc Allegret, often thought to have inspired the character of Olivier.<sup>179</sup> Passavant momentarily feigns interest in Sarah Vedel, Laura's younger sister, whom he meets at a post-banquet soirée toward the end of the novel. Upon catching sight of this "délicieuse enfant," as he calls her, he asks a hesitant Édouard to make her acquaintance.<sup>180</sup> Passavant, "habile à séduire et habitué à plaire," seduces her with his conversation and by familiarizing her with those present at the banquet, collaborators with the *Argonautes* literary group and other members of the Parisian literary elite to which he has privileged access.<sup>181</sup> He puts his arm around her waist, pressing her to him. But as the narrator reveals, this is merely a spectacle, performed for those watching since there were rumors concerning his interest in Olivier: "Averti des bruits désobligeants qui couraient sur ses rapports avec Olivier, il cherchait à donner le change."<sup>182</sup> With the help of several cocktails, his ultimate goal is to have the public see Sarah sitting on his knee. In the novel, the young count, in his role as foil to Édouard, lends to the latter even more virtue than he may deserve. Naomi Segal refers to Passavant's role as that of "diabolic lubricant."<sup>183</sup> His narcissistic and manipulative relations with Olivier and others serve to validate Édouard's mentor role and his love feelings for his half-nephew.

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<sup>178</sup> Regis Revenin's recent *Homosexualité et prostitution masculines à Paris (1870-1918)* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2005). Marcel Proust's *À La Recherche du Temps Perdu*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1961) boldly portrays the historical and social context for homosexuality in 19th-century France, particularly among the upper classes.

<sup>179</sup> Pierre Masson's *Lire Les Faux-monnayeurs* offers a detailed analysis of this triangle of competition.

<sup>180</sup> *Romans*, 1168.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 1167.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 1172.

<sup>183</sup> Segal, 267.



## 2.4.2 Pederasty Gide's Way

Despite their differences in temperament and likeability, both Édouard and Passavant can embody Gide's personal conception of pederasty. In Gide's *Corydon*, the author shows the "naturalness" of pederasty through a series of dialogues, employing natural and ancient history for support. Corydon dismisses the effeminate *invertis*, whom he considers as perverted homosexuals, far removed from "normal" homosexuals: "Si vous le voulez bien, nous laisserons de côté les invertis."<sup>184</sup> Gide's conception of pederasty is vital to the analysis of gender in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, both to the way Édouard is portrayed as a 'normal' homosexual, and to that in which Passavant is conceived as a corruptor. The ambiguity of certain characters' apparent sexual preferences is important to how the bachelor-pederast is presented as mentor-educator. More explanation is needed, then, of both pederasty in general and of Gide's views thereupon.

The term "sexual inversion" came into use around the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>185</sup> "Inversion" implied that the 'natural' object of desire (of the opposite sex) was inverted, reversed. Certain theorists implied that accompanying this deviation in sexual object choice, there was also a reversal of gender roles. Wayne Dynes, who points out the common interchangeability of the words "homosexuality" and "inversion" since the end of the nineteenth century, sums up the general meanings of the term: "For some, the term meant simply the reversal of the current of attraction from the opposite to one's own sex. Others believed that inversion entails also an adoption of patterns of thinking, feeling, and action that are characteristic of the other sex."<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> *Corydon*, 122. Patrick Pollard's *André Gide: Homosexual Moralist* (London: Yale University Press, 1991) summarizes and provides an excellent interpretation of this short work by Gide.

<sup>185</sup> Byrne Fone's *Homophobia: A History* (New York: Picador USA, 2000) offers detailed chronologic descriptions of a homosexual lexicon.

<sup>186</sup> Wayne Dynes' *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, Vol. 1 (New York: Garland Publishers, 1990), 610.

Pederasty in ancient Greece was not always sexual (this was the choice of the older *eraste* of the *eraste-eromenos* relationship), and if it was, did not necessarily presume anal intercourse, but often intercrural intercourse, between the thighs of the standing youth, as portrayed on many ancient Greek vases with this motif. This presents an obvious difference between pederasty and inversion, since the latter refers to an inverted gender role and generally implies being penetrated during sex. Gide did not think of himself as an invert, and preferred not to mix with them. This sentiment and Gide's personal conceptions of pederasty, sodomy, and inversion are clearly laid out in his Journal of 1918:

J'appelle *pédéraste* celui qui, comme le mot l'indique, s'éprend des jeunes garçons. J'appelle *sodomite* [...] celui dont le désir s'adresse aux hommes faits.

J'appelle *inverti* celui qui, dans la comédie de l'amour, assume le rôle d'une femme et désire d'être possédé.

Ces trois sortes d'*homosexuels* ne sont point toujours nettement tranchées ; il y a des glissements possibles de l'une à l'autre ; mais le plus souvent, la différence entre eux est telle qu'ils éprouvent un profond dégoût les uns pour les autres ; dégoût accompagné d'une réprobation qui ne le cède parfois en rien à celle que vous (hétérosexuels) manifestez âprement pour les trois.

Les pédérastes, dont je suis [...], sont beaucoup plus rares, les sodomites beaucoup plus nombreux, que je ne pouvais croire d'abord. [...] Quant aux invertis, que j'ai fort peu fréquentés, il m'a toujours paru qu'eux seuls méritaient ce reproche de déformation morale ou intellectuelle et tombaient sous le coup de certaines des accusations que l'on adresse communément à tous les homosexuels.<sup>187</sup>

Gide's apparent disdain for femininity in homosexual men is a primary factor in his being criticized by many homosexual activists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>188</sup> Such disdain for effeminacy carries into Gide's other fiction numerous times, and in various ways;

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<sup>187</sup> André Gide's *Journaux 1887-1925* (Paris : Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1996), 1092.

<sup>188</sup> Michael Lucey's *Gide's Bent: Sexuality, Politics, Writing* (1995) includes an engaging chapter on *Corydon* and what he considers Gide's innate homophobia.

Michel of *L'Immoraliste*, for example, following the 'discovery' of his taste for boys, takes to shedding his excess of clothing, which he finds to be "gênant et superflu" as he climbs the rocks at Ravello.<sup>189</sup> As the story progresses, Michel becomes more and more disgusted with the artificiality and unnaturalness of such adornments, so popular among dandies, as elegant clothing and carefully trimmed facial hair. Moustaches and beards were still very much the fashionable style for all men at the time, not merely for heterosexuals. Michel, like Gide would do definitively in 1908, sheds his beard along with his inhibitions, the beard that Michel feels as "postiche," "un dernier vêtement que je n'aurais pu dépouiller..."<sup>190</sup> While the beard is here considered as a false embellishment, the moustache, somewhat ironically, is often considered elsewhere as a universal symbol of French manliness during this period.<sup>191</sup> The shedding of the beard and clothing extends a general theme of *dépouillement*, of renunciation of unnecessary excess and personal property, a common motif in Gide, found in *L'Immoraliste*, *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, and many of Gide's other works, especially those with particularly religious themes, such as *La Porte étroite* (1909). Further implications of the dissolution of Gide's sense of property will be considered in the following chapter.

While Gide and his characters shed certain exterior signs of manliness, there is also a rejection of signs of femininity. From what may be gathered through previous work on Gide, his attraction to young boys had much more to do with their youth than what could be perceived as femininity in pre-adolescent boys. Gide's former Algerian servant Athman, met at age fifteen in Biskra (1893), is encountered again in Tunis in 1899, at which time he seems ugly; at age twenty-one, the young man is too old to conform to Gide's taste in boys. But as Alan Sheridan

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<sup>189</sup> *Romans*, 401.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 402.

<sup>191</sup> Maupassant's "La moustache" (1883) provides exaggerated praise of the "manliness" of the moustache.

points out, Gide betrayed no desire for the beautiful Ali, the twelve or thirteen year-old “servant” of Lord Alfred Douglas: “He [Gide] disliked the ‘cruelty in the disdainful pouting of the lips’ and, above all, his generally effeminate appearance.”<sup>192</sup> Gide publicly shares only his desire for the “masculine,” rejecting the effeminate “inverts” mentioned in his personal *Journal*. Gide’s well-documented attraction to youth in boys, rather than to their potential femininity, is expressed by the writer as the central element of his pederastic desires.

Gide’s theories from *Corydon*, and their practice as illustrated in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, are supported and illustrated by Gide through scientific and literary argument, with Corydon’s natural and ancient history lessons, and Édouard’s beneficial relationship with Olivier as approved by the boy’s own mother. Gide’s use of the Greek model, while flawed in that the latter was generally a stage followed by marriage and heterosexual “love” for the younger partner, is an attempt to naturalize pederasty, considered an illegitimate sexual relationship in French society. But just as the ancient Roman model of filial legitimacy is not necessarily applicable to nineteenth-century French law concerning bastards, ancient Greek pederasty was not a sufficient example to ground such behavior in contemporary France.<sup>193</sup> My argument here is not to refute or support Gide’s argument, however, but to explore his questioning of “legitimate” sexuality and masculinity, and to eventually demonstrate how it is vital to his representation of the *enfant naturel*.

It may be said that Édouard remains a bachelor merely due to his sexual tendencies for boys, but this would be to ignore his numerous diatribes against the ephemeral nature of love. These invectives, recorded in Édouard’s (initially) private journal, show that he has little faith in marriages based on love. Barring a profound instance of bad faith on his part, Édouard’s

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<sup>192</sup> Alan Sheridan’s *André Gide : A Life in the Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 120.

<sup>193</sup> Knibiehler, 30-33.

reflections on marriage must also be accounted for in the examination of his lifelong bachelorhood. Gide, after all, was married to his cousin Madeleine, whom he loved profoundly, although this love was never translated into desire and never found a physical outlet.

### 2.4.3 Édouard and the Decrystallization of Love

Explaining how love is often insincere and ephemeral, Édouard appears to justify his own bachelorhood while avoiding making an issue of his homosexuality. This detour may be a diversionary tactic, however, considering that Édouard is a closeted homosexual, whose sexual tendencies are known to a select few. While in *Corydon* Gide implies that pederasty is actually a positive practice which may contribute to a young man's preparation for marriage, Édouard seeks to demystify the institution altogether. Although he admits that Laura acts as his muse, his description of her is that of a child, positing himself as her instructor: "Près de moi, je la sens enfantine encore, et toute l'habileté de mon discours, je ne la dois qu'à mon désir constant de l'instruire, de la convaincre, de la séduire."<sup>194</sup> His references to desire and seduction must evidently not be interpreted as sexual in nature. Here Édouard speaks of seducing Laura's mind, but realizes that being with her, despite their (platonic) love, he finds himself being shaped to resemble her. Although she is elsewhere depicted as a stabilizing force for Édouard, she is revealed in these words from his journal to be a denaturalizing or falsifying agent in his life as he is in hers: "Involontairement, inconsciemment, chacun des deux êtres qui s'aiment se façonne à cette idole qu'il contemple dans le cœur de l'autre... Quiconque aime vraiment renonce à la sincérité."<sup>195</sup> Édouard is wary of the insincerity he considers the proper of love. He also feels that he is himself so variable that his "morning self" could have trouble recognizing his "evening

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<sup>194</sup> *Romans*, 986.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibidem*.

self”: “Rien ne saurait être plus différent de moi que moi-même.”<sup>196</sup> It is what he calls his decentered sense of being that would make him an improper husband:

Cette force anti-égoïste de décentralisation est telle qu'elle volatilise en moi le sens de la propriété – et, partant, de responsabilité. Un tel être n'est pas de ceux qu'on épouse. Comment faire comprendre cela à Laura ?<sup>197</sup>

Édouard is also concerned with what he considers the inevitable “decrystallisation” of love. This is a literary reference to the “crystallization” of love described in “De l’amour” (1822) by Stendhal, whose work Gide knew well. For Stendhal, the lover will discover more and more qualities in the person of the beloved: “Ce que j'appelle cristallisation, c'est l'opération de l'esprit, qui tire de tout ce qui se présente la découverte que l'objet aimé a de nouvelles perfections.”<sup>198</sup> Édouard, then, is thinking about the reverse of this process, when the qualities of the beloved become faults and irritations. His skeptic words echo those of Stendhal: “Tant qu'il aime et veut être aimé, l'amoureux ne peut se donner pour ce qu'il est vraiment, et, de plus en plus, il ne voit pas l'autre – mais bien, en son lieu, une idole qu'il pare, et qu'il divinise, et qu'il crée.”<sup>199</sup> He considers that after a time all marriages “of love” are destined to witness this decrystallization, and explains how he had tried to convince Laura that their shared (yet unequal) love could not guarantee their happiness. Stendhal mentions two crystallizations, in fact, the second of which is more lasting than the first. Édouard makes no reference to this of course, since it would undoubtedly complicate his theory. He witnesses the decrystallization of love in the marriage of his old friend La Pérouse, among other couples. After his third visit to La Pérouse, whose

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 987.

<sup>197</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>198</sup> Stendhal's *De l'Amour* (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1959), 9.

<sup>199</sup> *Romans*, 989.

marriage is defined according to the latter by lies, cruelty and senility, Édouard is not entirely sure whether to believe the complaints of the husband or the wife:

“Il reste que voici deux êtres, attachés l’un à l’autre pour la vie, et qui se font abominablement souffrir. J’ai souvent remarqué, chez des conjoints, quelle intolérable irritation entretient chez l’un la plus petite protubérance du caractère de l’autre, parce que la ‘vie commune’ fait frotter celle-ci toujours au même endroit. Et si le frottement est réciproque, la vie conjugale n’est plus qu’un enfer.”<sup>200</sup>

The decrystallization of Édouard’s own love for Olivier is a clear possibility as well. The pederastic couple is destined to separate as the younger partner reaches adulthood and, according to the Greek model, seeks marriage. This occurred for Gide with his young friend and guide Athman, replaced in Gide’s later trips to North Africa by other younger boys, and for Michel of *L’Immoraliste* with the young Charles, who loses his charm when he fully reaches manhood, betrayed by his whiskers. The pederast is relatively unbound by his relations, which may end without the complications posed by marriage, or may exist simultaneously with such a marriage, as in Gide’s own case. Much like the teacher-student relationship which it closely resembles, the pederastic couple is fated to dissolution from the onset. This is subtly hinted at in the final line of the novel through Édouard’s journal: “Je suis bien curieux de connaître Caloub.”<sup>201</sup> Caloub is the youngest of the Profitendieu sons, and he is already being positioned in the text as a possible replacement for Olivier as object of Édouard’s desires. The two adult bachelors of the novel are more easily classified than the central adolescent characters, also bachelors, but perhaps not all indefinitely so.

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 1059.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 1248.

#### 2.4.4 The (Bastard) Bachelor and Knight Errant

\***bachelier** 1080, *Roland (bachelor)* ; le mot, par substitution de suffixe, devient à la fin du XIV<sup>e</sup> s. *bachelier* ; du latin. Pop. *baccalaris* ou *baccalarius* (attesté au IX<sup>e</sup> s.), d'orig. peut-être gauloise ; d'abord « possesseur d'un domaine » (IX<sup>e</sup> s., en Espagne, dans le Midi), puis, en anc. fr., « jeune gentilhomme » ou « aspirant chevalier », enfin « jeune homme » jusqu'au XVII<sup>e</sup> s. (La Fontaine). Il a été appliqué au premier grade universitaire dès la fin du Moyen Age.<sup>202</sup>

Let us again consider the events leading to Édouard making Bernard his secretary. This arrangement was facilitated by Bernard's newly acquired freedom from his family. His (non)status as bastard is the essential factor that allows him to pick up immediately and follow Édouard. Their common link with Olivier dismisses suspicions about their relationship, which is chaste, and Édouard finds a temporary replacement for his beloved nephew. The formation that Bernard receives with Édouard resembles that of a young knight (*bas chevalier*), a knight bachelor, travelling under the banner of an older, richer one. This comparison will provide a useful analytical method for examining Bernard's academic and sentimental education. At the novel's opening, even as Bernard decides to leave the Profitendieu home, he is preoccupied with finishing his exams, which he will only achieve at novel's end. Becoming *bachelier* in this sense for Bernard has a seeming greater significance at the beginning of Gide's book than at the end. Considering the etymological origins of this word will help to illustrate this modification of Bernard's priorities.

The root of the English word "bachelor" is the French "*bas chevalier*," "young knight," later coming to mean "university graduate" and eventually "unmarried man." The root of the French "*bachelier*," according to Larousse's etymological dictionary, is of an equally varied origin. While the modern meaning is most current (one who has earned the *baccalauréat*), the term may also refer to a young knight, as with the English root of the word. For both Bernard

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<sup>202</sup> *Nouveau dictionnaire étymologique* (Paris: Larousse, 1969).



and Olivier, completing their *baccalauréat* examinations becomes less important to their education than their respective tutelage with Édouard and Passavant, although Olivier will in fact pass his exams before leaving for Corsica with Passavant. As *Les Faux-monnayeurs* is in some ways a coming-of-age story, a sort of *roman d'apprentissage*, Bernard the bastard especially will take on the role of *bas chevalier* well before finishing his exams, in the sense that he is an “*aspirant chevalier*” in the literary world and a courtly knight in his “love” for Laura. The term “knight” originates from Old English “*cniht*,” meaning “servant boy,” or merely “boy” in reference to those devoted to the service of a local lord or a king. While Bernard and Olivier will presumably come into their own, and if they follow the model of the *bas chevalier*, it is inevitable that they will be replaced by others.

The comparison is particularly apt in the case of Bernard. His friend Olivier, taken away by Passavant, sometimes resembles an abducted yet willing maiden much more than a knight. Again, following an embarrassing drunken scene following a well-attended literary banquet, Olivier is essentially depicted as a damsel in distress. He is insulted by Dhurmer, a rival and schoolmate, who essentially calls him a woman: “Regardez donc Molinier! Il est poltron comme une femme.”<sup>203</sup> In response to this insult on his masculinity, Olivier attempts to strike Dhurmer, but in his state of intoxication, misses his mark. Despite his unsuccessful blow, Olivier demands a duel, and has Bernard and their friend Bercaïl serve as his seconds, a role they know nothing about: “Aucun d’eux ne connaissait rien aux affaires dites ‘d’honneur’.”<sup>204</sup> Their meeting would have to wait, however. Édouard pulls Olivier away from the confusion so that the latter might splash some water on his face and sober up. Once in the care of Édouard, Olivier lets fall his mask of manly resolve; he nearly faints and passively allows himself to be taken away: “Quand il

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<sup>203</sup> *Romans*, 1174.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibidem*.

avait senti la main d'Édouard se poser sur son bras, il avait cru défaillir et s'était laissé emmener sans résistance."<sup>205</sup> Finally realizing that he has made a fool of himself, Olivier desperately turns to Édouard, asking him to take him away:

Il se sentait ridicule, abject... Alors, tout frémissant de détresse et de tendresse, il se jeta vers Édouard et, pressé contre lui, sanglota :  
'Emmène-moi.'<sup>206</sup>

Sobbing and quivering with distress and tenderness, Olivier throws himself into the arms of Édouard and asks his "knight" to take him away. After spending the night with Édouard, Olivier attempts suicide, supposedly because he had experienced such "joy" with Édouard that he could never be any happier than he was that night. Bernard explains to Édouard Olivier's understanding of suicide: "Qu'il comprenait qu'on se tuât, mais seulement après avoir atteint un tel sommet de joie, que l'on ne puisse, après, que redescendre."<sup>207</sup> Indirectly, however, he stands down from his upcoming duel by his attempted suicide, and only avoids "dishonor" thanks to the astute diplomacy of Bernard and the flight of his foe Dhurmer. As a "man of honor," let alone as a knight, Olivier proves less than convincing. Considering Gide's aforementioned aversion for effeminate homosexuals, it seems less than coherent that the model pederastic couple of the novel would include a partner of such feminine description. But then, Édouard is not meant to be a perfect representation of Gide either. The feminization of Olivier, at any rate, is sharply contrasted with the chivalric transformation of Bernard.

While Gide's narrator implies that Bernard knows nothing of affairs of honor, this is only true in the case of the duel and its protocol. When first introduced in the novel, Bernard seems arrogant and disrespectful, at least if he is judged by his letter to M Profitendieu. In this letter, he

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 1175.

<sup>206</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 1180.

explains the reason for his flight from home and admits his relief at knowing he is not the son of the magistrate Profitendieu. Although this show of bold irreverence is discovered to be a gross exaggeration, it is of great interest to read the letter's closing with consideration of the entire novel to follow: "Je signe du ridicule nom qui est le vôtre, que je voudrais pouvoir vous rendre, et qu'il me tarde de déshonorer."<sup>208</sup> Bernard posits himself as a spurious rebel with no desire except to dishonor those who made him a bastard, but this revolt is short-lived. Bernard's revolt may in fact be interpreted as yet another form of the bachelor's quest, the "époque joyeuse" mentioned earlier by Perrot and defined by "des amours passagères" (like that of Bernard and Sarah Vedel, Laura's sister), "des voyages, de la camaraderie et d'une forte sociabilité masculine."<sup>209</sup> His only truly questionable or rebellious act, one that might dishonor the name of Profitendieu, is when he takes Édouard's suitcase, which he has no intention of keeping. Although Bernard announces his intention to dishonor his family name, he is in fact one of the better behaved adolescents of the novel. Most of the other schoolboys, including Olivier, are involved in either the prostitution scandal or the counterfeiting scheme.

Bernard becomes especially consumed with honor and chivalrous conduct when he meets Laura. At their first encounter, he feels a connection with her, due to his own bastardy and the fact that Laura is pregnant with an illegitimate child of her own. Since I have proposed a comparison between Bernard the bastard and the knight errant, it is doubtless appropriate to point out that although medieval knights of illegitimate origin displayed this status on their shields, it had no effect on either their capacity as warriors or their potential for honorability.<sup>210</sup> Bernard's place next to Édouard represents a rare formative opportunity for a young wandering

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 944.

<sup>209</sup> Perrot's "En marge: célibataires et solitaires," in *Histoire de la Vie Privée, Tome 4*, 293.

<sup>210</sup> See *A Dictionary of Heraldry* (Stephen Friar, Ed. New York: Harmony Books, 1987). The bar or bend sinister (*barre sinistre*) in knightly heraldry denotes a bastard knight.

bastard, who otherwise has no position or occupation in society. Bernard is allowed to ride under the banner of Édouard, while devoting his life to his lady, Laura. His relationship with her is classically *courtois*. This trio forms another unique triangulation of illegitimacy; Bernard the bastard loves Laura, Laura the estranged pregnant wife loves Édouard, and Édouard the pederastic uncle (a *vieille tante* even) loves the absent Olivier while mentoring Bernard, albeit half-heartedly.

Between the pages of Édouard's journal, Bernard finds and reads a letter from Laura, "celle qui criait ici sa détresse."<sup>211</sup> Although at first interested only in meeting Édouard, Bernard is moved by the plight of Vincent's abandoned mistress, and sets off to offer his services to this damsel in distress. He feels "un vif sentiment du devoir," and goes to offer himself ("m'offrir") to her.<sup>212</sup> Bernard finds her on the third floor of her hotel, abandoned like a maiden trapped in a tower: "Depuis quelques jours qu'elle était à Paris, elle attendait confusément quelque chose ou quelqu'un qui vînt la tirer de l'impasse."<sup>213</sup> After introducing himself, Bernard explains that he is aware of her situation, that he is a friend of Olivier, "frère de Vincent, votre amant, qui lâchement vous abandonne," and that he, like her unborn child, is a bastard. Shocked at hearing this, Laura falls from a broken chair and Bernard gallantly helps her to her feet.<sup>214</sup> Bernard poses himself opposite the cowardly Vincent, and when Édouard arrives, he asks to become his secretary. Laura, desperate and anticipating Olivier's later plea to Édouard, asks to be taken away: "Emmenez-moi. Emmenez-moi."<sup>215</sup> Édouard does agree to take her away, and he answers this plea for deliverance as he will when he later whisks Olivier away in the night,

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<sup>211</sup> *Romans*, 1032.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 1033.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 1034.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 1038.

acting like a chivalrous savior in both cases. Shortly after Édouard meets Bernard in Laura's hotel, they take the damsel away on what may naturally be called a quest, to fetch the grandson of old La Pérouse from Saas-Fée.

Bernard then begins his apprenticeship with Édouard, learning about writing (somewhat) and falling more deeply in love with Laura with each day they all spend together in Switzerland. There is indeed a sort of "love triangle" between these three travel mates: one that seems purely circumstantial and in which physical desire plays an untold role. Édouard loves Laura like a sister or, at times, a daughter. He may express affection for Bernard at times, but it is obvious that Olivier holds his heart. Laura for her part loves Édouard but knows that he has never shared the same sort of love for her, and she is resigned to her marriage with Douviers. Bernard, who respects Édouard, soon realizes that they are not terribly compatible, and his love for Laura is not returned, but merely answered by maternal condescension and indulgence. For these three, love is posed as an impossibility, or at least remains so within the bounds of their particular group dynamic, determined by incompatible leanings and impossible desires.

In Bernard's letter to Olivier from Saas-Fée, he admits that he missed taking his *baccalauréat* exams. He expresses his love for Laura, his desire to be worthy of her, and his respect for a woman that he "n'oserais pas toucher du bout du doigt."<sup>216</sup> At one point when Bernard proclaims his love for Laura, which he quickly renames his "dévotion" to better please her, the scene becomes an exaggerated, poetic confession: "Et puis d'abord, je ne suis pas malade; ou si c'est être malade que de vous aimer, je préfère ne pas guérir."<sup>217</sup> Falling to his knees before her, Bernard resembles a servant at the feet of his queen, or a worshipper bowing to his deity:

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 1068.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 1090.

Il s'était mis à genoux devant elle, et bien qu'elle eût un peu reculé sa chaise d'abord, Bernard touchait du front sa robe, les bras rejetés en arrière comme en signe d'adoration ; mais quand il sentit sur son front la main de Laura se poser, il saisit cette main sur laquelle il pressa ses lèvres.<sup>218</sup>

Bernard appropriates the comportment of a courtly knight, as illustrated by the above scenes from the novel; he offers his service to a lady whose honor has been threatened by a villain (Vincent). She is married to an unworthy man (Douvièrs), and Bernard seeks to replace him as her admiring yet chaste lover, since Édouard is unwilling. In his letter to Olivier, Bernard expresses Laura's ennobling effect on him: "Oui, vraiment, près d'elle, on est comme forcé de penser noblement."<sup>219</sup> But Bernard's knightly play-acting with Laura hides a far more realist morality.

When he discovers that Laura plans to return to her husband, Bernard accepts that she belongs with him, although Bernard is convinced that she loves Édouard, "mais différemment," she says. Courtly love need not involve sexual acts; indeed it is generally based on physical attraction as well as spiritual and moral appeal. While Bernard denies any sexual attraction to Laura, in her absence he eventually becomes physically intimate with her younger sister Sarah, who closely resembles Bernard's beloved. Bernard alludes indirectly to this act, which he later regrets, as the "exaltation et anéantissement à la fois, de son être," an act committed to forget his idol.<sup>220</sup> The memory of Laura refusing his love and his guilt at sleeping with her sister, make Bernard want to forget her: "Bernard repousse l'image de Laura, veut étouffer ses souvenirs."<sup>221</sup> With Laura's departure Bernard's role as knight dissolves, and the young man must find a new

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 1091.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 1068.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 1178.

<sup>221</sup> Ibidem.

purpose for himself; his errantry ends and he enters into the next stage of his education at the pension Vedel-Azaïs.

Throughout this section, there appear clear differences between Maupassant and Gide's treatment of the bachelor figure. Maupassant, despite his own lifelong bachelorhood, problematizes the bachelor as a social type in ways not found in Gide. The most obvious differences are those of sexuality and the variants of seduction involved in each text. The heterosexual *séducteur* is Maupassant's default bachelor figure, fathering illegitimate children and fleeing commitment in a perpetual effort aimed at retaining his independence. The "art of rupture," however, is shown to be impracticable in cases where illegitimacy is concerned, and Stivale's views on this "art" even becomes subverted in the case of "Un million," where the bachelor is used as a prop for the perpetuation of bourgeois reproduction.

While seduction is always of a sexual nature in Maupassant's tales, it takes on a different meaning in Gide. The carrying away of young boys and the textually orchestrated legitimization of pederasty shape and define the Gidean bachelor. While Maupassant ironically pokes fun at the illusion of legitimacy and laments the status of bastards and their victimized mothers, Gide gives hope to the bastard, offering him familial substitutes, as in the case of Bernard with Édouard. A young man's illegitimacy, as presented in Gide, is not as formidable of an obstacle as it is in Maupassant. On the contrary, the very concept of illegitimacy for Gide holds the possibility of questioning not only legally, religiously and socially mandated legitimacy for the sake of freeing the bastard, but also the prospect of refuting the seemingly impervious authorities that dictate sexual, political and literary legitimacy. This seemingly constant questioning of "legitimacy" as a gauge of an individual's authenticity will enlighten readings of both Gide and Maupassant as we consider the metaphor of the bastard as counterfeit coin.

### 3.0 PART II - Counterfeit Author(ity): Authenticity and the Passing of False

#### Coins in Gide and Maupassant

Why bastard? wherefore base?  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,  
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?  
- William Shakespeare– King Lear, Act I, Scene II

William Shakespeare's marked interest in bastardy, especially royal bastards, is evidenced by the presence of spurious children throughout his body of plays.<sup>222</sup> The above quotation from "King Lear" expresses the idea that an illegitimate child should in no way be deemed inferior to a legitimate one, and raises the question of why a bastard should be considered 'base.' This sort of questioning challenges the authority of the very institutions that differentiate an illegitimate child from a legitimate one. André Gide begins the sixth chapter of *Les Faux-monnayeurs* with a quotation from the English playwright:

We are all bastards;  
And that most venerable man which I  
Did call my father was I know not where  
When I was stamp'd.

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<sup>222</sup> Edmund of *King Lear*, Philip Faulconbridge of *King John*, Thersites of *Troilus and Cressida*, and Don John of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Joan la Pucelle and the Bastard of Orleans of *Henry VI* are all famous bastards from Shakespearean plays.



And yet, Gide cuts the metaphor short. The line continues in the play: “Some coiner with his tools/Made me a counterfeit.”<sup>223</sup> By choosing this quotation, and indeed the title of his novel, Gide establishes a semantic platform from which to begin understanding the multiple meanings, namely those concerning authority and authenticity, which may be drawn from his text. The textual introduction of the ‘real’ false coin during Édouard’s description of his own unwritten novel, *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, comes late in the work, and the actual counterfeiters and their accomplices in the narrative do not have terribly important roles, at least for the majority of the novel. For these reasons, the import of coining must be considered as representative of a broader and more abstract concept of counterfeiting; by this token, characters who pass themselves off as something other than what they are, as something “unnatural,” contribute to unique representations of illegitimacy.

While the immediate interest in counterfeiting for me is its utility as metaphor for the birth of an illegitimate child, the image of the false coin is very important in various analyses of Gide’s work. The themes of authenticity and sincerity are common in many of Gide’s most well known writings. Michel, the central character of *L’Immoraliste*, seeks his “authentic self” as he convalesces after a bout with tuberculosis:

L’amas sur notre esprit de toutes connaissances acquises s’écaille  
comme un fard et, par places, laisse voir à nu la chair même, l’être  
authentique qui se cachait.<sup>224</sup>

Michel’s image of the “*fard*” which falls off to expose the naked flesh beneath is nearly the contrary image of Bernard’s false coin, the gold coating of which will rub off, revealing the crystal center. While cosmetics are generally meant to enhance beauty, Gide’s Michel privileges

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<sup>223</sup> *Cymbeline*, Act II, Scene V.

<sup>224</sup> André Gide’s *L’immoraliste*, in *Romans, Récits et Soties, Œuvres Lyriques* (Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, 1969), 398.

what is underneath. One can in this case discern two sorts of counterfeits: that which is of value, yet hidden by base materials, and that which is base or worthless, artificially embellished to seem more valuable.

This sort of “counterfeiting of the self” is admittedly abstract and will require further explication to gain insight into Gide’s use of the coining metaphor with regard to bastardy and sexuality. Jonathan Romney, considering the title of *Les Faux-monnayeurs* as ambiguous, states that “it is hard to establish exactly what the act of forgery consists of, who are the forgers, and what – world or literature – is subject to falsification.”<sup>225</sup> His observation may well imply that there is nothing that may not be falsified, and Gide expresses this in many ways. We shall see how Gide’s characters embody and perform a wide variety of forgeries, including forms of writing, speech acts, sexual acts, gender performances, marriage practices, religious insincerity, beside of course the actual counterfeiting of coins. It is important to treat this diverse array of fakes and fabrications in order to show how Gide uses the image of the counterfeit to question the authenticity of what is being replicated, whether it is the legitimacy of a monetary currency, of a child, or even of one’s gender identity. Everything is subject to Gide’s questioning. His use of the bastard son, the false priest, the adulterous father and the closeted pederastic uncle provides the material for an analysis of Gidean authenticity, as we will see. This positive trait is not to be mistaken with legitimacy, which is mostly seen as appearance or pretense. I will show how Gidean authenticity, a sort of conscious and willful authenticity based on agency, differs both from legitimacy and factual authenticity, as discussed in my introduction. This willfulness is most often typical of the bastards represented in his work.

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<sup>225</sup> Jonathan Romney’s “Forgery and Economy in Gide’s *Les Faux-monnayeurs*.” In *Neophilologus*. Springer Netherlands .Volume 71, Number 2, April, 1987) 196.

### 3.1 Gide's Coin Metaphor: Influences and Interpretations

First, it is important to explain how and why Gide is supposed to have employed the counterfeit metaphor in the title of his novel, in order to develop its wider use in the study of bastards. Germaine Brée has postulated that Gide was influenced by his 1891 reading of lectures by Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*:

Carlyle's images reflect the ambiguity of his dialectic: true Pope, false Pope; true king, false king; true prophet, false prophet. Quackery, priestcraft, dupery, simulacra, falsehood, semblance, swindle, cant, sham, fake – the words are eloquent whereby Carlyle denounces his counterfeiters and their identity, and Gide was to make good use of them.<sup>226</sup>

It is true that Gide made extensive use of these images in the two works considered in this chapter: the counterfeiters' sham, marital insincerity, and hidden illegitimacy in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, and of course the great papal dupery involved in *Les caves du Vatican*.<sup>227</sup> Thomas Carlyle's work will resurface again in due course.

Some critics have asked whether the counterfeit of Gide's *Les Faux-monnayeurs* is not the novel itself. If one considers the act of writing as the conception and birthing of a text, and the writer as both mother and father, how might this hermaphroditism affect perceptions of the gender of the writer? How might a text be viewed as illegitimate? In his discussion of the portrayal of hermaphrodites as feminized and villainous beings in Renaissance texts, Todd Reeser details the theoretical immoderation of hermaphrodites represented in Thomas Artus'

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<sup>226</sup> Germaine Brée's "Culture and Counterfeit" (*The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 5, Papers of the Midwest MLA, Number 2, *Criticism and Culture*, 1972), 78.

<sup>227</sup> One English translation of which is entitled *The Vatican Swindle*.

*L'Isle des Hermaphrodites* (1605); these representations contrast with the moderation of homosocial friendships between men:

If male-male friendship is a key avenue to achieve moderation in the Aristotelian model, the hermaphrodites' laws institute a kind of antifriendship as if to keep the potential for moderation out [...] This lack of interest in intimacy explains why money cannot be used to maintain friendship (“secourir ses amis”); one spends money as one expends friends.<sup>228</sup>

The hermaphrodite is represented, by its sexual organs, as double-stamped: a coin stamped with two different values. The writer, like the hermaphrodite, has the capacity to “connect” with anyone, whether intellectually or sexually speaking; nevertheless, as Reeser shows, the hermaphrodite is generally rejected. The theoretical hermaphrodism of the writer poses a handful of charged questions: Is the writer condemned to the same lack of intimacy as Artus' hermaphrodite? If the hermaphrodite's gender is represented by its sex(es), does this hold true for the writer as well? So, if one considers that the author is at once both mother and father, and if one admits the validity of the Latin expression “*mater certissima est*,” how might one question a text's paternity, then?<sup>229</sup> Jonathan Romney points out Gide's “retribution” of his novel's paternity:

This is precisely what happens when Gide, the “father” of his text, tries to attribute to the novel a controlling, originating force other than his own, and his protestations of innocence and limited control are part of this strategy. In the matter of mimesis, the author may claim simply to be representing a world which submits to translation; Gide, however, presents a resistance to the author on the part, not simply of the world, but of the text itself.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Todd Reeser's *Moderating Masculinity in Early Modern Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 247.

<sup>229</sup> “The mother is most certain”.

<sup>230</sup> Romney, 200.

Romney refers to Gide's novel as one that seemingly writes itself. For Romney, Gide essentially attributes self-authorship to the text, rather than claiming to reproduce reality as the writer himself. In a way, this may be interpreted as Gide's refusal to recognize his text; he bastardizes it. The paternity of the text becomes thereby contestable. As in the case of the "immaculate conception" of the Christian Gospels which never left Gide's side in his youth, his own text is father of itself. But Gide's "resistance to the author" is far from complete, and is more of a rejection of the author as absolute authority. Gide's Édouard is created as the author's double, an alternate Gide writing an alternative version of *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. It is Édouard who "writes" and orchestrates much of Gide's novel, introducing various characters and telling much of the story through the pages of his private journal. While in this way Édouard may be interpreted as a counterfeit Gide, he is also a counterfeit uncle whose potential "male authority," if such a thing exists, is completely redefined by his amorous feelings for his nephew and his exclusion from the institutions of bourgeois marriage and fatherhood.

At the close of the novel's second of three parts, Gide as author replaces his limited third-person narrator for a short while in the chapter entitled, "*L'auteur juge ses personnages*," comparing himself to a "voyageur," who tries to discern where the path he has taken will lead him: "Ainsi l'auteur imprévoyant s'arrête un instant, reprend souffle, et se demande avec inquiétude où va le mener son récit."<sup>231</sup> Although the sincerity, or perhaps literalness, of these lines may be questioned, their meaning remains clear; Gide affirms his characters' independence from his own authorial artifice. While in the chapter title he calls himself "auteur" and mentions his "personnages," the pages that follow use only proper names with no mention of them as characters. They are given their own will. They annoy and surprise Gide, but at the end of the

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<sup>231</sup> *Romans*, 1108.

short *entr'acte*, he surprisingly lets slip his mask of authorial passivity: “S’il m’arrive jamais d’inventer encore une histoire, je ne la laisserai plus habiter que par des caractères trempés, que la vie, loin d’émousser, aiguise.”<sup>232</sup> Even this phrase is paradoxical. The writer admits to inventing the story, and yet speaks of who he will “allow to inhabit” a future one. In this way, Gide still clings to the author’s *puissance paternelle*. By allowing his characters their independence, rather than renouncing his authority entirely, he acts more like a father who recognizes his children’s self-determination. Significantly, Oscar Molinier, the father of Olivier in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, states: “Mais il faut bien se rendre compte qu’à partir d’un certain âge, les enfants nous échappent.”<sup>233</sup> As Jean-Jacques Rousseau explains in his *Contrat Social*, Molinier knows that independence is generally inevitable:

La plus ancienne de toutes les sociétés et la seule naturelle est celle de la famille. Encore les enfans ne restent-ils liés au père qu’aussi longtemps qu’ils ont besoin de lui pour se conserver. Sitôt que ce besoin cesse, le lien naturel se dissout. Les enfans, exempts de l’obéissance qu’ils devoient au père, le père, exempt des soins qu’il devoit aux enfans, rentrent tous également dans l’indépendance. S’ils continuent de rester unis ce n’est plus naturellement, c’est volontairement, et la famille elle-même ne se maintient que par convention.<sup>234</sup>

What Rousseau says of the family, Romney recognizes for the father/writer as well: “The author’s authority is, in any case, undermined by the text’s independence. Once signed and published, a text speaks for its author and for itself, but its author no longer speaks for it.”<sup>235</sup> In *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, Robert de Passavant, also a writer, refuses to let his novel speak for itself, much to Édouard’s dismay. Édouard remarks upon the several newspaper articles that review Passavant’s latest book, *La Barre fixe*:

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<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 1111.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 1114.

<sup>234</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Du Contrat Social*. (Ed. B. de Jouvenel. Genève: C. Bourquin, 1947), 175.

<sup>235</sup> Romney, 199.

Un quatrième [journal] contient une lettre de Passavant, protestation à un article un peu moins louangeur que les autres, paru précédemment dans ce journal; Passavant y défend son livre et l'explique. Cette lettre irrite Édouard plus encore que les articles. Passavant prétend éclairer l'opinion; c'est-à-dire qu'habilement il l'incline.<sup>236</sup>

If Rousseau's words on the naturalness of the family are extended to the familial metaphor of the text, Passavant refuses to detach himself from his book, and maintains his paternal authority, even beyond its publication and release. In this way, he claims a perpetual control over the work and its possible interpretation and reception; unlike Édouard (or Gide), he refuses to allow his novel to speak for itself. Although Édouard seemingly reports events in the novel as they happen, his reflections on other characters and his judgments, however masked, lend a certain doubt to the authenticity of his accounts. His weaknesses are expressed; his doubts about his choice to bring Boris, the grandson of his friend La Pérouse, to Paris are evident; his theory of the novel is ridiculed by his companions in Saas-Fée, and Gide himself interjects to cast doubt on Édouard's conduct: "Pourquoi cherche-t-il à se persuader, à présent, qu'il conspire au bien de Boris? Mentir aux autres, passe encore; mais à soi-même!"<sup>237</sup>

Édouard, as substitutive author-father is repeatedly shown to be lacking, rather than leaving Gide, the *genitor* of the text, open to criticism. Signing the text symbolically gives it a name; the father's name constitutes the text's legitimacy. Perhaps Gide, wanting his text to speak for itself, but not necessarily for him, sought to limit his authorial responsibility. For as Romney notes, "[t]he rebellious offspring will speak for itself, and tend to give an erroneous picture of its creator."<sup>238</sup> The only way to avoid a negative reflection on the author/father, since

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<sup>236</sup> *Romans*, 983.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 1109.

<sup>238</sup> Romney, 199.

his voice is not necessarily heard through his “rebellious offspring,” is to disinherit that offspring. The only way to give complete independence to a text or to a child, whether rebellious or not, is to deny authorship. Édouard’s role as uncle or mentor, himself a writer of counterfeiters and perhaps even a counterfeit himself, prevents his replacing any legitimate or presumptive “father” figure. The layer of textual “gold” disguising Édouard’s true nature, whether in reference to his sexuality, his capacity as mentor for Bernard, or his potential for bourgeois conformity and literary notoriety, is paper-thin, easily scratched away by all but those who wish to see him as other than he truly is, such as the case of Laura, hopeful that he may reciprocate her love.

### 3.1.1 Some Coiner with His Tools: Legitimacy versus Authenticity

Jean-Joseph Goux, in his reading of *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, sees the novel itself as “a counterfeit of the real thing”:

[I]t is a challenge to the novelistic form, a critical essay disguised as a novel by the brilliant depiction of pathetic themes woven or engraved in it; a true novel, but one consumed from the inside by critical reflection, by a perspicacity that wears through (*abîme*) its fine appearance and discredits its face value, until it is devalued to a mere cheat of a token devoid of opacity and colour, a clear crystal of no account among the circulating money that the authentic writer must mint.<sup>239</sup>

So for Goux, Gide’s book, while simultaneously (and paradoxically) a “counterfeit” and a “true novel,” is false in that its stated genre is falsified, disguised, an essay rather than a novel. Gide considered *Les Faux-monnayeurs* to be his only true novel, so Goux’s comments may be interpreted as an attack on Gide’s sincerity, or a recognition of a conscious effort to transgress or

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<sup>239</sup> Jean-Joseph Goux’ *The Coiners of Language (Les Monnayeurs du langage)*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 10.



perhaps modernize the genre. In an upcoming book, Ben Roberts sums up part of Goux's argument: "In short, Gide's novel registers a struggle between the 'gold language' of literary realism and the 'inconvertible' language of modern literature."<sup>240</sup> Perhaps the modernity of Gide's book is its embrace of the illegitimate language (*langage*) of modernism before it had become a widely accepted currency.

Bernard lived most of his young life in the home of his mother and her husband, the judge Profitendieu. Until the discovery of his illegitimacy, he is passed off as a son of Profitendieu, a legitimate coin. As we will see, despite his inherent value, Bernard's name, his mark, is a false stamp. When Bernard is revealed as a bastard, it is as if he has suddenly been excluded from the system of exchange, if not exactly rendered worthless: a raw (precious) metal bearing no legitimating stamp. Passed off conveniently for years, Bernard finally feels obliged to leave the Profitendieu home, and effectively takes himself out of currency. When Édouard accepts Bernard as a young protégé, he brings him back into exchange, so to speak. The image of the bastard as an exchangeable or adoptable commodity in Gide's novel echoes the way women, wives or potential wives, are also represented as commodities or gifts exchanged in patriarchal societies.<sup>241</sup>

The commodification of women will remain key when comparing the drop in status from commodity to worthless stock both in bastards when unveiled, and in women when giving birth to a "natural child." The bastard's value seems to require bartering, an attempt to set a value for a new or foreign commodity. Édouard defends Bernard's value when Oscar Molinier opposes

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<sup>240</sup> Ben Roberts in *The Representation of Capital: Speculation and Displacement* (Palgrave, forthcoming 2009), 2.

<sup>241</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté* (Paris et La Haye : Mouton et Co., 1967) explores "primitive" systems of kinship and exchange.

Olivier's friendship with Bernard: "Je protestais que je connaissais Bernard assez pour me porter garant de sa gentillesse et de son honnêteté."<sup>242</sup> With these words, Édouard appropriates the role of guarantor of Bernard's worth, of his social viability. The expression, "se porter garant" implies that Édouard is willing to take responsibility for Bernard, to vouch for him; the expression is often used in banking as well, to guarantee a loan or the stability of a currency.

While the bastard figure in Gide is comparable to a false coin, illegitimate children are not the only symbolic counterfeits in Gide's fiction. Marital and religious practices may equally be read, in *Les Faux-monnayeurs* and *Les Caves du Vatican*, as cases where institutional structures are employed in the creation of legitimized, if not quite authentic, authorities, relationships, and values. The obvious root of the word "legitimacy" or "legitimate" is the Latin *legitimus* for "legal" or "lawful." Legitimacy has at its base law and legality, marking an important difference between "legitimate" and "authentic." "Authentic" refers to something that is genuine or authoritative, implying a relationship with an authority or *author*; in the case of paternal relations, "authentic" may be used to describe a paternal-filial connection without direct reference to law. The "willful" authenticity promoted by Gide moves a step further and requires no reference to blood ties for this same connection; authenticity that is "willful" implies that the individual's will and choice of action, rather than exterior legal factors, determine her authenticity. Considering authenticity in this manner allows the argumentative opposition of conceptions of legitimacy as founded on the Law, and also the meaning of authenticity as a positivist consideration of *factual* genuineness and paternity. To reveal an illustration of this opposition in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, one need only look at Oscar Molinier, father of Vincent,

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<sup>242</sup> *Romans*, 1118

Olivier, and Georges, and husband of Pauline, Édouard's half-sister, who is revealed as an adulterer and a father with no authority.

Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, in a sub-section of *The Newly Born Woman* entitled "The Dawn of Phallogentrism," reference James Joyce in presenting a view of fatherhood as being as artificial as patriarchy:

What is a father? "Fatherhood is a legal fiction," said Joyce. Paternity, which is a fiction, is fiction passing itself off as truth. Paternity is the lack of being which is called God. Men's cleverness was in passing themselves off as fathers and "repatriating" women's fruits as their own. A naming trick. Magic of absence. God is men's secret.<sup>243</sup>

The concept of the father as fiction presumes the artificiality of the paternal bond, an idea which is well illustrated by Oscar Molinier. Although a secondary character, Molinier embodies the sort of weak and undermined paternal figure that defines the spirit of an entire generation of sons in the novel; adolescent Georges Molinier and his schoolmates have no authoritative presence in their lives, an absence exacerbated by their sequestration at the Pension Vedel, an all-boys Protestant boarding school. In the novel, it is these boys who pass false coins and frequent prostitutes. Gide shows how they influence each other and are influenced by outsiders; not only their lack of a father figure, but also their lack of independent thought and reasoning, leads them down a potentially dangerous and criminal path.

Although Bernard's presumptive father, Profitendieu, is not the boy's biological parent, he proves to be a better father to Bernard than Oscar Molinier is to Olivier. Édouard also steps in as a temporary substitute for Profitendieu, but his role is fundamentally not that of a father.

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<sup>243</sup> Cixous and Clément, 101.

Profitendieu proves his paternal affection for Bernard at the end of the novel, and Bernard returns the sentiment, realizing during his time with Édouard and Laura that fatherhood is much more than a biological condition. Bernard questions Laura:

« Est-ce que vous croyez qu'on peut aimer l'enfant d'un autre autant que le sien propre, vraiment ?

- Je ne sais pas si je le crois ; mais je l'espère.

- Pour moi, je le crois. Et je ne crois pas, au contraire, à ce qu'on appelle si bêtement "la voix du sang."<sup>244</sup>

Bernard refuses the validity of "blood" as the ultimate physical and symbolic link between father and son. While I earlier compared blood with the metal of an authentic coin, throughout the novel, Gide lends a greater importance to the self, which transcends any physical or hereditary disposition. While blood may constitute factual paternity, Gide privileges agency, lending to the individual the prospect of becoming father or son through choice and action; this represents a departure from the blood-metal/name-mark binary which generally establishes authenticity and legitimacy. The required "will to paternity" evident in Gide departs from the centrality of blood for bourgeois identity, which was described by Michel Foucault in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*.<sup>245</sup> Beyond the perceptions of legitimacy and factual authenticity, another element exists that defines the individual: "willful authenticity," merit based in the strength of an individual's will. The minted coin is a passive symbol, one whose value is established from without, or by pre-existing conditions. In this way, Gide's counterfeit coin can only represent the bastard son until the latter establishes his own agency through action, becoming his own

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 1092.

<sup>245</sup> *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 124.

author/ity. It is perhaps for this that Édouard proclaims in his journal that “[l]’avenir appartient aux bâtards.”<sup>246</sup>

Oscar Molinier, for his part, is a legitimate father by all standards: his legal status as husband of his son’s mother, and his biologically authentic paternity. As a husband, however, Molinier is lacking in his observance of the “laws” of marriage. He is equally a disingenuous father in that, besides his adultery, Molinier is shown quite clearly to be lax in most matters of religion; he may attempt to educate his sons in the ways of God, but this is done indirectly by sending them to the Protestant Vedel-Azaïs boarding school. Oscar takes no direct and evident role in the lives or education of his children, a fact evidenced by the utter lack of textual signs of interaction between father and sons. Gide leaves out all potentially relevant dialogue between Molinier and his sons, refusing to force interaction where he, as author/ity, sees none. In a conversation with Édouard, the only scene where Molinier’s character is developed in any depth, he shows himself to be unrepentantly adulterous, a heavy drinker, and oblivious to the reality of his family’s internal and external relations and conflicts. In view of Molinier’s absence from the lives of his sons, fatherhood may indeed be viewed as a “legal fiction.”

Molinier and Édouard meet in the Luxembourg Gardens, the regular hangout of the schoolboys as well, before going to lunch. Édouard describes Molinier’s tone as “plaisantin, parfois même égrillard.”<sup>247</sup> This joking and ribald manner, according to Édouard, is affected in order to please an artist, whose morality is supposed to be lax. Already this affectation reveals Molinier’s desire for others’ approval, especially other adult men. His relations with and attitudes toward women are clearly modeled after a certain masculine sexual ideal. He laments

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<sup>246</sup> *Romans*, 1022.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, 1113.

his wife's virtue, since it serves to further vilify his own carnal desires. He has an affair with an unnamed woman, justified by his comment that he is a "passionné." His openness in discussing this with Édouard is equally an appeal to the latter's presumed "masculine" inclinations.

Molinier assumes that Édouard shares his lustful feelings for women of the world; otherwise he would be taking a considerable risk in discussing these issues with his wife's half-brother. Molinier depends on other men to prop up his own ideals for manly conduct. Not only does he confess his adultery to Édouard, seeking understanding if not approval, but early in the novel Molinier makes a point of condemning only the women involved in the prostitution scandal, as we have discussed, in which his own sons took part. His first priority is to protect the young boys of good name, and put a quiet end to the affair, as he stresses in his advice to the magistrate Profitendieu:

Je ferais fermer l'appartement, le théâtre de ces orgies, et je m'arrangerais de manière à prévenir les parents de ces jeunes effrontés, doucement, secrètement, et simplement de manière à empêcher les récidives. Ah ! par exemple, faites coffrer les femmes ! ça, je vous l'accorde volontiers ; il me paraît que nous avons affaire ici à quelques créatures d'une insondable perversité et dont il importe de nettoyer la société.<sup>248</sup>

Molinier's view that the young boys involved in the scandal are basically innocent, influenced by the perverse women of the clandestine brothel, illustrates his bad faith, his refusal to believe that these boys from respectable families might be responsible for their own actions and sexuality. Molinier, in his role as father and representative of justice, reveals a blatant hypocrisy; through him, Gide shows that where paternity is concerned, authenticity is preferable to legitimacy, but willful authenticity is far superior to factual authenticity or real blood ties.

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., 940.

Now that concepts of “counterfeiting” and authentic value have been introduced, and a basic difference between legitimacy and authenticity has been established and illustrated, these ideas may be developed so as to highlight the centrality of the coin metaphor when analyzing a range of Gidean characters. The coin image will eventually will be extended to include entire systems of economic exchange, credit and debt, all heavily dependant on forms of legitimacy used to create and represent value.

### 3.1.2 In Debt and Impure: Debased Metals and Bodies

“As the sign and currency of exchange, the invaded woman’s body bears the full burden of ritual pollution.... If marriage uses the woman’s body as good money and unequivocal speech, rape transforms her into counterfeit coin, a contradictory word that threatens the whole system.”  
- Patricia Kleindienst Joplin<sup>249</sup>

If one accepts the classical equivalence of woman and currency, as conveyed in the epigraph by Patricia Kleindienst Joplin, another analytical comparison can be made concerning the bastard figure, this time contrasting the latter with the seduced woman or *fille-mère*. Joplin uses the above hypothesis in her essay to represent the woman’s body in marriage as “good money.” When the “pollution” in the “invaded woman’s body” is made visible by a pregnancy, one may consider that the “sin” of the flesh is itself manifested in the child’s flesh, whether this sin is that of fornication (outside of marriage) or that of ‘allowing’ oneself to be seduced (or raped). My earlier example of Maupassant’s farm girl, Rose, demonstrates how the illegitimate child may be likened to a weed, itself comparable to pollution, its appearance an instance of disorder in the

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<sup>249</sup> Patricia Kleindienst Joplin’s “The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours,” in *Rape and Representation*, eds. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 46.

very structured architecture of the farm. It is appropriate to further develop this theme with respect to counterfeiting.

While the “polluted” woman is made thus through the body, no fundamental exterior physiological change is required, but rather an imperceptible socio-psychological alteration is involved, due in no small part to social stigma. For the bastard, there is no evident physiological sign either, but rather a genetic difference between legal father and child in the case of adulterine illegitimacy, and a purely legal conundrum in cases of bastards born to unwed mothers. The nineteenth-century preoccupation with genetics, degeneration and blood, however, lends to the discourse another dimension; the bastard child constitutes impurity in a factually or figuratively pure family bloodline. In Gide, this disruption is usually signified by blood and gold. The value of the gold coin in France under the gold standard was established by a dual system, one based on both intrinsic value (the metal) and the legitimacy of a coin minted by the State (the mark). The same is true for the bloodline; the son’s intrinsic value is supposedly in his blood, whereas his legitimacy lies in his name. A question central to this discussion is that of which is more essential to value: the metal/blood of the coin/son, or the stamp/name. The former constitutes authenticity, whereas the latter establishes legitimacy, although neither is as unproblematic as these simple binaries imply. In this context, I will discuss the similar natures of Laura and Bernard as well as the peculiar case of the little Boris, all characters from *Les Faux-monnayeurs* caught up in discourses of impurity and illegitimacy.

When Laura Douviers met Vincent Molinier, future father to her illegitimate child, in the town of Pau, the false presumption they shared that they would both die from tuberculosis inspired their love affair. One may say that the presumed infection of the body allowed the moral infection of their adulterous affair. In the case of Laura’s “sin,” one must consider not



only the fact that she is married, but also that her father is the pious Pastor Vedel, and that she is often recognized, most notably by Bernard, as the pinnacle of virtue. In her first letter to Édouard, Laura wishes that she had never survived her convalescence: “Que ne suis-je demeurée malade! que ne suis-je morte là-bas [...]”<sup>250</sup> She feels unworthy of ever seeing her husband again, and thus justifies her flight: “Hélas, je ne suis plus digne de le revoir.”<sup>251</sup> Her guilt over her adultery is sharpened by the knowledge that her husband, Félix Douviers, would forgive her immediately: “Il me pardonnerait sans doute et je ne mérite pas, je ne veux pas qu’il me pardonne.”<sup>252</sup> The idea of ‘paying for one’s sins’ makes the prospect of Douviers’ unconditional pardon difficult in that Laura has only to ask for it. Her repulsion at the thought of her husband’s unconditional forgiveness is contrasted with a fear of her father’s rejection, an irony in view of the latter’s vocation as pastor: “Mon père, s’il apprenait, s’il comprenait, serait capable de me maudire. Il me repousserait. Comment affronterais-je sa vertu, son horreur du mal, du mensonge, de tout ce qui est impur?”<sup>253</sup> Laura, already abandoned by Vincent, avoids being turned away by her own father by exiling herself, first to a hotel room in Paris, then to Switzerland with Édouard and Bernard. Her fear of her father’s potential reaction to her pregnancy implies her culpability, her consideration that she is sinful, dishonest and impure. Her shame in bearing a bastard is made all the worse by her upbringing, just as the fact that Bernard comes from an upright bourgeois family makes his bastardy of greater consequence.

Bernard, for his part, has no control over or responsibility for his disgraced status, which constitutes the central difference between the two characters with regard to their respective sorts of ‘impurity.’ In Saas-Fé, Laura is contemplating a return to her husband, and Bernard, who

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<sup>250</sup> *Romans*, 984.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibidem*.

feels repentant for his behavior toward the judge Profitendieu asks her if he should also return home: “Est-ce que vous trouvez que je devrais implorer son pardon, retourner près de lui ?”<sup>254</sup> Laura recalls their earlier conversations, explains that what is good for one is not necessarily so for another. She admits that she feels weak, whereas she considers Bernard strong. She fears that Bernard is not yet ready to make such a decision, that he should not return to his father “défait.” She questions Bernard’s intentions in proposing to return home:

Voulez-vous toute ma pensée? C’est pour moi, non pour lui, que vous vous proposez cela ; pour obtenir ce que vous appeliez : mon estime. Vous ne l’aurez pas Bernard, que si je ne vous sens pas la chercher. Je ne peux vous aimer que naturel. Laissez-moi le repentir ; il n’est pas fait pour vous, Bernard.<sup>255</sup>

If Laura reserves repentance for herself, it is because she blames herself for her fall from grace, whereas Bernard has done nothing to merit his own precarious illegitimate status, the same status as her own unborn child. She warns him that she will not esteem his actions if they are not authentic, genuinely his own. In saying that she could only love Bernard if he is ‘natural,’ Laura also validates his being an *enfant naturel*; Bernard can only be authentic, then, when “natural.” This passage implies that, already illegitimate, Bernard is risking the loss of his own authenticity as well, becoming less natural for the sake of earning Laura’s “esteem”; he makes himself doubly counterfeit.

Olivier, for his part, is made into a counterfeit, an artificial dandy litterateur by Passavant, although later he is rescued by Édouard, whereas Bernard is left free by the author and allowed to be genuine and unadulterated. He falsifies his own authenticity, however, when he falls into the love-trap described in Édouard’s journal: “Quiconque aime vraiment renonce à la

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 1093.

<sup>255</sup> Ibidem.

sincérité.”<sup>256</sup> It is only when Laura leaves Bernard and Édouard’s company to rejoin her husband that the young man is disposed to return to the home of his adoptive father, Profitendieu, whose seemingly genuine love Bernard actually shares, despite what he had said in the letter announcing his departure. In the letter, Bernard had explained his belief that he had been kept in the household by “horreur du scandale,” and that his mother would accept his flight “avec soulagement et plaisir.”<sup>257</sup> He further explains his departure in terms of debt: “L’idée de vous devoir quoi que ce soit m’est intolérable et je crois que, si c’était à recommencer, je préférerais mourir de faim plutôt que de m’asseoir à votre table.”<sup>258</sup> By this, it is clear that Bernard primarily seeks to avoid being indebted to anyone. The debt in question appears as a monetary one, but the meaning of the word “*devoir*” may be taken not only as “to owe,” in this case, but also as the substantive “duty”; in the latter case Bernard owes no allegiance to his false father, since he is compelled by no form of filial duty.

Laura also contends with the unpleasant feeling of being indebted, this time to Édouard, as the narrator explains:

Ce dont elle souffrait surtout et qui, pour peu que s’y attardât sa pensée, lui devenait insupportable, c’était de vivre aux dépens de ce protecteur, ou mieux : de ne lui donner rien en échange ; ou plus exactement encore : c’était qu’Édouard ne lui demandât rien en échange, alors qu’elle se sentait prête à tout lui accorder.<sup>259</sup>

The monetary discourse of exchange, always applicable to male-female relations in which the female is construed as object of exchange, is here problematised; Laura is unable to ‘pay’ Édouard for his support and protection, for he does not desire her physically, and his love for her

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<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 986.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 944.

<sup>258</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 1076.

is expressed in a strictly ‘honorable’ and amicable fashion. His protection revives in her feelings of the past: “De plus, lorsqu’elle remémorait le passé, il lui paraissait qu’Édouard l’avait trompée en éveillant en elle un amour qu’elle sentait encore vivace, puis en se dérochant à cet amour et en le laissant sans emploi.”<sup>260</sup> From this look into Laura’s mind, it is clear that the currency with which she would repay her debt to Édouard is her love, but the feeling is not reciprocal. Her love then is its own sort of counterfeit, authentic in her, but worthless for any exchange with Édouard, who accepts a “foreign” currency other than that offered by Laura; in matters of love, they trade in divergent markets with different currencies. Laura’s eventual return to her husband is the most direct manner for Laura to regain her legitimacy as wife, if not as mother, and this return also represents a re-entry into the heterosexual market where she is again an accepted, tradable currency.

Bernard also struggles with the feeling of not earning his keep with Édouard, and complains that he is left with few duties as *secrétaire*: “il ne me donne rien à faire.”<sup>261</sup> He is less concerned with this inability to repay Édouard than Laura, however, and is more interested in being honest and authentic, comparing himself to the false coin he had previously shown to his travel mates:

Tenez, on me demanderait aujourd’hui quelle vertu me paraît la plus belle, je répondrais sans hésiter: la probité. Oh! Laura! Je voudrais, tout le long de ma vie, au moindre choc, rendre un son pur, probe, authentique. Presque tous les gens que j’ai connus sonnent faux. Valoir exactement ce qu’on paraît; ne pas chercher à paraître plus qu’on ne vaut...<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 1077.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 1095. The younger live-in “secretary” in literary homosexual households is present in other fiction of the time, notably in the work of Marcel Proust.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 1093.

Here it becomes clear how Gide's Bernard resembles Michel in *L'Immoraliste*; both seek authenticity. This passage also illustrates how Gide seemingly privileges innate worth over the appearance of worth. Bernard refers to the sound of the pure gold coin he would like to resemble, not to the stamp upon it. It is for this that Gide's chosen period for the novel is notable, just before the First World War and the suspension of the gold standard.<sup>263</sup> Bernard shows that the appearance of a real coin is easy to reproduce and counterfeit, whereas the metal with which the genuine article is created is much more difficult to fake.

In *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, there is another case of economics tied to bastardy that deserves at least a brief consideration. Little Boris, quite a different case from Bernard, is not presented through the same monetary discourse as Laura and Bernard. Legally a bastard in that his parents were never married, Boris became orphaned of his father, and later was essentially abandoned by his mother to the Doctor Sophroniska, who took him to Switzerland to treat his presumed nerve disorder. Always in transit, Boris can develop no roots; he has nothing with which to stabilize himself. His delicate nervous system inclines him to tics and eccentricities, all linked according to the doctor to his excessive and quasi-mystical practice of masturbation. Doctor Sophroniska, an early Freudian analyst, is fated to failure in the end; she seeks the origin of Boris' disorder in an early traumatic event, "dans un premier ébranlement de l'être dû à quelque événement."<sup>264</sup> She employs psychoanalysis to interpret the boy's dreams, leading to what she calls his "complete confession": "Il faut que j'amène Boris jusqu'à l'aveu complet;

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<sup>263</sup> While the gold standard was suspended in France during the war years, it was readopted from 1931-1936. Kenneth Mouré's "The Bank of France and the Gold Standard, 1914-1928" (In *International Financial History in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Marc Flandreau, Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich, and Harold James. Washington D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 2003) explains the monetary realignment which accompanied the international adoption of the gold standard in the early twentieth century.

<sup>264</sup> *Romans*, 1073.

avant cela je ne pourrai pas le guérir.”<sup>265</sup> Explaining Boris’ case to Édouard, she attributes his illness to guilt:

La mort du père est survenue. Boris s'est persuadé que ses pratiques secrètes, qu'on lui peignait comme si coupables, avaient reçu leur châtement; il s'est tenu pour responsable de la mort de son père; il s'est cru criminel, damné.<sup>266</sup>

This depiction of Boris casts a Freudian shadow over the son, whose sexuality is supposed to somehow cause the death of the father, leaving psychological traces of guilt, fed by the mother. If there is any possible reference to debt, monetary or other, in the case of Boris, it is the debt of guilt supposed by Doctor Sophroniska. Boris’ constant self-culpabilization, especially when in the presence of the angelic Bronja, lends credence to the therapist’s theory: “Moi je serai toujours un méchant,” the boy says.<sup>267</sup> Sophroniska proposes psychoanalytical confession as the means of resolving this guilt-debt, and she indeed believes to have cured him, having brought him to a full confession before sending him off to live with his grandfather in Paris:

Sophroniska m'a reparlé de Boris, qu'elle est parvenue, croit-elle, à confesser entièrement. Le pauvre enfant n'a plus en lui le moindre taillis, la moindre touffe où s'abriter des regards de la doctoresse. Il est tout débusqué. Sophroniska étale au grand jour, démontés, les rouages les plus intimes de son organisme mental, comme un horloger les pièces de la pendule qu'il nettoie.<sup>268</sup>

This passage from Édouard’s journal frames Boris’ “cure” as resulting from a purifying confession, his mind compared to a clock being cleaned. Gide takes a critical jab at psychoanalysis with his descriptions of Sophroniska and her ultimately unsuccessful treatment of

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 1074.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 1098-99.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 1072.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 1097.

Boris. Gide shares his views of Freudian psychoanalysis in certain passages of his *Journaux*, in which he expresses a very limited recognition of Freud's work:

Ah! Que Freud est gênant! Et qu'il me semble qu'on fût bien arrivé sans lui à découvrir son Amérique! Il me semble que ce dont je lui doive être le plus reconnaissant, c'est d'avoir habitué les lecteurs à entendre traiter certains sujets sans avoir à se récrier ni à rougir. Ce qu'il nous apporte surtout c'est de l'audace; ou plus exactement, il écarte de nous certaine fausse et gênante pudeur.<sup>269</sup>

The resemblance between the therapist as confessor and the priest is evident, both absolving sin and otherwise purifying the sinner. Earlier, Sophroniska implies that the mere recognition of the cause of a patient's disorder may be enough to heal and purify him/her: "Je crois qu'un regard clair nettoie la conscience comme un rayon de lumière purifie une eau infectée."<sup>270</sup> But despite Boris' supposed recognition of his sins and repentance, he will nevertheless be shaken by a later reminder of his "pratiques clandestins," his "talisman." This simple piece of paper from Boris' past, inscribed with the words "Gaz. Téléphone. Cent mille roubles," is later ornately decorated and placed on Boris' desk by an unknown schoolmate.<sup>271</sup> This gesture of seeming ill will contributes significantly to Boris' renewed longing to fit in at school, which in turn will ultimately lead to his "accidental" death. We will see that just as psychoanalytic confession produces no long term cure for Boris' condition, religious confession proves equally ineffective.

Nevertheless, Gide highlights the boy's purity, through remarks by the latter's therapist: "je le crois d'une très grande pureté."<sup>272</sup> A contrast is thereby established with Boris' own

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<sup>269</sup> André Gide's *Journal, 1889-1939*. In *Journal Tome I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 785.

<sup>270</sup> *Romans*, 1073.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 1098.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 1075.

feelings of impurity. In Saas-Fée, his devout playmate, Bronja, implores Boris to pray with her in order to be released from his lie-telling and naughty nature: “Veux-tu que nous allions tous les deux jusqu'à [...] et là tous les deux nous prierons Dieu et la sainte vierge de t'aider à ne plus être méchant.”<sup>273</sup> When he allows himself to be taken on this pilgrimage by Bronja, he hands her a stick with which to lead him, his eyes closed. When the girl reaches to take the stick, Boris stops her short, revealing his deep revulsion at his own impurity: “Oui, non, pas ce bout-là. Attends que je l'essuie.” “Pourquoi?” “J'y ai touché.”<sup>274</sup>

Boris is also bastardized through his use of language in one scene, an amalgam of real and made up languages worked into a nonsensical babble, primarily during the period of his nervous disorder: “Vibroskomenopatof. Blaf balf.” “Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire?” “-Rien.”<sup>275</sup> He explains that his mother speaks many languages: “Ma maman, elle, parle le français, l'anglais, le romain, le russe, le turc, le polonais, l'italoscope, l'espagnol, le perruquoi et le xixitou.”<sup>276</sup> Boris' linguistic background, so diverse, thanks to his mother, is adulterated by his personal “manias” and the guilt caused by his mother's early admonitions, creating a nonsense language so bastardized that its possible origins and meaning remain impenetrable even to him. His speech echoes his personal and even spatial instability, being moved around ceaselessly with inadequate, if well-intentioned, guidance. By no means a representation of Gide's ideal bastard, Boris is a weak and feminized orphan, the victim of a puritanical belief structure in which his sexual experimentation is painted as shameful by his mother, and then scrutinized ceaselessly by his psychoanalyst.

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 1072.

<sup>274</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 1071.

<sup>276</sup> Ibidem.



### 3.1.3 Lafcadio: No Credit but to Himself

D'ailleurs ce roi est un grand magicien: il exerce son empire sur l'esprit même de ses sujets; il les fait penser comme il veut. S'il n'a qu'un million d'écus dans son trésor, et qu'il en ait besoin de deux, il n'a qu'à leur persuader qu'un écu en vaut deux, et ils le croient. S'il a une guerre difficile à soutenir, et qu'il n'ait point d'argent, il n'a qu'à leur mettre dans la tête qu'un morceau de papier est de l'argent, et ils en sont aussitôt convaincus.

Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*. Lettre 24

When Montesquieu makes the above ironic remarks, the target of his criticism is the same sort of seemingly arbitrary authority that sets values for currency today; he pokes fun and develops a critique of systems of value, as does Gide in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. To consider a currency, or an individual, as more or less valuable according to arbitrary and fluctuating needs, economic or social, political or personal, is one of the functions of a sovereign, according to Montesquieu. His Enlightenment criticism of the French absolute monarchy with reference to the value of the “écu” is echoed and extended in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, whereas Gide’s earlier book, *Les Caves du Vatican*, introduces the bastard’s tendency to reject these systems in favor of an anarchistic project which rejects all debt and traditional systems of credit. I use the term anarchy carefully since Gide makes no reference to historical anarchist movements in *Les Caves du Vatican*, although later mentions in *Les Faux-monnayeurs* could be considered to refer to some form of anarchy or another, such as Strouvilhou’s anarchic literary project for a review entitled “*Les Nettoyeurs*,” which is more reminiscent of the Dada movement or surrealist conceptions of anarchy in art than of any anarchic political agenda.<sup>277</sup> Debtlessness would imply the dissolution or avoidance of any obligation or duty to creditors of any kind, thereby freeing the subject from the hegemonizing (and patriarchal) authorities that establish systems of redemptive value (the king, the father, and the priest). While Laura and Bernard of *Les Faux-monnayeurs* will dislike

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<sup>277</sup> *Romans*, 1199.

being indebted to Édouard or to Profitendieu respectively, Gide illustrates another character who incorporates debtlessness into his entire life philosophy: the prototypical Gidean bastard *par excellence*, thus far left unexamined: Lafcadio Wluiki.

*Les Caves du Vatican*, which introduces Lafcadio, precedes *Les Faux-monnayeurs* by a decade. Gide's *sotie*, as he classified it, is loosely based on a newspaper story concerning a scam devised to defraud devout Catholics of their money using a concocted story of an impostor pope, put into place by Freemasons who had kidnapped the true one. It follows a series of events in the lives of an extended family, comprised of the Baragliouls, the Fleurissoires and the Armand-Dubois, all related by blood or marriage. The central character of the novel, although some chapters are devoted to other characters, is undoubtedly Lafcadio, illegitimate son of a successful courtesan and a retired ambassador, the Count of Baraglioul. While raised by his mother and a series of her lovers (his "uncles"), he never knew his biological father. Lafcadio is tracked down one day by the count's legitimate son, Julius de Baraglioul, a wealthy writer and devout Catholic sent to gather information about the young man at the request of their father. Lafcadio suspects the real motive for the visit, and goes to see the dying count. Told by the latter that he cannot hope to ever join the Baraglioul family, Lafcadio begins a new life, financed by the inheritance that he will nevertheless receive from the old count: "Mon enfant, la famille est une grande chose fermée; vous ne serez jamais qu'un bâtard."<sup>278</sup> The count's explanation paints the family as "a great closed thing," implying exclusive interiority and the sort of verticality typical of political and patriarchal hierarchies. Exiled to the outside of this structure, Lafcadio is released into the open, horizontal space where all bastards must find their place. When the count calls Lafcadio "my child," while continuing to explain that he will never be more than a bastard, he points out

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<sup>278</sup> *Romans*, 728.

the hypocrisy of his own traditional view of the family, reflective in no small part of the aristocracy, refusing to recognize in public a son he freely addresses as such in private. His inheritance affords Lafcadio financial independence, while his rejection from the legitimate family line will assure his freedom of action. The revelation of his origins and this financial watershed immediately provide the impetus for a change of locale and of wardrobe. Tossing out his girlfriend, Lafcadio takes an advance on his inheritance and buys a new set of clothes. His rebirth and refitting as an illegitimate Baraglioul takes place simultaneously with the ongoing papal scam, masterminded by Lafcadio's former schoolmate, Protos, who will be described later.

Amédée Fleurissoire, Julius' brother-in-law and also a devout Catholic, comes to Rome to lend a hand, however he may, to uncover the "plot" against the pope. Amédée, a pathetically weak and gullible figure, finds himself in the same train car as Lafcadio toward the end of the novel. Lafcadio, on a whim, pushes Amédée from the train in the defining moment of the book, performing the famous and much discussed Gidean "gratuitous act." This scene occurs after a conversation between Lafcadio and his half-brother Julius concerning the nature of a truly unmotivated act. Lafcadio gets away with the murder, with a bit of help from his old friend Protos, and contemplates turning himself in. The novel ends with his final reflections on whether or not to give up his freedom and confess his crime.

Even before discovering the identity of his father and realizing what one might call the "existential benefits" of bastardy, authenticity and freedom, Lafcadio had developed an attitude toward life, foundational for the Gidean bastard, strongly defined by a horror of debt and recognition. Themes of debt, accounting and credit, both financial and otherwise, pervade Lafcadio's past and his whole persona. Like Gide's Bernard, who is in fact a rewriting of Lafcadio according to the *Journal of the Counterfeiters*, the earlier bastard finds debt and duty

equally intolerable: “Par horreur du devoir Lafcadio payait toujours comptant.”<sup>279</sup> The bastard is defined by his separation from social constraints tied to heredity, from familial connections and traditional roles, and from expectations stemming from hegemonic stereotypes of conduct, all pertaining to gender performance, marriage choices, public appearance and a variety of other social infringements on the individual. I will argue that Lafcadio’s aversion to debt and refusal to keep accounts of any kind, despite his perfect aptitude in all affairs of accounting and accountability, are logically appropriate and expressive of his status as bastard.

To be in debt, or to owe something to someone, presumes an earlier transfer of funds, goods, or services; in the structure of the family this investment is represented by the very rearing of a child, by the time and financial responsibilities inherent in parental duty. As we saw earlier, the French verb *devoir*, meaning “to owe,” also means “duty” in its substantive form; duty, then, is both what is owed to a dependent child by the parent, and the loyalty and obedience owed in turn to the parent by the child. Recalling Rousseau’s comments on parental *devoir*, the perpetuation of these bonds becomes unnatural when the child attains independent adulthood. In the specific instance of paternal duty within patriarchal structures, the investment traditionally involves gender role-modeling as well. Illegitimate sons then remain exterior to this system, owing no obedience or allegiance to hegemonic bourgeois ideals of gender and morality. Lafcadio’s embodiment of this filial independence appears early in his life, during his varied and eclectic education by his “uncles,” none of whom remain in his life long enough for Lafcadio to develop any sense of obligation or duty.

As he explains to Julius, Lafcadio’s first “uncle” was the German Baron of Heldenbruck: “Il m’enseigna sa langue, et le calcul par de si habiles détours que j’y pris aussitôt un amusement

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 725.

extraordinaire.”<sup>280</sup> Heldenbruck made him his personal “cashier,” responsible for keeping the baron’s money and paying for his numerous purchases, “et il achetait beaucoup”:

Parfois il m'embarrassait de monnaies étrangères et c'étaient des questions de change; puis d'escompte, d'intérêt, de prêt; enfin même de spéculation. À ce métier je devins promptement assez habile à faire des multiplications, et même des divisions de plusieurs chiffres, sans papier. Rassurez-vous (car il voyait les sourcils de Julius se froncer), cela ne m'a donné le goût ni de l'argent ni du calcul. Ainsi je ne tiens jamais de comptes, si cela vous amuse de le savoir.<sup>281</sup>

Despite his aptitude for calculation and financial abstraction, Lafcadio admits to Julius his aversion to keeping accounts; this is both true and misleading. Lafcadio may keep no bank accounts, but he does in fact keep a leather-bound notebook in which he records another sort of accounting. Earlier in the novel, when Julius enters Lafcadio’s room before their first encounter, he discovers the notebook in a drawer, reading within the following inscription: “à Cadio, pour qu'il y inscrive ses comptes, à mon loyal compagnon, son vieux oncle, Faby.”<sup>282</sup> Julius remarks a strange sort of balance sheet:

*Pour avoir gagné Protos aux échecs = 1 punta.*  
*Pour avoir laissé voir que je parlais italien = 3 punte.*  
*Pour avoir répondu avant Protos = 1 p.*  
*Pour avoir eu le dernier mot = 1 p.*  
*Pour avoir pleuré en apprenant la mort de Faby = 4 p.*<sup>283</sup>

Julius takes the term “punta” for a foreign currency, which is not entirely incorrect. We learn after Julius’ departure the meaning of “punta” when Lafcadio adds two new entries: “*Pour avoir laissé Olibrius fourrer son sale nez dans ce carnet = 1 punta,*” and again “*Et pour lui avoir*

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 738.

<sup>281</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 716.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 717.

*montré que je le savais = 2 punte.*”<sup>284</sup> For these “*punte*” Lafcadio takes out a knife, sterilizes it with a flame, and drives it into his thigh in three places. He then pours some *alcool de menthe* over the wounds, and sets about to destroy his only possessions. He tears up a photo of himself, nude on a beach, with his mother and his uncle Faby, correctly guessing that Julius had seen it. He throws the photo into the fireplace, along with his only two books, and his notebook, now torn apart, and burns it all.

Julius’ invasion of his room represents for Lafcadio a weakness on his own part, one for which he must punish himself. The accounting represented in the notebook represents a personal debt to *himself*, penalizing instances when he shows his superiority, his knowledge or skills, but also for showing weakness. It is telling that the most serious penalty on the list is for crying at his “uncle’s” death, “pour avoir pleuré.” What may be asked is whether this chastisement represents revulsion at what may be perceived as “feminine” behavior or simply emotional vulnerability. In either case, reserve and moderation are highly prized in Lafcadio’s personal code of conduct, at least in public, since he privately administers extreme punishments such as self-mutilation. Lafcadio’s “horror” of debt carries into all aspects of his life, including his interpersonal relations.

After meeting with the dying count of Baraglioul, Lafcadio meets Julius in the latter’s home under the pretense of discussing a job as *secrétaire*. In response to the offer, known to both men as fabricated, Lafcadio announces his conditions for “employment” immediately upon entering Julius’ office: “j’ai grande horreur de la reconnaissance; autant que des dettes; et quoi que vous fassiez pour moi, vous ne pourrez m’amener à me sentir votre obligé.”<sup>285</sup> Considering the strange and impromptu circumstances of their first encounter, and unaware that Lafcadio too

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 719.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 734.

had deduced their fraternal relation, Julius interprets this as a refusal to “be bought,” perhaps even a pre-emptive rebuff of any future physical advance: “Je ne cherche pas à vous acheter, Monsieur Wluiki.”<sup>286</sup> Considering Gide’s concerns, this hypothesis should not be overlooked here, whether written to be thusly read or not, and regardless of the short duration of the subject of “buying” Lafcadio. Julius, unlike his future incarnation Édouard, has no noticeable attraction to men or boys. If one presumes that Julius has divined that Lafcadio is aware of their fraternal bond, Julius’ declaration that he does not wish to “buy” Lafcadio may simply be interpreted as an avowal that his “job offer” is not intended as a pay-off to keep him quiet about their secret relation, or to make him cede a share of their father’s inheritance. But other instances of explicit reference to homoerotic possibilities are certainly presented.

As a homosexual writer, Gide is able to posit the bastard son as an ideal, if somewhat elusive, object of desire for the adult male pederast. Lafcadio is a young, handsome, clever, unattached bastard, who despite his refusal of homosexual advances remains Gide’s ideological homoerotic model. On another later occasion, during his train ride with Amédée, when the latter smiles at him amicably, Lacadio expresses his own seeming revulsion at the thought of an older man’s attraction to him, whether real or not: “Pense-t-il que je vais l’embrasser! Se peut-il qu’il y ait des femmes pour caresser encore les vieillards!”<sup>287</sup> Lafcadio’s resistance to homoeroticism, whether real or presumed, requires one to be cautious when discussing the homoerotic element surrounding Lafcadio. Larry Schehr considers Lafcadio as “among the most powerful homoerotic images” before the male protagonists of Cocteau’s “Les Enfants terribles.”<sup>288</sup> Daydreaming in the train car shortly before the murder, Lafcadio admits that he wishes that his

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<sup>286</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 825.

<sup>288</sup> Laurence R. Schehr’s *French Gay Modernism* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 133.

one “uncle” Faby would not have held back his feelings when acknowledging his love for him: “Faby, les premiers temps, était confus de se sentir épris de moi; il a bien fait de s'en confesser à ma mère: après quoi son coeur s'est senti plus léger. Mais combien sa retenue m'agaçait!”<sup>289</sup>

One can read this reaction to Faby’s confession of love as indicative of homosexual leanings, or as expressing the possibility that Lafcadio was simply amused and flattered by Faby’s sentiments, or still that Lafcadio is comfortable with being the object of same-sex attraction without necessarily sharing it. Regardless, Lafcadio obviously has a strong attachment to Faby, evidenced by Lafcadio’s tears at learning of his death, even if he punishes himself for showing his tears with four “*punte*” from his knife.

Lafcadio’s physical attraction to Geneviève, Julius’s daughter, with whom he has sex in the final pages of the novel, shows him as subject to heterosexual passion. On the other hand, in the only scene of the novel where Lafcadio is reunited with Protos, the latter comments on his younger “friend’s” beauty and remarks how useful he could have been to Protos’ various scams and con jobs: “J’ai toujours pensé qu’on ferait quelque chose de vous. Beau comme vous étiez, on aurait fait marcher pour vous toutes les femmes, et chanter, qu’à cela ne tienne, plus d’un homme par-dessus le marché.”<sup>290</sup> Just as he had done with Carola, Protos would have loved to control and prostitute Lafcadio, for as the narrator remarks, “Protos aimait dominer.”<sup>291</sup> There are signs that Protos may be a homosexual, or at least have bi-sexual tendencies: “Mais comme [Protos] lui caressait légèrement le bras, Lafcadio se dégagea dans un sursaut.”<sup>292</sup> Lafcadio’s pulling away indicates a negative response to Protos’ touch, whether he is responding to the homoerotic tension thus created or his reaction is an extension of his anger at Protos: “Lafcadio l’aurait

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<sup>289</sup> *Romans*, 824.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 856.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 787.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 857.



étranglé; il serrait les poings et ses ongles entraient dans sa chair.”<sup>293</sup> Gide’s Protos has unmistakable similarities with Balzac’s (in)famous recurring character Vautrin; both are arguably homosexual and use elaborate disguises to advance their respective shady power-seeking agendas.<sup>294</sup> While Larry Schehr is absolutely right to point out the homoerotic aura surrounding the character of Lafcadio, given the potential for a Gidean pederastic element conveyed through Uncle Faby’s and Protos’ behavior toward Lafcadio, Schehr’s mention of “Lafcadio’s queerness” expresses more specifically Lafcadio’s “challenge to heteronormativity,” his narratological role as object of same-sex desire, calling attention to a developing queer consciousness in contemporary France.<sup>295</sup> And we have seen that the homoerotic element surrounding Lafcadio has in fact much to do with his status as bastard.

When Lafcadio decides to burn all bridges and start a new life he leaves no debt behind nor does he keep any stock in his old life: “N’importe, Baraglioul ou Wluiki, occupons-nous à liquider notre passé.”<sup>296</sup> This phrase is as telling as any; Lafcadio liquidates his past, settling all accounts and leaving no trace of his past life. An element of “liquidating” his past involves sending off his mistress Carola. He makes sure to “pay off” the woman with a pair of cufflinks as he breaks up with her in a note: “à Carola Venitequa pour la remercier d’avoir introduit l’inconnu dans ma chambre, et en la priant de ne plus y remettre les pieds.”<sup>297</sup> Lafcadio’s distaste for obligation extends beyond the social sphere and into the religious, maintaining Gide’s ongoing critique of the Catholic Church throughout *Les Caves du Vatican*. When Lafcadio admits to his half-brother that he had murdered Amédée, Julius offers encouragement:

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 856.

<sup>294</sup> Marie-Denise Boros Azzi’s “Vautrin et Protos: une étude intertextuelle” in *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1993), 55-69) draws the parallels between the two in this detailed article.

<sup>295</sup> Personal communication with Schehr.

<sup>296</sup> *Romans*, 730.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 731.

Il ne tient qu'à vous, j'en suis convaincu, de redevenir un honnête homme, et de prendre rang dans la société, autant du moins que votre naissance le permet... L'Église est là pour vous aider. Allons ; mon garçon, un peu de courage : allez vous confesser.  
Lafcadio ne put réprimer un sourire...<sup>298</sup>

Lafcadio's smile betrays his utter lack of confidence in the Church. Although Lafcadio is neither involved in nor very informed about the Vatican swindle, which is the prime narratological space for ironic anti-Catholic critique, his doubts concerning the Catholic Church are apparent enough. This doubt is brought out most sharply when Geneviève, his half-niece and future lover, also suggests he go to confession to atone for his crime: "Lafcadio, l'église est là pour vous prescrire votre peine et pour vous aider à retrouver la paix, par delà votre repentir."<sup>299</sup> By these words, she posits Lafcadio into a position of debt with God; the Church must "prescribe his punishment." Gide's narrator offers a momentary recognition of confession as Lafcadio's only viable option: "Geneviève a raison; et certes Lafcadio n'a rien de mieux à faire qu'une commode soumission [...]"<sup>300</sup> Nevertheless, the young man rejects Geneviève's suggestion and chooses rather to seduce her and draw her away from her father, Julius, and by extension from her "heavenly Father":

-- Quelle leçon me récitez-vous là ? dit-il hostilement. Est-ce vous qui me parlez ainsi ?

Il laisse aller le bras qu'il retenait, le repousse ; et tandis que Geneviève s'écarte, il sent grandir en lui, avec je ne sais quelle rancune contre Julius, le besoin de détourner Geneviève de son père, de l'emmener plus bas, plus près de lui [...]"<sup>301</sup>

Here, Lafcadio the criminal, the murderer, takes up another role: that of a demon. Lafcadio, while not explicitly called "démon," expresses his desire to corrupt her and "lower" her to his

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 869.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., 872.

<sup>300</sup> Ibidem

<sup>301</sup> Ibidem.

level. He plays a game of seduction with his half-niece, telling her to return “à votre père, à vos coutumes, à vos devoirs...,” none of which suits Lafcadio’s project.<sup>302</sup> Manipulating the girl’s professedly strong feelings for him, whom she had earlier witnessed rescuing a baby from a house fire, Lafcadio spends the night with her.

### 3.1.4 The “Demon” as Modernist Subject

The “demon,” so often mentioned in Gide’s *Les Faux-monnayeurs* yet never given a physical incarnation, is for a brief moment manifest in the character of Lafcadio. The “démon” appears in name if not in body in *Les Faux-monnayeurs* thirteen times, with regard almost exclusively to Bernard and Vincent Molinier. For Bernard, the “demon” leads him to discover his illegitimacy, and helps him to appropriate Édouard’s suitcase, both occasions leading to the development of his individual identity, outside the confines of the family.<sup>303</sup> Gide plays with concepts of good and evil in both of the works discussed so far, creating the opportunity for areas of gray between action and intention.

Towards the end of *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, Gide presents a chapter which further defines his novel as modernist and sets it apart from the realist tradition. After one of his *baccalauréat* exams, Bernard encounters an “angel,” to which he reacts calmly despite the fact that he is described as a strict realist by Édouard, and an atheist by the narrator. The angel grills Bernard on his plans for the future and demands of him the sort of self-accountability that Lafcadio had never had to face: “Le temps est venu de faire tes comptes. [...] Laisseras-tu disposer de toi le hasard? Tu veux servir à quelque chose. Il importe de savoir à quoi.”<sup>304</sup> Once again, Gide employs the accounting metaphor in reference to Bernard’s need to choose a path for his life, his

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<sup>302</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 933, 996.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 1209-10.

need to put his life in order: “*faire ses comptes.*” The “angel” leads Bernard to a nationalist meeting, where he must decide between “devotion” to France or confidence in himself. Bernard refuses to sign the paper given to him, and proceeds to wrestle with the “angel” for the remainder of the evening, announced by a line adapted from Balzac’s Rastignac: “Alors, maintenant, à nous deux.”<sup>305</sup> But when Bernard later describes his encounter to Édouard, the “angel” changes aspect:

Hier, en sortant de mon examen, continua Bernard sans l'entendre, je suis entré, je ne sais quel démon me poussant, dans une salle où se tenait une réunion publique. Il y était question d'honneur national, de dévouement à la patrie, d'un tas de choses qui me faisaient battre le cœur.<sup>306</sup>

The “ange” becomes “démon,” a reversal that reveals the double role played by the angel-demon, tempting Bernard to lose his individuality in favor of a national identity, an identity prescribed by a hegemonizing patriarchal society.<sup>307</sup> In this chapter, Gide takes angels and demons out of their usual religious context and repositions them in a conflict between the individual and the forces of socio-national(ist) conformity. This rich scene will be revisited later as I explore the bastard as free subject, but for now I will continue to detail other roles played by Gide’s “demons” in the economy of his narratives.

On seven other occasions in *Les Faux-monnayeurs* the narrator names “le démon” when speaking of Vincent, generally in reference to his abandoning Laura and his bout of gambling which leads to his inability to support Laura during her pregnancy. In these instances, the demon serves to draw Vincent away from his paternal “duties,” which eventually leads Laura to return

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 1214.

<sup>307</sup> Michael Lucey’s *Gide’s Bent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 122-42, analyses “sleep” and “dreaming” in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. Although never acknowledged by Bernard as such, this scene with the angel may indeed be interpreted as a dream.

to her lawful husband; thus the demon contributes to the legitimate regime of the bourgeois family while liberating Vincent, the bachelor.<sup>308</sup> Later, it is the “démon de l’ennui” described by Lady Griffith in a letter to Passavant that introduces her and Vincent to the “démon de l’aventure.”<sup>309</sup> They find themselves bored on the ship they had boarded in Monaco. Although they continue to sleep together, Lady Griffith admits that she has begun to hate Vincent. Her eventual implied drowning is then made possible by the “demon,” who had led them to adventure on the sea in the first place, seducing them with the promise of a break from boredom. The boredom that draws them to adventure is similar to the boredom Lafcadio describes after the murder of Amédée:

[...] car il ne tenait rien en si grand-honte que l'ennui, ce mal secret dont les beaux appétits insoucians de sa jeunesse, puis la dure nécessité, l'avaient préservé jusqu'alors. Et quittant son compartiment le cœur vide d'espoir et de joie, d'un bout à l'autre du wagon-couloir, il rôdait, harcelé par une curiosité indécise et cherchant douteusement il ne savait quoi de neuf et d'absurde à tenter.<sup>310</sup>

This “demon” of boredom throws a wrench into the theory of the unmotivated act, but not one that makes this theory invalid; rather it expands and explains it. Boredom, with no motive beyond itself, leads Lafcadio to seek novelty and absurdity. Julius specifies his concept of “disinterested actions” to Amédée, shortly before the latter’s murder:

Par *désintéressé*, j'entends: gratuit. Et que le mal, ce que l'on appelle: le mal, peut être aussi gratuit que le bien. - Mais, dans ce cas, pourquoi le faire? - Précisément! Par luxe, par besoin de dépense, par jeu. Car je prétends que les âmes les plus

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<sup>308</sup> This is similarly accomplished in the situations described earlier in Maupassant’s stories “Un million” and “Une fille de ferme,” in which bachelors are liberated from paternal responsibility by their abandonment of or by their bastard child’s mother.

<sup>309</sup> *Romans*, 1193.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 846.

désintéressées ne sont pas nécessairement les meilleures-au sens catholique du mot; au contraire, à ce point de vue catholique, l'âme la mieux dressée est celle qui tient le mieux ses comptes (Gide's emphasis).<sup>311</sup>

By this theory, the reasons for gratuitous actions are purportedly chosen haphazardly. To the list of reasons given (“Par luxe, par besoin de dépense, par jeu.”), one may add “par ennui.” Julius posits the gratuitous actor outside of a Catholic framework in which accounts are kept scrupulously; one's sins and good actions are kept in an account book of sorts, used to calculate one's spiritual solvency, one's salvation. Lafcadio's refusal to keep such accounts, “à ce point de vue catholique,” leaves him clearly outside of Catholic morality.<sup>312</sup> To consider Lafcadio as a demon of sorts, is simply to point out his role using the nomenclature of a moral system to which he does not subscribe, a system strongly criticized by Gide, who nonetheless never entirely abandons his Protestant vocabulary.

The morning following Lafcadio's seduction of Geneviève, Gide's narrator announces the beginning of “un nouveau livre.”<sup>313</sup> Rising from atop his “lover” with her “beautiful face” and “perfect breasts,” Lafcadio contemplates, not Geneviève, but “l'aube où frissonne un arbre de jardin.”<sup>314</sup> He hears a sounding bugle announcing a new day and for him, the new life that he hopes to embrace, leaving him to weigh the consequences of giving himself over for the murder. Lafcadio's unrelenting project of owing nothing but to himself, of paying up front (also a way of remaining hidden or unnoticed), and thereby of remaining free from obligations or duties to others, whether to the Baraglioul family or to Protos, is the most sure and constant vein that runs

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 816.

<sup>312</sup> Georges Bataille's essay “The Notion of Expenditure,” from *Visions of Excess : Selected Writings, 1927-1939* (Trans. Allan Stoekl. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1985), treats the “principle of loss” as contrary to “the economic principle of balanced accounts (expenditure regularly compensated for by acquisition)” 118. This notion becomes more important in my later treatment of “*l'acte gratuit*.”

<sup>313</sup> *Romans*, 873.

<sup>314</sup> Ibidem.

through the character. This project of debtlessness defines Lafcadio, at the end, as a freely formed individual and as the Gidean bastard *par excellence*.

### 3.1.5 The Clothes That Make the Man

When the old Count de Baraglioul clearly rejects any possibility of Lafcadio joining the ranks of the Baraglioul family, at least in name, and especially after the count's death, Lafcadio is free to assume an identity which he privately and mentally associates as that of a Baraglioul, without publicly announcing himself as a member of the bloodline. While refusing to recognize Lafcadio as his son, the count nevertheless recognizes his pleasing physique, despite his displeasure at Lafcadio's dress: "Vous êtes bien bâti. Mais cet habit vous va mal."<sup>315</sup> The old count finds that his illegitimate offspring lives up to any possible expectations he may have had concerning the young man's mental capacity and outer appearance: "Je consens que vous ne soyez pas bête; il me plaît que vous ne soyez pas laid."<sup>316</sup> Although never raised as the count's son, he considers both his actions and appearance with reference to his heredity, albeit an illegitimate one. Before going to meet his biological father, Lafcadio had made a set of calling cards printed with the name "Lafcadio de Baraglioul." He remarks that the card printer, after reading the name to appear on the cards, did not give him the respect he thought he deserved as a Baraglioul: "il faut reconnaître que je n'ai guère l'air Baraglioul! Nous tâcherons d'ici tantôt de nous faire plus ressemblant."<sup>317</sup> Lafcadio's calling cards, counterfeited with the hopeful yet fictitious name represent the first and very obvious instance of Lafcadio counterfeiting himself, an even bolder dissimulation than the self-restraint described earlier in his diary entries. He then

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 727.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 728.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 723.

goes to find more suitable clothing for the impending visit. This is the moment when Lafcadio's pervasive concern with clothing and appearance begins to develop in the narrative.

Clothing plays a considerable role throughout the novel, whether denoting class, as for Julius' "cronstadt" hat, or religious vocation, as for Protos when he "plays" Abbé Cave. Clothing, an exterior alteration to one's physical appearance, is a key image in the wider examination of the counterfeit, employed in a similar fashion for individuals as the thin gold coating is used to mask Bernard's crystal counterfeit coin, in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. While Lafcadio's fixation on clothing began earlier in his life, it is only after the realization of his illegitimate origins that this preoccupation is developed in the narrative.

After the dying count tells him "qu'il n'y pas de Lafcadio de Baraglioul," he promptly tears up the cards, tossing "Lafcadio" into one sewer drain, and "de Baraglioul" into another.<sup>318</sup> The physical act of accepting his public exclusion from his father's family does nothing to prevent his private contemplations of how he might behave as a Baraglioul. More important than his earlier behavior as a potential Baraglioul is Lafcadio's preoccupation with clothing, whether his own or those of others. The narrator expresses this with a religiously angled metaphor: "La malséance d'un vêtement était pour Lafcadio choquante autant que pour le calviniste un mensonge."<sup>319</sup> Lafcadio evidently adopted this view from one of his many "uncles," the Marquis de Gesvres, who used to tell him "qu'on reconnaît l'homme aux chaussures."<sup>320</sup>

As I have mentioned, though, Lafcadio had earlier spent the summer in Duino with his mother and "uncle" Faby, during which time Lafcadio remained naked for most of the time. This was done at Faby's request, Lafcadio explains: "sous prétexte de me bronzer, Faby gardait

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 727.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 725.

<sup>320</sup> Ibidem.



sous clef tous mes costumes, mon linge même...”<sup>321</sup> That summer, he spent as a “sauvage,” playing on the rocks and swimming in the sea. This period of physical fortification echoes Gide’s Michel, who when giving the account of his convalescence in *L’Immoraliste*, leaves out the mind in favor of the body as he says at the start of the *récit*’s third part:

Je vais parler longuement de mon corps. Je vais en parler tant, qu'il vous semblera tout d'abord que j'oublie la part de l'esprit. Ma négligence, en ce récit est volontaire; elle était réelle là-bas. Je n'avais pas de force assez pour entretenir double vie [...]<sup>322</sup>

Similarly, Lafcadio’s summer at the beach was supposed to fortify him and tan him, while admittedly his education, *l’esprit*, was neglected: “Oui, j'apprenais si facilement que ma mère jusqu'alors l'avait un peu négligée.”<sup>323</sup> After his summer with Faby, and their subsequent trip to Algeria, Lafcadio was sent to a boarding school in Paris to study, where he met Protos.<sup>324</sup> The latter taught Lafcadio his own personal philosophy of never seeming to be what one truly is: “dans ce monde, il importait de n’avoir pas trop l’air de ce qu’on était.”<sup>325</sup> Lafcadio eventually ran away from Paris and rejoined his mother and another “uncle,” the Marquis de Gesvres, who brought him back to Paris. It is from this “uncle” that Lafcadio inherited his taste for elegant dress: “Tout au contraire de Faby, lui m'apprit le goût du costume; je crois que je le portais assez bien; avec lui j'étais à bonne école; son élégance était parfaitement naturelle, comme une seconde sincérité.”<sup>326</sup> The marquis taught Lafcadio to give in to his fancies, to appreciate everything despite its value, to not enjoy a thing “selon qu'elle coûtait plus cher, ni moins si, par chance, elle n'avait coûté rien du tout,” and to spend as he wishes without keeping track of the cost: “il

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 741.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., 741.

<sup>324</sup> The pederast’s trip to Algeria, already central to Gide’s *L’Immoraliste*, was earlier realized by Gide in his frequent travels to North Africa, notably in 1895 when Gide reunited there with Oscar Wilde.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 742.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 743.

m'apprit à dépenser sans tenir de comptes et sans m'inquiéter par avance si j'aurais de quoi suffire à ma fantaisie, à mon désir ou à ma faim.”<sup>327</sup> The marquis' dandyish taste for clothing and unregulated expense frame Lafcadio's ultimate view on personal attire and the presentation of the self. A conflict between Lafcadio's disregard for cost and his horror of debt occurs when he goes to visit the tailor, shoemaker and other favorite *fournisseurs* of his “uncle,” the Marquis de Gesvres. He finds at each shop unpaid bills waiting for his “uncle” the marquis, which he pays along with those for his new clothing. Lafcadio's thoughts reveal a break with this, his last “uncle”: “J'aurais plaisir à lui renvoyer acquittées ses factures, pensait Lafcadio. Cela me vaudrait son mépris; mais je suis Baraglioul et désormais coquin de marquis, je te débarque de mon cœur.”<sup>328</sup>

Clearly, then, there is an apparent evolution from nakedness with Faby (a homoerotic pretext here but elsewhere a sign of authenticity as in *L'Immoraliste*), to the disguising of the self as embodied by Protos as priest, and eventually to the expression of the self through one's dress, a “second sincerity,” as learned from the Marquis de Gesvres, despite the latter's disregard for unpaid debts. Lafcadio appears most at ease and comfortable with himself when attired in his beaver hat and soft, loose-fitting suit: “Il se sentait bien dans sa peau, bien dans ses vêtements, bien dans ses bottes - de souples mocassins taillés dans le même daim que ses gants; dans cette prison molle, son pied se tendait, se cambrait, se sentait vivre.”<sup>329</sup> In a sense, Lafcadio embodies the dandy ideal: too concerned with fashion to remain naked, yet so fashionable as to reject traditional dress in a way that questions hegemonic trends in masculine attire. Lafcadio feels his foot able to move freely in his moccasins, what he calls a “soft prison,” but “prison” all the same.

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<sup>327</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 822.

<sup>329</sup> Ibidem.

In contrast to his comfortable suit which allows free movement, reflecting Lafcadio's freedom as well, other characters are compelled to wear more traditional, tight-fitting and therefore constraining attire, particularly Julius and Amédée.

Michael Rowland, in a 1989 article entitled "Lafcadio's Crime Revisited," seeks to explain Lafcadio's murder of Amédée through a series of observations and interpretations of "neck apparel" and "neck" imagery.<sup>330</sup> Rowland begins his article with a commentary on an interview between psychobiographer Jean Delay and Gide, during which Gide remarks the extent to which he enjoys wearing colorful and supple clothing: "C'est pour moi une manière de protester contre la façon dont j'étais vêtu par ma mère durant mon enfance."<sup>331</sup> What Rowland calls "Gide's obsession with parental collars" supposedly pervades the novel.<sup>332</sup> The men of the Baraglioul family, as he states, are all required to wear some sort of neck apparel: "Ties, collars, and the like are the Baraglioul badge, and they also signify each character's relative position."<sup>333</sup> The old count wears an elegant lace collar, and Julius the viscount is comfortable in his tie. Amédée, however, who has merely married into the Baraglioul family, is consequently agitated and anxiety-ridden due to his concern with proper neckwear, especially around Julius, as Rowland points out. Rowland focuses on the neck as a symbolic locus of submission, as the placement site of the yoke, or of the iron collar, and attributes to members of the Baraglioul family "especially vulnerable necks," and thereby a susceptibility to family influence: "They do not exercise their will to resist the submission expected by the family."<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Michael Rowland's "Lafcadio's Crime Revisited" in *The French Review*, Vol. 62, No. 4, 1989, 604-11.

<sup>331</sup> Quoted in Rowland, 604.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 606.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 608.

While Julius and Amédée focus their sartorial concerns on neckwear, Lafcadio is more concerned with his hat and moccasins: the former sitting atop the head, the seat of intelligence, and drawing attention to the face, and generally to the boy's beauty, whereas the latter item of clothing is associated with movement, and its supple fit denotes free movement, quite to the opposite of the restrictive neckwear worn by others. Rowland discusses Lafcadio above all, but also treats the character of Anthime Armand-Dubois. He is yet another member of the Baraglioul extended family with an obsession with neckties, as Rowland explains: "The Baraglioul uniform is a visual means by which Anthime, Amédée, and Lafcadio express their relationship to the family, but it serves simultaneously as a means to control them."<sup>335</sup> It is a bit surprising that Rowland does not discuss Lafcadio's illegitimacy with regard to the Baraglioul family, a subject which might complicate his argument that Lafcadio resisted the influence of the father and the family, particularly since he was never truly offered admission to the family. To take this argument in another direction, let us rather say that Lafcadio's idiosyncratic style of dress, coupled with his occasional moments of undress, represents a departure from the traditional social order that defines the Baraglioul family. Lafcadio's uniqueness in this respect demonstrates the young man's independence, and his clothes are the visible signs of his self-willed authenticity, and his refusal to be inhibited in any manner whatsoever.

Thomas Carlyle is an important reference for interpreting Gide's mentions of clothing, particularly the role of clothing in establishing the appearance of authenticity. Gide had read and been influenced by the writings of Thomas Carlyle, a fact remarked by Germaine Brée:

Even as he continued in his everyday life to observe, and in a part of his own mind to adhere to the system of belief of his youth, he had begun to feel ill at ease with its forms, its intellectual and moral imperatives. It seems to have been Gide's reading of Carlyle

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 607.

in 1891, when he was just over twenty that furnished the initial intellectual impetus for a process of thought that Nietzsche subsequently reinforced. And Carlyle too furnished the ambivalent image of counterfeit that runs through so much of Gide's work.<sup>336</sup>

“Sartor Resartus” is one of the two works by Carlyle, along with “On Heroes,” whose influence on Gide appears in both *Les Faux-monnayeurs* and *Les Caves du Vatican*.<sup>337</sup> This work by Carlyle is a brilliant and purely ironical essay concerning “The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh,” the sub-title to the work. In it, Carlyle lauds the fictional German Professor Teufelsdröckh and his obscure “Philosophy of Clothes.” Although he often veers into nonsensical yet seemingly learned digressions, Carlyle provides a parody of German philosophy while ironically exposing and ridiculing the seemingly universal importance of appearance and apparel in matters of authority and legitimacy, particularly criticizing the presumed legitimacy and probity of figures of (notably religious) authority. In this prosodic ode to a fictional school of thought, Carlyle mocks the innate authority and reverence demanded by mere articles of clothing:

Even as, for Hindoo Worshippers, the Pagoda is not less sacred than the God; so do I too worship the hollow cloth Garment with equal fervour, as when it contained the Man: nay, with more, for I now fear no deception, of myself or of others.<sup>338</sup>

Although critiquing the authority lent by an article of clothing, Carlyle raises the idea, arguably true, that the authority symbolized by the costume, that of a priest for example, is only adulterated, made deceitful and thereby of less authority and legitimacy, when it is worn by a “Man.” But Carlyle’s image does not show the man wearing the garment, but rather being

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<sup>336</sup> Brée, 77.

<sup>337</sup> Thomas Carlyle’s “Sartor Resartus” (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).

<sup>338</sup> Carlyle, 222.

contained in it; he is swallowed, enveloped by the sacred and wearable symbol. Carlyle also contemplates “tradition” in a broad sense, considering each generation as “woven” to the next:

If now an existing generation of men stand so *woven together*, not less indissolubly does generation with generation. Hast thou ever meditated on that word, Tradition: how we inherit not Life only, but all the *garniture* and form of Life; and work, and speak, and even think and feel, as our Fathers, and primeval grandfathers, from the beginning, have given it us?<sup>339</sup>

According to the explicator of the imaginary “Philosophy of Clothes,” tradition is how the “garniture” and “form of Life” are bequeathed: garniture, costumes, customs. Carlyle’s ironic explanation of tradition with regard to sartorial imagery elucidates the useful idea that dress, the costume or suit, is often and meaningfully linked to custom or tradition: costumes = customs. This word equation is based in the two words’ common etymology: *costume* in Old French refers to both *manners* and *attire*, and later split into two words, *costume* and *coutumes*. The similarity of the words *habit* and *habitude* are noteworthy here as well. A sandwich that is complete and garnished, a pizza with everything, is *tout(e) garni(e)*, or in English one might say “fully dressed.” All the garniture of Life, as Carlyle explains, would be the things that make Life complete, yet complicate it, things that inevitably garnish every member of a family, bound to tradition. Tradition provides insight into how people work, speak, feel, and think, all following a paternal line. If one reads Carlyle’s parody to mean this, clothing may then reasonably be used as a metaphor for social and familial customs. With this in mind, I now return to Rowland’s comments on neckwear.

In reference to Lafcadio’s resistance to “parental collars,” Rowland examines the scene where Julius first comes to visit Lafcadio. When Julius leaves and Lafcadio reads the former’s

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 227, my emphasis.

calling card, Rowland sees a “premonition” of an awaiting “family yoke,” when the young man tears off his scarf, worn “en guise de cravate et de col,” and unbuttons his shirt.<sup>340</sup> Rowland considers this act of undressing as “meant no doubt to defy the submission expected by the family,” and the subsequent redressing in a tie, before going out to research the Baraglioul family, as indicative of “the lure of those same [family] bonds.”<sup>341</sup> While Lafcadio does have a style of dress expressive of his need for freedom, this early encounter with Julius takes place too early to assume a resistance to the family *per se*, but is rather a resistance to the esthetic influence and invasion of Julius the noble bourgeois, nicely attired in his overcoat, dickey, and “cronstadt” hat. Lafcadio’s naturalness in wearing no tie, a scarf “as” a tie, or a proper tie, reveals a freedom of dress and comfort among diverse social classes not shared by Julius. According to the narrator, Julius had never really mixed with people outside of his social class, and it is the opportunity rather than the “taste” for this frequentation that he lacks: “Julius était peu descendu jusqu’à présent hors des coutumes de sa classe et n’avait guère eu de rapports qu’avec des gens de son milieu. L’occasion, plutôt que le goût, lui manquait.”<sup>342</sup> While he may have wanted to meet individuals of the lower classes, out of a “certaine curiosité professionnelle,” Julius is locked into a social status which considers a visit outside of his class as below him. He does not even own the appropriate clothing that would allow him to fit in when he goes to Lafcadio’s neighborhood, but decides that it is all for the better if his outfit “n’invitât pas à trop brusque familiarité le jeune homme.”<sup>343</sup>

Lafcadio is witnessed in the pages of the novel undressed, half-dressed, and fully dressed as appropriate to diverse social situations and milieus, as opposed to Julius who is always and

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<sup>340</sup> *Romans*, 720.

<sup>341</sup> Rowland, 608.

<sup>342</sup> *Romans*, 712.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibidem*.

necessarily dressed in a rich suit, or to Amédée who is ashamed to be seen without a clean collar and whose moment of undress is marked by the shame of his adultery. Lafcadio's lack of obligation to social customs of dress is a logical extension of his status as bastard, and eventually, but only after the full realization of his paternal origins, his choice of dress will reveal a break from the Baraglioul dress code. Lafcadio is in many ways a blank slate, a social chameleon of sorts that can change aspect at will, drifting effortlessly from one social situation to another, while at the same time remaining authentic and true to his goal of debtless freedom.<sup>344</sup>

### 3.1.6 Protos and the Counterfeit Priest

The importance of clothing for Lafcadio is its comfort and fashion, as well as his own rejection of sartorial norms as a symbolic act of rebellion. While Lafcadio's illegitimacy is only partly expressed through his dress, Gide illustrates how another sort of illegitimacy is performed, or more specifically, how an impersonation is contrived with the indispensable elements of ironic misdirection and disguise; with Protos, Gide gives us a presumably homosexual criminal who passes off as a priest, while at the same time poking fun at the social conventions that place so much importance on certain recognized forms of dress, costumes which contribute immensely to the "legitimacy" of the individual wearing any such uniform of authority. The list of identities recognizable from style of dress is remarkable: priest, king, pope, nobleman, dandy, etc. Protos' choice of priestly garb is the same as that of Balzac's Vautrin, mentioned earlier, most notably in the writer's proto-gay narrative, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838), where Vautrin is disguised as a priest. Gide's Protos is another perfect example of sartorial dissimulation.

So adept at hiding what he truly is, even Lafcadio is uncertain of his elusive former schoolmate's origins; Protos is a man without a past, or at least he has none before Lafcadio

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<sup>344</sup> Wolfram Schmidgen, mentioned earlier, discusses the bastard figure in English literature as a uniquely free "social observer," a "threshold," or "liminal" figure.



meets him at boarding school. Lafcadio describes Protos as a young man, explaining that he considered Protos to be his savior during his time at the boarding school. Despite this, he was never his friend, as Lafcadio explains: “je n’avais pas précisément de l’amitié pour Protos, mais je me tournais vers lui comme s’il avait dû m’apporter la délivrance.”<sup>345</sup> Protos is described as the ultimate actor, able to showcase his brilliant wit in conversation while disguised as a priest or a law professor, or conversely to pass unnoticed, acting the fool: “Il ne se tenait point pour satisfait tant qu’il ne paraissait que modeste; il tenait à passer pour sot.”<sup>346</sup> In a way, Protos could represent a definitional model of the bastard, a proto-type as his name suggests, even if he is not said to be one explicitly; he is without roots, without obligation to any authority, he appears wholly self-made. He is thus perfectly positioned to use his status as shrewd “*subtil*” to take advantage of and make a profit from “legitimate” society, “le régime des crustacés,” as he says. Nonetheless, Protos is far from Gide’s ideal bastard, the model of which is provided by Lafcadio. Lafcadio manages to remain unaffiliated with all “societies” that might offer a place to the free subject he embodies. Protos, despite his criminal and seemingly “outsider” role, is nevertheless subject to a code, a society in which he is at the top of a hierarchy, whose law he calls “la loi des subtils.”<sup>347</sup> Protos’ “subtils” constitute a separate society, one whose members are devoted to organized crime, taking advantage of society’s flaws and naïveté, without ever seeking to undermine its normal functioning; that is to say, the “subtils” are not a revolutionary group, but a very clever and organized gang. The “Croisade pour la délivrance du Pape” is their scam project, which Gide’s narrator refers to as “l’entreprise d’escroquerie,” in which Protos is

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 742.

<sup>346</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 858.

only one participant, although the chief.<sup>348</sup> Central to the “subtils” strategy to defraud Catholics is their use of aliases and disguises. The constant borrowing and adulteration of “legitimate” authorities’ apparel and personae make the “subtil” a unique bastard of sorts with no loyalty to any custom or costume, and no concern for the individuals he impersonates or defrauds. Protos, the leader of his group of “subtils,” is, like a bastard, without roots and origins.

Protos takes on the role of two different priests and a professor of law in the pages of Gide’s book. Presenting himself as the chanoine de Virmontal, clergy member in the service of a cardinal, Protos uses the religious personage to flatter and dupe the countess de Saint-Prix, sister of Julius and therefore Lafcadio’s half-sister. Gide develops few of his female characters as fully as his male characters, often painting them as passive, villainous, or leaving them barely sketched; the women of *Les caves du Vatican* are no exception. The countess proves to be easily duped by Protos. By impersonating a priest, an archetype of paternal authority, and subsequently lending “manly” traits and confidence to the countess, he uses irony and gender-based manipulation to reach his unscrupulous ends. Although physically described as masculine, Protos’ role is played much less so: “Le chanoine de Virmontal était bel homme; sur son noble visage éclatait une male énergie qui jurait (si j’ose dire) étrangement avec l’hésitante précaution de ses gestes et de sa voix...”<sup>349</sup> He is described as contradictory in his gender from the beginning; his “male energy” clashes with his, presumably feminine, “hesitant precaution.” The countess, who loves “les confidences et simagrées,” bids the priest to enter a private *boudoir* to tell his news.<sup>350</sup> Before managing to spill the beans about the papal kidnapping, however, the *chanoine* convulses in sobs, at which the countess loses patience. Protos explains that the

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 785.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 746.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 747.

cardinal had told him he could have absolute confidence in the countess, who is attributed “une discrétion de confesseur,” thereby reversing their respective (gender) roles.<sup>351</sup> Protos hesitates to reveal the entire story to her, explaining that she is the first woman to be made privy to the scandal: “Et je m’effraie, je l’avoue, à sentir cette révélation bien pesante, bien encombrante, pour l’intelligence d’une femme,” to which she responds, “On se fait de grandes illusions sur le peu de capacité de l’intelligence des femmes.”<sup>352</sup> At this point, the countess is essentially ensnared in the trap. Taken off her guard, she is in a position to earn the priest’s confidence rather than Protos needing to gain her trust. It is her supposed intellectual similarity to a man, a gender equality remarked ironically by Protos, that finally seems to convince the somewhat feminized priest:

- Vous voyez que je vous parle comme à un homme.
- Vous avez raison, Monsieur l’abbé. Agir, disiez-vous. Vite : qu’avez-vous résolu?
- Ah ! je savais trouver chez vous cette noble impatience virile, digne du sang de Baraglioul.<sup>353</sup>

Playing this holy character in order to ensnare the mind of the countess Guy de Saint-Prix, Protos manages to trap Arnica Fleurissoire as well by hushed word of mouth. Arnica, wife of Amédée and Julius’ sister-in-law, informs her husband of the pope’s kidnapping, at which point he decides to go to Rome:

Les mots *captivité*, *emprisonnement* levaient devant ses yeux des images ténébreuses et semi-romantiques; le mot *croisade* l’exaltait infiniment, et lorsque, enfin ébranlé, Amédée parla de partir, elle le vit soudain en cuirasse et en heaume, à cheval... lui marchait à présent à grands pas à travers la pièce...<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 748.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 751.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 767.

Despite this single heroic image of Amédée, an ironic jab at Catholics, and possibly at the Crusades themselves, Amédée is more of a sickly and weak Don Quixote, unfortunate and delusional, than is he portrayed as a Crusader. Shortly after her chivalric observations of her husband's preparation to enter the "Crusade," Arnica is already warning her frail husband to take care not to catch cold: "Tu vas t'enrhumer, c'est certain. – Je mettrai ton foulard," he responds.<sup>355</sup> Another piece of clothing, this one indicating Amédée's weakness and sharply contrasted with the knight's cuirass and helmet, is added; it is her scarf that he will wear, or perhaps a scarf she made for him. In either case, and if one admits the validity of the idea of subjugation by neckwear, Amédée is in one way or another subordinated to his wife by the sign of the scarf, just as he is subject to the masculine Baraglioul image by the collar, as Rowland suggests. I have already discussed Amédée's choice of outfits; Rowland considers Amédée's concern with clothing as an anxiety. Like the countess of Saint-Prix and his wife, the aspiring Catholic "knight" is particularly susceptible to the illusion of dress in its function as marker of social class and especially of religious affiliation and rank.

Amédée arrives in Rome having already faced a number of trials and unfortunate events; he is attacked by bugs, then fleas, and finally by mosquitoes, and is suffering from sleep deprivation. In Rome, he is led to a hotel/brothel by one of Protos' cohorts, and is unwittingly seduced by Carola. The following day, distraught by his adultery, Amédée is somewhat consoled to meet a priest who recognizes him as a fellow member of the cause to free the pope. This is none other than Protos who, having this time adopted the name of l'abbé Cave,

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 769.

approaches Amédée and sobbing once again exclaims: “Quoi! Je ne suis pas le seul! Quoi! vous aussi vous le cherchez !”<sup>356</sup>

The priest’s outfit is never described, although it is the necessary indicator of his vocation which Amédée must have remarked. The priest’s physical appearance, however, is all that is depicted in the ironic narrative description:

Le digne ecclésiastique portait long un abondant cheveu d’argent, et son teint jeune et frais, indice d’une vie pure, contrastait avec cet apanage de la vieillesse. Rien qu’au visage on aurait reconnu le prêtre, et à je ne sais quoi de décent qui le caractérise : le prêtre français.<sup>357</sup>

Gide, raised as a Protestant, comments here on the importance of appearance for the recognition of religious authority in the Catholic Church. The silver haired Protos, whose “young and fresh” complexion is obviously due to the fact that he is actually in his twenties, seems pure by virtue of his young look, all part of his disguise. Here begins the great masquerade performed to dupe Amédée. Protos quickly changes the subject when a passer-by comes into earshot, explaining after: “Avez-vous vu comme il nous regardait? Il fallait à tout prix donner le change.”<sup>358</sup> Gide’s ironic narrative orchestration takes hold of the exchange between the two men as Protos attempts to make Amédée suspicious of everyone but him:

- Quoi ! s’écria Fleurissoire ahuri, se pourrait-il que ce vulgaire maraîcher soit un de ceux, lui aussi, dont nous devons nous défier ?  
- Monsieur, je ne le saurais affirmer ; mais je le suppose. Les alentours de ce château sont particulièrement surveillés; des agents d'une police spéciale sans cesse y rôdent. Pour ne point éveiller les soupçons, ils se présentent sous les revêtements les plus divers.

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<sup>356</sup> *Romans*, 789.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 790.

Ces gens sont si habiles, si habiles! Et nous si crédules, si naturellement confiants!<sup>359</sup>

The “common enemy,” the Masons and their allies, are according to Protos omnipresent and disguised in various ways, with “les revêtements les plus divers.” The people of whom he is speaking, and he may as well be telling Amédée about his own organization, are skilled and clever (*habiles*), whereas the “we” Protos mentions as credulous and naturally trusting, obviously only refers to Amédée and the others taken by the scam.

Protos offers to introduce Amédée to the Cardinal San-Felice, who would be disguised as the modest chaplain Bardolotti, to avoid suspicion or possible danger. This man, evidently another of Protos’ band, does everything in such a manner as to hide his eminence as cardinal, as Protos explains. Even the latter’s letter to Bardolotti, which he commences with “*Ma vieille...*” reflects this. Gide’s irony has no limits, as he shows when Protos explains to Amédée that the name “Cave,” with which he signs the letter, does not merely refer to the passages beneath the Vatican, but is a Latin word, “qui veut dire aussi PRENDS GARDE!,” “Beware.”<sup>360</sup> The fact that it is Amédée himself who should beware is lost on him, perfectly convinced by Cave’s disguise and role-playing. From this moment on, Protos has no need to appear priestly, since Amédée now understands that the priestly garb would draw unwanted attention.

When Protos eventually takes Amédée to see Bardolotti, he asks his credulous victim if his secular apparel is convincing:

Mais dites-moi comment vous me trouvez dans ce costume? J’ai peur que le curé n’y reparaisse par endroits. – Rassurez-vous, dit candidement Fleurissoire : personne d’autre que moi, j’en suis sûr,

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<sup>359</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 793.

ne reconnaîtrait qui vous êtes. – Puis l’observant bienveillamment, et la tête un peu inclinée : Évidemment je retrouve à travers votre déguisement, en y regardant bien, je ne sais quoi d’ecclésiastique, et sous la jovialité de votre ton l’angoisse qui tous deux nous tourmente.<sup>361</sup>

Amédée recognizes his companion’s joviality as but another part of his new disguise to hide the “fact” that he is a priest, and he still senses the abbé Cave behind it. At their lunch with the “cardinal,” the new imposter Bardolotti speaks vulgarly so as to not attract suspicion as they dine and drink wine. Protos points out a newspaper article which reports their very own fraud, calling the project absurd by virtue of its name, “CROISADE POUR LA DÉLIVRANCE DU PAPE.” At this Bardolotti is revolted: “Mais c’est affreux! - Ajoutez à cela, dit Bardolotti, qu’ils jettent le discrédit et la suspicion sur nous-mêmes, et nous forcent à redoubler d’astuce et de circonspection.”<sup>362</sup> Amédée, Gide’s ultimate depiction of the deluded religious fool, remains convinced that his present companions are the legitimate crusaders, and remarks how adept the two men of the cloth are at hiding their true identities: “Hélas! Balbutia Fleurissoire, vous du moins, vous vous en tenez à la feinte, et c’est pour cacher vos vertus que vous simulez le péché.”<sup>363</sup>

This scene is sufficient to convey the most central themes in Gide’s book: legitimacy may be feigned, thereby casting doubt on the truly legitimate. Honest and authentic individuals, such as Fleurissoire, may unwittingly support an illegitimate authority, whereas the illegitimate, Lafcadio as the case in point, may refuse to disguise his illegitimacy and rather choose to seek a “willful authenticity.” *Les Caves du Vatican* is written with beautiful narrative skill, and lays out a complicated story which flows surprisingly well considering its complexity. But among the

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 796.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 804.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 805.

many important elements of the work is its *mise en scène* of deceitful appearances and disingenuous individuals which creates an atmosphere of ironic uncertainty where legitimacy may be and must be questioned, and no one, even the “willfully” authentic, can be taken at face value.

Gide’s storytelling unveils a variety of dissimulations and exchanges of “false coins,” whether embodied in Édouard as “uncle,” Bernard as unconscious bastard, Oscar Molinier as (dis)honorable father, or in a charlatan masquerading as a priest. Each of these puts into question a form of paternal authority which is somehow destabilized. Gide’s counterfeits offer a challenge to conventional legitimate authority, proposing “authentic” alternatives. Maupassant, however, critiques contemporary views of illegitimacy without emphatically proposing to change them. Of a slightly older generation, Maupassant witnessed key events in the development of what we refer to as modernity, without ever identifying as a modernist, or any other brand of writer for that matter. His Naturalism, even if he would have refused the label, refuses to advocate revolutionary social change, although his subject matter focuses on questions of society which were pertinent in public debates contemporary to his writing; Maupassant criticizes, ironizes and laments the present, but never depicts a vision for the future. It is with this in mind that I return to Maupassant to study hidden illegitimacy and authenticity in his fiction.

### **3.2 Maupassant’s Bastards: Authenticity as Sexuality**

Since it has become clear how Gide’s characters transgress both the laws of “legitimate” authority and society’s innate tendency toward insincerity, the practice of questioning legitimacy will now be applied to much earlier works by Maupassant, whose bastards are on the



whole much less “willfully authentic,” and more passively subject to circumstance. While this author’s work often exposes the hypocrisy and falseness of people in general and of Parisian *société* in particular, the questioning of legitimacy will serve as a starting point in the analysis of a selection of Maupassant’s bastard narratives. Although the coining metaphor is not specifically presented in Maupassant’s work, the *passing off* of a bastard as legitimate is central to several of his bastard narratives. One novel, *Pierre et Jean*, and several of his short works will provide the examples needed.

Guy de Maupassant, as we have seen, presents illegitimate children under a dominantly naturalist light; while the events surrounding these characters’ portrayal are realistic, the storytelling behind them brings out a more somber side of illegitimacy than those uncovered in Gide’s work. His bastard narratives present the theme of dissimulation mostly as that of an illegitimate child, the passing off of a bastard or a single mother’s hiding her pregnancy. “Passing off” may here have a strictly corporal or strategic reference: corporal as in the case of Rose in “Histoire d’une fille de ferme,” or strategic as will be witnessed in my discussion of *Pierre et Jean*. Maupassant, rather than directly questioning the legitimacy of institutions like the Catholic Church or the legal code, presents a number of inauthentic or morally hypocritical individuals as representative of a class or of a cross-section of society. But for the most part, Maupassant’s most notable antagonists in the bastard narratives are social customs themselves. The historical and political aspects of French society during the late nineteenth century play central roles in the development of the Naturalist school of French writers; the Franco-Prussian War, the fall of the Second Empire, the creation of the Third Republic and the industrial revolution all contribute to the imagining of unstable and cruel urban milieus, or of narratives of

degeneracy within a social backdrop transformed by industrial innovation.<sup>364</sup> Maupassant, in his own way, also recreates the underbelly of rural areas and towns, which in his fiction has less to do with inter-class struggle, than an individual's struggle within his or her own class, whether peasant or *petit bourgeois*. As we have already seen, Maupassant's bastards are overwhelmingly depicted as victims of circumstance, but this fact does not prevent certain *fils naturels* from advancing in society, becoming successful, and making a life for themselves despite their legal predicament; they may be divided into two categories: those who overcome, and those who fail as a result of their regrettable fate. A character's "authenticity," as we will see, plays an important role in how he or she adheres to or transgresses the social order, specifically in instances of illegitimacy.

While the Naturalist school in the vein of Zola is generally considered for its overwhelmingly dark depictions of the cruel and unfortunate aspects of social reality among the common people, Maupassant adheres to a realist narrative structure without abandoning all his bastards to the seemingly inevitable biological degeneracy. Maupassant's realism lies in his investigation into the events of people's lives while choosing how best to present them without embellishment or overwhelming detail. His opinion of the Romantic and Realist or Naturalist schools of literature is expressed in the preface of *Pierre et Jean*:

Donc après les écoles littéraires qui ont voulu nous donner une vision déformée, surhumaine, poétique, attendrissante, charmante ou superbe de la vie, est venue une école réaliste ou naturaliste qui a prétendu nous montrer la vérité, rien que la vérité et toute la vérité.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Émile Zola's *L'Assommoir* (1877) and *Nana* (1880) are just two of the author's most popular novels; they describe the misery and hardship of urban life in Paris, particularly for women.

<sup>365</sup> Guy de Maupassant's preface to *Pierre et Jean*, entitled "Le Roman" (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), xxxvi.

His description of the Naturalist school as synonymous with Realist (*une école*), and as the successor of the Romantics, betrays a doubt that this school can (or should) try to describe “the whole truth” which is always the truth experienced by the writer, a translation of his experience into narrative. Maupassant describes a realism in art by which the writer guides the reader in a thorough yet focused investigation of the truth “hidden” behind the real. The key to his ideal of realism is that it simultaneously portrays the truth, and is directed toward a complete portrait of the subject. Maupassant reveals what is hidden, and it is not surprising that an illegitimate pregnancy is the “hidden reality” of several of his important works.

Maupassantian hidden bastards are at times presented only as infants or children, lending them little to no agency in their own lives (“Histoire d’une fille de ferme,” “L’enfant,” and “Le petit”). In such cases, the writer makes circumstance a key plot point in the narrative of illegitimacy: the father who refuses his fatherhood and flees, and the mother, whether single or an adulteress, who must make crucial decisions alone. In Maupassant’s 1883 tale, “Le petit,” a supposed father raises his newborn son after his wife’s death in childbirth, helped in raising the child by their family friend.<sup>366</sup> When the father angers a servant, she exposes the truth; the family “friend” is the boy’s true father, and everyone but the deluded cuckold is aware of this fact. The tale ends with the distraught widower’s suicide, and his relinquishment of his paternal rights to the child’s biological genitor. This story demonstrates the fragile nature of paternity and its uncertainty and, in its own way, supports the aforementioned view of paternity presented by Cixous and Clément by which all fathers are frauds: men merely passing themselves off as fathers in patriarchal societies. Nevertheless, Maupassant does sometimes allow the

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<sup>366</sup> Later this tale was expanded and adapted into the story “Monsieur Parent” (1885).

replacement of the “legal” father with the “authentic” or biological father. In certain cases, the father is completely evacuated from the bastard narrative.

### 3.2.1 Monstrous Maternity: Forging Freaks

In “La mère aux monstres,” a woman who once tried to hide an illegitimate pregnancy with restrictive clothing gives birth to a deformed child which she sells to a travelling show, a lucrative practice which she then repeats several times for a profit. The “mother of monsters” hides her first bastard, but eventually endeavors to capitalize on her capacity to produce “counterfeit” humans, *des contrefaçons*. This story reveals parallels with conceptions of gold versus fabricated or counterfeit currency and also of the “gold currency” of realism, a notion expanded upon by Jean-Joseph Goux when he writes about *Les Faux-monnayeurs*:

Considered as a whole, the internal economy of *The Counterfeiters* is revealing: not only do language and money, in their closely homologous relationship, come under attack, but in addition the value of paternity, and all other values that regulate exchanges, are questioned. *Gold, father, language, phallus*: continuously serving mutually as metaphors for each other, these structurally homologous general equivalents, with their respective functions in measurement, exchange, and reserve, simultaneously undergo a fundamental crisis that is also the crisis of the novel as a genre.<sup>367</sup>

Although the crisis of the novel mentioned by Goux is projected onto the 1920s, his list of “values that regulate exchanges” is applicable in analyses of Maupassant as well. Gold or wealth is an important factor in most of his fiction, and indeed, “la mère aux monstres,” accepts gold in exchange for her deformed children. As the woman is producing malformed children for inclusion in a traveling show, one may argue that she is working against the nation and current biopolitical conventions and policies; rather than being a legitimate (read married) mother who bears healthy children destined to contribute to the nation, whether through public or military

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<sup>367</sup> Goux, 3-4.

service or as workers, she creates freaks who will live as outcasts in the social periphery, existing beyond the State's control over the French population. In some ways, they will function in a manner similar as the nomadic bachelors I described previously. Yet their deformity will make them dependent on their new society, the new nomadic "family" provided by the freak show.<sup>368</sup>

Equally threatening are the mother of monsters' reasons for continuing to produce children. She is portrayed as devoid of maternal sentiment, unobligated to the absent father(s) of the children, and she is rich enough to live on her savings, yet she continues to birth monsters. If one admits as valid Goux' above statement, by taking gold in exchange for her offspring, this woman essentially rejects her maternity and seeks the *phallus*, in a Lacanian sense, preferring the *puissance paternelle* to the burdens of the single mother. In Maupassant's novel *Pierre et Jean*, we will see how the exchange of gold is problematized within the framework of illegitimate children and their fathers, and the question of narrative language will also be of great importance.

It is also worthwhile to point out that the il/legality of divorce is important in many of Maupassant's bastard narratives. In several such texts, single mothers and adulterous wives are compelled to either hide their pregnancy (an act of inauthenticity for a biological mother) or "pass off" their bastard, much as one passes a false coin. Many of the impending changes in divorce law and family law occurring during the end of Maupassant's life and in Gide's teenage years had a remarkable impact on the two authors' literary portrayals of bastards. Arguably the most important among these is the Naquet law of 1884, reestablishing limited legal divorce in France after the Bonald Law of 1816 had forbidden it. These legal realities will affect the

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<sup>368</sup> Philip G. Hadlock's "(Per)Versions of Masculinity in Maupassant's 'La Mère aux monstres'" (In *French Forum*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Winter 2002, 59-79). Hadlock's article examines deformed representations of masculinity in this tale.

choices made by the parents of illegitimate children in the following bastard narratives, and thereby, the fates of bastard sons.

In the following pages I will consider two short stories, “L’enfant” (1883) and “Le testament” (1882), and then I will explore Maupassant’s fourth novel, *Pierre et Jean* (1888). There are important differences between the two adult bastards represented in these works: René of “Le testament” is relieved and made rich by the revelation and publicity of his illegitimacy, whereas Jean continues to pass himself off as his mother’s husband’s son even after discovering that he is a bastard. Among the various ideas conveyed in these two works, there is a sentiment shared with Shakespeare’s Edmund of “King Lear,” as quoted earlier; the bastard may often be of greater value to a family than its legitimate children. But first in “L’enfant,” Maupassant provides the unborn bastard no possibility of overcoming the circumstances of his birth, but does, however, offer a biting social critique of those who would judge the single mother who is forced to hide a “shameful” pregnancy. The legal aspects of illegitimacy are peripheral at best in Maupassant’s “L’enfant,” in which a doctor tells the story of an aristocratic widow who is terrorized by her unborn illegitimate child. “Hélène” is obsessed purely by the social ramifications for her family should her pregnancy be discovered; this obsession leads to her suicide in an attempt to cut the unborn child from her womb.

### **3.2.2 Infanticide: Illegitimacy and the Fear of Social Ridicule**

This tale is a graphic and powerful statement criticizing social opinion and sex-based inequities. The legal ramifications of an illegitimate pregnancy are the last thing on the mind of the *fille-mère* of this tale; she is terrified of the unborn manifestation of her shame, caused by her “uncontrollable” promiscuity. Her shame is based in custom and social conventions more so

than in law; it is her reputation and that of her family which are threatened. This instance of a hidden pregnancy turned to one of infanticide merits close consideration.

Not to be confused with an 1882 story of the same name which is sometimes translated in English as “A wedding gift,” “L’enfant” (1883) is told as a series of stories within a story, in some ways comparable to “Histoire d’une fille de ferme” in that a young single woman must hide an illegitimate pregnancy and decide the fate of the baby. At the tale’s departure, Maupassant’s narrator introduces a dinner party consisting of guests with differing opinions of the crime of infanticide, or rather, of the mothers who commit them.

A baroness present at a dinner soirée in a château is horrified when the conversation moves to a recent infanticide, interestingly referred to at the tale’s beginning as an “avortement” which had taken place in the commune.<sup>369</sup> The girl was seduced by a young butcher, and threw the resultant newborn into a pit. The doctor who tells this story marvels at the girl’s courage for crossing two kilometers on foot to dispose of the baby: “Elle est en fer, cette femme! Et quelle énergie sauvage il lui a fallu pour traverser le bois, la nuit, avec son petit qui gémissait dans ses bras.”<sup>370</sup> Here again, Maupassant describes a woman as wild or mad in some way, like Rose, a mother traveling through the woods. And then, calling upon the baroness to consider the girl’s situation more seriously, the doctor continues:

Comme la vie est odieuse et misérable! D’infâmes préjugés, oui, madame, d’infâmes préjugés, un faux honneur, plus abominable que le crime, toute une accumulation de sentiments factices, d’honorabilité odieuse, de révoltante honnêteté poussent à l’assassinat, à l’infanticide de pauvres filles qui ont obéi sans résistance à la loi impérieuse de la vie. Quelle honte pour

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<sup>369</sup> CN I, 981. It is worth noting the interchangeability of the terms for the infanticide. While “avortement” holds a certain connotation to the contemporary ear, the girl brought her child to term and bore it before killing it. This shows a departure and difference of meaning. Abortion was a dangerous and unpredictable practice in the late nineteenth century, often failing and leading to post-natal abandonment or exposure of newborns.

<sup>370</sup> Ibidem.

l'humanité d'avoir établi une pareille morale et fait un crime de l'embrassement libre de deux êtres !<sup>371</sup>

With this monologue on prejudice and false honor, the theme is one of social criticism, particularly with regard to *les enfants naturels*. What is peculiar in his discourse is that the doctor laments for all of “l'humanité” for the “morale” established in France, lending a universalizing socio-centrist feel to what is otherwise a virulent attack on French custom and their honor system. Although the doctor laments several aspects of society in a heavily accusatory manner, the one of interest in this discussion is that of bourgeois honor. Maupassant's choice of a doctor to tell his tale is significant.

As we know, Michel Foucault writes at length on Western societies' control of sexuality as a means of social management. Indeed, biopolitics plays a central role in framing illegitimacy as counterproductive to bourgeois reproduction. Infanticide, in several ways, may be considered as a violent yet logical response to biopolitical pressure, on women particularly, to produce healthy legitimate children, future citizens and workers.<sup>372</sup> Women's sexuality is, in a sense, counterfeited by society and marked for exclusive expression in marriage and as a means of procreation. “Authentic” expression of a woman's sexuality, without regard for its utility in social reproduction, is represented as repressed, punished, or both, as in “L'enfant.” Historian Rachel Fuchs notes that early in the century, moralists appropriated the role of “dominant regulators of sexuality, but by the end of the century that role transferred to doctors, who developed scientific analyses of sex and sexuality.”<sup>373</sup> Whether or not Maupassant's doctor might consider himself a “regulator” of sexuality, in this tale he comes across as surprisingly

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<sup>371</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>372</sup> Again, Foucault's *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* provides crucial theoretical framework concerning “bio-power,” 140-44.

<sup>373</sup> Rachel Fuchs' *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 63.



sympathetic to the pregnant young woman. Here my goal will be to examine the infanticide narrative told within Maupassant's story, as well as to interpret the underlying social commentary, both with an ear out for references to honor, which is always ultimately tied to hegemonic patriarchy. This tale, while illustrating a case of gender inequality in the bourgeois family and wider society, focuses mainly on establishing pity for a single mother, conveyed through the narrative description of the young woman's fears of social dishonor, and the author's playing with stereotypes through the doctor's tragicomic portrayal of a "nymphomaniac" as a victim of Nature. While the story within the story is improbable, perhaps exaggerated by the doctor, the message conveyed by Maupassant is nevertheless a realist one, depicting truth rather than strict unfiltered factuality. For Maupassant, truth emerges through sexuality; his characters' authentic selves are often revealed through sexual acts, particularly those occurring outside of marriage.

The first infanticide mentioned in "L'enfant" and the doctor's tirade both contribute to a criticism of French honorability and the social imperatives of marriage and sexual moderation. By condemning "honnêteté," Maupassant's doctor effectively celebrates "love," as euphemistically as was required to avoid censure.<sup>374</sup> Sex acts are described vaguely in a wide-range of manners, all of which reveal the speaker's opinion of the acts in question. The doctor first refers to "l'embrassement libre de deux êtres," denoting freedom and the physical act itself.<sup>375</sup> The baroness refers to an unmarried woman having sex as "abandoning herself to her shameful instincts, "à ses instincts honteux."<sup>376</sup> But for her the wife "accomplishes her duty,"

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<sup>374</sup>B. Haezewindt's "Guy de Maupassant: histoires lestes et contes pudiques," <http://www.bris.ac.uk/dix-neuf/MauMend.html>. This interesting article deals with sexual innuendo in Maupassant; Haezewindt's goal is "tenter de montrer que, partant d'histoires lestes, l'écrivain a réussi le tour de force d'en faire des contes pudiques."

<sup>375</sup> CN I, 981.

<sup>376</sup> Ibidem.

“accomplit son devoir dans l’intégrité de sa conscience,” by performing the unnamed sexual act.<sup>377</sup> Her reaction to the doctor is rather extreme and overly simplistic in that it considers only the vice or virtue of sexuality, referring to sexuality almost exclusively in terms of morality and within a marital framework. Dividing female morality into two classes of women, the baroness fears that the doctor places “la prostituée avant l’honnête femme.”<sup>378</sup> Her choice of reference for all women who bear illegitimate children essentially equates victims of seduction and even of rape, to prostitutes.<sup>379</sup> The doctor then, “qui avait touché à bien des plaies,” looks beyond bourgeois morality and into desire and passion.<sup>380</sup> He recounts Maupassant’s central narrative as a tragicomedy, possibly exaggerated for the baroness. He describes what he calls “les invincibles passions,” a mystery of Nature, considering them as something that the baroness does not understand and can never know: “Vous ne savez pas. Ah ! vous dormez tranquille dans un lit pacifique que ne hantent point les rêves éperdus. Ceux qui vous entourent sont comme vous, préservés par la sagesse instinctive de leurs sens.”<sup>381</sup> The baroness, in a sense then, is not considered as “authentic,” and her views of sexuality are artificial and falsified, counterfeited even by hegemonic social views of gender and sexual expression.

For the doctor, there is no question of class, however, since both Hélène and the baroness are of the *noblesse*. For him, Hélène’s condition is purely “natural,” if often cruel for the young victim. Ironic at times, Maupassant’s doctor prepares a story for this baroness, to evoke her indignation and shock, perhaps her jealousy, and finally her silence. He introduces the story as a recent real-life event he witnessed himself: “Laissez-moi vous dire une aventure récente dont je

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<sup>377</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>378</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>379</sup> Fuchs 2005, 66. Seduction and rape rarely led to legal action at the time, except in instances of broken marriage promises for seduction, or if the girl was under age or kidnapped, in the case of a rape.

<sup>380</sup> CN I, 982.

<sup>381</sup> Ibidem.

fus témoin.”<sup>382</sup> According to the doctor, another ill-fated infanticide, Mme Hélène, is one of those individuals to whom nature has given “unappeasable senses,” a euphemism for an insatiable sexual appetite. The exaggeration which makes the story somewhat parodic is found in the portrayal of sexual passion as stronger than free will for some people, a force of Nature to which resisting is as useless as blowing against the wind:

Pouvez-vous arrêter le vent, pouvez-vous arrêter la mer démontée ? Pouvez-vous entraver les forces de la nature ? Non. Les sens aussi sont des forces de la nature, invincibles comme la mer et le vent.<sup>383</sup>

These sorts of women are even described as having different organs and flesh than the baroness: “Ses organes ne ressemblent point aux vôtres, sa chair est différente [...]”<sup>384</sup> Before recalling the story of Mme Hélène, the doctor includes a vague “nous” in this group of helpless hedonists, perhaps but not necessarily implicating himself. His interlocutor, the baroness, is excluded in either case :

Si vous saviez quelle puissance ils ont. Les sens qui nous tiennent haletants pendant des nuits entières, la peau chaude, le cœur précipité, l’esprit harcelé de visions affolantes !<sup>385</sup>

Although sex is not mentioned, and the “*sens*” referred to could technically retain their literal mundane meaning, the narrator’s style in detailing the all-powerful senses lends a remarkable sensuality to the narrative, aimed at stirring up the baroness’ prudish and proper sensibility.

The first direct reference to sex or love is when the doctor introduces his patient, having observed her “*sens*” from a young age. “Elle les avait eus dès sa petite enfance. Chez elle ils

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<sup>382</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>383</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>384</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 983.

s'étaient éveillés alors que la parole commence.”<sup>386</sup> She had been brought to him at age twelve, when he declared her “femme déjà,” harassed by “désirs d’amour.” He describes her sensually, indicating her full lips, open like flowers, strong neck, hot skin, palpating nose, and her eyes whose look “allumait les hommes,” turned men on. Her desire and emotions are shown to be debilitating and tortuous for her. Marriage proves incompatible with her condition, which was deadly to her three husbands:

Elle passait des nuits à pleurer sans cause. Elle souffrait à mourir de rester sans mâle. À quinze ans, enfin, on la maria. Deux ans plus tard, son mari mourait poitrinaire. Elle l’avait épuisé. Un autre en dix-huit mois eut le même sort. Le troisième résista trois ans, puis la quitta. Il était temps.<sup>387</sup>

Thrice married, twice a widow, this “bête ardente” will remain alone when her third husband leaves her, presumably to preserve his health; unable to legally divorce, she is unwilling to break with convention and take a lover, despite her youth and seemingly irresistible sexual passion. The doctor believed that her natural desire would lead to her dying of widowhood, “mourir de son veuvage,” here referring to her lack of a legal husband, a legitimate mate with whom to sate her desire.<sup>388</sup> But to her despair, her physical need was stronger than her will to remain “*sage*.” She confided to the doctor that she was pregnant by her gardener, with whom she had been having frequent sexual relations. She took care to point out that she continued to pay him rather than taking him as a lover. This arrangement effectively posits the gardener as a prostitute rather than the widow, a remarkable reversal of the usual narratives of female prostitution.

It is surprising that over three marriages spanning nearly seven years of her life, the woman had never had a legitimate child. Three sterile husbands and then becoming pregnant to

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<sup>386</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>387</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>388</sup> Ibidem.

her gardener presents an irony typical of Maupassant's narrative style. This irony has ramifications for the question of class as well; none of her husbands, all presumably of the same social class were fertile or "virile" enough to produce a pregnancy. It is rather the socially inferior gardener who manages to impregnate Hélène. If she had become pregnant by one of her husbands, it is possible to imagine an eventual change in Hélène's sexual lifestyle, legitimate motherhood acting as a diversion of investment. Hélène's reaction to the illegitimate pregnancy is explained clearly as she confesses her actions to the doctor:

J'ai pris des bains brûlants, j'ai monté des chevaux difficiles, j'ai fait du trapèze, j'ai bu des drogues, de l'absinthe, du safran, d'autres encore. Mais je n'ai point réussi. Vous connaissez mon père, mes frères ? Je suis perdue. Ma sœur est mariée à un honnête homme. Ma honte rejaillira sur eux. Et songez à tous nos amis, à tous nos voisins, à notre nom..., à ma mère...<sup>389</sup>

As she describes her attempts at self-abortion, the idea of the fetus inspires only horror and shame in the expectant mother. She is absorbed with concern for her family honor. The order of her concerns is revealing: first she mentions the father and brothers, then the sister with reference to her husband. Her shame will be reflected on them, she states. Next, she thinks of her friends, neighbors, her family name, and finally, of her mother. The list of those to be dishonored and scandalized starts at the top of the familial hierarchy with the patriarch, the male heirs, and another male married into the family. And then, rather than thinking of her mother, Mme Hélène thinks of her reputation in society, the family name, and only mentions her mother as a last concern; ironically it is the comments of the mother that provoke the woman's first attempts to abort the child: "Comme tu engraisse, Hélène; si tu étais mariée, je te croirais enceinte."<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid., 984.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., 985.

Since the shame of a bastard child was so threatening to family structure and stability, French fathers and other family members could often assist an unwed mother in hiding an illegitimate birth and, eventually, the child. Other literary examples of similar situations are not difficult to find; Mathilde de la Mole of *Le Rouge et le Noir*, when she becomes pregnant to Julien Sorel, asks her father's help so that she may marry Julien. M. de la Mole offers Julien a title and a promoted military rank in hope of protecting his daughter's reputation, since she is determined to marry the father of her child. If not for the disruptive letter sent by Mme de Rênal, this strategy of dissimulation may in fact have worked.

The Empire had instituted the use of “*tours*” in 1811, towers with a turntable mechanism allowing mothers to leave infants, while remaining anonymous. This practice did not endure for very long, however. Many women from the countryside, who did not have the familial support structure of bourgeois and noble women, would come to urban centers to give birth and leave the child. The solution provided by the towers was dissolved by their closing in 1860.<sup>391</sup> This is widely considered as one reason for the increase in infanticides during the last half of the century. But Maupassant's Hélène had other resources not available to lower-class women, and could have gone to her family with this problem, or taken the advice of the doctor to go far away to give birth, a common practice found elsewhere in Maupassant's short fiction.<sup>392</sup> Nevertheless, her shame, like her nymphomania previously, seems to drive her mad.

The doctor informs his audience that Hélène was considered crazy in her community, in part due to her strange nocturnal outings, made to tire herself and resist her sensual urges: “Dans le pays on la disait folle. Elle sortait la nuit et faisait des courses désordonnées pour affaiblir son

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<sup>391</sup> Michelle Perrot details this in *Histoire de la vie privée*, Vol. 4, 267.

<sup>392</sup> “L'abandonné” (1884), and “Histoire d'une fille de ferme” (1881).

corps révolté. Puis elle tombait en des syncopes que suivaient des spasmes effrayants.”<sup>393</sup>

Again, the scene described is improbable, a literary exaggeration: but to what end? The doctor’s discourse is less than scientific. Hélène’s subsequent blackouts and “spasms” would lead a modern doctor to seek other medical explanations than so-called “nymphomania,” but Maupassant’s doctor leads his audience to believe that such behavior fell into the wide range of symptoms belonging to so-called female sexual disorders, such as Hélène’s nymphomania, much as Rose’s “mad” roaming through fields was shown as symptomatic of her lunar hysteria. There is also a similar association with Nature and madness, extending to the outdoors and unbridled sexuality. She admits to having given herself to the gardener for the first time in a park, after nearly fainting. She hardly remembers what had happened. “Qu'ai-je fait ? Je ne sais plus ! L'ai-je étreint, embrassé ?”<sup>394</sup>

Later, after learning of her pregnancy, the girl steadily falls into madness, according to the doctor, who does not seem to recognize her earlier behavior as madness, but as symptomatic of her sexual disorder. What he admits as crazy conduct is Hélène’s obsessive trips to look at herself in the mirror and her renewed and more violent attempts to kill her unborn child. When her attempts all fail, the narrator renews earlier imagery when he shows her, once again, running madly through the fields: “Après ces luttes inutiles, ces impuissants efforts pour se débarrasser de lui, elle se sauvait par les champs, courant éperdument, folle de malheur et d’épouvante.”<sup>395</sup>

The doctor’s discourse takes on what he presumes to be the mother’s own expression, presenting her child as an abomination and a curse. It is progressively her “abominable secret,” “cet être qui la perdait,” “l’ennemi acharné,” “enfant maudit,” “embryon inconnu et redoutable,” and

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<sup>393</sup> CN I, 983.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 984.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 985.

finally, “cette larve.” She finally removes the baby with a kitchen knife, cutting open her own stomach. Tearing the child from herself, she tries to throw it into the hearth ashes, but she is still connected to the child. The tale ends with the following, somewhat vague, passage :

Mais il tenait par des liens qu'elle n'avait pu trancher, et, avant qu'elle eût compris peut-être ce qui lui restait à faire pour se séparer de lui, elle tomba inanimée sur l'enfant noyé dans un flot de sang. Fut-elle bien coupable, madame ? Le médecin se tut et attendit. La baronne ne répondit pas.<sup>396</sup>

This final image, both vivid and disturbing, leaves one final question. What connection(s) could she not cut in time? The two obvious possibilities are that they were connected by the umbilical cord, or figuratively, by some sort of unexpected maternal rapport. This detail is left out of the last grisly image of the girl, lying dead in a pool of her own blood. There is an absolute lack of maternal love throughout the tale, yet the final scene leaves this in suspense with the possible inference that she held maternal instincts despite herself. Through Hélène's immoderate sexual appetite and seeming infertility in marriage, she transgresses the social order in two ways; her illegitimate pregnancy represents another transgression. Her hate for the child is shocking in several senses. But it is what the child would represent for the mother's family that motivates this profound disdain: their dishonor.

The importance of honor for the nobility having a long history, honorability retained much of the chivalric character of past centuries for the late nineteenth-century French nobility and the bourgeoisie, albeit in various new forms.<sup>397</sup> Although the case of infanticide is an extreme case of what may occur to a “natural child,” the concept of family and personal honor affects the outcome of any illegitimate pregnancy. Hélène's concern for her family's honor is reflected in her horror of illegitimacy, and the doctor-narrator's question regarding the

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 986.

<sup>397</sup> Robert Nye's *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (1998) provides important details.



justifiability of her crime is of central importance at the story's end: "Fut-elle bien coupable, madame?"<sup>398</sup> Concerning illegitimate births and infanticides during the nineteenth century, genealogist Myriam Provence writes:

Mais c'est surtout au XIXe siècle que ces naissances se sont multipliées, apparaissent comme un phénomène essentiellement urbain dû à la Révolution industrielle. Pendant la première moitié du siècle, l'augmentation des infanticides apparaît à Paris comme étroitement liée à celle de la population. Les quartiers populaires en fournissent les plus gros contingents et ces infanticides doublent à la suite de la suppression du tour.<sup>399</sup>

The rate of infanticides, committed mostly by the mothers, noticeably increased during the nineteenth century. Infanticides had many motives, including the inability to care for and support a child, the desire to remain "marriageable" for a future suitor, and the fear of family dishonor, among others. Rachel Fuchs points out that women who committed the infanticide were generally poor and motivated to commit the crime by concerns fostered by a patriarchal social structure.<sup>400</sup>

For Héléne, though, a child would not constitute a financial burden, but rather a symbol of her "fault," a sign of dishonor in a strongly coded social matrix dictating sexual behavior. The wide social gap between her and her child's male genitor made marriage not only undesirable, but simply unthinkable. Only by killing the child, and herself in the bargain, is Héléne able to free herself from both her uncontrollable "senses" and her seemingly "natural" biological determination as mother.

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<sup>398</sup> CN I, 986.

<sup>399</sup> Myriam Provence's "Guide des Recherches sur les Enfants Naturels et Abandonnés" (Paris : Brocéliande, 2001), 55.

<sup>400</sup> Rachel Fuchs' *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 2005.

For H el ene in “L’enfant,” she refuses her “natural” role as mother and falls victim to her more “authentic” sexuality and the social stigma that accompanies it. In “Le testament,” Maupassant portrays yet another sort of bastard narrative in which the illegitimate son is made happier by learning of his bastardy, this time through his mother’s confessional last will and testament.

### 3.2.3 A Bastard’s Legacy

In “Le testament,” first appearing in the *Gil Blas* Newspaper in 1882, Maupassant introduces Ren e de Bourneval who learns that he is illegitimate after the death of his mother. The themes of inheritance and legal wills are not uncommon in Maupassant’s writing.<sup>401</sup> “Le testament” explores a variety of themes concerning both gender inequality and masculine honor, from the general weakening of the patriarchy to the duel of honor. The narrator introduces his friend Ren e de Bourneval, who is described as having a likeable but somewhat sad countenance, and as being bitingly skeptical of humanity in general. As the narrator explains, “Il [Bourneval] r ep etait souvent: ‘il n’y a pas d’hommes honn etes; ou du moins ils ne le sont que relativement aux crapules.’”<sup>402</sup> As M. de Bourneval has a different last name from that of his mother, the narrator inquires whether he was born from her first or second marriage. This query provokes the telling of the story within the story.

De Bourneval describes his mother as a timid little woman, a fearful and delicate individual who had been married for her wealth. Her husband is called a “*rustre*,” a “*gentilhomme campagnard*” who after a month of marriage began living with a servant and sleeping with all the wives and daughters of the men who worked on his farmlands. Faced with

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<sup>401</sup> Such legal themes are central to his novel *Pierre et Jean*, and the story “Un million,” both considered in this dissertation. The story “Coco, coco, coco frais!” (1878) also concerns a will; a nephew shares in his uncle’s inheritance, but is instructed to give 100 francs to the first “coco” vendor he encounters.

<sup>402</sup> CN I, 620.

this situation, Madame de Courcils had taken a friend of her husband as a lover, M. de Bourneval. The latter represents an interesting amalgam of traditional masculine traits. Firstly, he is described as a former cavalry officer, a widower both tender and violent. He is a tall, slender *gaillard* with a large black moustache. The description of the gentleman provides the first of several social critiques of family law in France. He is influenced by and well read in the philosophy of the Enlightenment: “Il savait par cœur le *Contrat social*, la *Nouvelle Héloïse* et tous ces livres philosophants qui ont préparé de loin le futur bouleversement de nos antiques usages, de nos préjugés, de nos lois surannées, de notre morale imbecile.”<sup>403</sup> Although the term “philosophants” in reference to the books he read may be understood as ironic, this commentary may nevertheless be made in reference to the revolutionary changes following the Ancien Régime, but of which many were turned over by clauses of the 1804 Civil Code. Later in the text, however, echoes criticizing contemporary social custom revive a feeling that Revolutionary and Enlightenment ideals had been lost, the project left incomplete.

René de Bourneval confides the details of his mother’s will to the narrator, introducing it with important legal details, without which the legal validity of Maupassant’s tale would be easily doubted:

Elle mourut. J’avais alors dix-huit ans. Je dois ajouter pour que vous compreniez ce qui va suivre, que son mari était doté d’un conseil judiciaire, qu’une séparation de biens avait été prononcée au profit de ma mère, qui avait conservé, grâce aux artifices de la loi et au dévouement intelligent d’un notaire, le droit de tester à sa guise.<sup>404</sup>

Here Maupassant describes in detail how Mme de Courcils is able to avoid handing over her pre-nuptial wealth to her husband at her death; this arrangement is clearly described as exceptional

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 621.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 622.

and requiring legal maneuvering. Divorce was illegal in France from 1816 under the Restoration until 1884 with the Naquet law; so lacking recourse to divorce and legal separation, Mme de Courcils managed to retain her rights with regard to her inherited wealth. René is still a minor until age 21 according to the Civil Code, and as is revealed, an illegitimate child. He can not therefore receive his mother's wealth directly and immediately, so she arranged her testament accordingly.

Her testament is in part a confession as well as an accusation: "J'ai souffert toute ma vie. J'ai été épousée par calcul, puis méprisée, méconnue, opprimée, trompée sans cesse par mon mari. Je lui pardonne, mais je ne lui dois rien."<sup>405</sup> As for her children, she admits that her older, legitimate sons did not love her, but treated her like a maid, following the father's lead. She herself shows little affection for them in death:

J'ai été pour eux, durant ma vie, ce que je devais être ; je ne leur dois plus rien après ma mort. Les liens du sang n'existent pas sans l'affection constante, sacrée, de chaque jour. Un fils ingrat est moins qu'un étranger ; c'est un coupable, car il n'a pas le droit d'être indifférent pour sa mère.<sup>406</sup>

These words recall Bernard's thoughts in Gide's *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, when he refuses to acknowledge what is called "la voix du sang"; blood alone does not constitute a familial relation, and in the case of Mme de Courcils a son's affection is as important as their biological connection. Having fulfilled her maternal duty in life, she decides to leave all her disposable fortune to her lover, who will in turn leave it to their illegitimate son, expressing in her final will the fears she would be freed from in death: "J'ai toujours tremblé devant les hommes, devant

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 622-23.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 623.

leurs lois iniques, leurs coutumes inhumaines, leurs préjugés infâmes. Devant Dieu, je ne crains plus.”<sup>407</sup>

The reaction to the reading of the will is violent and immediate. M. de Courcils declares his late wife mad, whereas M. de Bourneval announces that the testament is authentic and truthful, and that he can prove so with letters he possesses. The two old friends, the husband and the lover, exchange insults and two days after engage in a duel of honor in which de Bourneval kills de Courcils. The de Courcils sons remain silent concerning the contents of the will and René, in exchange, hands over half his mother’s inheritance to them.

M. de Bourneval had died five years before the telling of the tale, leaving René deeply saddened: “point encore consolé.”<sup>408</sup> The final lines of the tale are René’s thoughts on the beauty of his mother’s will and the narrator’s agreement: “Eh bien! Je dis que le testament de ma mère est une des choses les plus belles, les plus loyales, les plus grandes qu’une femme puisse accomplir. N’est-ce pas votre avis?” to which his friend replies, “Oui, certainement, mon ami.”<sup>409</sup> In this tale, authenticity is opposed to legitimacy; René is depicted as “the good son,” whereas the Madame de Courcils’ legitimate sons act “unnaturally,” treating their mother “un peu comme une bonne.”<sup>410</sup> Hidden, René is passed off as “good money,” whereas following his mother’s death his uncovered illegitimacy becomes a symbol of his mother’s transgression against a socio-legal institution, marriage, which often leaves wives helpless in abusive and adulterous marriages.

In another bastard narrative, his novel *Pierre et Jean*, Maupassant tells the story of two half-brothers and an inheritance left only to the younger brother. The dissimulation of the

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<sup>407</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid., 624.

<sup>409</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid., 621.

illegitimate son in this novel lies at the origin of the story, and the continued passing off of the counterfeit son is central to the dénouement. In this novel, legitimacy itself is questioned and factual authenticity replaces it as the “currency” which determines a man’s value.

### **3.2.4 Pierre the Sacrificial Son**

*Pierre et Jean* explores several important aspects of illegitimacy, particularly its possible causes and consequences. In Maupassant’s tale, “passing off” a bastard son as legitimate is shown to be a necessary practice to maintain the social order, despite the innate gender-based inequalities illustrated by the writer. The *père de famille*, M. Roland, is a retired jeweler who comes to Le Havre from Paris to spend his retirement sailing and fishing. His two sons both join their parents in Le Havre as they finish their studies and prepare to launch their careers: Pierre in medicine and Jean in law. When a friend of the family, Léon Maréchal, dies and leaves his fortune to Jean alone, Pierre the elder son begins to question the motives for such a legacy. With his newfound wealth, Jean is able to advance in his career, rent an office, and eventually become engaged to Mme. Rosémilly, a wealthy young widow and friend of the family. Pierre’s doubts are fuelled by the suspicious comments made by a “fille” employed in a local bar as well as by the admonitions of his much older friend Marowsko, an apothecary and maker of liquors. Pierre finds himself in constant oscillation between suspicion of his mother, and embarrassment for having doubted her virtue.

After seeing an old portrait of the deceased Maréchal, who resembled Jean, Pierre begins to make dinner-table insinuations in front of his mother, whose fear of her older son betrays the truth she tries to hide, namely that Jean is the son of Maréchal and not of M. Roland: “Elle avait peur de lui, et son fils avait peur d’elle et de lui-même, peur de sa cruauté qu’il ne maîtrisait

point.”<sup>411</sup> Pierre becomes cruel with his mother, making biting remarks and insinuations at every occasion, even despite himself. The two sons eventually get into an argument, provoked by Pierre’s changed behavior within the family and his discourteous comments concerning Mme Rosémilly. Pierre, who by this time is exasperated and upon whom the secret of his mother’s adultery weighs heavily, reveals all of his suspicions. Although Jean refuses to believe him at first, Mme Roland admits the truth to Jean. While no one dares to inform M. Roland, Pierre can no longer bear to live in the paternal home, and so he takes a humble position as ship doctor on a liner, leaving his family behind.

Since *Pierre et Jean* appeared in 1888, many critics have read it and tried to classify it as a Realist, Naturalist, or psychological novel. Others still value its symbolic aspects, focusing on the omnipresent images of smoke, fog and the sea as they represent changes or variations in the characters’ state of mind. For example, a now dated series of concatenated articles appeared in *The French Review* from 1959 to 1989, sustaining a thirty-year literary debate of *Pierre et Jean*. The critics’ of these articles take turns discussing and developing what might be considered as the “deeper,” symbolic meaning of the novel.<sup>412</sup> Robert J. Niess departs from the idea that the study of symbols appearing in Maupassant’s book will lead to a better understanding of the author’s (hidden) meanings:

*Pierre et Jean*, it seems to me, is one of the best proofs of Maupassant’s skill at this artistic kind of dissimulation. Some of its symbols seem to have such importance in its economy that it

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<sup>411</sup> Guy de Maupassant’s *Pierre et Jean* in *Œuvres complètes illustrées, Tome X* (Paris : Librairie de France, 1934), 389.

<sup>412</sup> Robert J. Niess’ “*Pierre et Jean*: Some Symbols,” *The French Review*, Vol. 32, No. 6, 1959, Murray Sachs’ “The Meaning of Maupassant’s *Pierre et Jean*,” *The French Review*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1961, Elliot M. Grant’s “On the Meaning of Maupassant’s *Pierre et Jean*,” *The French Review*, Vol. 36, No. 5, 1963, Dzintars Freimanis’ “More on the Meaning of *Pierre et Jean*,” *The French Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1965, Robert M. Viti’s “The Elemental Maupassant: The Universe of *Pierre et Jean*,” *The French Review*, Vol. 62, No. 3, 1989.

may not be an exaggeration to claim that they hold the key to its true meaning and to Maupassant's intentions and aims.<sup>413</sup>

While Niess' interpretation of symbols in *Pierre et Jean* was published in 1959, subsequent critical articles have generally followed the same formula: referencing earlier criticism, pointing out symbolism, and arguing a slightly varied interpretation of their meaning. Critics such as Niess, Grant, Sachs, Freimanis, and more recently, Viti, all focus on Pierre's jealousy or slow realization of the truth, giving psychological readings of symbols and Pierre's mind-state, but without ever truly discussing the central issue of the novel: that is to say, the infiltration of a bastard into the legitimate family structure, his overshadowing of and superiority over the older legitimate brother, and the reasons why this betrayal of sorts makes for such an emotional climax when Pierre forces his mother to reveal her secret to Jean, leading to the legitimate son's ultimate self-exile from Le Havre, his family and essentially, from society.

In the following pages, I divide my argument into three parts considering issues previously discussed by others, but with specific attention paid to how they relate to the importance of authenticity over legitimacy. The hegemonizing patriarchal institutions of marriage and law, and the undermining of such institutions, are manifested through the triumph of the bastard son within the "legitimate" family. These themes include: Pierre's jealousy of his brother, the idealized mother's fall from grace through her adultery, and finally the ridiculization of the paternal figure. Following the visit of the notary announcing Jean's inheritance, Pierre takes a walk and begins to analyze his own thoughts and feelings with regard to his brother's new wealth:

Il avait mal quelque part, sans savoir où; il portait en lui un petit point douloureux, une de ces presque insensibles meurtrissures

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<sup>413</sup> Niess, 511.



dont on ne trouve pas la place, mais qui gênent, fatiguent, attristent, irritent, une souffrance inconnue et légère, quelque chose comme une graine de chagrin.<sup>414</sup>

This vague feeling of suffering may be a precognition of the truth behind Jean's inheritance and the problems to arise from it, or it may be jealousy as Pierre later remarks to himself guiltily: "Donc j'ai été jaloux de Jean, pensait-il. C'est vraiment assez bas, cela! [...] Faut soigner cela!"<sup>415</sup> Deciding whether to go to a nearby café or to continue walking to the quay, Pierre turns toward the pier: "Il avait choisi la solitude," foreshadowing his eventual self-exile.<sup>416</sup>

The jealousy manifested is more than "de la jalousie gratuite," as Pierre reflects; it is importantly that of an elder son who, according to tradition, would marry first and establish a career.<sup>417</sup> In nineteenth-century France, where the eldest son was traditionally given preference in all matters, including those of legitimate inheritance, the first affront to Pierre is Jean's receiving the entire inheritance of their "family friend," followed by Jean's renting the office coveted by Pierre and his engagement to the pretty young widow, Mme Rosémilly. Such traditions, remnants of former aristocratic rights (*droit d'aînesse, droit de masculinité*), are recalled by Pierre when he is surprised that his family had not waited for him, "le fils aîné," before dining one evening.<sup>418</sup> Jean himself also remarks the natural preference for the eldest son in matters of marriage. When the Roland family discusses the mysterious visit of the notary, before they learn of Jean's inheritance, Pierre, perhaps jokingly, suggests that the visit concerned a marriage proposal for Jean, an idea that the younger son contests:

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<sup>414</sup> *Œuvres*, Tome. X, 307.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>418</sup> Yvonne Knibiehler's *Les pères aussi ont une histoire* succinctly describes French traditions of primogeniture, and their origins in Roman law, 120-22.

Tout le monde fut surpris à cette idée, et Jean demeura un peu froissé que son frère eût parlé de cela devant Mme Rosémilly.  
« Pourquoi pour moi plutôt que pour toi ? La supposition est très contestable. Tu es l'aîné ; c'est donc à toi qu'on aurait songé d'abord. Et moi, je ne veux pas me marier. »<sup>419</sup>

Jean's comment that he does not want to be married conveys the same sentiment as expressed by Pierre, contemplating his future career and amorous exploits: "Il ne se marierait pas, ne voulant point encombrer son existence d'une femme unique et gênante, mais il aurait des maîtresses parmi ses clientes les plus jolies."<sup>420</sup> Both brothers, at the start of the novel, are still enjoying the bachelor lifestyle described earlier in this dissertation, and both foresee remaining single until exterior events cause them both to reconsider. The familial pressure and social expectation of marriage however will at different points sway these two bachelors in their views on marriage, if only briefly in the case of Pierre, for whom "le désir du mariage l'effleura."<sup>421</sup> He momentarily considers that a real woman, "une vraie femme" like his mother, who is "la raison et le charme du foyer paternal," might make his life more enjoyable.<sup>422</sup> These thoughts will be pushed from his mind, of course, the more he suspects his mother's adultery. While both brothers consider the prospect of marriage as a worthwhile endeavor, it is Jean alone who will settle down and marry before the novel's close. While the issue of wealth is the most relevant reason for Pierre's jealousy, there is also a preexisting tension between the two brothers. This tension, demonstrated from the beginning of the novel, even before the news of Jean's inheritance, stems from a seemingly harmless and uniquely "masculine" fraternal competitiveness between the two Roland sons.

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<sup>419</sup> *Œuvres*, Tome. X, 298.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibidem.*

The opening scene of *Pierre et Jean* finds the entire Roland family accompanied by Mme Rosémilly on a fishing outing on Monsieur Roland's boat.<sup>423</sup> Before the news of the inheritance arrives, this initial scene already establishes a masculine atmosphere of physical competition, one in which Jean is revealed as superior. The two sons must row the father's boat back to shore, each trying to outperform the other: "une lutte commença pour montrer leur vigueur."<sup>424</sup> This demonstration of "l'orgueil de mâle des deux frères" results in Pierre's visible exhaustion and subsequent "defeat" by his brother.<sup>425</sup> This is far from the only example of Jean's superiority of physique and character. Despite their five-year age difference, Jean is described as much bigger than Pierre. Although Pierre does sport the typically masculine moustache, the narrator makes frequent allusions to Jean's "belle barbe blonde."<sup>426</sup> The pretty Mme Rosémilly is said to prefer Jean from the beginning of the narrative, whereas Pierre has only fantasies about women, dreaming about "les blondes Suédoises ou les brunes Havanaises," and his only real amorous prospect is the "petite bonne" at his local bar, the very woman who will hint at Jean's illegitimacy, compounding Pierre's suspicions, and eventually disgust Pierre with her "vraie pensée de prostituée."<sup>427</sup>

The temperaments of the two brothers also indicate Jean's superiority; this time it is Jean's greater level of stability and career advancement within the masculine bourgeois milieu of Le Havre. Pierre was "exalté, intelligent, changeant et tenace, plein d'utopies et d'idées philosophiques."<sup>428</sup> Jean however, was "aussi blond que son frère était noir, aussi calme que son

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<sup>423</sup> Jonathan Patrick's "Maupassant's Men: Masculinity and the Franco-Prussian War" (In *Fin de Siecle?*, Ed. Anne Fremiot. University of Nottingham, 1998, 17-26) provides an interesting analysis of masculinity in *Pierre et Jean*.

<sup>424</sup> *Œuvres*, Tome. X, 292.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 312, 338.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

frère était emporté, aussi doux que son frère était rancunier.”<sup>429</sup> Jean is described throughout the book as more level-headed, attractive, and successful than his brother, seemingly since birth. It had taken Pierre much longer to decide on a career, and the younger son is able to establish his first lawyer’s office before his brother. When Pierre was younger, the narrator explains that Jean’s character was considered a model for his brother, who before becoming a doctor was constantly reproached by his parents for his indecisions:

Ses parents, gens placides, qui rêvaient pour leurs fils des situations honorables et médiocres, lui reprochaient ses indécisions, ses enthousiasmes, ses tentatives avortées, tous ses élans impuissants vers des idées généreuses et vers des professions décoratives.<sup>430</sup>

These reminders of Jean’s superiority follow Pierre into manhood in the form of Jean’s accomplishments as they are pointed out by the Roland parents: “« Jean a fait ceci, Jean a fait cela, » il comprenait bien le sens et l’allusion cachés sous ces paroles.”<sup>431</sup> Pierre is shown to be emotional and capricious, despite his own frequent attacks on his brother’s manhood. Maupassant’s narrator recounts how a younger Pierre considered his brother to be weak, calling him: “ce gros garçon dont la douceur lui semblait être de la mollesse, la bonté de la niaiserie et la bienveillance de l’aveuglement.”<sup>432</sup> But as the story unfolds to reveal Jean’s obvious strengths, and “good fortune” of course, Pierre despairs at his own shortcomings as a man of his class, and laments his fall from favor as oldest child, though it would be difficult to say he was ever the favored child, despite his *aînesse*. The differences between the two brothers reveal themselves

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<sup>429</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>431</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>432</sup> Ibidem.

as indicative of hereditary traits; the sons' characteristics reflect some of their respective biological fathers' best and worse qualities.

DNA had been first isolated in the late nineteenth century, and discourses of genetics were revealed through narratives of heredity, the focus of which is less medical than theoretical; they treat questions of hereditary degeneration, especially mental illness and sexual degeneracy, which are closely linked with gender deviations and sexual perversion.<sup>433</sup> Maupassant's "Un fils" treats fear about degeneracy in a more direct way than that in which genetic heredity is discussed in *Pierre et Jean*, but common traits between father and son become important in distinguishing between a son of Roland and one of Maréchal. Jean and Maréchal are both handsome and intelligent men, both successful in love, even if not in marriage. Even the barmaid, the only woman in which Pierre shows any expressed interest, does not fail to remember that Jean was "un beau blond à grande barbe," a good-looking guy, a "rudement joli garçon."<sup>434</sup>

Descriptions of the Roland father emphasize the potential inferiority of his biological son, particularly when Pierre is only beginning to accept the certainty of his brother's illegitimacy. He sees that Jean in no way resembles Roland, Pierre's biological father: "Ce gros homme flasque, content et niais, c'était son père, à lui!"<sup>435</sup> Otherwise, the Roland father is depicted as an outdoorsman, a lover of nature and boats, and a stereotypically neglectful bourgeois husband and "man's man." Pierre too loves to spend time sailing, and shows that he has little interest in what women want, and merely sees how he might benefit from a future marriage. Despite Pierre's obvious deficiencies, he remains the only legitimate Roland son, and as such would assume a privileged position to receive a greater share of the Roland inheritance, should he cause

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<sup>433</sup> Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (1976, Eng. trans. 1977), 118-19. Foucault discusses "degenerescence" in these terms.

<sup>434</sup> *Œuvres*, Tome X, 326.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

a public scandal for this closed and very private family unit; but he does not do this. Pierre's jealousy is not so complete that he would seek the injury of his family reputation. Already inferior to a bastard son, Pierre has little left for him in Le Havre, unless he were to expose the truth, thereby causing an inevitable scandal. Pierre's self-exile is a sacrifice, made to continue the dissimulation of his brother's bastardy and preserve the tranquility of Le Havre bourgeois life and that of a family he no longer considers his own. Exile is presented as a prison for Pierre; twice he is called or compared to a "condamné."<sup>436</sup> His crime is seemingly his inferiority and the jealousy caused by it, but Maupassant shows in his narrative that Pierre also represents a threat to the structure of bourgeois life.

The illusion of legitimacy in the Roland home is essential, since the option of divorce for the unhappy Madame Roland was off the table. Although it is difficult to say the exact year in which the novel is meant to take place, the fact that Maupassant was writing it in 1887 leads one to believe that the Roland couple was married and had their children long before Naquet passed his law. Even after the 1884 law, for Mme Roland to be divorced it is Monsieur Roland who would have had to seek a divorce for reason of adultery. There is no indication that Monsieur Roland himself had ever been unfaithful (the "*bonhomme*" in fact appears sexless), but even if this were the case, women could only divorce for adultery under the Civil Code if the husband brought his mistress into his family home. Since divorce would only upset the ignorant bliss of the father, Pierre agrees with his mother and brother that the simplest solution is for him to leave.

Besides Pierre's jealousy, the novel also explores the illusion of idealized gender roles as Mme Roland falls in the mind of her legitimate son from an idealized pinnacle of motherly merit and blamelessness into the mob of common women of common morals. Pierre's thoughts

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 427, 431.

express a starkly divided conception of feminine archetypes, splitting all women into one role or the other in a Madonna-whore dichotomy. Following the fall of the mother in Pierre's esteem, even this distinction disappears as his mother represented the only woman belonging to the Madonna category. Carl Jung's vision of "analytical psychology" includes a variety of subcategories of "archetypes" for masculinity (the *animus* archetype) and femininity (the *anima* archetype). He considers that all people are hard-wired with knowledge of a "mother" archetype which makes them identify relationships which involve "mothering"; the mother role, for Jung, is generally fulfilled by one's own mother, but in many cases where the biological mother is absent or found wanting, she is replaced as representative of the mother archetype by another idealized "mythological" mother, like the Virgin Mary or "Mother Earth."<sup>437</sup> In other cases the maternal void may be filled, interestingly for our study of *Pierre et Jean*, by a life at sea, ubiquitous symbol of the "maternal."

Pierre's saintly view and love of his mother are expressed throughout the novel, building up an ever higher pedestal of virtue from which she will fall, and justifying Pierre's absolute disillusionment with relationships of all kinds: marital, familial, and social. He loves his mother religiously, and uniquely at the beginning of the novel: "Il n'aimait que sa mère au monde."<sup>438</sup> After the truth of her adultery is revealed to Pierre, he feels that he is able to truly see her for the first time: "il lui sembla tout à coup qu'il ne l'avait jamais vue."<sup>439</sup> His explanation of why he is finally able to look at his mother is comparable to a filial/maternal example of Stendhal's description of the decrystallization of romantic love: "Il comprenait à présent que, l'aimant, il ne

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<sup>437</sup> Carl G. Jung's *Aspects of the Feminine*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>438</sup> *Œuvres*, Tome X, 347.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 361.

l'avait jamais regardée.”<sup>440</sup> His reaction to his mother's adultery boils down to the realization of a son who never before considered his mother's unhappiness and the possibility that she, previously irreproachable in his eyes, could violate the sanctity of marriage, thereby lowering herself in her son's esteem. Pierre's violent reaction to this realization brings him almost to the point of murdering his mother, held back only by the thought that his mother had cheated on (*trompé*) his father and not him:

S'il avait été le mari de cette femme, lui, son enfant, il l'aurait saisie par les poignets, par les épaules ou par les cheveux et jetée à terre, frappée, meurtrie, écrasée ! [...] Il était son fils, il n'avait rien à venger, lui, on ne l'avait pas trompé.<sup>441</sup>

But Pierre does feel deceived, especially in his “pious respect” of his mother, “son pieux respect.”<sup>442</sup> He demands of her only what is demanded of all mothers, her purity: “Elle se devait à lui irréprochable, comme se doivent toutes les mères à leurs enfants.”<sup>443</sup> In this sense, it is the mother who is seen as a counterfeit. Pierre's outrage is that of all bourgeois society, whereas his shame is that of a son: shame for having revealed his mother's secret to his brother, for having tortured his mother with a truth she would have preferred to keep hidden. He expresses his guilt immediately after making the revelation to Jean: “Tiens, je suis un cochon d'avoir dit ça!”<sup>444</sup>

The reason given by Mme Roland for her adultery is indicative of the sexual inequality common in marriage practices at the time; she was married without love and consequently never received the affection and attention she desired as a wife and mother. The deceased Maréchal was her only source of love and joy before the birth of her sons. She considers him her true

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<sup>440</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>442</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>443</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 402.



husband, as she wishes Jean to consider him. This is one of the conditions she imposes on Jean if he wishes to prevent her flight from the Roland home:

Pour que nous puissions encore vivre ensemble, et nous embrasser, mon petit Jean, dis-toi bien que si j'ai été la maîtresse de ton père, j'ai été encore plus sa femme, sa vraie femme, que je n'en ai pas honte au fond du cœur, que je ne regrette rien, que je l'aime encore tout mort qu'il est, que je l'aimerai toujours, que je n'ai jamais aimé que lui, qu'il a été tout ma vie, toute ma joie, tout mon espoir, toute ma consolation, tout, tout, tout pour moi, pendant si longtemps !<sup>445</sup>

While she was not treated as a servant within her family, as was the case of the adulterous mother in "Le testament," she does feel that in taking Maréchal as her lover, she had regained the possibility of feeling the love and happiness denied her in marriage by her unloved and unloving husband. The prospect of adultery for a seemingly virtuous and responsible wife and mother has direct importance in the impression given of the husband as a deserving cuckold.

Mme Roland is made unhappy by her marriage, which assumes Monsieur Roland's deficiency as husband. The old retired jeweler ironically never recognizes his younger "son" as a "false coin." The father is treated as inconsequential by his family and he takes little to no part in its affairs after his retirement in Le Havre. He himself wishes to have no say in Jean's installation in his new office and apartment: "Moi, je ne veux entendre parler de rien. J'irai voir quand ce sera fini."<sup>446</sup> The father is kept in the dark about nearly everything, from his wife's treachery to Jean's engagement. Toward the end of the novel, in a moment of solidarity between mother and daughter-in-law, Mme Roland explains to Mme Rosémilly: "Nous faisons tout sans lui rien dire. Il suffit de lui annoncer ce que nous avons décidé."<sup>447</sup> Mme Rosémilly finds this

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 425.

statement perfectly normal since “le bonhomme comptait si peu.”<sup>448</sup> While he is generally shown to be harmless yet useless, the Roland father is also described as vulgar and repulsive to Mme Roland’s supposed romantic sensibility. He is nearly unbearable to Mme Roland who, for her part, loves to read poems “pour la songerie mélancolique et tendre qu’ils éveillaient en elle.”<sup>449</sup>

Maupassant highlights that family love exists independently of biological relation, while hereditary traits, including one’s temperament, are seemingly inescapable indicators of biological heredity. We have seen how Rousseau considers the family unit as artificial in its advanced function as traditional social structure, Pierre points out the artificiality of his father and brother’s love, born of a false belief of relation: “[...] ils s’embrassaient, se réjouissaient et s’attendrissaient ensemble des mêmes choses, comme si le même sang eût coulé dans leurs veines.”<sup>450</sup> Pierre feels that he will remain the only one to know the “mensonge impossible à dévoiler,” the lie that artificially creates paternal/filial affection.<sup>451</sup> Pierre never contemplates accusing his mother in his father’s presence, nor ever to reveal the truth to any outsider. It is for this that he exiles himself, hiding from the shameful truth that would tear his family apart. The reputation of the family, the honor of the idealized patriarchal institution of marriage, would be menaced if the truth were to be known to any outsider. Jean and Mme Roland, once the truth has been shared between them, have an interest in keeping the secret, in hiding Jean’s illegitimacy. Pierre has the most interest in revealing the truth, since he has lost favor by his mother’s deception, and yet he leaves his family in order to protect it from the threat of dishonor, to be freed from the constant reminder of Jean’s illegitimacy made palpable by Pierre’s mere presence

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<sup>448</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>451</sup> Ibidem.

in his father's home. Not only would Pierre be disgraced himself by such a scandal as this adultery might produce, but he feels as if he no longer belongs to his family: "Plus de mère, car il ne pourrait pas la chérir, ne la pouvant vénérer avec ce respect absolu, tendre et pieux, dont a besoin le cœur des fils ; plus de frère, puisque ce frère était le fils d'un étranger."<sup>452</sup> He admits that he now loves neither his mother nor his father. Pierre cannot bring himself to feel more filial love for his father than he does in reality: "ce gros homme, qu'il n'aimait pas."<sup>453</sup> He recognizes that he alone is Roland's son, and this may entail the fear of being predisposed to his biological father's negative qualities.

Annelise Mauge, in her 1987 book, discusses the perceived "*crise de masculinité*" in *fin-de-siècle* France.<sup>454</sup> This crisis, she explains, is often framed in discourses of defeat following the Franco-Prussian War, and presumes a looming threat of degeneration, as seen through Foucault, and the effeminization of the French nation, fueled by the activity of nineteenth-century feminist movements. Monsieur Roland represents a very macho model of the bourgeois male of the turn of the century, which makes his failure as husband and father even more damning. As a successful jeweler, he realizes the bourgeois ideal of wealth through commerce. He is married and the (presumed) father of two respectable sons. In retirement, he continues to exude a certain bourgeois masculinity through his love of the outdoors and such manly homosocial activities as sailing and fishing. Despite this, he is still depicted as a pathetic figure, all the more since he embodies the *public* ideal of bourgeois masculinity.

But it is his failure in the private conjugal and familial spheres that condemns Roland the father to cuckoldry, and later, to general disdain within his family. His ineffectual presence in

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 367.

<sup>453</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>454</sup> Annelise Mauge's *L'identité masculine en crise au tournant du siècle* (Paris : Éditions Rivages, 1987).

the home contrasts starkly with his public persona among his sailing mates, particularly the old sailor Papagris and the shipping captain Beausire. His behavior in public and in the home appears to hide an unspecified insecurity. His loud vulgarity and utter lack of refinement cause his wife infinite pain and embarrassment: “Devant tout étranger il se tenait, mais dans sa famille il s’abandonnait et se donnait des airs terribles, bien qu’il eût peur de tout le monde.”<sup>455</sup> This secret fear, unaddressed throughout the rest of the novel, indicates a hidden weakness in the macho bourgeois father. His wife, who hates the scenes he creates, always yields to his outbursts and demands, which could only serve to satisfy his desire for a patriarchal authority that he apparently lacks.

Despite the fact that Jean’s marriage with Mme Rosémilly is desired by both young lovers, there are hints that their union may turn out to be little more than a contract to their mutual benefit, since there is no real mention of love in the proceedings, and in this way similar to the marriage that produced the illegitimate Jean. The latter is described as more likeable and even-tempered than the Roland father, which assures that Jean’s marriage will be more likely to succeed, if not more loving than that of his legal parents. Jean’s marriage proposal and its acceptance, however, turn out to be more of a formality than he had expected. Revealing his passion and feelings for Mme Rosémilly, Jean is met with a quick business-like acceptance of his proposal, finding himself bound by a contract rather than connected by love: “Il s’attendait à des gentillesses galantes, à des refus qui disent oui, à toute une coquette comédie d’amour mêlée à la pêche, dans le clapotement de l’eau ! Et c’était fini, il se sentait lié, marié, en vingt paroles.”<sup>456</sup> This scene hints at a cyclic repetition, a reproduction of the bourgeois family, an institution resisted by Maupassant in life, but generally accepted as a *fait accompli* in his fiction. Ironically,

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<sup>455</sup> *Œuvres*, Tome X, 291.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

it is the man in this case, rather than the woman, who is disappointed by the lack of romantic interplay in the prospect of marriage.

We have seen how the interest in hiding an illegitimate son in certain Maupassantian bastard narratives is tied to the preservation of the bourgeois social order. This need to preserve the patriarchal order is felt both by women in “L’enfant” and *Pierre et Jean*, as well as the men in *Pierre et Jean*. Nevertheless, there is a minor challenge of the patriarchal order in Maupassant’s fiction which questions the institution of marriage, as portrayed in “Le testament,” which leads one to believe that Maupassant, if he was in fact determined to portray reality, or “truth,” as he discusses in the preface to *Pierre et Jean*, recognizes a current of change in French society, with regard to both women’s rights and views of illegitimate children, which he portrays in his fiction as part of a unique Realist project.

#### 4.0 PART III - BASTARD FREEDOM : BETWEEN NOMADISM

##### AND ANOMIE

“L'enfant naturel, l'orphelin  
Est malheureux et je le plains,  
Mais, du moins, il n'est pas tenu  
Au respect d'un père inconnu.”

– Georges Brassens, « Ce n'est pas tout d'être mon père »

The greatest disadvantage facing the illegitimate son within the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century-France was his exclusion from the familial structure that guarantees the financial and social opportunities needed for easy transition into a career and “normalized” family life of his own. A legitimate son is afforded the reputation, support and inheritance allowed by his status as male offspring, but there exist nevertheless certain disadvantages in this arrangement as well. The son who is dependent upon the family for financial and social assistance is equally obliged to follow the rules and meet the expectations that accompany his role as obedient and dutiful son. While such a role may seem natural to some, Maupassant and Gide portray the family structure as restrictive and counter to the individual's will, particularly in matters of marriage and profession, as well as a number of other decisions; these may include seemingly insignificant choices like one's style of dress as in *Les Caves du Vatican*, or more importantly, one's sexuality as witnessed in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, or the choice to reproduce or not, as shown in Maupassant's “Un million.” In various narratives by both Gide and Maupassant, then, one finds examples of the particularly ambiguous sort of freedom exercised by the bastard son.

For Gide especially, the disadvantages of the illegitimate son are overshadowed by this freedom from familial and social constraints. It is already evident that Gide expresses a negative opinion of the family in various instances throughout his early literary work; the most famous expression of this is doubtlessly the exclamation of his character Ménélaque in *Les Nourritures terrestres*: “Familles, je vous hais!”<sup>457</sup> Édouard in *Les Faux-monnayeurs* notes in his journal certain ideas for an upcoming chapter to a book: “L’avenir appartient aux bâtards. – Quelle signification dans ce mot: ‘*un enfant naturel!*’ Seul le bâtard a droit au naturel. L’égotisme familial... à peine un peu moins hideux que l’égotisme individuel.”<sup>458</sup> The “*naturel*” of the bastard may be considered as the metonymic equivalent of the “artificial” nature of the legally-defined family. But importantly for us, the “*naturel*” mentioned by Édouard is also the quality of “authentic” individuals, as we have discussed earlier. As Gide valorizes the “authentic” so exclusively in his major bastard narratives, he also foresees the end of the bastard’s estrangement from the social order. The notion of the family as a “great closed thing,” as it is called in *Les Caves du Vatican* reinforces my earlier conception by which the family defines an interior (which is the family itself) and an exterior. In Gide, one finds that the bastard is permitted the opportunity to redefine interiority and create a unique identity in opposition to hegemonic conceptions of masculinity, marriage and the family, uninhibited by inherited prejudice and suffocating behavioral constraints. If one were to extend this inside-outside dichotomy to the Nation and its laws, or to a hegemonic vision of society in which gender performance and identity are regulated, the bastard falls into a similar category as the bachelor, the outlaw or the homosexual.

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<sup>457</sup> *Romans*, 186.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 1022.

In the following pages, however, I hope to reveal how the bastard's status as outsider not only lends him the sort of freedom mentioned earlier, but can also leave him predisposed to violence, sociopathic behavior, and vengeful tendencies. I argue that the freedom of the bastard, as it is presented by Gide and to a different degree by Maupassant, favors the practice of what I call "nomadic" performances of masculinity, but also opens the door to "a-nomic" and potentially sociopathic behavior. Illegitimacy and 'hybrid' or 'nomadic' gender formation work together to destabilize accepted norms in both the public and private spheres, creating new possibilities for the conceptualization of the self and for a society's changing views of relational propriety and moral diversity. The Revolutionary ideals of individual freedom and equality between citizens carry through, in diversely diluted manifestations, to nineteenth and twentieth-century legal and social practice, witnessed in the vicissitudes of divorce law, the debate surrounding women's suffrage, and governmental responsibility within the public sphere.

#### **4.1 Bastard Nomadism**

As we have seen in my introduction, Deleuze and Guattari do not link their development of nomadism and the war-machine to gender roles explicitly, therefore a slight theoretical shift is required to bring their ideas into the study of masculinities. The State-form's propensity to self-reproduction is parallel with the reproductive function of society. The control of sexuality, especially women's sexuality, was central to nineteenth-century efforts to maintain social stability throughout Western Europe. Rachel Fuchs explains how "[t]hroughout the nineteenth century, bioreasoning, or thinking about women in terms of their reproductive biology, shaped



much of western European social thought.”<sup>459</sup> The social pressure to marry and produce legitimate children embodies national concerns about depopulation, or more accurately about decreased fertility rates, in late nineteenth-century France. French Republican society, particularly following the reinstatement of the Republic in 1871, maintained strict expectations for men and women to marry and reproduce. Laws were passed encouraging women to marry and discouraged them from pre-marital sex. The bastard’s place in this reproductive social machinery is, quite simply, on the outside: exterior not only to the legitimate family, but also to national interests and efforts to encourage population growth and acceptable *hygiène*.

The bachelor figure, as discussed earlier, represents a menace to the accepted family model, while simultaneously providing a resource, a potential mate for widows, other single women, and gay men. What the nomadic war machine represents geographically and militarily, the bachelor machine represents socially and sexually. The bastard is another sort of nomad, existing outside of the familial model and contributing nothing to the interests of patriarchal society. However, just as the State appropriates a war machine, industry may appropriate the bastard as a labor source, even if for a short time; this is especially appropriate to nineteenth-century industrialization, a period of great poverty yet great production and modernization in urban centers. Despite the bastard’s occasional participation in functions of the State, he remains in many cases on the margins of society, sometimes destined to misery, or alternately gifted with a unique freedom, as I have mentioned. Many examples of “bastard freedom,” however, end in violence, thereby complicating the seemingly positive nature of “freedom” as a character trait for the illegitimate. In the following pages, I will expand upon these ideas, beginning

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<sup>459</sup> Rachel Fuchs’ *Gender and Poverty in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 43.

chronologically with Maupassantian examples of nomadic masculinity and sociopathic bastards, and eventually ending with Gide's "free" bastards.

#### 4.2 The Bastard as Murderer

"L'orphelin," published in 1883, is a brief *nouvelle* that tells the story of Mademoiselle Source, a woman terribly burned and disfigured in an accident, and of her adoptive son, a neighbor's baby orphaned at birth. Mlle Source places the infant into the charge of caretakers, and finally brings him back to live with her when he is fourteen years old. After living happily together for a year, Mlle Source notices that her adoptive son, as he becomes an avid and solitary reader, begins to distance himself from her. Later she remarks how he begins to silently, constantly stare at her, and she starts to fear him. A few years pass, and she eventually decides to sell her house and move, uncomfortable living in seclusion with the boy, who has turned eighteen by this time. Before they make the move however, she is mysteriously murdered, her throat cut. The boy, at first a suspect, has a solid alibi, and after his acquittal becomes a well-respected man and eventually mayor.

Although the story is before all else a mystery, there are many indicators in the text that show complications in the boy's development of a masculine identity. The first is that he is never given a name, at least not by the narrator. To give a child one's name is to legitimize it. Being without a name is some ways synonymous with being a bastard. Not only did the boy never know his father, but the man is never even mentioned. After her disfigurement, Mlle Source had decided to never marry. With the possibility of marriage, she also loses the possibility of fulfilling her potential role as mother, and therefore takes this child with the hope of fulfilling this role and feeling loved. But as she does this, the boy finds himself isolated in a

feminine sphere devoid of any male presence. Before the murder of Mlle. Source, the orphan is the only male mentioned explicitly in the story; Mlle. Source, her two female cousins, and the orphan's deceased biological mother are the only other characters presented up to the point of the crime. After, the coach-driver who drops off Mlle Source the night of the attack, the notary and the *percepteur* are the only characters mentioned, all men. Regardless of the murderer's identity, Mlle. Source's death creates a clear division between the boy's childhood and manhood, between his sedentary isolated life and his much more social life in the city of Rennes, and therefore between the domestic feminine sphere and the homosocial masculine sphere of social and political engagements.

One may read the narrator's account of the boy's relationship with the spinster, whom he called "*tante*," as one lacking anything that may be considered a "masculine" formation. The narrator recounts the home life of the orphan and his "*tante*" in strictly infantile and feminine terms; their relationship is loving and tender, and yet it is portrayed as one that arrests the boy's development. The boy is first described as "doux, timide, silencieux et caressant." He is given less than manly nicknames: "Ma petite fleur, mon chérubin, mon ange adoré, mon divin bijou."<sup>460</sup> The spinster's treatment of the adolescent boy is depicted strangely like that of a doll or pet; they would cuddle by the fireplace, and "elle lui préparait des douceurs," serving him warm wine toast, "une petite dînette charmante avant d'aller se mettre au lit."<sup>461</sup> The narrator notes that even at fifteen years old, "il était demeuré frêle et petit, avec un air un peu maladif."<sup>462</sup>

The behavioral change that will begin to worry Mlle Source is said to begin at the time when the youth takes to reading passionately. Even the spinster's motivation for buying him his

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<sup>460</sup> CN I, 848-49.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., 848.

<sup>462</sup> Ibidem.

first books is decorative, and indexically feminine: “pour lui orner l’esprit.”<sup>463</sup> He becomes more and more absorbed in his reading, and slowly distances himself from his adoptive “tante.” She becomes jealous of the boy’s new passion, which draws his attention away from her. Although he shows her no open hostility, he withholds his affection and companionship.

When the orphan turns eighteen, Mlle Source remarks ever greater changes. When she eventually refuses to give him more money for books due to financial constraints, he takes to staring at her, an echo of the spinster’s earlier unreturned gaze at the boy, while the latter was absorbed in his reading. The narrator informs us: “Il lui semblait qu’il avait été jusque-là comme un homme hésitant qui aurait pris tout à coup une résolution.”<sup>464</sup> This statement, besides being the first reference to the orphan as a “man,” implies the following question: what does this stare signify, and what resolution had he taken, if any? His contemplative gaze may be considered a projection of frustration and anger due to an unfulfilling, sedentary life indexically linked to femininity. But his gaze, whether he realizes it or not, is also one of power. It is by his constant gaze that the young man asserts his power over the woman who had held power over him for most of his life. At eighteen, he is represented as somewhat “manlier” than before. The narrator’s later description of the boy provides the best evidence for the argument that he nevertheless seems like less than a man, even at eighteen: “Il n’avait pas beaucoup grandi, ayant toujours l’aspect d’un enfant, bien que les traits de sa figure fussent d’un homme. Ils étaient durs et comme inachevés cependant. Il semblait incomplet, mal venu, ébauché seulement, et inquiétant comme un mystère.”<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 849.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid., 850.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., 851.

#### 4.2.1 Death of the Feminine, Regaining of the *Logos*

After the spinster's murder, one remarks another drastic change in the young man's comportment. The silence characteristic of his earlier years with Mlle Source disappears, and he becomes known for his openness and his *bavardage*. The orphan is only directly referred to as a man after the spinster's murder. This may suggest that he can only ever become a man when the symbol of his feminization is no longer present, and he can finally establish his masculine identity. One unanswerable question, even more mysterious than the identity of the murderer, is this: What was the boy reading that made him change so completely? The narrator briefly describes the orphan's immobility and seeming absence while reading: "il lisait, entré, disparu tout entier dans l'aventure du livre."<sup>466</sup> The boy may have been reading adventure novels in the Robinsonade tradition, or any number of epic or heroic novels. The mention of "aventure" at the very least denotes a drastic change from the boy's calm and uneventful lifestyle, living alone with his coddling "tante." This leads to other questions. Was his unquenchable thirst for reading merely coincidental with his experience of puberty? Did his becoming-man create an urge to explore the masculine world, until then denied him? The question of literature's role in perpetuating masculine ideals then becomes a key to interpretation. The orphan would recognize in novels diverse male narratives and masculine identities that he had never witnessed in his own life, and it is perhaps for this that his view of Mlle Source may have changed. He may even have read something that led him to recognize Mlle. Source's deformity, hitherto apparently unnoticed. Literature provides the opportunity for the orphan to construct a masculinity from the

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid., 849.

countless narratives he ingests every day.<sup>467</sup> Ben Knights writes: “Inasmuch as masculinity too is a rhetorical construct, our choice of masculinities has been limited by the narratives addressed to us.”<sup>468</sup> The boy, then, is only able to formulate his masculine self after being exposed to masculine narratives in his reading. Mlle Source came to represent for the boy an obstacle to his becoming a man, the reason for his being preserved in a state of non-development, of masculine non-identity, and in a certain sense, a bastard.

Mlle. Source had adopted the orphan for seemingly selfish reasons: “afin d’avoir dans sa maison vide quelqu’un qui l’aimât, qui prît soin d’elle, qui lui rendît douce la vieillesse.”<sup>469</sup> As she had used the orphan boy to satisfy her need to perform her femininity as she envisioned it, the boy turns his gaze back upon her in an appropriation of his perceived masculinity. Only a complete separation from the spinster’s feminine presence, represented by her severed throat, will allow him to finally develop his mature masculine identity. Before the murder, the orphan is *anomic*, alienated from society by his isolation in the feminine sphere, and lacking both father and law.

For every fatherless son, there exists the possibility of filling that void with an(other) authority figure(s), a paternal substitute. Here one can establish a link between the text and the father. Both furnish models of masculinity and are guarantors of the law. The fictional text, like the paternal figure, provides representations of masculinity which are sometimes heroic, sometimes violent and oppressive. For Maupassant’s *orphelin*, the paternal void could only be filled by literature. Not every fatherless son provides such mystery and potential for violence as

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<sup>467</sup> Philip G. Hadlock’s “Orphans and Others: Gender and Narrativity in Maupassant’s *L’Orphelin*” (*The French Review*, Vol. 73. No. 1, December 1999, 281-89) provides an original reading of the tale, focusing on Maupassant’s narrative staging of gender.

<sup>468</sup> Knights, 23.

<sup>469</sup> CN I, 848.

that of “L’orphelin,” but two other stories by Maupassant that I will explore depict cases of extreme violence committed by or against bastard sons, fitting into subcategories of nomadic or wandering bastards.

#### 4.2.2 Identity as Murder

“Un parricide” and “Le champ d’oliviers” are two bastard narratives that relate the tales of two natural sons of sharply different backgrounds, and the violent deaths of their respective fathers. Both stories posit the bastard son as a victim of circumstances, each one having handled their situation differently and with varying degrees of success, particularly with regard to the unexpected revelation of their biological parent(s)’ identit(y)(ies). In these two texts particularly, Maupassant resists any definitive hermeneutic interpretation. Since the writer provides no clear lesson or moral to these stories, his intention cannot be determined moralistically. Maupassant manages, through literature, to critique and criticize without moralization; one could even call him an immoralist, as the term is understood when referring to one who offers no overt opinion on questions of morality and ethics, but rather paints reality without judgment, at least ideally. This will to *immoralisme* is also what led André Gide to write in his preface to *L’Immoraliste*: “Mais je n’ai voulu faire en ce livre non plus acte d’accusation qu’apologie, et me suis gardé de juger. Le public ne pardonne plus aujourd’hui que l’auteur, après l’action qu’il peint, ne se déclare pas pour ou contre.”<sup>470</sup> In order to explain in what ways Maupassant presents the violent and vengeful side of bastard narratives, depicted vividly but without judgment, a close reading of the text will prove enlightening.

“Un parricide,” first published in 1882 in *Le Gaulois*, tells the story of a man who may be called a self-justifying criminal, an oxymoronically “honest murderer.” The man, born a bastard

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<sup>470</sup> André Gide’s *L’immoraliste* (Collection Folio 2001), 10.

and abandoned, eventually becomes a successful woodworker (*menuisier*). The tale begins in a courtroom where the woodworker reveals himself as the killer of a well-known bourgeois couple. The couple had had no known enemies, and with no leads, the case was to be abandoned until Georges Louis, “dit Le Bourgeois,” turns himself in.<sup>471</sup> Perhaps facetiously called “The Bourgeois” due to his intellect and tastes, the woodworker is described as active in local politics and a great reader: “On le disait aussi fort exalté, partisan des doctrines communistes et même nihilistes, grand liseur de romans d’aventures, de romans à drames sanglants, électeur influent et orateur habile dans les réunions publiques d’ouvriers et de paysans.”<sup>472</sup> It is possible to imagine Le Bourgeois as one example of how Maupassant’s “L’orphelin” may have grown to adulthood, should his parents have abandoned him, rather than dying before or at his birth. As Le Bourgeois’ lawyer pleads insanity, he makes critical remarks blaming the Commune for the defendant’s actions. The lawyer points out the illogic of a man killing his best clients. He calls him an “ardent republican,” a man whose political party and its doctrines had inspired in him bloody thoughts and murderous anti-bourgeois sentiments: “Il a entendu des républicains, des femmes mêmes, oui des femmes! demander le sang de M. Gambetta, le sang de M. Grévy; son esprit malade a chaviré; il a voulu du sang, du sang de bourgeois!”<sup>473</sup> The lawyer’s speech seems convincing and the case won, until Le Bourgeois states that he would prefer the guillotine to a mad house, announcing: “J’ai tué cet homme et cette femme parce qu’ils étaient mes parents.”<sup>474</sup> He goes on to tell how he discovered the identity of his biological parents and eventually murdered them.

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<sup>471</sup> CN I, 553.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 554.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, 555.



Firstly, Le Bourgeois' confession to the murders is hyperbolic and overly dramatized, but the "truth" that comes from it is that of illegitimacy, and of the pathetic situation of the victimized child which results from it. By turning himself in, this man who was not even a suspect acts "*invraisemblablement*," in an improbable way. If Maupassant uses the character of the bastard criminal to criticize bourgeois society itself, the bastard figure here rejects such a role, regressing toward a more personal, even infantile expression of resentment. In order to defend or justify his actions, the bastard pleads a case against his parents, and thereby indirectly against the wider society. The very significant nickname of Le Bourgeois allegorizes the prosecution; the Law put the Bourgeois on trial.

He retells the story of his birth, how he was abandoned and condemned not only to misery, but to death: "puisque'on l'abandonna, puisque la nourrice, ne recevant plus la pension mensuelle, pouvait, comme elles font souvent, le laisser dépérir, souffrir de faim, mourir de délaissement."<sup>475</sup> (Un)luckily, he explains, his wet-nurse, "plus mère que ma mère," brought him up: a mistake in his view. It is better, he states, to leave these children to die, thrown from the *banlieue* to the villages "comme on jette une ordure aux bornes."<sup>476</sup> He remembers a vague feeling of dishonor as he was growing up, called "bâtard" by other children, although none of them understood what the word meant. He expresses that his potential was left unrealized because of his status: "J'aurais été un honnête homme, mon président, peut-être un homme supérieur, si mes parents n'avaient pas commis le crime de m'abandonner."<sup>477</sup> Here it is clear that rather than rejecting bourgeois society, Le Bourgeois laments his exclusion from it; he bitterly pleads that he missed the opportunity to be a respected bourgeois ("honnête home") or

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<sup>475</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>476</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>477</sup> Ibidem.

perhaps even a politician or lawyer (“homme supérieur”). He continues to discuss his parents’ “crime” and lack of pity, and himself being a victim, “sans défense.”

The father, and eventually his wife, had for a long time been coming to the woodworker’s shop to place large orders. Le Bourgeois noticed the wife’s strange behavior, trembling and fainting at one point: the latter occurring when she hears Le Bourgeois speak of his biological parents as “des misérables qui m’ont abandonné.”<sup>478</sup> One day the wife hands him an envelope of money, offered as a dowry for a future wife, so that he might marry for love rather than for financial reasons: “Moi, j’ai été mariée contre mon cœur une fois, et je sais comme on en souffre.”<sup>479</sup> When plainly asked by Le Bourgeois if she is his mother, the woman staggers backward, hiding her eyes. The husband reproaches Le Bourgeois for his accusation, and the latter explains that he would keep their secret if only they would admit the truth. The couple escapes the shop, but Le Bourgeois, feeling dishonored and rejected, follows. After another verbal exchange along the Seine River, the husband strikes Le Bourgeois and pulls out a *revolver*. Seeing red, Le Bourgeois strikes out with his carpenter’s compass, first at the husband, then at the wife, who is screaming murder. Le Bourgeois ends this story, explaining how he unthinkingly pushed their bodies in the river, and finally asking to be judged: “Voilà. – Maintenant, jugez-moi. L’accusé se rassit. Devant cette révélation, l’affaire a été reportée à la session suivante. Elle passera bientôt. Si nous étions jurés, que ferions-nous de ce parricide?”<sup>480</sup>

### 4.2.3 Atypical “Male Narratives”

The abrupt and open ending is a commonplace in Maupassant’s tales. The suspension or ambiguity of judgment is similar to how other Maupassantian stories end, as witnessed in

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<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 557.

<sup>479</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid., 558-59.

“L’enfant” (1883), or “Un fils.” For this reason, Maupassant may be called an immoralist storyteller. The writer’s suspension of narrative judgment, as with Gide’s *L’Immoraliste*, is according to Ben Knights *atypical* of “conventional” “male narratives”:

The male paradigm (whatever the actual gender of the writer) tends to *éloignement*, to ironic or judgmental distance, to positive and judicious knowledge, to the overview – in the end to mastery of a subject matter, or even to Olympian detachment.<sup>481</sup>

There is a difference between Maupassant and Gide on this count. It is generally Maupassant’s third-person narrators who establish a space of free judgment for readers, rather than the writer himself asking the question, “que ferions-nous?” Who shall be judged? Maupassant does not use first-person narration in the vast majority of his fiction; this may be considered the writer’s *éloignement*, and he is certainly familiar with “ironic” distance. Nevertheless, Maupassant’s bastard narratives often seem to allow for judgment on the part of the reader; but judgment should only be read in these narratives as relative to the viewpoints offered by the writer in his “male narrative.” While seeming to suspend judgment, Maupassant indeed uses irony and other rhetorical devices to present a certain judgment as valid, but without explicitly pronouncing a verdict. Such is the case at the end of “un fils,” for example, when the narrator’s detailed and emotional story depicting the misery of bastard children is interrupted at its moralistic climax with the ironic response: “C’est bon vraiment d’avoir vingt-cinq ans, et même de faire des enfants comme ça.”<sup>482</sup> In “L’orphelin,” the persistent image of the title character as mysterious, distorted, and frightening prepares the reader for a murder conviction, but his later introduction into society, particularly into male society, leads to a such a drastic change in his behavior that the tale ends by introducing doubt into the presumption of the orphan’s guilt: “Un homme qui

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<sup>481</sup> Knights, 65.

<sup>482</sup> CN I, 425.

parle avec tant de facilité et qui est toujours de bonne humeur ne peut pas avoir un pareil crime sur la conscience."<sup>483</sup> Judgment is again suspended in this tale, as in “Un parricide,” despite acts of aggressively masculine violence portrayed as potentially justifiable.

Gide’s narratives are even more dissimilar to the “male paradigm” Knights describes. In the preface to *L’Immoraliste*, the author expresses the suspension of his own judgment, allowing the reader to contemplate his character Michel, the eponymous immoralist: “Mais je n’ai voulu faire en ce livre non plus acte d’accusation qu’apologie, et me suis gardé de juger.”<sup>484</sup> Gide’s narrative style in *Les Faux-monnayeurs* in particular is starkly opposed to the “Olympian detachment” mentioned by Knights; Gide’s limited third-person narrator speaks subjectively, if not judgmentally. For example, the chapter when the Profitendieu family first learn of Bernard’s departure closes with a conversational transition, highlighting the limited knowledge allotted to the narrator: “J’aurais été curieux de savoir ce qu’Antoine a pu raconter à son amie la cuisinière ; mais on ne peut tout écouter. Voici l’heure où Bernard doit aller retrouver Olivier. Je ne sais pas trop où il dîna ce soir, ni même s’il dîna du tout.”<sup>485</sup> This style of narration, which claims no “mastery of a subject matter,” is far from detached.

In “Un parricide,” Maupassant leaves the question of whether or not Le Bourgeois deserves the guillotine up in the air; based on the final words of the tale, the narrator implies that there is more behind the crime than a simple case of murder by a random psychopath. The entire narrative discourse of Le Bourgeois is built to defend his crime as a vengeful reaction to the crime committed against him at birth:

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<sup>483</sup> Ibid., 854.

<sup>484</sup> *L’Immoraliste* (Collection Folio, 2001), 10.

<sup>485</sup> *Romans*, 950.

Un homme injurié frappe; un homme volé reprend son bien par la force. Un homme trompé, joué, martyrisé, tue; un homme souffleté tue; un homme déshonoré tue. J'ai été plus volé, trompé, martyrisé, souffleté moralement, déshonoré, que tous ceux dont vous absolvez la colère. Je me suis vengé, j'ai tué. C'était mon droit légitime.<sup>486</sup>

Should the reader feel sympathy for the abandoned bastard, or outrage at the murder? The above plea is reminiscent of Julien Sorel's musings in prison after shooting the woman he loves, Mme de Rênal, in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830). Julien shoots Mme de Rênal because she had spoiled Julien's engagement with Mathilde de la Mole by sending a libelous letter to the latter's father. Stendhal's famous Napoleonic hero, however, not only admits to his crime, but also, unlike *Le Bourgeois*, accepts that he was justly condemned: "J'ai commis un assassinat, et je suis justement condamné."<sup>487</sup> *Le Bourgeois*, on the other hand, compares his actions to those of men who have been cheated, dishonored and slapped in the face. His argument, which was very apt at the time, is that men who wound and kill another in a duel of honor are often acquitted by courts, and he considers himself as having been more injured than most of those to whom he makes reference. Nevertheless, Maupassant's views of the duel are evident in his journalistic writings; in his 1881 *chronique* "Le duel," for example Maupassant ridicules the practice of the duel of honor. While the writer may not have considered the duel as a legitimate option for regaining one's honor, he was perfectly aware that this comparison would make *Le Bourgeois* more understandable to many of his contemporary readers.

Another question that is raised by Maupassant is to what degree do politics play a role in the tale, if at all. *Le Bourgeois*' lawyer uses the political affiliations of the accused to deflect blame for the latter's violent acts. But as we have seen, *Le Bourgeois* himself denies this and

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<sup>486</sup> CN I, 556.

<sup>487</sup> Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* (Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1972), 566.

places blame wholly on the couple's past decision to abandon their illegitimate child to dishonor, misery, and probable death. Le Bourgeois' political philosophy can only be considered as one of several factors that may have contributed to his violent reaction to a second rejection by his parents. An argument of self-defense could even be conceivable, if not for Le Bourgeois' statement that he simply wanted to kill them: "Je les ai tués parce que j'ai voulu les tuer."<sup>488</sup>

The woodworker is said to be an actively political individual, partisan of "doctrines communistes et même nihilistes." If these doctrines are associated with violence, which is not always the case, Le Bourgeois' political background could explain his actions, but this does not seem to be the case, given his own testimony. He is also called a "grand liseur de romans d'aventures, de romans à drames sanglants." This observation recalls the story of "L'orphelin" to an extent, and even echoes debates concerning the effects of different media (film, television, music, video games) on children and teenagers, and whether or not these mediatic sources provoke violent behavior. Adventure novels forcibly depict heroic figures engaged in violent quests, and "bloody dramas" forcibly present violent solutions to conflicts of some sort. The mere mention of Le Bourgeois' reading preferences denotes the possibility that they may have affected his behavior, along with his politics. While the accused effectively refuses his advocate's plea of madness, blamed on the bloody doctrines of the Commune, nothing is mentioned to address the potential implication that literature may have had an effect on his actions. While this argumentation cannot be extended at much length, due to a lack of further textual support, it is certainly worth mentioning. Whatever its deeper motivation, and provided that one accepts that violence, through the practice of dueling in the nineteenth century, was a

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<sup>488</sup> CN I, 553.

manner for men to protect their honor, and thereby their masculinity, then Le Bourgeois' act could be considered as a similarly motivated one, by his own argument.

What is disconcerting in this story is that a man who has survived the circumstances of his unfortunate birth and become financially self-sufficient is overcome by emotion and a sense of dishonor rooted in his status as bastard, effectively destroying the life he has worked at such length to build. What may be extracted from this tale is that Maupassant, through the character of Le Bourgeois, places an importance on the concept of legitimacy which surpasses politics and reason, revealing an almost Romantic representation of irresistible emotion and tragic determinism. Le Bourgeois' accomplishments count for nothing, and his sense of tranquility is dissolved when he becomes aware of the circumstances of his birth following the appearance of his parents at his shop, which represents, in a certain sense, an invasion of Le Bourgeois' home and of his life by those who had rejected him from their own. He is unable to escape from his illegitimacy. In this tale, Maupassant criticizes bourgeois society quite specifically, giving an ironic name to Le Bourgeois, but more importantly, giving him agency and a public voice with which to condemn bourgeois morality, if not the social class as a whole. Le Bourgeois, by condemning the couple for his abandonment and lamenting his lost opportunity to belong to the class where he could have become an "homme supérieur," becomes not only the bourgeoisie's greatest critic, but also its defender. The violent tendency of the bastard manifests itself in "Un parricide" as a self-defensive and arguably honorable reaction to the hypocrisies of the French bourgeoisie. Le Bourgeois is not a "nomadic" bastard, but rather, he tries to acquire a "bourgeois" status for which he is not destined and, in the end, challenges bourgeois society to a "duel" of sorts.

#### 4.2.4 The Sins of the Father

In “Le Champs d’oliviers” (1890), Maupassant tells a violent story of deception, crime, and the haunting past of a village priest, “le curé Vilbois.” The *curé* is first presented rowing a boat back to shore after a fishing trip. He is well respected and painted as physically superior to other men. He is succinctly described by the narrator: “C’était d’ailleurs un ancien homme du monde, fort connu jadis, fort élégant, le baron de Vilbois, qui s’était fait prêtre, à trente-deux ans, à la suite d’un chagrin d’amour.”<sup>489</sup> This describes the man’s history and provides a clue to the drama about to unfold. Upon returning home to his humble but comfortable *bastide*, the *curé*’s servant Marguerite informs him that someone had come by three times in hopes of speaking with him, a man described by Marguerite as a “*maoufatan*,” meaning a “*malfaiteur*” or “evil-doer.” When the young man returns to see the *curé*, the former is evidently destitute, prematurely aged by fatigue “ou de débauche précoce,” as the priest remarks.<sup>490</sup> After an exchange of distant salutations, the younger man eventually explains that he is the *curé*’s son, born from his former love affair with an actress: “Ah! Vous ne voulez pas reconnaître que je suis votre fils, papa curé?”<sup>491</sup> The young man’s argument and the fact that he has a portrait of the *curé* from his youth, evidence of their physical resemblance, convince the *curé* of the truth of the vagabond’s tale. The priest invites his son to stay for dinner, much to the disapproval of his servant, still suspicious of the *maoufatan* and ignorant of the reason for the visit.

As they dine, the men drink two bottles of wine, most of which is consumed by the *curé*’s illegitimate and miserable son. The latter’s inebriation is tolerated in the hope that he will reveal more about his past and the fate of his deceased mother, who had lived with her other lover, a

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<sup>489</sup> CN II, 1181.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid., 1187.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid., 1188.



senator named Pravallon, until her death, allowing the latter to believe the child was his own. The *abbé* learns that when the vagabond was about sixteen, and his mother was still alive, his presumed father realized that the boy was not his own, but the *curé's*, due to their close resemblance. The substitute father essentially disowns and denies recognition of the vagabond, who had been given Pravallon's first name: Philippe-Auguste. However, when asked his name he first responds with the following: "Père inconnu, dit-il, pas d'autre nom de famille que celui de me mère que vous n'aurez probablement pas oublié."<sup>492</sup> The younger man admits with a certain pride to Vilbois that he had made quite a bit of trouble in his life, that he was street-smart, tough and fearless: "J'ai fait quelques fredaines vers seize ans; alors ces gouapes-là m'ont mis dans une maison de correction, pour se débarrasser de moi."<sup>493</sup> As the son gets more and more intoxicated, he begins to reveal facts about his life that disconcert the *curé*, who is taken back by his son's story of a life of misery and crime. He is disturbed to learn the crimes of his own son, who resembles him so. The young wanderer reveals that he accidentally murdered the passengers of a coach by forcing them into a river:

Je prends le cheval par la bride, je le fais monter dans le bac du passeur et je pousse le bac au milieu de la rivière. Ça fait du bruit, le bourgeois qui conduisait se réveille, il ne voit rien, il fouette. Le cheval part et saute dans le bouillon avec la voiture. Tous noyés! Les camarades m'ont dénoncé. Ils avaient bien ri d'abord en me voyant faire ma farce. Vrai, nous n'avions pas pensé que ça tournerait si mal. Nous espérions seulement un bain, histoire de rire.<sup>494</sup>

While the vagabond, Philippe-Auguste, admits that the prank was not meant to be fatal, he shows little regret except for his later denouncement by his friends. He was sent to a correctional

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 1191.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 1195.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid., 1196.

facility for the crime, which is not the most shocking act that he admits to his father. He begins retelling the presumed highlight of his violent and criminal exploits, one that was supposedly committed in the name of the father: “Je vous ai vengé papa.”<sup>495</sup> The vagabond continues, telling how his mother died revealing his biological father’s name, and how he was disowned by his mother’s lover, Pravallon. When Pravallon tries to speak kindly to him and bribe him with a thousand franc bill, meant to prevent his trying to find his real father, the bastard responds with violence:

Je tends la main pour prendre celui qu'il m'offrait, mais au lieu de recevoir son aumône, je saute dessus, je le jette par terre, et je lui serre la gorge jusqu'à lui faire tourner de l'œil; puis, quand je vis qu'il allait passer, je le bâillonne, je le ligote, je le déshabille, je le retourne et puis... ah! Ah! Ah! ... Je vous ai drôlement vengé! ...<sup>496</sup>

The vagabond had thrown his substitute father to the ground, strangling him without killing him, gagging and binding him, and proceeded to torture the man with a red hot poker, slicing “X”s into the man’s chest and back, “ainsi qu'on marquait les forçats autrefois.”<sup>497</sup> The symbolic “X” is also the traditional signature for the illiterate, those who had no access to writing, and therefore no control of their own names. By burning and scarring Pravallon with “X”s, the vagabond renames the man by marking him, just as he himself had been “marked” with the name of a man who was not his legitimate or biological father.

While the son tells this story of torture rather as one of vengeance, Vilbois is shocked and without pity in his reaction to his son’s “confession,”: “sans pitié, sans clémence en son propre nom, et il n'appelait plus maintenant à son aide ce dieu secourable et miséricordieux.”<sup>498</sup> He

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<sup>495</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid., 1199.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., 1200.

<sup>498</sup> Ibidem.

demands that the vagabond go to live in another town, where he would be provided for by the priest, but from where he would be forbidden to leave without permission. The vagabond refuses the offer and implies to his father that as a respected *curé*, he is in his son's power: "Papa, faut pas me la faire... t'es curé... je te tiens... et tu fileras doux, comme les autres!"<sup>499</sup> A violent scene ensues, begun when the *curé* reacts to his son's threats by pushing him into a wall with the table. Auguste grabs a knife, and when the lamp is knocked over, the following description of the fight is narrated as a short confusing blur of drunken and blind violence: "Pendant quelques secondes une fine sonnerie de verres heurtés chanta dans l'ombre; puis ce fut une sorte de rampement de corps mou sur le pavé, puis plus rien."<sup>500</sup> When the *curé*'s head wraps against the service gong, Marguerite rushes in to find the floor covered in blood and both combatants lying on the floor, dead or unconscious. She runs off to find help, and returns with a group of men from town, acting as if she had lost her head. The *curé* is found dead with his throat cut, and the *malfaiteur* is hurt, unconscious and dead drunk. The story ends with the question of why the murderer did not run away. A conclusion concerning his intoxication is accepted: "Il était trop soul."<sup>501</sup> The narrator, however, ends the *nouvelle* by implying that the *curé* may have killed himself: "car l'idée ne serait venue à personne que l'abbé Vilbois, peut-être, avait pu se donner la mort."<sup>502</sup>

Now, this story is not only a tale of bloody and violent vengeance; it offers unique representations of bastardy and fatherhood, as well as Maupassant's naturalist depiction of cross-class gender roles. Christian symbolism and imagery, in this tale, may also be read as an important source of ironic story-telling. In the following pages, I will treat three central themes:

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<sup>499</sup> Ibid., 1201.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid., 1201-02.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., 1204.

<sup>502</sup> Ibidem.

the representation of the paternal bond, the intermingling of social classes, and the representation of the bastard as potentially criminal and volatile.

First of all, the title of Maupassant's tale carries certain connotations in Biblical context. The olive tree is, besides a staple in the economy of Biblical-era Israel, an important symbol; a dove brought Noah an olive leaf during the Great Flood, Jesus and his disciples met often on the "Mount of Olives," and most importantly here, Jesus was betrayed by Judas and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, called an olive grove in the Gospel of John. While this Biblical story centers around sacrifice and condemnation, it is also a narrative of submission; while Judas is plagued by guilt for his betrayal of Jesus, the latter accepts his own death, as planned by his "Father in Heaven." Certain parallels and telling divergences may be drawn between the Biblical episode in the olive grove and Vilbois' meeting with his son.

If "Le Champs d'oliviers" is read as a rewriting of Jesus' arrest and condemnation to death, Philippe-Auguste's refusal to submit to the will of his father and be "territorialized," as it were, against his will, may be read in sharp contrast with Jesus' submission to the will of God the "Father." The presumed suicide of Vilbois in reaction to the sins of his son subverts the Biblical story; rather than the son being sacrificed for the sins of all, the priest sacrifices himself for both his own sins and those of the son. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus stresses the inevitability of his condemnation and his submission to the will of the Father. Jesus commands Simon Peter, who had cut off the ear of a high priest's servant: "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"<sup>503</sup> Philippe-Auguste, the rebellious son, drinks from the cup of his father as well, but the intoxication produced by the priest's best bottles of "vin blanc du cap Corse" only feeds his violent reaction to his father's attempt to confine him. The drinking

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<sup>503</sup> John 18: 11, New International Version (NIV) of the Bible.

of the “cup” mentioned by Jesus to Simon Peter, of course, represents the sacrificial son’s submission to his heavenly Father, but in Maupassant’s tale it is the drunken son himself who attempts to take up the “sword” against the father when their encounter turns violent: “Sentant qu’il allait tomber et qu’il était au pouvoir du prêtre, il allongea sa main, avec un regard d’assassin, vers un des couteaux qui traînaient sur la nappe.”<sup>504</sup> Drunk already, the vagabond refuses the “cup” of submission, further revealing his solitary and sociopathic nature. The priest, for his part, suspends his own submission to the will of God the “Father,” refusing to forgive his son who is beyond salvation:

Lui qui avait tant pardonné, au nom de Dieu, les secrets infâmes chuchotés dans le mystère des confessionnaux, il se sentait sans pitié, sans clémence en son propre nom, et il n'appelait plus maintenant à son aide ce Dieu secourable et miséricordieux, car il comprenait qu'aucune protection céleste ou terrestre ne peut sauver ici-bas ceux sur qui tombent de tels malheurs. Toute l'ardeur de son cœur passionné et de son sang violent, éteinte par l'apostolat, se réveillait dans une révolte irrésistible contre ce misérable qui était son fils, contre cette ressemblance avec lui, et aussi avec la mère, la mère indigne qui l'avait conçu pareil à elle, et contre la fatalité qui rivait ce gueux à son pied paternel ainsi qu'un boulet de galérien.<sup>505</sup>

Not only is the priest’s faith shaken by the shock of meeting his criminal offspring, but his former violent self reemerges. His paternal bond to Philippe-Auguste, while not broken, is shown in the end as a sort of prison, a punishment, the fateful ball-and-chain “riveted” to his “paternal foot.” Submissive obedience and salvation are completely evacuated from this story, when it is interpreted as a retelling of the Biblical arrest in Gethsemane.

Now, if we consider the social status of the father and son, certain traits and behavior may be associated with each man’s respective social class: the father from the aristocracy and the

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<sup>504</sup> CN II, 1201.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid., 1200-01.

son an essentially declassed criminal. The priest Vilbois is attributed the following background: “Issu d’une vieille famille picarde, royaliste et religieuse, qui depuis plusieurs siècles donnait ses fils à l’armée, à la magistrature ou au clergé.”<sup>506</sup> He represents in various ways every social order linked to the aristocracy. He studied law to work at the Palais Royal, and later became a priest. His royalist background represents his obvious tie to the fading monarchy in nineteenth-century France, already obliterated by the Third Republic. His family, as was the norm, sent sons to become magistrates, priests and soldiers. These social conditions and professions, which are all central functions of the aristocratic State, posit the *curé* as a man of the ruling classes; despite the donation of much of his wealth upon taking on the cloth, the priest eats, drinks, and generally lives very well.

If considered in isolation from other Maupassantian bastard narratives, “Le Champs d’oliviers” might also be interpreted as a criticism of the “intermingling” of the classes. The former baron of Vilbois had become attached to the vagabond’s mother, an actress described as “jolie, nativement perverse, avec un air d’enfant naïf qu’il appelait son air d’ange.”<sup>507</sup> She dominated their relationship: “Elle sut le conquérir complètement.”<sup>508</sup> For Vilbois, love trumped his concerns for social propriety: “malgré son nom et les traditions d’honneur de sa famille, il aurait fini par par l’épouser.”<sup>509</sup> His love would only be curbed by his lover’s infidelity with Pravallon, the baron’s own friend who had introduced the lovers to each other. This deception is the impetus behind Vilbois’ withdrawal from society and eventual entrance into the priesthood. When he discovers the woman’s treachery, his love for her turns to a violent reaction of vengeance, and the romantic illusion of her perfection dissolves. At the moment of their

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<sup>506</sup>Ibid., 1181.

<sup>507</sup>Ibid., 1182.

<sup>508</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>509</sup>Ibidem.

confrontation, the actress is recast as a manipulative and shameless woman of the masses, “du peuple,” realigning their relation as socially improper:

Mais elle, enfant des trottoirs de Paris, impudente autant qu'impudique, sûre de l'autre homme comme de celui-là, hardie d'ailleurs comme ces filles du peuple qui montent aux barricades par simple crânerie, le brava et l'insulta; et comme il levait la main, elle lui montra son ventre.<sup>510</sup>

The above description of Vilbois' lover recalls similar “enfants du trottoir” depicted in countless nineteenth-century Parisian narratives, perhaps most famously by Zola. While the actress of Maupassant's tale is above painted as audaciously insulting and generally indecent, Vilbois shows a violent side of himself which is accepted as natural to him, reacting “avec toute la brutalité du demi-sauvage qu'il était”; this reaction manifests itself as the urge to kill both mother and unborn child.<sup>511</sup> Only the actress' insistence that the child was not his prevents Vilbois from committing the double homicide. Vilbois' murderous intention was at first to erase the double-sign of his shame, “anéantir cette double honte.”<sup>512</sup> His relief at hearing that the bastard child was not his own calmed the baron enough for him to allow the actress to leave, banished forever from his sight. It may seem surprising that Vilbois would have ever considered marrying a woman of the actress' social position, thereby relinquishing his freedom as a bachelor, but Vilbois' situation was such that his concern for social expectations had been diminished; both of his parents had died during his law studies, and his considerable inheritance allowed him to live freely without dedicating himself to a career appropriate to his social class: “Donc, ayant hérité soudain d'une grosse fortune, il renonça à des projets de carrière quelconque

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<sup>510</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>511</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>512</sup> Ibidem.

pour se contenter de vivre en homme riche.”<sup>513</sup> This new situation is very favorable for a bachelor lifestyle, allowing the young baron both freedom from parental interference and financial independence. If Vilbois had simply taken the actress as his mistress, or as one of his mistresses, without falling in love with her and contemplating marriage, his violent rage, despair and exile might have been prevented. In this case, the “art of rupture” may have saved him. He may have remained a bachelor, or eventually be married to a more suitable woman, but the circumstances of the narrative lead one to believe that inter-class marriage, or even the belief that such a pairing could pass beyond a casual sexual relationship, is destined to fail, leaving the “loyal” upper-class man open to victimization by a conniving woman “*du peuple*.” As it stands, however, no one is blameless in this particular bastard narrative.

When the priest’s son appears, a haunting specter of the past, it reinforces the opposition to interclass relations; even the other nobleman Pravallon recognizes the risks of becoming too involved with the actress. Although Pravallon keeps her as his mistress up to her death, he never marries her and never officially recognizes Philippe-Auguste as his son, even before he realizes that the boy was the son of Vilbois. The actress-mother in her role as deceptive lower-class manipulator of rich men, continues to appear through her son. Her resemblance to him suddenly manifests itself to Vilbois as the vagabond prepares to tell of his criminal and violent exploits, already mentioned above:

Et il souriait gentiment, avec une grâce féminine sur les lèvres, une grâce perverse que le prêtre reconnut. Non seulement il la reconnut, mais il la sentit, haïe et caressante, cette grâce qui l'avait conquis et perdu jadis. C'était à sa mère que l'enfant, à présent, ressemblait le plus, non par les traits du visage, mais par le regard captivant et faux et surtout par la séduction du sourire menteur qui

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<sup>513</sup> Ibid., 1181.



semblait ouvrir la porte de la bouche à toutes les infamies du dedans.<sup>514</sup>

The question of heredity is always of importance in Maupassant's bastard narratives to some degree, whether in an economic or physical-behavioral context. Here, between the mother and son, there is more of a behavioral resemblance. There is in the above passage the seemingly hereditary cruelty and manipulative nature of the mother, appearing so natural in the son. Although these traits may be inherited in the sense of being learned rather than through genetics, there are other details implying hereditary traits in the story, particularly between the father and son.

As I have earlier pointed out the importance of the bastard's propensity toward crime and violence in Maupassant's bastard narratives, this tendency must be examined with specific reference to not only the vagabond's social circumstances, but also to the personality and gender performance of the father, all of which will provide a better picture of how the traits of the father may be perpetuated, exaggerated, and perverted in the illegitimate son. Firstly, I must return to descriptions of the father Vilbois in order to establish the masculine aura surrounding the man, and how his gender performance, initially depicted positively, will be negatively reenacted by the bastard; the former performs while the latter deforms. The vagabond's masculinity will manifest itself as a criminal and sociopathic performance, a perpetuation of the sexually and gender-based system of deception and manipulation which functions between the vagabond's mother and father, and then between the mother and her lover Pravallon for over thirty years.

Vilbois, although a priest, is shown from the outset of the *nouvelle* as a strong and superior *man's man*.<sup>515</sup> The previously mentioned scene of the priest rowing his boat back to

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 1196.

shore attests to this masculine image. He is very muscular, “l’homme le mieux musclé du pays,” a superior marksman, and an excellent swimmer as well.<sup>516</sup> The brutal violence of Vilbois, particularly in reaction to his lover’s treachery, however, shows a tendency toward aggressive behavior which is manifested again during his dinner with the vagabond. The man’s violent nature is also present in the son, albeit in a more cruel and criminal manifestation. The son explains with pride that he is tough and ruthless: “Je suis débrouillard, moi, quand il faut, et pour la malice, pour la ficelle, pour la poigne aussi, je ne crains personne.”<sup>517</sup> It is of interest that the young man, who was raised by his mother and a nobleman who believed himself the boy’s father, is transformed so quickly into a criminal, considering that his illegitimacy was only discovered when he was fifteen years old. There is little description of the boy’s conduct before this time, no indication of his manners or his propensity for getting himself into trouble. But it is quite clear that in six years of delinquent behavior followed by four years in prison, the young man is completely transformed into a social outcast by age twenty-five. Maupassant seemingly illustrates how the abandonment of the illegitimate child, in whichever form, seems to precipitate the bastard’s abandonment of common morality and any sense of proper social conduct, here as in the case of *Le Bourgeois*, despite the latter’s attempt at self-justification. Although Vilbois the “demi-sauvage” tends toward violence, particularly toward women, he manages to stop himself from murdering his ex-lover, whereas his son displays no such restraint. This wandering bastard follows no religious or political doctrine which might inhibit his violent and sociopathic tendencies. Sociopathic behavior also is demonstrated by Gide’s bastard hero Lafcadio, as we

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<sup>515</sup> In his physical aspect particularly, Vilbois embodies Maupassant himself, the “taureau normand” who was also an active, outdoorsman and avid rower.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 1181.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 1197.

will see, but Gide's bastard will never be caught for his crime, unlike the fatalistically condemned bastards just discussed in Maupassant.

### 4.3 Nomadism and Masculinity: Wandering Bastards

In the following pages I try to make relevant the connection between certain images of “nomadology” as described by Deleuze and Guattari, and what I call “nomadic bastards” found in two of André Gide's works. This analysis shows how the bastard figure is defined, and later redefined through the practice of nomadic wandering, which applies both to physical displacement and social meanderings, similar to hitchhiking and by which the male bastard is exposed to non-traditional social and gender models, and may develop either a hybrid and unique identity, or as part of a marginalized social category. Criminals and homosexuals, for example, pervade Gide's novels, but they are not the primary subject of this section. Gide's bastard heroes, Bernard and Lafcadio, are both exposed to criminal and homosexual elements, but both young men find themselves radically “deterritorialized” socially and geographically, to use the term of Deleuze and Guattari. How and if they reterritorialize is the central object of this section.

Justin O'Brien, renowned critic, translator and Gide scholar, discusses Lafcadio and Bernard as among Gide's “fortunate bastards”:

Lafcadio is the first of the many fortunate bastards in Gide's work who need take into account no past, who need fear no haunting atavism, for whom everything lies in the future. In addition to Lafcadio, the Bernard of the *Faux-monnayeurs* and Gide's

Oedipus are the shining examples of this form of *disponibilité* and *rootlessness*.<sup>518</sup>

O'Brien's use of the words "availability" (*disponibilité*) and "rootlessness" highlights the Gidean bastard's freedom and potential for nomadic wandering. But as we will see, this concept of bastard freedom is not unproblematic, nor is it entirely desirable.

Young Bernard Profitendieu's discovery of his own illegitimacy and his resulting self-exile precipitate his nomadic wandering, whereas Lafcadio Wluiki is born a bastard nomad, raised by a handful of illustrious men, themselves in constant movement. While André Gide's two best known and most developed bastard characters manage to overcome the disadvantages of their illegitimate birth in different and exceptional ways, Bernard illustrates the possibility of the bastard as nomadic free subject to be appropriated by hegemonic social institutions, to free himself from such institutions, and eventually to rejoin the family voluntarily, and in so doing reshaping it. This appropriation is perfectly compatible with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the nomad, which they describe in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

If the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence, it is precisely because there is no reterritorialization *afterward* as with the migrant, or upon *something else* as with the sedentary (the sedentary's relation with the earth is mediatized by something else, a property regime, a State apparatus). With the nomad, on the contrary, it is deterritorialization that constitutes the relation to the earth (...). The land ceases to be land, tending to become simply ground (*sol*) or support.<sup>519</sup>

This lengthy passage explains relatively succinctly the theorists' way of conceptualizing "nomadology," with focus here on "territorialization" and its many derivatives. Considered in such a manner, the Earth itself changes for the nomad; he does not walk on the same ground as

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<sup>518</sup> Justin O'Brien's *Portrait of André Gide: a Critical Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 181.

<sup>519</sup> *A Thousand Plateaus*, 380-81.

others. Territorialization, when applied to conceptions of social roles and hierarchies, is a question of positioning and repositioning, of occupying social space.

With respect to Maupassant's misfits, Gide's Lafcadio represents a more independent bastard, more suited to indefinite nomadism, to perpetual wandering, to the incorporation of various experiences and influences into his social and gender identity, and the inter-class freedom to roam, observe and adapt to a variety of social situations. In the case of Bernard, the social institution to which he submits is that of the family, but his eventual reconstitution of the family will reveal the artificial nature of hegemonic familial structures. In a certain way, Bernard also redefines the role/rule of the father in what becomes an adoptive, exclusively male, single-parent family unit, a far-from-traditional conception of the family in 1925.

#### **4.3.1 Bernard Profitendieu: Prodigal Bastard?**

There are many events which lead to Bernard's return to the paternal home, a handful of which will be discussed in the following pages. I will presently focus primarily on Bernard's nomadism and his position in relation to the family as an ideological structure, as well as his diverse and often private negotiations within political and cultural discourses; I will also briefly treat the importance of religion and questions of politics and nationhood as they influence the circumstances of the bastard nomad, and how they tie into a traditionally ideal family configuration which includes legally married parents and their legitimate children. Institutions such as law, the family, religion, and the nation are personified and put into relation with the novel's theme of illegitimacy; the fathers Profitendieu and Molinier, as judges and fathers, represent the Law as well as the head of the family in the French bourgeois tradition. The Protestant Church is personified and caricatured in the pastor Vedel and Monsieur Azaïs, the heads of the Vedel-Azaïs boarding school, where Protestant austerity is parodied and deformed

by slack morals and the students' lack of discipline and respect for the school's male instructors. Surprisingly, this environment proves sympathetic to Bernard the bastard; there he is able to finish his exams, despite his personal situation and illegitimacy.

Besides the two heads of the boarding school, religion is also presented through the angel/demon with which Bernard will "wrestle" before returning to his father. Lastly, blind and militant nationalism is manifested in a collective representation, witnessed by Bernard at a public meeting in which a national party is recruiting members, including Bernard's older half-brother, the oldest legitimate son of the Profitendieu family. For the present, however, I will continue to explore Bernard's nomadism with primary regard to the "family." I will limit the scope of my analysis to the episodes from the novel concerning Bernard's discovery of his illegitimacy, his thoughts about fatherhood while in Switzerland, and his night with the "angel."

While Bernard's meanderings lead to an ultimate return to the father, they produce a drastically altered version of the ideal patriarchal family, as we have seen. The following passage from Deleuze and Guattari shows how Bernard the nomad's return to the father may be viewed as compatible with the discussion of nomadology in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

The necessity of maintaining the most rigorous of distinctions between sedentaries, migrants, and nomads does not preclude de facto mixes; on the contrary, it makes them all the more necessary in turn. And it is impossible to think of the general process of sedentarization that vanquished the nomads without also envisioning the gusts of local nomadization that carried off sedentaries and doubled migrants (notably, to the benefit of religion).<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>520</sup> *A Thousand Plateaus*, 384.

While Bernard does not remain a nomad indefinitely, he may still not be called a migrant. He migrates in a certain sense from Paris to Switzerland and back again, but for Bernard, there is “no reterritorialization *afterward* as with the migrant.”<sup>521</sup> The ground itself has shifted.

The majority of the narrative takes place in Paris before the First World War, as indicated by the currency of real gold coins in the narrative. Bernard is preparing for his *baccalauréat* exams when he discovers that he is not actually the son of the judge Profitendieu, who had raised him as his son. Upon discovering this, Bernard writes the cold letter to his “false” father, as mentioned earlier, and runs away from home. He stays the first night with his friend Olivier Molinier, and wakes early to go seek his fortune, or at least self-sufficiency. He follows his friend Olivier to the Saint-Lazare train station where the latter is to meet Édouard, his half-uncle, the half-brother of Mme Molinier. Remaining out of sight, Bernard notices Édouard absentmindedly drop a luggage claim ticket, which the young man rushes to collect when the uncle and nephew part company. After claiming Édouard’s briefcase, Bernard finds money, some of which he uses to buy himself a meal, as well as Édouard’s journal. Among the pages of the journal, Bernard finds a letter from Laura Douviers who finds herself alone in Paris, pregnant with an illegitimate child, and abandoned by her lover, Vincent Molinier. Neither her family nor her husband know that Laura is in Paris, and she is too ashamed to face them. In her letter, she asks Édouard for help, so Bernard decides to find Laura and offer his services.

At Laura’s hotel, Bernard introduces himself and explains bluntly yet politely, that he is the only person besides her who knows both who she is and who her lover is, including the full scope of their relationship. At first merely curious about the young man, Laura nearly collapses upon hearing Bernard refer to her child as a “bâtard,” for which the schoolboy apologizes

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<sup>521</sup> Ibid., 380.

profusely. At this point Édouard arrives at the room, reclaims his belongings without being overly harsh with Bernard, comforts Laura, and agrees to meet Bernard to discuss the latter's proposal to become Édouard's *secrétaire*. Not much later, Bernard decides to postpone taking his exam and leaves with Édouard, a writer, and Laura, the desperate adulterer, for Switzerland. There Édouard is meant to find Boris, the grandson of his friend La Perouse, and bring the boy back to Paris to live with his grandfather.

#### **4.3.2 Bastard Exile**

The above summary of Bernard's role in the first part of Gide's novel is sufficient background to begin a study of Bernard's nomadism, the first element of this analysis. I argue that Bernard's letter of departure represents a confessional "outing" of the hidden bastard, although Bernard's parents are already aware of his illegitimacy and Bernard merely "outs" himself to the reader. Bernard, who was previously protected by the illusion of his legitimacy, willingly removes himself from the family. To be more accurate, Bernard rather "outs" his mother and false father in his letter; they are both already aware that Bernard is a bastard, but they keep it a secret. It is in fact the letters kept by Bernard's mother from her old lover, Bernard's father, which "out" Bernard when he happens upon them. Later, by presenting himself as a bastard to Laura, however, Bernard accepts the role assigned to his social and legal status as bastard.

Bernard's letter is first and foremost a purging of sorts; he writes to convince himself of his relief to be freed from the Profitendieu family, and from his presumably factitious filial affection for the magistrate Profitendieu. The letter is a cold admission of Bernard's discovery, "faite par hasard," when looking through his mother's hidden letters. The tone of his letter is cold and somewhat cruel, intimating his great relief at being disassociated from his family, "un



immense soulagement.”<sup>522</sup> He implies that his mother has no great affection for him, and that his “father” accepted to raise him as his son “par horreur du scandale.”<sup>523</sup> The note is signed below a bold and seemingly disrespectful concluding remark:

Je signe du ridicule nom qui est le vôtre, que je voudrais pouvoir vous rendre, et qu’il me tarde de déshonorer. Bernard Profitendieu.

« P.-S – Je laisse chez vous toutes mes affaires qui pourront servir à Caloub plus légitimement, je l’espère pour vous.<sup>524</sup>

The letter provides the first signs of Bernard’s becoming-nomad; he leaves behind his possessions, and refuses the name of his “legitimate” father. Referring to the importance of the name as a sign of legitimate membership in society, critic Marie Maclean writes about the significance of bearing the matronym as a liberation from the “law of the Father”:

If one’s personal narrative is perceived as a fiction, then other fictions may take its place. The bearer of a matronym in a patriarchal society has taken the first step toward seeing that a name is something which can be conferred, can be chosen or can, indeed, be created. The lack or the refusal of a father’s name is a form of social exclusion which can paradoxically be a form of social liberation, conferring a real or imagined freedom from the law of the Father.<sup>525</sup>

Maclean’s argument applies to the case of Bernard Profitendieu since he both lacks the knowledge of his biological father’s name, and refuses the name of his mother’s legal husband. This refusal, as Maclean states, is indeed a “social exclusion” for Bernard, albeit self-imposed. Bernard’s half-brother Charles, concerned that Bernard is not the only bastard in the family, is

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<sup>522</sup> *Romans*, 943.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 944.

<sup>525</sup> Marie Maclean’s “The Performance of Illegitimacy: Signing the Matronym” (*New Literary History*, Vol. 25, No. 1, “Literary History and Other Histories,” Winter, 1994, 95-107), 97.

reassured by his father: “non: rassure-toi. Bernard seul.”<sup>526</sup> Relieved, Charles judges that his illegitimate half-sibling should then assuredly be excluded from the family, but is stopped short by Profitendieu the father: “Charles, sentencieusement: - Dieu chasse l'intrus pour... mais Profitendieu l'arrête; qu'a-t-il besoin qu'on lui parle ainsi?”<sup>527</sup> Profitendieu’s reaction intimates his deep, paternal feelings for Bernard despite his illegitimacy.

The paradoxical “social liberation” discussed by Maclean is equally applicable to Bernard, for whom the revelation of his illegitimacy frees him to wander and mix with numerous and varied social groups throughout the majority of the novel. But as we will see, Bernard’s nomadic existence is only a temporary function. After much contemplation, discussion and travel, Bernard eventually comes to realize that he never felt so negatively about his adoptive father as he expressed in his letter. When he first considers returning to M Profitendieu, who is at this point separated from Bernard’s mother, Laura tells Bernard to not go back to his father “défait,” undone, presumably by the discovery of his illegitimacy: “Ne revenez pas à lui défait.”<sup>528</sup> Gide’s Lafcadio is never *défait*; he manages to remain disconnected from others, and his self-discipline dictates his relations with others. His illegitimacy was never the cause of such scandal as was that of Bernard, since it was never a secret. While Bernard and Lafcadio follow different paths, we have seen how the choices they make attest to the “willful authenticity” shared by both bastard heroes; as we have discussed, by this I mean the sort of authenticity that is explicitly self-creating and independent of legal status.

Now, while Bernard Profitendieu fully qualifies as a nomadic bastard for a time, there are signs that he is preparing to shift back to a more sedentary lifestyle by moving back with his

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<sup>526</sup> *Romans*, 950.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, 1093.

adoptive father. In this sense, Bernard is reterritorialized into a non-hegemonic familial arrangement, and by choosing to return to his legitimate family, he creates a new son-role for himself; his nomadic wandering shapes and changes his views of the family and the meaning of blood ties, in matters of fatherhood in particular:

“Et je ne crois pas, au contraire, à ce qu’on appelle si bêtement “la voix du sang”. Oui, je crois que cette fameuse voix n’est qu’un mythe. [...] Je pense que celui qui m’a tenu lieu de père n’a jamais rien dit ni rien fait qui laissât soupçonner que je n’étais pas son vrai fils.”<sup>529</sup>

This reflection, quoted in part earlier, essentially contradicts Bernard’s letter to Profitendieu, and foreshadows Bernard’s return to the father, following Laura’s reunion with her estranged husband. Bernard’s “abandonment” by Laura and his own casting aside of Sarah Vedel, with whom he has sex toward the novel’s conclusion, are precursors to Bernard’s constitution of an all-male sphere of homosocial solidarity; Madame Profitendieu, while Bernard’s biological mother, is hardly mentioned by Bernard in the later chapters of the book, whereas the paternal bond is what draws him back home when he learns that his mother had left the judge Profitendieu. But before returning, Bernard first veers from the nomadic path in his “devotion” to Laura, willing to sacrifice the freedom he sought in order to “serve” her. Although there is never any inkling that Laura thinks of Bernard romantically, or as any more than an intelligent and infatuated young man, Bernard’s feelings for her are a first clue that he is not dedicated to retaining absolute freedom, and leans toward chivalric codes of love, reminiscent of times when *l’amour courtois* could involve either non-physical love or adultery without creating much of a stir, when bastards could gain honor through merit and virtue. Bernard’s circumstantial background, as a potential young writer for example, is similar to that of a young knight errant,

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid., 1092.

erring, wandering; Bernard is a young unmarried man, a *bachelier* in more than one sense, a *bas chevalier* in his performance of chivalry is indicative of both his propensity for honorability, and his prizing love and authenticity over marriage and legitimacy. The fact that Laura is in the same position as was Bernard's own mother before his birth, reveals the central, yet generally unremarked connection between the two: illegitimacy.

Bernard seeks to earn honor by coming to Laura's aid, rather than discounting honorability in a wholesale manner; he still challenges, however, accepted views of honor and proposes a new model, built from many sources while wandering, with obvious ties to knightly codes of honor. He seeks a new masculine identity through the past, through traditions existing long before the nation and the Civil Code which put bastards like him at a legal disadvantage. Bernard as bastard hero attempts to perform his masculinity without regard to the Law. The voice of Law, however, eventually calls Laura back to her legitimate husband, despite her illegitimate pregnancy, thus leaving Bernard with nothing or no one to whom to devote himself.

### **4.3.3 The Prototypical Bastard Nomad**

As mentioned earlier, Bernard is a later rewriting of Gide's prototype for the bastard "hero," Lafcadio of *Les Caves du Vatican*. Lafcadio's home provides an initial portrait of the young man as well as a stage for enacting his deterritorialization from his very temporary life and quarters, as well as from his connections to the past. As I have explained elsewhere, Lafcadio's principal concern when dealing with others is his strong aversion to obligation or debt; this debtlessness, when reconsidered within the present discourse of territoriality, translates as an avoidance of "paying rent," so to speak, or "land tax." Lafcadio renounces personal possessions until he can own property by his own means, which eventually occurs when the count Baraglioul passes away, leaving Lafcadio with a sizeable inheritance to spend as he will,

with no binding strings attached. The death of the father in this case is the opportunity for the son to come into his own, become “his own man,” and live both freely and in luxury. These circumstances contribute enormously to Lafcadio’s persistence in nomadic wandering; one may even suggest that, paradoxically, he is able to continue a nomadic existence, thanks to the landed aristocracy that finances it, without Lafcadio ever disrupting the proper functioning of the “legitimate” aristocratic family. The depiction of this exceptional character shows how the bastard is not always damned to misery, as is often the case in earlier representations of bastardy, particularly in Realist narratives.

The potential freedom of the bastard, never completely free from criminal inclinations, is reflected in the famous “gratuitous act” of Lafcadio’s railway murder of Amédée Fleurrissoire, Julius’ brother-in-law, as we have mentioned. Lafcadio is nomadic not only through the international education he received from his numerous “uncles,” his mother’s lovers, all nobles from different countries and each teaching Lafcadio different languages and various other “subjects” such as juggling, bookkeeping, fashionable dress, acrobatics and sleight of hand. The young man is also nomadic in his peregrinations throughout the novel, from Paris to Rome and parts unknown, with no final destination set or necessary. The murder scene takes place, symbolically, on a train; the distinctly modern freedom of railway transit is a fitting setting for a seemingly unmotivated act of “morally neutral” freedom. As Julius says earlier to Amédée, the future victim, there are “disinterested actions”: “Ne me comprenez pas si vite, je vous en prie. Par *désintéressé*, j’entends: gratuit. Et que le mal, ce que l’on appelle: le mal, peut être aussi gratuit que le bien.”<sup>530</sup> That which is *désintéressé* may also refer to that which is paid off, paid for, *quitte*. This meaning reinforces the idea that Lafcadio’s nomadic nature and sparse

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<sup>530</sup> *Romans*, 816.

possessions are extensions of his aversion to debt and obligation. It is for this reason that the inheritance left him by the late count guarantees Lafcadio's continued existence as a nomadic bastard, free from judgment and free from the hindrance of property; private property is widely shown as an obstacle to freedom of movement and freedom from debt. For Lafcadio's part, the fortune left him represents his own pay-off; the dead count paid his paternal debt to his bastard son, allowing the latter to live debt-free for as long as he would wish. A recurrent theme in Gide's work is the condemnation of private property and the complimentary call for a shedding of possessions; Gide's most famous characters all seek to destroy or give away their possessions at a certain point. This anti-property theme, made evident in Bernard's letter as mentioned above, is rendered more specific in Lafcadio's obsessive avoidance of debt or duty, which I have developed in my Part II.

The greatest extent to which Lafcadio departs from his demonstrated aversion to ownership is his preference for expensive, elaborate, even dandyish dress. Even this choice challenges the patriarchal power of the fading French aristocracy; Lafcadio's beaver hat, suede boots and gloves and loose fitting suit with its relaxed collar, "le cou non serré," contrast sharply with the austere suits and tight neck-tied collars of Julius, Amédée and Anthime.<sup>531</sup> As I have explored, clothing plays a significant role in *Les Caves du Vatican*. Besides the expense of his vestimentary preferences, Gide's Lafcadio seems uninterested in spending his fortune on a home or property. His lack of real estate reinforces the underlying pattern of Gide's model nomadic bastard, both figuratively and linguistically, by which Lafcadio has no real "état": no trade (...*de son état*), no government and no civil status (*état civil*). Conversely to Bernard Profitendieu, whose more traditional education presumably prepares him for a trade and who was (more or

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid., 822.

less) employed as Édouard's *secrétaire*, Lafcadio exercises no visible profession. Lafcadio takes no political stand, nor is he framed by any discourse of nationalism, or even nationality due to the multinational nature of his upbringing and his models of masculinity, his mother's lovers. Bernard, on the other hand, enters directly into conflict with the political influence of an unnamed nationalistic party, to which he is introduced strangely enough, by the earlier-mentioned wrestling angel.

#### 4.3.4 Modernist Individualism and the Apolitical Bastard

In this scene, Gide leads his reader through Paris with Bernard and the angel, presented perfectly matter-of-factly by the narrator, despite the previously-mentioned fact that Bernard is normally considered a realist and an atheist. The scene takes place in the third and final part of Gide's novel, once poor pregnant Laura goes back to her husband, Olivier is united with Édouard, and just before young Boris' "accidental" suicide overshadows all remaining unsettled plot points of the novel. In this, the least realist scene of the novel, the angel tempts the new *bachelier* by leading him to a public meeting, where three orators profess a nationalistic doctrine for the "régénération de la France."<sup>532</sup> The final orator speaks of what may be considered a dictatorial or fascist ideology:

L'orateur cependant continuait. Quand Bernard recommença de l'écouter, l'autre enseignait un moyen certain de ne jamais se tromper, qui était de renoncer à jamais juger par soi-même, mais bien de s'en remettre toujours aux jugements de ses supérieurs.<sup>533</sup>

This scene recalls the idle chit-chat of Bernard's schoolmates at the start of the novel, gathered in the Luxembourg Gardens to discuss literature and politics; one happened to be reading *Action française*, a nationalist counter-revolutionary periodical, while others discuss the articles of

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<sup>532</sup> *Romans*, 1210.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, 1211.

Charles Maurras, whose monarchist ideology influenced and redefined *Action française*. Certain characteristics of extreme nationalistic parties reflect widespread concerns in late-nineteenth century France, such as a perpetual concern with depopulation and the potential moral and genetic degradation of the nation, often combined in medical discourses.

Bernard rejects this doctrine and refuses to sign the *bulletin* and join the group; he is simply too much of an individualist to adhere. When Bernard asks the angel if he should sign up, the latter tells the new *bachelier* that he certainly should, if he doubts himself: “Oui, certes, si tu doutes de toi.”<sup>534</sup> Bernard’s refusal to abandon his free will, his freedom to think, and to adhere to an absolutist party reflects an anti-fascist quality, a quality here associated with an illegitimate son, whose freedom is reflected in his resistance to authoritarian or proto-fascist influence. We will see shortly how Gide’s idea of the French Republic resembles his bastard figure in their common tendency toward individualism and resistance to extreme nationalism. Far right-wing groups like *Action française*, and nationalist governments such as the Vichy Regime in France draw upon ideas of legitimacy based in a national identity, and Bernard’s bastardy is a reminder that France too saw “illegitimate” governments, not founded on hereditary power or existing hegemonic rule; the Revolutionary French Republic, the reign of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the Third Republic were all considered illegitimate usurping powers by various parties, whether by Royalists, Communards or Bonapartists.

Gide’s novel presents with impressive detail the literary society and atmosphere of Paris at the time, and politics are practically absent from the book, except for the public assembly and the schoolyard discussion described in the scenes above. Bernard’s refusal to implicate himself in any particular political ideology mirrors the author’s resistance to allow politics to infiltrate

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<sup>534</sup> Ibidem.



his vision of modernist narrative. In his personal journals from 1914-1918, Gide speaks very little about the First World War, noting in much greater detail his social life, what he reads, where and with whom he lunches and dines. Rather than setting his novel during the war, the period of its conception, Gide chooses the beginning of the century, a relatively stable period in French politics, a time of colonial expansion and the central point of the forty-year respite between the Franco-Prussian War and the First World War, thereby allowing his novel to explore social, moral and literary questions, without worry for politics, which interested him little:

À vrai dire, les questions politiques ne m'intéressent pas beaucoup; j'ai du mal à me persuader que tel régime soit par lui-même préférable (...)

Oui, les questions politiques m'intéressent moins, et je les crois moins importantes que les questions sociales; les questions sociales moins importantes que les questions morales.<sup>535</sup>

The following citation is from Gide's 1918 journal, at the end of the war. His impressions of the war have little to do with political consideration, and much to do with his personal notions concerning national identity:

C'est proprement la dispute entre le colossal et l'individuel, on l'a dit. Tout ce qui est Français tend à s'individualiser; tout ce qui est Allemand à dominer ou à se soumettre. On a écrit et dit bien des sottises contre l'individualisme - pour n'avoir pas compris ou voulu reconnaître que le triomphe de l'individu est dans le mot divin de l'évangile: qui veut sauver sa vie la perdra, mais celui qui la donnera la rendra vraiment vivante.<sup>536</sup>

To take Gide's generalization at face value, France is a nation of individualists, whereas Germany must dominate or submit, be in power or powerless, leaving no room for thought or practice outside of a master-slave dichotomy, no consideration for individual choice and

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<sup>535</sup> *Journaux*. (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1960), 667-68.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 674.

freedom. Here is where the role and function of Bernard as bastard may truly be applied to politics of nationalism. For Gide, the nationalist resembles more a German or a Spaniard than a true (read individualistic) Frenchman: “Le nationaliste français se reconnaît à son amour pour ce qui est espagnol.”<sup>537</sup> Nationalistic exclusion and intolerance are key aspects of the strict ideology which Gide criticizes: “Le nationaliste a la haine large et l'amour étroit.”<sup>538</sup>

Gide’s purported aversion to all things political, in his fiction at any rate, may also be symptomatic of a modernist esthetics, a reaction to Realism, and thereby to the reality of war. Realism is a problematic subject for Gide’s Édouard’s, who tends toward the abstract and the ideological in the writing of his *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, the title of which Édouard has difficulty explaining to his travel companions in Switzerland, in the second of the novel’s three parts:

À vrai dire, c'est à certains de ses confrères qu'Édouard pensait d'abord, en pensant aux Faux-monnayeurs; et singulièrement au vicomte de Passavant. Mais l'attribution s'était bientôt considérablement élargie; suivant que le vent de l'esprit soufflait ou de Rome ou d'ailleurs, ses héros tour à tour devenaient prêtres ou francs-maçons. Son cerveau, s'il l'abandonnait à sa pente, chavirait vite dans l'abstrait, où il se vautrait tout à l'aise. Les idées de change, de dévalorisation, d'inflation, peu à peu envahissaient son livre, comme les théories du vêtement le *Sartor Resartus* de Carlyle -- où elles usurpaient la place des personnages. Édouard ne pouvant parler de cela, se taisait de la manière la plus gauche, et son silence, qui semblait un aveu de disette, commençait à gêner beaucoup les trois autres.

- Vous est-il arrivé déjà de tenir entre les mains une pièce fausse? demanda-t-il enfin. - Oui, dit Bernard; mais le "non" des deux femmes couvrit sa voix.<sup>539</sup>

This long citation encapsulates the deep intertextuality between Gide’s two books: *Les Faux-monnayeurs* and the earlier *Les Caves du Vatican*. The book described by the narrator,

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<sup>537</sup> Ibid., 668.

<sup>538</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>539</sup> *Romans*, 1085.

Édouard's *Les Faux-monnayeurs*, is in fact *Les Caves du Vatican*, or could be; the mention of Rome, priests and free masons, and less obviously that of exchange, devaluation and inflation, refer to key elements in Gide's *sotie*. The author's manner of presenting one of his own books within another may reveal a desire to point out how he has evolved as a modernist writer, critiquing himself as he dissimulates Édouard's true authorial intentions: the counterfeiting scam in the novel is no more than a half-hearted red herring. After Édouard mentions the fake coin, Bernard produces a real counterfeit coin which he had recently procured to show to the former, already aware of the book's title from reading the writer's journal. Bernard interprets Édouard's standoffishness and reaction to the physical coin as lack of interest. Taking the coin back, Bernard seems to regret having shown it:

Je vois, hélas! que la réalité ne vous intéresse pas.  
-- Si, dit Édouard; mais elle me gêne.  
-- C'est dommage, reprit Bernard.<sup>540</sup>

Bernard shows himself to be a realist in this passage, just as he is called by Édouard: "Les réalistes partent des faits, accommodent aux faits leurs idées. Bernard est un réaliste."<sup>541</sup> Édouard, perhaps without seeming to realize it, expresses what may be considered one of the functions of the modernist novel: to shape factual reality, or the appearance of it, to the author's ideas, rather than starting with fact and strictly realist representations.

Bernard's advocacy for realism is dissolved, however, by his meeting with the "angel"; this unrealistic creature and Bernard's unquestioning acceptance of its existence attest to the waning hold of realism on Bernard, and thereby to the breaking free of the bastard from nationalism as well as from the authority of the patriarchal family. Realism's assumed validity as the representation of truth is shown to be faulty; in Gide's "Les Faux-monnayeurs,"

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<sup>540</sup> Ibid., 1086.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid., 1096.

legitimacy is no longer representative of reality or authenticity, and truth is conveyed through Gide's creation of a modernist narrative and its departure from traditional realist narratives. Shortly after his political *prise de conscience*, Bernard returns to the home of his father, Albéric Profitendieu, whose wife, Bernard's mother, has left him. The novel ends with an entry from Édouard's journal, which records his upcoming dinner with Bernard, Profitendieu and a handful of others: "Nous devons nous revoir demain soir, car Profitendieu m'a invité à dîner avec Molinier, Pauline et les deux enfants. Je suis bien curieux de connaître Caloub."<sup>542</sup> Besides Bernard, the other Profitendieu children are all generally and markedly absent from the third act of the novel; only Caloub, the youngest, reappears in the above passage at the close of the novel.

#### **4.3.5 Moderate Masculine Nomadism**

The fact that Gide presents such a non-traditional father-and-son relationship attests to the essentially modern aspects of *Les Faux-monnayeurs*; the positive light Gide uses to illuminate the reunited (adoptive) father and illegitimate son creates an unmistakable statement concerning the potential authenticity of hybrid social models and roles which were generally excluded from the hegemonic institution of the family at the time the novel takes place. This representation is enough proof of Gide's challenge to traditional familial structures and thereby to the entire French social structure without even mentioning the peripheral (for the present argument) critiques of organized religion and the legal system, both of which have importance throughout the novel. Bernard's return to his father, like Gide's "enfant prodigue," represents the end of his wandering, the term of his nomadism.<sup>543</sup> The ideal of moderation as a masculine virtue, as discussed earlier in reference to Todd Reeser's theses, is recalled by Bernard's performance of a moderate nomadic masculinity. His period of "rebellious" nomadism, for all its initial bravado,

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 1248.

<sup>543</sup> André Gide's "Le Retour de l'Enfant Prodigue," 1907 (Paris : Gallimard, 1978).

was short-lived and moderate; Bernard does not overindulge in drinking alcohol or smoking, he commits no crimes, and he is sexually moderate, only sleeping with Sarah in the novel. Gide's narrator suggests, in the authorial voice in the same self-reflexive chapter discussed earlier, that Bernard rebels against his rebellion: "L'habitude qu'il a prise de la révolte et de l'opposition, le pousse à se révolter contre sa révolte même."<sup>544</sup> His self-moderating rebelliousness is therefore central to the performance of Bernard's masculinity, which remains limited to moderate behavior. Being conscious of his illegitimacy does not in fact change Bernard's temperament in any extreme manner, despite the temptation of extreme nationalism, as we have seen. The moderation embodied in the judge Profitendieu, then, is in fact the same retained by Bernard, even while a self-exiled nomad.

The nomadism of the bastard, in Bernard's case, is significant to a functional practice of resistance, of remaining unaffiliated with Profitendieu and exterior to the family structure. Bernard also embodies Gide's own avoidance of absolute isolation, which is compatible with nomadism, generally practiced in groups. Bernard appropriates and subverts patriarchy by his free agency; he exists within the hegemonic structures of society, the school and the family, while retaining his free will. Lafcadio, Gide's earlier bastard "hero," is a more pure prototype of the essential bastard hero, before this figure is reabsorbed by the family group in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. He provides a vision of the bastard as pure exteriority, refusing all association, all attachment, and embracing his nomadic freedom as a key aspect of his bastard individuality.

While I have already touched upon Lafcadio's performance of the "gratuitous act," I will presently consider both Lafcadio's murder of Amédée Fleurissoire and his dramatic rescue of an endangered infant as expressive of Lafcadio's tendency towards excessive behavior, and of his

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<sup>544</sup> *Romans*, 1109.

embrace of freedom in the most extreme manner. The textual preparation for the murder lies in two conversations, one held between Julius and Amédée, the other between Julius and Lafcadio. After learning from Amédée of the “kidnapped pope,” Julius begins a philosophical discourse, presumably in reference to the motives of the pope’s captors. He stresses to Fleurissoire the importance and risk of “disinterested actions”:

- Mais, dans ce cas, pourquoi le faire? - Précisément! Par luxe, par besoin de dépense, par jeu. Car je prétends que les âmes les plus désintéressées ne sont pas nécessairement les meilleures-au sens catholique du mot; au contraire, à ce point de vue catholique, l'âme la mieux dressée est celle qui tient le mieux ses comptes.<sup>545</sup>

As Julius explains, the “disinterested” act tends neither toward good, nor bad; the term “disinterested” itself indicates a freedom from both. Such acts are said to be motivated by luxury, the need for expenditure, and “play,” all of which according to Julius run contrary to a Catholic ideal. So, to consider the “gratuitous act” as one performed for the sake of excess (*luxury, expense*) may also assume that extreme or immoderate performances of masculinity are gratuitous, performed for the sake of themselves and “free” from the system of monetary exchange. In “The Notion of Expenditure,” Georges Bataille explains the difference between “productive” and “unproductive” forms of expenditure:

Human activity is not entirely reducible to processes of production and conservation, and consumption must be divided into two distinct parts. [...] The second part is represented by so-called unproductive expenditures: luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction of sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity (i.e., deflected from genital finality)—all these represent activities which, at least in primitive circumstances, have no end beyond themselves. Now it is necessary to reserve the use of the word expenditure for the designation of these

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<sup>545</sup> *Romans*, 816.

unproductive forms, and not for the designation of all the modes of consumption that serve as a means to the end of production.<sup>546</sup>

Bataille's description of expenditure in reference to unproductive forms of activity, having "no end beyond themselves," applies quite naturally to the case of Lafcadio. It is of interest to point out that Julius' mention of a "besoin de dépense," or "need of expenditure," has an obvious link with sexual expenditure, particularly for the male, thereby linking Lafcadio's "acte gratuit" to a perceived masculine need to expend sperm.

When Julius explains his ideas for a fictional character to Lafcadio, following the former's discovery of the murder, the writer is newly inspired to depict a character who is free from ethics and morality, and is only motivated by the desire to perform an unmotivated act:

Je ne veux pas de motif au crime; il me suffit de motiver le criminel. Oui; je prétends l'amener à commettre gratuitement le crime; à désirer commettre un crime parfaitement immotivé. Lafcadio commençait à prêter une oreille plus attentive.

- Prenons-le tout adolescent: je veux qu'à ceci se reconnaisse l'élégance de sa nature, qu'il agisse surtout par jeu, et qu'à son intérêt il préfère couramment son plaisir.<sup>547</sup>

While the mere mention of any "motivation" in the case of unmotivated act seems paradoxical, Julius explains that it is the criminal who is to be motivated, rather than the crime itself. The "gratuity" of Lafcadio's actions highlights the state of "*anomie*" in which he exists, a state of lawlessness, defined as either: "1. Social instability caused by erosion of standards and values. 2. Alienation and purposelessness experienced by a person or a class as a result of a lack of

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<sup>546</sup> Georges Bataille's *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 118.

<sup>547</sup> *Romans*, 837-38.

standards, values, or ideals.”<sup>548</sup> Lafcadio’s self-perpetuated “alienation” and “purposelessness,” as evidenced by the unproductive nature of the “acte gratuit,” posit him as an “anomic” bastard, outside of law and society.

Lafcadio’s embodiment of the “free man” is evident not only in the murder scene on the train, but throughout the narrative, particularly early on when Lafcadio is on his way to meet his biological father for the first and only time. Lafcadio performs a heroic rescue of a child from a burning building, although his motivation is unclear and his behavior after the rescue is absolutely unheroic. Geneviève de Baraglioul, Julius’ daughter who had promised a purse of money to a potential rescuer, enlists Lafcadio aid in this rather comedic scene of the novel. Without hesitation, Lafcadio climbs the side of the building and lowers the endangered infant into the arms of its frantic mother. Taking the purse from Geneviève, he hands his sixty franc reward to the baby’s poor mother, but requests to keep the purse as a souvenir of the pretty young woman, both yet unaware that they are half-cousins. Heroics, however, is evidently not Lafcadio’s goal: “Quand Lafcadio descendit à son tour, la foule l’acclamait comme un héros: - ‘On me prend pour un clown,’ pensa-t-il, exaspéré de se sentir rougir, et repoussant l’ovation avec une mauvaise grâce brutale.”<sup>549</sup> This heroic and potentially romantic scene is ended when Lafcadio abruptly leaves the scene of his heroism:

La jeune fille semblait émue, plus pâle encore et comme désireuse de parler. Mais brusquement s’échappa Lafcadio, fendant la foule à coups de canne, l’air si froncé qu’on s’arrêta presque aussitôt de l’acclamer et de le suivre.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

<sup>549</sup> *Romans*, 724-25.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, 725.



While Lafcadio first stops at the burning house because of his attraction to Geneviève, he makes no attempt to ask the young woman's name. The risky rescue attempt may in fact be considered Lafcadio's first "gratuitous act" of the novel. If Lafcadio is unmotivated by money, romantic longing and recognition, the only feasible explanation for the act is a possible desire on Lafcadio's part to resemble a Baraglioul; this is still a serious concern before the ailing count de Baraglioul explains clearly that Lafcadio will never be a part of the family: "Mon enfant, la famille est une grande chose fermée; vous ne serez jamais qu'un bâtard."<sup>551</sup> Calling the young man "my child," the count simultaneously and paradoxically excludes him from any sort of familial relation. Before this explanation, Lafcadio is still considering the potential for his inclusion in the Baraglioul family. Rejected, he reacts stoically, accepting his exclusion (along with an advance on his promised inheritance) and departing from the home of his genitor with a new desire to start over: "occupons-nous à liquider notre passé."<sup>552</sup> The liquidation of all ties to his past is for Lafcadio the final step in completing his becoming-anomic.

The term "liquidation" has a number of useful meanings here. Firstly, and as mentioned earlier, Lafcadio has an obsessive aversion to debt; "Par horreur du devoir Lafcadio payait toujours comptant."<sup>553</sup> He pays for everything in cash. Secondly, a solid that turns to liquid may represent freedom in a variety of ways, particularly in meteorology; water is a free element, changing form and constantly escaping, moving, evaporating, precipitating. This freedom reflects that of the nomad. The bastard's ability to change form and infiltrate or slip into all social groups reflects a "liquid" or fluid character. Justin O'Brien interprets Protos and

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<sup>551</sup> Ibid., 728.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid., 732.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 725.

Lafcadio's discussion concerning "crustaceans" and "subtle men" in terms of liquid inconsistency, following Lafcadio's comment that he is an "être d'inconséquence":

Consequently Lafcadio acknowledges no family and belongs to no society. A "creature of inconsistency," as he boasts, he has more curiosity about himself than about events. In him everything is possible and, as he has hardened no shell, he has nothing to change from. The unusual crime he commits in killing Amédée does not, therefore, change him.<sup>554</sup>

O'Brien's translation of Gide's "inconsequence" is apt; there is inconsistency in Lafcadio's education and in his upbringing, and his constant movement in and out of groups and situations shows a social inconsistency typical of many literary bastards. Lafcadio is unchangeable because he is always already changing; he is imperfect in that he is unfinished. Since he has "hardened no shell," Lafcadio becomes no more of a villain for having murdered Amédée, than he became a hero for his earlier dramatic rescue. While this independence from any ethics may result from Lafcadio's (excessive?) freedom, it also indicates the limit of Lafcadio's identification as "nomadic." His seemingly perfect separation from moral sentiment of any kind denotes a freedom that goes beyond typical nomadic behavior. For Deleuze and Guattari, the nomad, while exterior to the State, is not consequentially without ethics, and the nomadic existence is presented as that of a group, a society. When Lafcadio meets Protos aboard a train following the murder, Protos explains his surprise that the young man seems to believe "qu'on pouvait si simplement que ça sortir d'une société, et sans tomber du même coup dans une autre; ou qu'une société pouvait se passer de lois."<sup>555</sup> Protos attempts to claim Lafcadio for criminal society, asking the young murderer if he will submit to the law of the criminal underground, "la loi des subtils." Lafcadio's downfall, while neither he nor Gide would recognize it as such, is the

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<sup>554</sup> Justin O'Brien's *Portrait of André Gide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 182.

<sup>555</sup> *Romans*, 859.

same as that of Philippe-Auguste, the vagabond bastard of “Le Champs d’oliviers”: not only does he refuse to submit to the Law of the Father, of God, and of society, but he also enters a space of unethical existence. Lafcadio’s refusal to conform and adhere to a shared ethical code, and his aversion to meaningful social relationships, betray a departure from the nomadic model and a shift toward “*anomie*.” Lafcadio’s rejection of any system of law or ethics besides his own proves to be too absolute, leading to the “disinterested” homicidal attack on the train. It is perhaps for this deviation that Gide felt the need to recast the bastard figure in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. In the *Journal of “The Counterfeiters,”* in which Gide chronicles his novel’s development, he explains how Lafcadio was initially intended to be a major character in that novel as well; Bernard eventually replaces Lafcadio as Édouard’s protégée in the second “*journal*.”<sup>556</sup>

While Lafcadio and Bernard are both deterritorialized in various ways, Bernard eventually reterritorializes onto a social space of the purely male family, this time without the mother; the term of his nomadism is limited, as is the extent to which his illegitimacy will uproot his life. The end of Bernard’s wandering exile reveals his freedom to reconstitute the family unit, and to return to a paradoxically non-traditional patriarchal structure. The questioning of the institutions of marriage and the family, continuous throughout the novel, is made possible by Bernard’s nomadic wandering, however limited the time it lasted. Lafcadio, on the other hand, takes his own freedom from any paternal authority, familial obligation or moral sensibility, to its extreme limit; he commits murder simply because he can. The concrete act of murder is more than an illustration of Gide’s famous “gratuitous act”; it represents the sociopathic behavior

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<sup>556</sup> *Journal of “The Counterfeiters,”* translated by Justin O’Brien, published with *The Counterfeiters*, New York: Random House, 1973.

risked when the bastard “hero” extends his personal freedom beyond all consideration for ethics and other people. This slip into sociopathic behavior is an ever-present risk for the “free” bastard; Bernard reins himself in and rejoins society according to a new familial model, while Lafcadio refuses association with both lawful “crustaceans” and Protos’ society of “subtle” criminals.

Gide’s representations of bastard figures, despite their obvious differences, both exhibit behaviors which are clearly identifiable as nomadic; both exist outside of the law or state in various ways, and both exhibit a freedom of movement through both space and society, comparable to the nomads discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. As for the importance of the bastard as a symbol of Modernism, Gide’s modernist expression finds a fitting representative of the movement in these two young men, particularly in Bernard; As Bernard is excluded from a legitimate family and later returns to a changed home that welcomes him, the modernist novel breaks supposed literary law, expresses the writer’s freedom beyond that allowed by the rules of realism. For both Gide and Maupassant, bastard freedom is represented with the ever-present risks of criminality and violence. While bastard nomadism may be linked positively to freedom, it also threatens to become *anomie*.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I hope to have enlightened the work of Gide and Maupassant in a new way, presenting bastards and bachelors in particular as essential figures in the authors' understanding of sexuality and gender roles as presented in their critical depictions of contemporary French society. The importance of this dissertation is its unique treatment of illegitimacy and its consequences as a socio-cultural and literary markers of change in a variety of French literary works which are representative of diachronically and socially diverse subjects, ranging from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth, and depicting bastards and their lives among the working classes and up through the socio-economic hierarchy as far as the declining nobility and the thriving bourgeois class. My analysis of "bachelor behavior" opens up a series of questions pertaining to the link between bachelor masculinities and other categories of masculinity, married heterosexual bourgeois masculinity to name only one variety.

Both the bachelor and the bastard perform and embody a variety of masculinities which differ from hegemonic views of what French men are expected to represent. The bachelor and the bastard also allow a discussion of "authenticity" as very distinct from "legitimacy," in both social and literary terms. Both realism and modernism have strong conceptualizations and representations of the "truth" and of the "natural." The "natural child," then, becomes a perfect literary pretext for a reflection on narrative authenticity. Beyond "legitimacy" and factual "authenticity," I have explored what it means for an individual to exist as "willfully authentic." Gide's bastards Lafcadio and Bernard provide the best illustrations of such authenticity, one that

has nothing to do with legality and which is defined by individual will and choice. Despite many examples of bastard murderers, Maupassant shows in *Pierre et Jean* that not all bastards are degenerates and criminals, and that hereditary characteristics are more important than legal status in certain cases of illegitimacy, such as that illustrated through Maupassant's Jean, the superior bastard son.

Contemporary social debates concerning marriage and sexuality are illustrated in a wide variety of texts by Maupassant and Gide, and how these two authors represent in literature important views of illegitimacy during the time period from approximately 1870 to 1918. The dramatic social upheaval during the period of industrialization in France and following the Franco-Prussian War creates an ideal context for literary work concerning illegitimacy and the "imperfect" institution of marriage as it was framed under the Civil Code of 1804.

Representations of the bastard and his role in literature reflect real changes in French law, particularly the 1884 Naquet law reintroducing legal divorce in France. Bastard narratives can serve as historical gauges of social opinion, depicting social change or the need for it, and often embodying potential challenges to the social, religious and gender orders of turn-on-the-century France. "Illegitimacy" as a subject of critical study has wide-reaching implications for the study of gender roles and sexuality, and it provides a literary space in which to question the legitimacy of hegemonic patriarchy, monetary systems, and religious organizations. While my dissertation focuses on male bastard characters, there remains a wide area of research to be developed in the study of illegitimacy, particularly the area of female bastards and their place in literature, as well as the critical comparison of male and female bastard figures.

Maupassant and Gide both present bachelors as problematic figures in a society that privileges legitimate marriage and children over bachelorhood and bastards, and that tends to

alienate both. The paradigmatic bachelors for these two writers, however, have been shown to be remarkably different however; Maupassant's sexually virile bachelors play a role in a strictly heterosexual "bachelor machine," which often leads to illegitimacy, whereas the bachelor in Gide's fiction must be treated differently, taking into consideration that the homosexual (bachelor) is a common and central figure in his work, often a pederast whose practice of seduction contrasts sharply with its often violent manifestation in Maupassant's bastard narratives.

As the bastard may be conceptualized as a "counterfeit coin," involved in complex negotiations of value and authenticity, this metaphor may be used to analyze other "counterfeits," fakes and fictions, not only in matters of gender, but in also in many questions of politics, religion, culture, and even of literary genre. Maupassant's bastard narratives furnish prime examples of "authentic" sons who are not necessarily legitimate. Along with the distinction between "legitimacy" and "authenticity," we have also witnessed the appearance of the bastard's "willful" authenticity as an exceptional form of self-willed genuineness, particularly in Gide.

I have shown how a static organization of sexual and economical flows is, at least temporarily, challenged by the passage of an errant, wandering figure: the nomad. Both bachelors and bastards have been shown to display "nomadic" traits, opposing them alternately with "grounded" or "territorialized" married men and legitimate sons. In some instances, gender development itself is seen as "nomadic," whereas bastard nomads, especially in Gide, are subject to nomadic wandering and a relative freedom from traditional hegemonic views of sexuality, morality and ethics, sometimes leading to an isolated *anomic* state and violent, even sociopathic behaviors.

Maupassant presents the bastard realistically, drawing attention to the circumstances of illegitimacy and its consequences. He criticizes French society with his trademark ironic style and leads his reader to question the customs and prejudices that condemn single mothers and their illegitimate offspring to misery and worse. Overall, Gide's bastards convey the individual's potential "will to authenticity," and serve as unique observers of society, hinting at the bastard's eventual liberation from juridically mandated inferiority.



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