

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: IN SEARCH OF THE CITY: POWER,  
IDENTITY, AND NARRATIVES OF  
URBANIZATION FROM STENDHAL TO  
ZOLA

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This dissertation studies urbanization in nineteenth-century French novels, exploring the ways that this demographic phenomenon structures plot, describes inner transformations, and most importantly becomes a catalyst for confronting and challenging established power structures. Characters who transition from rural to urban states, either geographic and actual, or interior and moral, force confrontations between a whole series of power constructs embodied by the country and city. Their evolution, mapped in conjunction with demographic studies and the writings of urban theorists, allows us to explore questions of authority, reality, language, and gender in nineteenth-century France. An analysis of the concrete urbanization of Julien Sorel in Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* is followed by a study of the abstract urbanization of Emma in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, who refashions her identity and morals in line with urban ideals. Chapter three employs Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* to study the urbanization reshaping the economic power structures of Paris. Chapter four uses Zola's *L'Assommoir* to question the nineteenth-century idealism behind many urban reforms. Using works by Flaubert, Théophile Gautier, Pierre Loti, George Sand, Claire de Duras, and numerous visual artists, the final chapter explores the relationship between urbanization and Orientalism by transposing the rural-urban binary onto the relationship between Occident and Orient.

Ultimately, this dissertation argues that actual rural and urban geographies become cartographies of power wherein the country and city communicate an entire set of forces competing for agency. Each narrative of urbanization exhibits different manifestations of the city and the country and different types of evolution between the two. Yet each narrative reveals a fundamental transformation precipitated by the clashing of rural and urban ideas, powers, and identities. This transformation shapes and defines nineteenth-century France.

IN SEARCH OF THE CITY: POWER, IDENTITY, AND NARRATIVES OF  
URBANIZATION FROM STENDHAL TO ZOLA

by

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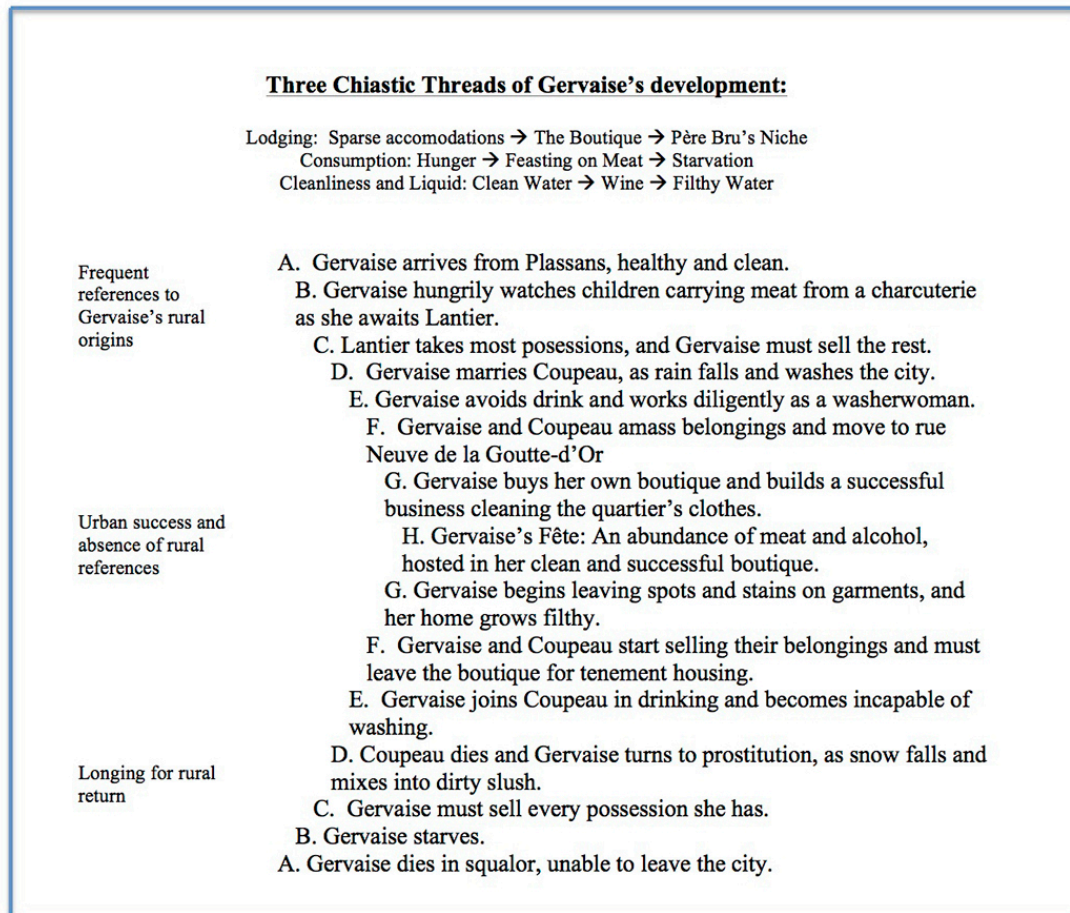
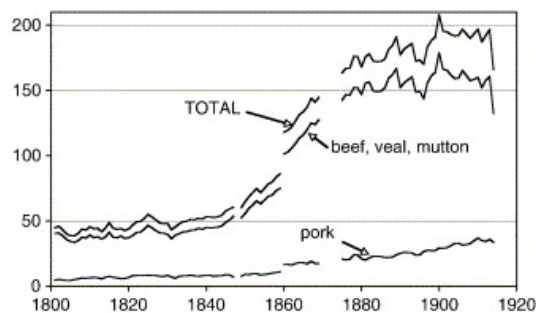


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*“L’urbanisation a servi de berceau à l’homme, l’a défendu contre les carnivores qui menaçaient son existence. Elle l’a protégé de la fureur des éléments... Elle lui a procuré repos et tranquillité pour que puissent se développer ses facultés intellectuelles et morales. Elle a apaisé sa férocité et adouci ses mœurs. Elle l’a conduit à l’état de société, lui a enseigné la culture. Elle l’a civilisé. En un mot, l’homme doit à l’urbanisation, qui naquit et s’est développée avec lui, tout ce qu’il est, tout ce qu’il peut être en ce monde : la conservation de son existence individuelle d’abord, son développement moral et intellectuel ensuite, et enfin son existence sociale.”*

- Idelfonso Cerdà, *La Théorie Générale de L’urbanisation*, 1867

## Introduction: Rastignac's Cry

In the final pages of Balzac's *Père Goriot*, Eugène de Rastignac surveys the city of Paris from the vantage point of the Père Lachaise cemetery and, in contempt for the "beau monde dans lequel il avait voulu pénétrer," famously cries, "A nous deux maintenant!"<sup>1</sup> Rastignac's words embody his personal quest to succeed in Parisian society, and they underscore a fundamental tension of the nineteenth century: province against Paris, rural arrival against the city. They hint at the conflict inherent in France's demographic change and point towards the power struggles that accompany literary representations of the country, the city, and urban migration. The narratives that chronicle France's urbanization become explorations of the establishments upset by a migratory populace, calling into question economic and political structures and destabilizing fixed notions of language and gender. By mapping the evolution of literary protagonists as analogous to nineteenth-century urbanization, we can read the transformation of urban and rural space as a means of grappling with France's changing power constructs.

The rise of cities shaped the nineteenth century. In 1843, Robert Vaughn wrote, "Our age is the age of great cities. ... The world has never been so covered with cities as at the present time, and society has never been so leavened with the spirit natural to cities."<sup>2</sup> Vaughn's interest stems from religious activism and perceived moral duty, but the nineteenth century did undergo an unprecedented explosion of urban centers that implies a specific "spirit natural to cities." By midcentury, the urban population in England surpassed the rural population, the first time in world history for city-dwellers to

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<sup>1</sup> Balzac, *Le Père Goriot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 367.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Vaughn, *The Age of Great Cities: Modern Society viewed in its relation to intelligence, Morals, and Religion* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985), 1.

outnumber the countryside.<sup>3</sup> In 1800, no Western city had even a million people, yet by 1850, London had more than two million inhabitants and Paris over a million.<sup>4</sup> In France, migration from the countryside to the city increased to such an extent that the phrase “rural exodus” was coined to describe the phenomenon.<sup>5</sup> Seasonal migration was never unusual, as an agrarian economy always experiences the natural flux of workers and crops to accompany harvest and trade. But as the century progressed, migration became emigration.<sup>6</sup> Although it proves difficult to capture in one number the demographic effects of urbanization, a conglomerate of statistics and records allows us to discern a society drastically displaced from the beginning of the century to the end, transformed from a political structure anchored in the country, to one worked out in the city. Despite the fact that agricultural and rural populations remained a majority in France until well into the twentieth century, urbanization emerges as a dominant narrative of France in the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

If the rise of the city is the story of the nineteenth century, the novel proves the ideal means of transmitting that story. The growth of the novel and the city are inseparable, as these stories allow “toute société urbaine nouvellement installée de déchiffrer les indices et les codes d’un espace inconnu.”<sup>8</sup> James Donald asserts that the novel not only expresses the city, but *creates* it:

The relationship between novel and city is not merely one of representation. The text is actively constitutive of the city. Writing does

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford Univ Press, 1973), 217.

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, 1961), 529.

<sup>5</sup> Leslie Page Moch, *Paths to the City: Regional Migration in Nineteenth Century France* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983), 19.

<sup>6</sup> Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 285.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Max Raynaud, “‘À nous deux... la ville’ ou comment, au xixe siècle, le roman et l’urbanisme s’inventent réciproquement,” *Revue Urbanisme* 379 (2011): 39.

not only record or reflect the fact of the city. It plays a role in producing the city for a reading public... At their best, novels imagine the sort of *living city*... [they] are speech acts in that they help to construct that living symbolic city.<sup>9</sup>

City builders, like those imagined by Donald, dominate the nineteenth-century French canon. The city of Paris transcends mere setting for authors like Balzac, Stendhal, Hugo, and Zola, becoming an active character as much as passive backdrop. The panoramic gaze they direct on the city mimics the perspective used in urban planning, delivering a literary “regard qui inaugure l’autre facette de l’urbaniste, celle du planificateur ; un regard qui sait ce qu’il voit, qui a appris les détails et les secrets de la ville, un regard qui contient un projet.”<sup>10</sup> Haussmann’s wide boulevards and desire for unobstructed sight mirror the urban literary experience where authors describe the city in elaborate detail and allow the reader unrestricted visual access. Effectively, the writing of urban novelists “narrativise l’espace.”<sup>11</sup> The novel comes into urbanity along with the nation, playing a key role in mapping urban space and experience, in comparison to earlier centuries where cities featured less prominently.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, critical discussions of urban growth frequently narrow into discussions of Paris exclusively. This phenomenon finds historical backing, as migration to Paris dominates nineteenth-century French urbanization, with the majority of its growth due not to natural evolution, but migration from the provinces.<sup>13</sup> Census records show minimal Parisian growth across the eighteenth century, yet during the nineteenth

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<sup>9</sup> James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 127.

<sup>10</sup> Raynaud, “À nous deux... la ville,” 40.

<sup>11</sup> Henri Mitterand, in Søren Pold, “Panoramic Realism: An Early and Illustrative Passage from Urban Space to Media Space in Honoré de Balzac’s Parisian Novels *Ferragus* and *Le Père Goriot*,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, vol 29, No. ½ (2000): 47-63, 49.

<sup>12</sup> Raynaud, “À nous deux... la ville,” 39.

<sup>13</sup> Tom McDonough, “City of Strangers,” *The Invisible flâneuse? : Gender, public space, and visual culture in nineteenth-century Paris*, ed. Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 149.

century, the population exploded from approximately 546,000 to almost 3 million inhabitants, signaling an unprecedented migration to France's largest urban center.<sup>14</sup> French urbanization is characterized by a more dominant capital than her urbanizing neighbors Germany and England. "The growth of Paris dwarfed all other French cities and has dominated the awareness of contemporary observers and historians," John Merriman explained, "just as Paris dominates France."<sup>15</sup> Walter Benjamin famously christened it the "Capital of the Nineteenth Century," devoting his mammoth (and unfinished) *Arcades Project* to a study of Paris' incarnation of capitalism and modernity. Literary representations of the city work in tandem with actual demographic explosion to firmly anchor Paris as the dominant force and promote it as mythic presence. Hans – Joachim Lotz claimed that "ce mythe de Paris au XIXe siècle est constitué par ces sources littéraires, mais il a pris racine aussi dans l'évolution économique et sociale de la capitale avec ses répercussions dans l'urbanisme," noting this comingling of fact and fiction especially in the "thème nouveau de la foule qui reflète les effets de cette 'explosion' démographique."<sup>16</sup>

This myth permeates the nineteenth-century French canon. French novelists of the nineteenth century create, as much as record, the urban landscape of Paris, mapping it as one of their most enduring contributions. Balzac's Paris is the "breeding ground of mythology,"<sup>17</sup> with no character in *La Comédie Humaine* more epic or antagonistic than Paris itself. Eugène Sue fed the papers a sensational diet of Parisian crime and intrigue in

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<sup>14</sup> "Ville de Paris: Population and Density from 1600," <http://www.demographia.com/dm-par90.htm>. Accessed November 2015.

<sup>15</sup> John Merriman, "Images of the Nineteenth-Century French City," *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishing, 1981) 11.

<sup>16</sup> Hans –Joachim Lotz, "L'Image irréaliste, bizarre et mythique de Paris chez Balzac et Baudelaire," *Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Aspects d'un mythe littéraire*. (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1984), 96.

<sup>17</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 83.



the serial publication of his *Mystères de Paris*. Victor Hugo's sweeping descriptions of Paris in *Les Misérables* and *Notre Dame de Paris* prompted Benjamin to conclude, "All that can be found anywhere can be found in Paris."<sup>18</sup> In the introductory text originally written for *Paris Guide par les principaux écrivains et artistes de la France, Paris, 1867*, Hugo boldly contends that the city has assumed the roles formerly held by Jerusalem and Rome, becoming a light for all humanity.<sup>19</sup> The numerous works Zola situates in Paris later color this claim, as his unlucky urban dwellers show that "ce phare n'éclaire pas également les hommes."<sup>20</sup> We find symbiosis between Paris and her inhabitants in Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale*, where he situates each character within the *quartier* that corresponds to their class. Similarly, Baudelaire immortalized an entire urban experience in his Parisian *flâneur*. More than a site for writing or analysis, the city was for Baudelaire the "symbole assurément d'une structure intérieure au poète."<sup>21</sup> The prominence of Paris as setting, antagonist, and symbol across nineteenth-century novels reveals its status as

Un cadre privilégié pour l'exploration de cette image de la condition humaine. C'est un lieu connu : connu de tout lecteur. Les descriptions en sont irrécusables, et garantissent le malheur qui sort d'elles. Lieu par excellence du plaisir, il est du coup celui d'un ennui de vivre à quoi rien ne saurait remédier. Capitale des élégances, il est celle de la légèreté et de la dégradation. Ville de foule, il est ville de rencontres anonymes qui favorisent des transgressions (inceste, érotisme libéré, fantaisies malveillantes). Il est la ville où l'isolé peut ne pas recevoir un regard, obtenir une parole. Le suicide même y devient fait divers. Villes des lieux communs de la promenade et de la conversation, quand Paris est transposé dans l'écriture, il apparaît comme possédant un sombre « génie du lieu »

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

<sup>19</sup> See page 238 in the fifth chapter for further discussion of this element of Hugo's text.

<sup>20</sup> Marie-Claire Banquart, *Paris "Fin-de-siècle" de Jules Vallès à Remy de Gourmont* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 2002), 105.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

pour cela même : l'ambiguïté et la mort sont au fond de ses habitants, sous sa terre et dans ses rues.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond dominating literary portrayals of urbanism, Paris eclipses all other critical discussions of city life and migration in nineteenth-century French literature, providing a rich body of works that study the ways that Paris is represented, understood, and actively present across literature, history, and culture. Benjamin uses his *Arcades Project* to highlight the literature, politics, economics, art, and cultural discussions passing through the capital and creating “a feeling of vertigo characteristic of the nineteenth century’s conception of history. It corresponds to a viewpoint according to which the course of the world is an endless series of facts congealed in the form of things...[it] makes an inventory.”<sup>23</sup> To inventory the whole of modernity, to dissect and understand it, Benjamin needed only to catalogue Paris. In *Paris “Fin-de-siècle” de Jules Vallès à Remy de Gourmont*, Marie-Claire Banquart argues not only for the city’s dominance in literature, but for its necessity. Paris is the “lieu où s’expriment par excellence les forces antagonistes de leur temps et leur propre inquiétude, mais aussi comme un lieu où ils peuvent le plus librement exprimer leurs désirs.”<sup>24</sup> In a 1982 colloquium titled “Paris au XIX siècle: Aspects d’un mythe littéraire,” scholars came together to explore the mythical proportions assumed by Paris and transmitted in French literature. “Le mythe [de Paris] est partout,” one critic wrote, “mais on lit dans le mythe une réalité urbaine.”<sup>25</sup> Numerous other studies have detailed the relationship between Paris and an individual

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Banquart, *Paris “Fin-de-siècle,”* 382.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Bellet, preface to *Paris au XIX siècle: Aspects d’un mythe littéraire*. (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1984), 9.

author's work. It is tempting to allow the infinitely interesting urban reality of Paris to obscure all other discussions of urbanity and migration in nineteenth-century literature.

### ***Urbanization Beyond Paris***

If this mythical Paris is the primary urban referent, so too does it dominate nineteenth-century literary criticism, preventing further critical discussions of urbanization. Contemporary author Aurélian Bellanger concluded that,

À vrai dire, il n'y a qu'une seule vraie métropole en France, c'est Paris. Et toute personne qui assume une ambition importante rêve d'aller à la capitale –cet imaginaire est prégnant et omniprésent dans l'histoire et la littérature françaises. Être français, de fait, c'est avoir un rapport complexe à la capitale de la France.<sup>26</sup>

The deeply entrenched divide between Paris and province both permeates literature and is perpetuated by it. Bellanger claims the relationship between Paris and France finds no comparison with Berlin and Germany or Rome and Italy, and his claim corroborates Paris' prominence in literary, critical, and historical studies. Yet my own study proposes venturing beyond the Paris-province dichotomy of urban development in French literature. In spite of the fact that half of all migration in France consisted of movement within *departments*, rather than to Paris,<sup>27</sup> the capital remains not only the summit of urbanity but the primary focus of studies of literary urbanism. A survey of the critical landscape regarding urban growth in literature reveals great attention to a single Parisian destination, but little regard for the transformative process as a whole. We lack a study of *urbanization* within novels, of characters migrating to the cities, adapting to new urban

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<sup>26</sup> Damien Augias, "Aurélian Bellanger: J'aime cette idée que la France n'est pas un vrai pays," *Slate*, 3 June 2017, accessed 7 June 2017, <http://www.slate.fr/story/142475/entretien-aurelien-bellanger>.

<sup>27</sup> Moch, *Paths to the City*, 23.

environments, or emulating the urbanizing process in their own development. My work situates itself in this critical lacuna.

Several works do address the changing demographics of France from a historical and socio-critical perspective. Most notably, Eugen Weber's *Peasants into Frenchman: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* studies the slow transformation of France from a rural and agrarian based society to one concentrated in urban centers. He analyzes the historical, economic, cultural, political, and linguistic components of this change, highlighting especially the politically motivated "colonization of France by the French." Lewis Mumford's *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* studies the rise of cities within Western culture more broadly, focusing especially on the capitalistic impetus for urbanization and devoting substantial attention to French urban planning in the nineteenth-century. He offers an overall pessimistic analysis of urban transformation as "bleak and ugly,"<sup>28</sup> and the advances in transportation necessitated by increased commercialism and trade as making a "wound in the earth [that] was unhealed."<sup>29</sup> John Merriman and Leslie Page Moch both offer more narrowly focused studies of urban migration in nineteenth-century France, studying regions and cities apart from the capital. However, Merriman himself laments the absence of more critical discussions of urbanization beyond the confines of Paris.<sup>30</sup> While not specifically directing his observation towards French scholarship, Mumford expressed a similar dissatisfaction. "With a few outstanding exceptions," he claimed, "one still looks in vain for fullness of understanding of the normal processes that the city furthers."<sup>31</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 463.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>30</sup> Merriman, "Images of the Nineteenth-Century French City," 40.

<sup>31</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 533.

resounding sentiment among demographers and migration scholars is one of dissatisfaction, even more so in the case of French studies where Paris exerts such a mammoth presence.

British literary criticism provides a glimpse of what French scholarship lacks. The most pertinent contribution to the study of urbanization in literature comes from Raymond Williams's study of the representation and evolution of the city and the country in British literature. Williams analyzes not merely the references to the city and country across the centuries, but their relationships to each other and their evolving connotations. He presents the gradual transformation of England from agrarian to industrial, highlighting the ways that country and city in poetry and novels act as surrogates in the changing debates about power. Williams concludes his work with the exhortation for similar works in the literatures of other countries, and his approach greatly informs my study. His project is vast, covering several centuries, countless authors, and multiple literary forms to paint a holistic panorama of changing relationships between the country and the city.

This dissertation attempts to fill the similar void in French scholarship, albeit on a significantly smaller scale. My own scholarship takes a much narrower focus, looking at the evolution across one century, but even more, focusing on the individual development of certain characters in their movements between country and city. When we approach the story of the city in the nineteenth century from the critical standpoint of its formation, genesis, development, and perpetual movement, rather than any one urban destination, several things become apparent.

The city and the country in literature are not exclusively records of places. They are, and have always been, fictions written in opposition to each other. While not denying the obvious existence of actual cities and real rural communities, the literary representations of both communicate the perceptions, goals, and anxieties of urbanization as much as they do factual existence. Williams asserts that the terms “country” and “city,” “seem to stand in for the experiences of human communities” as much as actual places.<sup>32</sup> He devotes considerable time to the study of poetic reflections of the country and their role in idealizing an Arcadian past that never existed, yet gained popularity in a time when capitalist agriculture was being pioneered and engendering a “conflict of values.”<sup>33</sup> Williams illustrates how authors use the geographical divide of country and city to highlight an ideological divide between an idealized past and an uncertain future, and between nature and worldliness, concluding:

Clearly, ideas of the country and the city have specific contents and histories, but just as clearly, at times, they are forms of isolation and identification of more general processes.... It is that in country and city, physically present and substantial, the experience finds material which gives body to the thoughts.<sup>34</sup>

James Donald similarly writes of the “imaginary city” as a way of understanding an “experience, [a] way of seeing, rather than to portray a place.”<sup>35</sup> Donald agrees with Williams in affirming the role that literature plays in shaping this experience, describing the imaginary city as

Shot through by the contents of the archive city. It has been learned as much from novels, pictures and half-remembered films as from diligent walks round the capital cities of Europe. It embodies perspectives, images,

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<sup>32</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>35</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 3.

and narratives that migrate across popular fiction, modernist aesthetics, the sociology of urban culture, and techniques for acting on the city.<sup>36</sup>

Ultimately, the country and the city in literature function as two forms of human experience in conflict with each other, embodying changing historical realities and voicing ongoing social conflicts.

Surrounding these two forms is a myriad of terms beneficial to define, even if defining intangible concepts proves more difficult than fixed realities. The terms “rural” and “urban” represent to us the opposition between pastoral or natural spaces and city centers. Inherent in the understanding of rural locales is a sense of something past and innocent, frequently idealized, even if, as Williams claims, this Arcadian state never existed. This idealization of rural spaces figures especially prominently in nineteenth-century French romanticism and landscape painting, as industrialization provoked the rise of its counter image in the form of untouched and natural vistas.<sup>37</sup> The concept of an urban space is “mediated through the sociological, cultural and political associations... it is these connotations that are condensed in the imaginary space of *the city*.”<sup>38</sup> As we shall see, what is “rural” and what is “urban” is highly subjective. For Julien Sorel in Stendhal’s *Le Rouge et le noir*, Besançon is urban in comparison to Verrières, yet is diminished in regard to Paris. The terms rural and urban broadly allow us to understand two directions of movement: one towards scattered communities, natural settings, ancient systems, old regimes, and traditional values or morals; the other towards condensed populations, the advances of capitalism and industrialization, disrupted moral systems, and “modern” values.

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Robert L. Herbert, “Industry in the changing landscape from Daubigny to Monet,” *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Merriman, 149.

<sup>38</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 121.

Even within the term “urban,” we find distinctions. While, as Mumford, Weber, and Williams repeatedly highlight, there is an indisputable connection between urbanity and capitalism in the nineteenth century, we cannot simply equate urbanization with industrialization. In her analysis of urban migration in southern France during the nineteenth century, Leslie Page Moch concludes that,

Destinations were urban, but not industrial... Major cities of the nation followed the same pattern; their growth at the end of the nineteenth century did not coincide with periods of industrial expansion. Industrialization and urbanization are firmly wedded in images of a change during the nineteenth century, but the image is a faulty one; industrialization and urbanization occurred together in France only in rare cases.... More commonly, regions and cities lost their traditional industries as urban areas grew. Nationally, the tertiary sector expanded slightly more than the industrial sector between 1850 and 1900.<sup>39</sup>

Urbanization is frequently conflated with industrialization, as this elision serves to further the oppositional agenda between the representation of the country as untouched nature and the city as crude industry. This binary precludes an understanding of all the myriad forces at play in urbanization, as well as the multiple representations assumed by the city. Weber provides a more nuanced understanding of the forces shaping urban migration by highlighting the role that increased transportation, schooling, and military service played in modernization and urban growth.<sup>40</sup> Moch likewise illustrates that urbanization must be accredited as much to changes in the countryside as to the lure of the city.<sup>41</sup> To understand urbanization as greater than mere industrialization, we must understand the city as a site of capitalism, but not exclusively industry. This distinction proves easily distinguishable when we study the urbanization of individual characters seeking their

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<sup>39</sup> Moch, *Paths to the City*, 201.

<sup>40</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 494.

<sup>41</sup> Moch, *Paths to the City*, 203.



fortunes in the city, but not entering into industrial professions, such as Zola's Denise (a store clerk) or Gervaise (a laundress), discussed in chapters three and four.

Finally, we must understand the difference between studying urbanization and studying isolated urban centers. Urbanization is inherently transformative, the movement from rural to urban more than just representation of one or the other. Nineteenth century Spanish architect and city-planner Ildefonso Cerdà's *Théorie générale de l'urbanisation* defined urbanization as "l'acte de convertir en *urbs* un champs ouvert ou libre."<sup>42</sup> This conversion entails a perpetual clash of all the forces represented by conceptions of the country and city and is typified by movement in every sense. We find this not only in evolution from rural and urban, but in the city's own perpetual motion. Baudelaire's *flâneur* comes to mind, that embodiment of the male gaze and the incarnation of the feeling of being at ease in the metropolitan city. This ease comes not from static presence, but from constant movement. The *flâneur*'s relationship with the city is predicated on motion, rather than immobile speculation. Mapping works in terms of urbanization means detailed movement between rural and urban states.

We can discern regular associations that allow us to construct, dissect, and understand the rural and urban fictions, even if they are divorced from a sole identity. The city doubles as a sign for wealth, money, *la foule*, power, and isolation, while the country conjures images of innocence, pastoral traditions, and nostalgia for the past. On its surface, urbanization is "a proportional increase in the number of people living in urban areas as opposed to rural regions,"<sup>43</sup> but in reality, it is a means of understanding the oppositions, forces, and ideas defining and shaping France in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>42</sup>Ildefonso Cerdà, *La Théorie Générale de L'urbanisation* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 82.

<sup>43</sup> Merriman, "Images of the Nineteenth-Century French City," *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, 17.

Thus, I use the city and country as both concrete and abstract concepts, highlighting actual rural and urban spaces through which characters evolve, and the intangible forces they confront en route, embracing the “economy of symbolic constructs which have material consequences that are manifested in an enduring reality.”<sup>44</sup>

### ***Proxies of Power***

If rural and urban spaces serve a symbolic as much as a historical function, what do they represent? Theorists of urbanism all emphasize the tension between country and city as first and foremost indicative in shifting power constructs. I spoke of the conflict between the two earlier, yet the novels I study highlight not just the opposition in urbanization, but exploitation. The countryside fuels the city, exhausting its people and its resources. Trade records from the nineteenth century “reflect the increasing importance of the city at the expense of the country. Cottage industry and rural artisans lost markets for their goods. As the agricultural sector declined, the prominence of the peasantry in the nation diminished.”<sup>45</sup> We see this in Zola’s correlation between increased meat consumption and city dwelling, the urban populations feasting on the labor of rural workers.<sup>46</sup> In his presentation of British literature, Williams concludes that “the relations are not only of ideas and experiences, but of rent and interest, of situation and power; a wider system.”<sup>47</sup> His assertion rings true in French literature as well, where urbanizing individuals struggle against numerous powers in their quest to transform from

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<sup>44</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 27.

<sup>45</sup> Moch, *Paths to the City*, 19.

<sup>46</sup> See page 145 and page 169.

<sup>47</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 7.

a rural to an urban state. They rarely succeed. In their failures, we can explore shifting power structures.

The city and the country embody the power struggles that defined the nineteenth century. In his writings on the urban proletariat, Karl Marx concluded that the revolutionary cause is “avant tout une révolution des villes,”<sup>48</sup> recognizing that the desire to overthrow established authorities primarily grows in urban centers. Mumford claimed that “the chief function of the city is to convert power into form,”<sup>49</sup> and we see this worked out through intentional architecture and city planning. Robert Vaughn idealistically asserted that cities narrow the distance between the classes and announce “a more equal diffusion of wisdom and humanity as to constitute the great object of society in the ages to come.”<sup>50</sup> This idea is seconded by Idelfonso Cerdà whose plans for Barcelona and theoretical writings promised “une société pleinement démocratique et égalitaire comme fruit, non seulement de la lutte politique, mais aussi des valeurs universelles de la science.”<sup>51</sup> Yet this moralistic optimism proves incongruent with the reality of calculated urban planning. We find this clearly in the controversial reforms of Baron Haussmann under Napoleon III. Mumford classifies Haussmann as one of the “Baroque city planners,” designing a city focused on controlling and containing unruly masses. He cites Haussmann’s series of straight boulevards to support military control and access and notes his manner of “improving” the squalid conditions of Paris’ older neighborhoods by wiping them out.<sup>52</sup> In reading the city as text as well as geography, we can decode the power struggles inherent in architectural and organizational decisions.

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<sup>48</sup> Karl Marx, quoted. in Cerdà, *La Théorie Générale de L’urbanisation*, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 571.

<sup>50</sup> Vaughn, *The Age of Great Cities*, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Antonio Lopez de Aberasturi, preface to Cerdà, *La Théorie Générale de L’urbanisation*, 64.

<sup>52</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 288.

When we compare this complex urban organism as a whole to the country, even more machinations come into play.

The discourses around power, agency, and authority in which the country and city act as proxies can be understood from several angles. Notably, they manifest a clash between old and new. The country conjures images of the past, provoking a “romantic structure of feeling – the assertion of nature against industry and of poetry against trade; the isolation of humanity and community into the idea of culture, against the real social pressures of the time.”<sup>53</sup> The agrarian focus of rural economies, coupled with the vestiges of a feudal tradition cemented the country as a sight of old power, old money, and old ways of life. In British literature, Williams notes a “defense of a ‘vanishing countryside’ – ‘the open air,’ ‘the life of the fields’ – can become deeply confused with that defense of the old rural order which is in any case being expressed by the landlords, the rentiers, and their literary sympathizers.”<sup>54</sup> A similar description applies to French literature. The revolutions that toppled the Ancien Régime displaced authority from rural landowners and shifted it to urban centers. Cities stand as a new incarnation of power, where the commercial merchant replaces the baron and we find “an aristocracy of capitalists to compete with an aristocracy of landholders.”<sup>55</sup>

This capitalism defines the city, forever altering the fabric of the French economy. Capitalism upsets the balance of power, shaping the city through economic and profit-driven needs rather than bloodlines and landownership. The absence of landownership proves especially important in transferring power from dispersed gentry across the countryside to concentrated urban merchants. Zola illustrates the presence of capitalism

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>55</sup> Vaughn, *The Age of Great Cities*, 84.

in every aspect of the city in his novel *Au Bonheur des dames*, discussed in length in chapter three. His novel traces the urban success of several rural migrants, all of whom rise in society through engaging with Parisian consumerism. The eponymous store acts as a microcosm for the city as a whole, wherein the modes of the marketplace dictate every aspect of urban life. Mumford describes the countryside as tied to an old order of agricultural, symbiotic work that “restores deliberately what man subtracts from the earth.”<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, the industrial revolution and capitalism consisted of destructive processes that either stripped the earth (as in mining ventures) or commoditized every aspect of human experience. The struggle between the country and the city can and must be understood as a struggle over both *how* power is manifested and *who* has a right to it. Williams argues that capitalism as a mode of production is in fact what we usually mean when we talk of urbanization, and while the two are not universally synonymous, capitalism does greatly define the city’s new agency.

In this light, we can understand why Paris dominates the critical discussions of the city in French literature. Its role in the marketplace and commercial culture is unparalleled. The city and the country frequently reduce to Paris and province, a deceptively simple term that stands for all “not-Paris,” and provide us with another power system threatened by urbanization. How to unite Paris and province was a centuries-old political debate in France. According to Weber, “a lot of Frenchmen did not know they belonged together until the long didactic campaigns of the later nineteenth century told them they did, and their own experiences as conditions changed told them this made sense.”<sup>57</sup> Walter Benjamin maintained that the city dweller’s “political supremacy over

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<sup>56</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 450.

<sup>57</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 113.

the provinces is demonstrated many times in the course of the century,”<sup>58</sup> an assertion backed by the literary experience of rural migrants to the city. Weber writes of Paris’ slow “colonization” of the countryside as what actually made these peasants French, the capital standing in as the national experience. While the Paris-province dichotomy certainly exists, I observe it as merely another understanding of power struggles at play in the nineteenth century – not the only critical approach. When we start to dissect the tensions that exist between the country and city, we unravel a whole series of oppositions of which Paris versus province is only one.

These oppositions run deeper than economics, entering into more basic human relationships. Beyond the readily apparent aspects of capitalism verses agrarianism and Paris versus province, the conflict between rural and urban societies exposes further shifting conceptions of identity. My work highlights the way that urban migration calls into question gender constructs. As Julien Sorel migrates to the city, he assumes feminine characteristics before the virilized Mathilde, his Parisian lover. Similarly, Emma Bovary claims male agency at the peak of her urbanity, her actions and dress placing her in a liminal space of performative gender. This opposition is not as clearly defined as the others I have highlighted, as we cannot neatly settle the city and country into binary gender representations. According to some scholars, the nineteenth-century French city was “coded as a place of (white, masculine) pleasure, and hence as a threat to bourgeois femininity,”<sup>59</sup> but literary representation of urban spaces frequently reveals increased feminine agency and assumption of masculine attributes. Women exert buying and

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<sup>58</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough, *The Invisible flâneuse? : Gender, public space, and visual culture in nineteenth-century Paris*, ed. Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 2.

selling power in the new urban market economies, power that jeopardizes masculine authority. Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough explore the presence of the *flâneuse*, the female counterpart of Baudelaire's masculine stroller, showing how these women, while less iconic in visual culture, existed as "an irruption in the city, a symptom of disorder, and a problem."<sup>60</sup> The city can be read "not as the instrument or unproblematic site of masculine authority, but as the space which puts that desired authority at risk" with hyper-masculine representations a "compensation, a defense mechanism against the threats posed by his environment."<sup>61</sup> The nineteenth-century city proves inextricably intertwined with the nineteenth-century woman. Marie-Claire Banquart illustrates that "Jamais, peut-être, ville ne fut plus frénétiquement assimilée à la femme – mère et maîtresse – que le Paris de Huysmans."<sup>62</sup> Perhaps the reconciliation of both notions is found in a larger idea of shifting gender constructs that permeates the nineteenth century. Dorothy Kelly writes: "when one comes upon so many masculine women and feminine men, the very nature of masculinity and femininity comes into question."<sup>63</sup>

This gender fluidity manifests itself in multiple ways across nineteenth-century literature and proves intriguing in conjunction with urbanization. While the countryside can be associated with an idealized and maternal femininity, such as that embodied by Stendhal's Madame de Rênal, the city is also frequently mapped in terms of the female body and experience. It is through predominantly female characters that I explore the transformative process of urbanization, with the notable exception of the feminized Julien. In the act of pursuing urbanity, female characters undergo a process of

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>62</sup> Banquart, *Paris "Fin-de-siècle,"* 272.

<sup>63</sup> Dorothy Kelly, *Fictional Genders: Role and Representation in Nineteenth-Century French Narrative*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 2.

performative masculinity that demands our attention and proves unique to nineteenth-century literary accounts of urbanization. Saint-Preux, in Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, does not experience a feminization from his travels to urban centers, nor do Montesquieu's Usbek and Ricca assume feminine characteristics as they study and adapt to Parisian life in *Lettres Persanes*. Prévost's besotted Chevalier Des Grieux recklessly pursues the eponymous Manon Lescaut to the city, but urban contact does not correlate to a reversal of gender roles. Similarly, we do not find Marivaux's heroine virilized in her urban ascension in *La Vie de Marianne*. Characters do migrate to the city in novels from preceding centuries, and there are discussions to be had regarding atypical gender assumptions, but urbanization does not inherently problematize gender the way it does in the nineteenth century.

Literary urbanization also gives us tools to map France's global presence in the nineteenth century. Rural and urban representations contribute to the nineteenth-century imperialistic discourse, with the Occident positing itself as urban in relation to the Orient's imagined rural state. Williams wrote several years before the publication of Said's *Orientalism*, yet he concludes by noting that British and French imperialism are perhaps nothing more than "the traditional relationship between city and country thoroughly rebuilt on an international scale."<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Weber noted that the relationships between urban and rural societies in nineteenth century France was "the process of acculturation: the civilization of the French by urban France... what happened was akin to colonization, and may be easier to understand if one bears that in mind."<sup>65</sup> City dwellers insisted on the backward aspects of peasant culture, not understanding the

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<sup>64</sup> Williams, *Country and the City*, 280.

<sup>65</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 486.



regional dialects and comparing them with colonized people of the New World or North Africa. Weber finds that “the peasant appears as a dark, mysterious, hostile and menacing figure, and is described as such. When he is not a noble savage, as he was for George Sand, he is simply a savage.”<sup>66</sup> Said declared the entire structure of Orientalism and the image upheld by the Western canon a non-inconsequential “structure of lies or of myths,”<sup>67</sup> and French literature and painting enable us to dissect the myth of the urban Occident dominating the rural Orient.

Characters in nineteenth-century French literature manifest these diverse tensions. Studying the city and the country as separate entities across literature allows us to understand their symbolic functions in the debates about agency and authority characterizing nineteenth-century France. But it is more fruitful to analyze characters that urbanize, who either migrate between rural and urban centers, or mimic this evolution in their own development. Their movement brings the structures embodied by the city and country into confrontation and magnifies the tensions present. Their narratives participate in the coding of the city and country as two systems of power incapable of peaceably coexisting. The novel becomes the battlefield for these struggles.

I begin with an analysis of urbanization in conjunction with the *Bildungsroman* of Stendhal’s *Le Rouge et le noir*. Julien’s trajectory follows a concrete urbanization as he migrates from Verrières to Paris and back again, and highlights the power constructs assumed by rural and urban sites. We move next to study the less-concrete urbanization of Emma in Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. While Emma does not successfully obtain the urbanity she seeks, we can chart her moral progression as a sort of internal urbanization,

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979) 6.

allowing us to study the influence and allure of the imagined urban space on the rural mind. Chapters three and four focus on Zola's Paris, not in regard to his exploration of urban space and inhabitants, but of his understanding of urbanization within the city, and the city itself urbanizing. Paris is not just the goal of urbanization, but a site of it continually reinventing itself. Zola's depiction of rural migrants Denise and Gervaise in *Au Bonheur des dames* and *L'Assommoir* fosters a discussion of the capitalist forces that drive urbanization and the human toll of urban renewal, and we can study the evolutions of both women within the context of the Parisian economy. Finally, we shift our gaze from French urbanization to imperialism, wherein France recasts itself as the urbanized modern center in regard to the stagnant Orient. While this final chapter marks a departure from the others in form and methodology, it allows us to use the established understanding of urbanization as a new framework to understand the much discussed theoretical approach of Orientalism.

In all of these domains, we look at the possibility of movement towards urbanity, understood both in the concrete sense of metropolis, and in the symbolic sense of (often fictional) conceptions of power and modernity. Scholarship has long bifurcated along the lines of socio-historical studies of urban migration across France on one side, and literary criticism about Paris within nineteenth century novels on the other. By broadening our understanding of urban centers and by reuniting demographic and socio-historical studies with literary analysis, we can understand the story of urban migration within the larger nineteenth-century context of displaced authority and new discourses on power.

I return to Rastignac's embittered cry above the buildings of Paris: "A nous deux maintenant!" In his challenge we can easily distinguish the conflict between the migrant

from province and the menacing urban world of Paris. But what simmers beneath his words, beneath the animosity between migrant and destination, between the country and the city as a whole, is an entire series of powers vying for recognition. The chapters that follow will allow us to confront them and explore the obstacles, processes, and incarnations of urbanization. We will revisit canonical texts from a new perspective, seeing if there remains something fresh to be studied from them. We will allow actual geographies to furnish imaginary cartographies of power. Williams wrote that the fictions of town and country existed “to promote superficial comparisons and prevent real ones.”<sup>68</sup> In exploring the fictional novels that both reflected historical reality and shaped our own understandings of it, we can unveil and explore the discussions on authority laid bare by France’s changing demographics. We can understand the city and country as surrogates for two conceptions of reality, authority, and identity, and urbanization as the catalyst for their inevitable clash.

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<sup>68</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 54.

## Chapter 1: The “Chronique” of Urbanization: *Le Rouge et le Noir* and a coming into urbanity

In 1830, Henri Beyle, dit Stendhal, published *Le Rouge et le Noir*, detailing Julien Sorel’s ascension through the ranks of society in attempts to change his station from humble provincial to powerful gentlemen. Though the story centers on the exploits of young Julien, Stendhal extends Julien’s story to encapsulate an entire moment in French political and social history, adding a subtitle that declares his oeuvre a “Chronique du XIXe siècle.” Julien becomes symbolic of the “upward aspirations of the entire society in which he circulates”<sup>1</sup> and his story personalizes that of France in this tumultuous era. Stendhal’s *chronique* highlights the many ways that competing ideologies, practices, and cultures typified France in the nineteenth century. The book rests on the struggle for power between Jansenists and Jesuits, Ultras and Liberals, men and women, and the imaginary and the real. An inescapable tension between rurality and urbanity, the pastoral village and the lure of the city, underscores all other secondary conflicts in the novel. At its core, the story of Julien Sorel and his rise is one of a progressive urbanization, with his fall entailing a rapid deurbanization and return to the country.

By studying the novel from the critical perspective of depictions and aspects of urbanization, we can better understand both the nature of urbanization in the early nineteenth century, and the role it played in the societal, political, and cultural changes redefining France. On the most basic level, this “chronique” of the century is one of urbanization, of shifting perceptions of the city and country, and a view of individuals as

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<sup>1</sup> Carol A. Mossman, *The Narrative Matrix: Stendhal’s Le Rouge et le noir*, (Lexington: French Forum) 1984, 31.

defined in relation to their urbanity or lack thereof. As Julien makes his way from country to city, he must navigate numerous power constructs upset by the process of urbanization. His evolution allows a study of numerous changing aspects of French culture and identity, including shifting relationships within language, meaning, and reality that can and should be studied within the context of changing urban demographics. Additionally, Stendhal's narrative highlights the ways that changes in urban makeup brought into question conceptions of gender. Julien and the women he loves personify both urban and rural spaces, and exhibit atypical gender attributes that demand our attention.

### ***The Bildungsroman and Urbanization***

Julien's arc of success and failure traces his progressive urbanization. This novel follows the structure of a *Bildungsroman*, charting Julien's "apprenticeship into the ways of the world to his mastery over it and eventual integration at a higher level into the sociosphere."<sup>2</sup> Karl Morgenstern defines the *Bildungsroman* as

The development of the hero in its beginning and progress to a certain stage of completion... The objective and work encompassing goal of any poet who produces such a novel will be the pleasurable, beautiful, and entertaining depiction of the formative history of a protagonist who is especially suited to such a development.<sup>3</sup>

Julien's progression, education, and adventures well fit this model, but Mikhail Bakhtin's later writings on the *Bildungsroman* provide an interesting connection between this genre and my perspective of urbanization. Bakhtin describes different types of *Bildungsroman* before focusing on the novel of emergence as intimately connected to the development of realism. Typically, the heroes of a *Bildungsroman* are constant, surrounded by a variable

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Morgenstern and Tobias Boes, "On the Nature of the "Bildungsroman," *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): JSTOR, 654.

world through which they move and learn, without fundamentally changing.<sup>4</sup>

Conversely, in novels of emergence, Bakhtin argues that the *Bildungsroman* focuses on a hero who

emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other. This transition is accomplished in him and through him. He is forced to become a new, unprecedented type of human being.<sup>5</sup>

Bakhtin argues that this type of hero exists as tied to a historical reality and emergence, a hero who transforms because of and to reflect a changing historical reality. This type of novel is frequently associated with nineteenth century realism. This assessment proves especially pertinent to my hypothesis that *Le Rouge and le Noir* benefits from a reading focused on urbanization. A study of urbanity and rural to urban movement within the text allows us to see the *Bildungsroman* and personal education of Julien as intrinsically intertwined not merely with France's political story, but with its evolving demographic reality. Each stage and aspect of Julien's development, from his attraction to the maternal Madame de Rênal to his assumption into Parisian society, proves a coming of age that cannot be divorced from a coming into urbanity. Thus his progression must be studied as not simply uneducated to enlightened, but rather rural to urban:

Pour Julien, faire fortune, c'était d'abord sortir de Verrières ; il abhorrait sa patrie. Tout ce qu'il y voyait glaçait son imagination. Dès sa première enfance, il avait eu des moments d'exaltation. Alors il songeait avec délices qu'un jour il serait présenté aux jolies femmes de Paris.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech genres and Other late essays*. Trans. Vern W McGee, Ed Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) 21.

<sup>5</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir* (Paris: Larousse, 2001), 32.

Movement, escape from his rural confines, life in the capital – these desires propel Julien throughout the novel. And in this way, Julien’s progression and emergence reflects and prefigures the urbanization beginning in France.

The novel opens with rich descriptions of the countryside, where what commerce exists is due to wood mills, carpentry, and rough work with nature.<sup>7</sup> Our initial impressions are guided by the omniscient narrator, who, far from being objective, provides an urban eye turned on the country and small villages. He details the perceptions received by a “voyageur parisien,” instantly aligning his opinions with France’s largest urban center, and coloring our perspective with an urban gaze.<sup>8</sup> The narrator introduces the small village of Verrières where we are “étourdi par le fracas d’une machine bruyante et terrible en apparence.”<sup>9</sup> This introduction of industry (however primitive) shocks the reader after the initial pastoral descriptions and highlights a departure from idyllic nature.

The introduction of industry into the portrait of the countryside also serves to highlight the changes wrought by the early onset of urbanization. While many of the larger effects of urbanization occurred in the second half of the century, the Revolution set into motion changes in industry, wealth, and society that began to slowly modify traditional rural life. In his juxtaposition of the total countryside and even the small village of Verrières, Stendhal highlights this changing relationship and economy:

*Rapporter du revenu est la raison qui décide de tout dans cette petite ville qui vous semblait si jolie. L’étranger qui arrive, séduit par la beauté des fraîches et profondes vallées qui l’entourent, s’imagine d’abord que ses habitants sont sensibles au beau ; ils ne parlent que trop souvent de la beauté de leur pays : on ne peut nier qu’ils n’en fassent grand cas ; mais c’est parce qu’elle attire quelques étrangers dont l’argent enrichit les*

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

aubergistes, ce qui, par le mécanisme de l'octroi, rapporte du revenu à la ville.<sup>10</sup>

The natural surroundings of Verrières, while beautiful, do not exist primarily for this end. Here we note an important departure from the romantic perception of nature. Whereas romanticism rested on "The discovery of nature... the discovery of wonder,"<sup>11</sup> Stendhal commercializes his nature immediately after its introduction, though not yet at the level of total commodification of Zola's Paris in *Au Bonheur des Dames*. He forbids the reader from developing sentimental notions about its existence and maps a landscape of power instead of merely providing a descriptive panorama.<sup>12</sup> Rather than being allowed to grow wild, the natural world around Verrières is carefully controlled and monetized, with the mayor's house overseeing the town and his authority affecting even the river, which he has diverted and reshaped to his own advantage.

The urban transformation that converted wild countryside to carefully controlled industry also reflects a shift from the older French regime to the new society, where even those in power must work in the community of Verrières. We learn that the mayor earns an income from making nails and that, in spite of his noble blood, "depuis 1815 il rougit d'être industriel."<sup>13</sup> Whereas the Ancien Regime was defined by carefully distinct spheres for nobles and peasants, the Revolution and subsequent changes began a slow process of blurring lines between those who worked and dwelled in cities, villages, or the fields, and the wealthy who inhabited estates or *hôtels particuliers en ville*. The urban transformation brings with it fear of further societal shifts, captured by Monsieur de la Mole, who, towards the end of the novel, postulates that "Nous, dans nos châteaux, nous

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Edwin Berry Burgum, "Romanticism," *The Kenyon Review* 3, no. 4 (1941): JSTOR, 479.

<sup>12</sup> Mossman, *The Narrative Matrix*, 26.

<sup>13</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 11.



serons massacrés par les paysans.”<sup>14</sup> Urbanization entails a reshuffling of society, erasing the clear delineations that previously existed. The transformation is slow and endures the entire century, but the peasant masses loathed by Monsieur de la Mole do start to find their footing in this new society. Eugen Weber explains that, “in France, the political action of the Ancien Régime functioned side by side with the traditional community and social structures. The ideological nation of the Revolution had to compete with these. It was not invented upon their dismantling; its invention implied their dismantling.”<sup>15</sup> The social mobility and opportunities ostensibly offered by the Revolution and changing society prompted a shift away from prescribed and unchanging roles of peasant and master. Though agricultural advancements and progress did not start substantially affecting the average peasant until about 1880, cultural changes started luring him away from his previously unchanged position much earlier.<sup>16</sup>

After our initial introduction to Julien and Verrières, Stendhal shifts the action further into the countryside, to Vergy whose “ruines pittoresques”<sup>17</sup> and natural beauty mark it as even more rural than the small village of Verrières, notable for its “unquestionable otherness...above all benevolent and protective.”<sup>18</sup> Vergy marks the beginning of Julien’s ascension of the social ladder and subsequent urbanization. In Vergy, he has his first introduction to refined society and his first amorous encounter. From Vergy, he is ultimately propelled towards Besançon and eventually, Paris. If Vergy is pastoral, it is also restrained, encircled by walls and overseen by the industrious eye of Monsieur de Rênal. Within the controlled natural environment of the de Rênals, Julien

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

<sup>15</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 113.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>17</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 86.

<sup>18</sup> Mossman, *The Narrative Matrix*, 136

falls in love with Madame de Rênal, the incarnation of the pastoral world. I will discuss her role in embodying the country in greater detail later, but for the moment it is merely essential to note the depictions of Julien's beginnings as associated with rural life.

Beyond his surroundings of Vergy, Julien also retreats into total wilderness in route to visit his friend Fouqué. Spending a night under the open skies, Stendhal aligns Julien with the typical romantic hero where "l'air pur de ces montagnes élevées communique la sérénité et même la joie à son âme."<sup>19</sup> The description instantly conjures associations with other romantic heroes who took refuge in nature, like Chateaubriand's René, but Stendhal draws key distinctions. Julien does occasionally experience periodic nostalgia for nature and his rural youth, but he avoids the romantic reflections of his predecessors. While attending seminary in Besançon, he gazes out the window and sees trees swaying in the distance, the sight calming him as if staring out at old friends.<sup>20</sup> Yet these trees lie beyond the wall of the city, highlighting a distinct separation from Julien's world and the natural world. Julien's sole focus for the majority of the novel is not moments of natural serenity or escaping the romantic *ennui* that plagued René, but rather spiraling ever closer to urban centers and rising in power and influence. During the night in the mountains referenced above, his natural reveries are quickly replaced by "la contemplation de ce qu'il imaginait rencontrer un jour à Paris."<sup>21</sup>

Eventually, Julien migrates from the tiny communities of Verrières and Vergy to the larger town of Besançon to attend seminary. He leaves Mme de Rênal and quickly thinks of nothing but the "bonheur de voir une capitale, une grande ville de guerre

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<sup>19</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 73.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

comme Besançon.”<sup>22</sup> Besançon is not the urban paradise of Julien’s dreams and aspirations, though his short time there does propel him up the ranks of the seminary and into the complex intrigue of the clergy before sending him to Paris. Paris proves both the summit of Julien’s urbanization and the realization of an urban fantasy that has lurked in the background of the entire novel:

Il allait enfin paraître sur le théâtre des grandes choses. Il aimait mieux moins de certitude et des chances plus vastes. Dans ce cœur-là il n’y avait plus la moindre peur de mourir de faim. Le bonheur d’aller à Paris, qu’il se figurait peuplé de gens d’esprit fort intrigants, fort hypocrites, mais aussi polis que l’évêque de Besançon et que l’évêque d’Agde, éclipsait tout à ses yeux.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of his feelings for Madame de Rênal in Vergy, or his initial fascination with the bustling town of Besançon, Julien cannot escape the draw of Paris and its mythical appeal.

Before embarking on the tale of Julien’s Parisian exploits, Stendhal opens the second half of the novel with two travelers discussing the city, country life, and the very tranquility that bores Julien. “J’aime la fraîcheur des bois et la tranquillité champêtre, comme tu sais ; tu m’as souvent accusé d’être romantique,” one man begins.<sup>24</sup> Beyond a mere romantic urge to flee the city, the man moves the conversation to politics and the chaotic instability of Paris. He seeks freedom from the incessant politics of the capital and is “las de cette comédie perpétuelle, à laquelle oblige ce que vous appelez la civilisation du dix-neuvième siècle. J’avais soif de bonhomie et de simplicité. J’achète une terre dans les montagnes près du Rhône, rien d’aussi beau sous le ciel.”<sup>25</sup> His attempts to disappear into the countryside also ended poorly and he finally concludes that

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

he will “chercher la solitude et la paix champêtre au seul lieu où elles existent en France, dans le quatrième étage donnant sur les Champs-Élysées.”<sup>26</sup> The conversation between these two men, overheard by the excited Julien, hints at the social and political labyrinth into which he is about to enter.

Indeed, shortly after his arrival in the capital he understands himself to be in the very epicenter of intrigue and hypocrisy. Abbé Pirard describes Paris as the “new Babylon,” a perfect description of the simultaneous fascination and revulsion that Julien experiences in the city. Disgusted by the society around him, yet attracted to the ubiquitous vestiges of his beloved idol Napoleon, “une profonde méfiance l’empêcha d’admirer le Paris vivant, il n’était touché que des monuments laissés par son héros.”<sup>27</sup> Inevitably, Julien succumbs to the aura of the city, rising in prominence and position within the house of the de la Mole family. As I will analyze in further detail later, he fully and successfully urbanizes, adjusting his speech, dress, and mannerisms to conform to the norms of the city.

But whereas the urbanization of Julien Sorel took an entire novel, his sudden deurbanization and return to Verrières comprises merely a few sentences. A letter from Madame de Rênal sends him homeward, where he attacks her in church and then resigns himself to prison. In prison, Julien ceases to think of the city and its lure, finding himself disenchanted with his Parisian life.<sup>28</sup> Julien confesses to Fouqué all the wrongs of the city, to which his friend responds that “jamais la province, comparée a Paris, n’a reçu un plus bel hommage.”<sup>29</sup> Julien and Madame de Rênal reunite, and in a bold rejection of the

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 254

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 508.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

urban love he found with Mathilde, Julien asks Madame de Rênal to raise the child that Mathilde carries. In death he seeks to definitively mark his break with urban existence in a rural burial, high above Verrières in the mountains where he sought solitude early in the novel. He longs to “reposer, puisque reposer est le mot,”<sup>30</sup> yet the rural refuge he desires is denied him. Mathilde, following him to Verrières and exerting one last dominate urban influence, ignores his wish for a simple grave in the mountains and erects instead an elaborate marble edifice, fashioned in Italy at great cost.<sup>31</sup> In a novel where the overarching plot reveals itself to be the progressive urbanization and subsequent deurbanization of the protagonist, Mathilde’s actions conclude the work on a definitive note of urban influence invading the country in spite of Julien’s rejection of his hard-earned urbanity. While she fulfills her own imaginative dreams to play the role of tragic lover in the story of Boniface de la Mole, she also reflects the urban tensions that serve as a subplot for the entire novel. Mathilde’s actions surrounding his death, from the macabre final kiss, to the Gothic candlelight ceremony in the cave, to the erection of the ornate Italian marble edifice, testify to her urban cosmopolitanism. Ignoring the simple desires of Julien to find repose in nature, she instead cloaks his death in all the fantasies of her own imagination, fantasies nurtured by her urban background.

The ending of *Le Rouge et le Noir* often proves problematic, as it involves a reversal of the *Bildungsroman* at its climax, seems to contradict earlier interpretations of a Julien-focused narrative, and involves the troubling unresolved aspect of Julien’s in utero child.<sup>32</sup> But it appears less problematic in regard to the narrative of urbanization

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 547.

<sup>32</sup> An extensive study of the ending and its numerous significations can be found in Carol Mossman’s *The Narrative Matrix*.

structuring the novel. My reading could seem oversimplified, focusing on the tokens of urbanity that surround Mathilde's actions and supplant Julien's final rejection of his urban self. Though it could appear to ignore the frequently cited complexities of the ending, studying the novel with a critical gaze to urbanization does not demand a reconciliation of the ending as much as some other readings. Instead, it situates Mathilde's actions within the context of her urban influence and provides an ending that, while not cohesive to a Julien-focused narrative, concludes the book on the note of inescapable urbanization that comes to define France in the nineteenth century.

### ***Urbanity and Identity***

The tension between urban and rural existence does not merely drive the plot and action of the novel, but also exists as a key component in the identity of each character. While *Le Rouge et le Noir* details the lives of numerous characters, many exist as caricatures in some aspect or another. Whereas Julien evolves from a mere *provincial* into an urban gentleman, the characters through whose lives he moves are defined by their urban or rural environments. The narrator frequently couches the representation of mannerisms or generalities in geographical terms, such as "en province, les maris sont maîtres de l'opinion"<sup>33</sup> or "il y a peu d'étourderie en province : les sensations y sont si rares, qu'on les coule à fond."<sup>34</sup> The narrator emphasizes a constant delineation between life in province and life *en ville* through his identification of characters and people as products and reflections of their surroundings. We see in this constant desire to

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<sup>33</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 147.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

distinguish between rural and urban, the literary perpetuation of the province versus Paris division noted in the introductory chapter.

Julien begins the novel as an example of “la pruderie provinciale,”<sup>35</sup> a distinction that evolves as he urbanizes, moving progressively upward in the society of characters who draw their identity from their urban or rural status. When he first travels to Besançon, he finds himself almost incapable of entering a simple café, both timid and fascinated, endearingly labeled by the narrator as a “petit paysan [qui] n’eut aucun moyen d’approcher les hommes distingués.”<sup>36</sup> The narrator intervenes to reinforce the distinction between Julien’s rural status and the cosmopolitan world of this city, situating it in comparison with Paris: “Quelle pitié, notre provincial ne va-t-il pas inspirer aux jeunes lycéens de Paris qui, à quinze ans, savent déjà entrer dans un café d’un air si distingué ?”<sup>37</sup> Provincial identity imparts timidity, while Parisian identification carries social power. In the midst of the persecution he suffers from his fellow pupils at seminary, Julien quickly begins to align himself with those in power, modifying his speech and dress, a pattern he adopts at every stage of his urbanization.

In spite of his peasant and rural upbringing, he occupies a liminal space in regard to other characters in the novel in the sense that he alone transitions between the levels of urbanity, changing his identity from “petit provincial” to cosmopolitan city dweller, whereas other characters remain more stagnant products of their surroundings. This is not to say that other characters and storylines do not point to the same upward, Paris-focused thrust of urbanization that Julien experiences. While Julien alone marks the full arc between tiny village and urban center, “nearly all the characters or character chains on

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

the periphery of the salutary Paris are engaged in an identical ascending movement, so that this is the apparent dynamics and the ostensible tendency motivating *Le Rouge*'s extraordinary univocal propulsion."<sup>38</sup> The difference lies in the fact that the others orient themselves toward this movement, or act as a connection in a chain of those urbanizing (like the various Abbés in the novel, or the political connections from Monsieur de Rênal all the way up to Paris), but they do not play the same role as Julien, who remodels his individual self at every stage in a progressive urbanization from country to city. The rumors that swirl around Julien at seminary (and continue throughout the entire novel) embody this hybrid identity, as he is thought to be both the son of a rural carpenter, and the illegitimate offspring of a rich noble.<sup>39</sup>

His status of constant flux and tension between his rural actuality and his urban potential comes into focus when we study the two women who dominate Julien's life, his urbanization, and the novel as a whole. His love for Madame de Rênal defines the first stage of his urbanization, that of his pastoral existence as a tutor to the de Rênal children. Madame de Rênal is one of those "femmes de province, que l'on peut très bien prendre pour des sottes pendant les quinze premiers jours qu'on les voit."<sup>40</sup> Before Julien's arrival, familial duties absorbed her entire life, this "masse de travail qui, loin de Paris, est le lot d'une bonne mère de famille."<sup>41</sup> The narrator thus presents a consuming passion for home and hearth as something tied to Madame de Rênal's rural status. The Parisian gaze discussed earlier is reinforced and turned on Madame de Rênal and we are told, "aux yeux d'un Parisien, cette grâce naïve, pleine d'innocence et de vivacité, serait même

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<sup>38</sup> Mossman, *The Narrative Matrix*, 28.

<sup>39</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 232.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.



allée jusqu'à rappeler des idées de douce volupté... Ni la coquetterie, ni l'affection n'avaient jamais approché de ce cœur."<sup>42</sup> The narrator paints Madame de Rênal as imminently tied with nature, always running through the woods and chasing butterflies alongside her children. When Julien decides to seduce her, he does so *en pleine nature*, with the descriptions of the garden and foliage intermingling with his conquest:

Les heures qu'on passa sous ce grand tilleul que la tradition du pays dit planté par Charles le Téméraire, furent pour elle une époque de bonheur. Elle écoutait avec délices les gémissements du vent dans l'épais feuillage du tilleul, et le bruit de quelques gouttes rares qui commençaient à tomber sur ses feuilles les plus basses.<sup>43</sup>

She is the antithesis of Mathilde, the city woman, but also of later women I will present like Emma Bovary, who long for the city while being trapped in tiny towns. Unlike both Emma and Mathilde, Madame de Rênal, "n'avait jamais lu de romans, toutes les nuances de son bonheur étaient neuves pour elle."<sup>44</sup> Far from the fictional delusions of Emma and Mathilde, Madame de Rênal stumbles into her affair with Julien without the propulsion of romantic dreams. She does imagine what a life with her lover would look like in the city, "se voyait vivant à Paris, continuant à donner à ses fils cette éducation qui faisait l'admiration de tout le monde. Ses enfants, elle, Julien, tous étaient parfaitement heureux,"<sup>45</sup> but she cannot leave the country and her village. For his part, Julien initially does not know how to proceed in his affair with Madame de Rênal, a quality the narrator attributes to his lack of urban savoir-faire:

A Paris, la position de Julien envers Mme de Rênal eût été bien vite simplifiée ; mais à Paris, l'amour est fils des romans. Le jeune précepteur et sa timide maîtresse auraient retrouvé dans trois ou quatre romans et jusque dans les couplets du Gymnase, l'éclaircissement de leur

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 91

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

position... Les romans leur auraient tracé le rôle à jouer, montré le modèle à imiter.<sup>46</sup>

Far from Paris, from the city, from this realm where the order of the novel becomes reality, Julien stumbles forward in attempts to seduce his employer's wife.

Madame de Rênal exists in the novel not only as the first love interest of young Julien, his induction into romance and seduction, but also as the female embodiment of the country, of Verrières and Vergy, of the rural community, all of which are intimately tied to the idea of fertility and maternity. The ruins of Vergy bespeak "a maternal locale and, inasmuch as they point to a vestigial order, they are material tokens of a lost time."<sup>47</sup> It is no coincidence that the trees that cover the grounds of Vergy are all fruit trees, laden and representing the maternity and femininity of their mistress.<sup>48</sup> In the motherless void of Julien's life, Madame de Rênal becomes a surrogate mother figure, from whom he both seeks love, and periodically struggles to distance himself. Julien's seduction of her becomes his initial stage of urbanization, just as it marks a key moment of his coming of age, the child surpassing his mother.<sup>49</sup> He succeeds both in surmounting the maternal influence in his life, and conquering her rural world. After dominating Madame de Rênal, capturing first her hand and later her entire self, he must abandon his post. He does so and instantly forgets her, moving on to larger urban centers and new conquests.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, and at the height of Julien's urbanization, we find Mathilde, "l'héritière la plus enviée du faubourg Saint Germain."<sup>50</sup> Mathilde manifests all the complexities and nuances of Paris in her person. The narrator frequently

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>47</sup> Mossman, *The Narrative Matrix*, 137.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>49</sup> Though admittedly, it is also a seduction *by* her, as I shall discuss in my later section on gender fluidity within the novel.

<sup>50</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 337.

describes her as a “poupée parisienne,” ensuring that Mathilde be tied to Paris as much as Madame de Rênal was to province. If the representation of Madame de Rênal served to elevate rural life to something innocent and natural, the portrayal of Mathilde casts a negative light on Parisian society. Mathilde changes her opinions, moods, and desires constantly, weaving an aura of unpredictability around her. “Ses opinions dans le jardin étaient bien différentes de celles qu’elle avouait au salon,” the narrator affirms, before concluding that she well incarnates the female coquetterie of Paris.<sup>51</sup> Dangerous dissimulation defines both Julien’s experience in Paris and, his affair with Mathilde. Fueled by her excessive imagination and romantic notions, their love resembles the current political situation simmering in the capital: precarious, unstable, and dangerous. When Julien compares the two women he has loved in his thoughts, he dwells on the passion and sweetness of Madame de Rênal, and the elegance and power that typify Mathilde:

Cet amour n’était fondé que sur la rare beauté de Mathilde, ou plutôt ses façons de reine et sa toilette admirable. En cela Julien était encore un parvenu. Une jolie femme du grand monde est, à ce qu’on assure, ce qui étonne le plus un paysan homme d’esprit, quand il arrive aux premières classes de la société. Ce n’était point le caractère de Mathilde qui faisait rêver Julien les jours précédents. Il avait assez de sens pour comprendre qu’il ne connaissait point ce caractère. Tout ce qu’il en voyait pouvait n’être qu’une apparence.<sup>52</sup>

In awe of her urbane charm and connections, she becomes “en un mot, pour lui l’idéal de Paris.”<sup>53</sup> Mathilde must be understood as a physical and human embodiment of the city and thus Julien’s urbanization must include the physical domination of her. She is “tout

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

ce que la civilisation la plus élégante peut présenter de vifs plaisirs.”<sup>54</sup> By the time Julien and Mathilde begin their turbulent affair, he has risen in rank, dress, and speech in his urban circle, and his conquest of Mathilde serves to finalize his domination of the city.

Just as the seduction of Madame de Rênal reflected her status as the incarnation of rural life, so too does Mathilde’s seduction demonstrate her symbolic role as the city.

Madame de Rênal fell to Julien’s charms in her garden, while Mathilde decides to seduce Julien at a ball surrounded by artificial flowers and potted plants. The foliage has “l’air de sortir de terre,”<sup>55</sup> but it is a false construction – like Mathilde’s love and perhaps even the city’s power. Julien and Madame de Rênal met in the garden, surrounded by natural beauty, while Mathilde directs him to climb through the garden – rising literally above the rural seduction of Madame de Rênal – and through her window. In a novel where characters exist not only as individuals, but as types reflective of their level of urbanity, Julien moves up and down the ladder of society, in and out of the windows or gardens of the women he woos, a process of urbanization that becomes indistinguishable from his overall evolution, seduction, and development.

### ***Cultivating the City***

The process through which Julien overcomes the stasis of the other characters and succeeds in upward mobility comprises a series of changes to his person. Both his speech and appearance evolve notably throughout the novel, bearing similarities to characters across other novels that urbanize. Beyond drawing our attention back to the fundamental tension between Paris and province that is ubiquitous in French culture, these

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 401.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

modifications also hint at changing relationships with established norms and realities that urbanization began to call into question in nineteenth-century France.

Julien's transformation includes a constant exchange of clothing, hinted at by the title. From his desire to don the red garments associated with the military, to his reality of a life in the black robes prescribed to the clergy, Julien spends the novel changing outfits as he rises in urban status and position. He exchanges his simple peasant clothes for studious black to tutor the de Rênal children, continuing to wear this uniform throughout his tenure at seminary. As his time progresses at the home of Monsieur de la Mole in Paris, he sheds his somber garments alongside his rural background. Monsieur de la Mole undergoes a project of eliminating "quelques façons de province,"<sup>56</sup> upgrading Julien's attire from stodgy black to a more becoming blue. When Julien emerges for dinner the first time in his new blue coat, he finds himself treated as an equal in spite of his inferior status. He experiments, emerging the next morning in his customary black, only to find himself once more relegated to his lower station. Stendhal highlights power given to clothing in establishing status by one of Julien's initial encounters in Paris. Julien arrives at a lavish home and when greeted by an elegantly dressed man, he offers a dignified salute, only to learn that the man is nothing but a tailor.<sup>57</sup> The encounter belies Julien's naiveté of city life and protocol, but it also ironically underscores the truth of Parisian high society. For a nineteenth-century arriviste navigating a world where the garments *do* make the man, a tailor has more power than initially apparent.

Julien's experience is not unique in nineteenth-century French literature. Numerous authors present urbanizing characters that consistently change clothes,

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

upgrading in relationship to their urban status. Notably, in Balzac's *Père Goriot*, Eugène de Rastignac arrives in Paris a similar young provincial, intent on making his fortune and rising in social class. Limited by his current financial state and dress, he entreats his sisters and mother to send money, a great sacrifice for them. He bemoans his state of not even having "un sou pour avoir des gants propres," seeking haute couture arms in the "combat perpetuel" that defines life in the capital.<sup>58</sup> As soon as he receives the money, Rastignac summons the tailor, with Balzac astutely noting that "un tailleur est ou un ennemi mortel, ou un ami donné par la facture."<sup>59</sup> In the urban world of contrived appearances, the tailor exerts great power, and it is only once Rastignac has donned his new uniform that he can continue his conquest of the city. His effort to discard his provincial identity must entail a refusal of his country clothes, just as Julien exchanges his black coat for blue.

Beyond learning to look the part, Julien's urbanization entails a transformation of speech. In fact, the ever growing and evolving status of language inserts itself almost as another character throughout the novel.<sup>60</sup> Stendhal uses language to situate characters and establish their identities, highlighting numerous distinctions. The education of Julien Sorel, his social ascension, and his romantic successes all depend on his growing linguistic mastery.<sup>61</sup> With Madame de Rênal, Julien fumbles through his words, and their relationship is marked by a lack of artifice and eloquence. At seminary in Besançon, he begins to understand the power of the right words, receiving praise for his uncanny ability to memorize things quickly, reciting full passages on demand. Arriving in Paris,

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<sup>58</sup> Balzac, *Père Goriot*, 122.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>60</sup> Boris Lyon-Caen, "Le Rouge et le noir: Le Langage en Representation," *Relire Le Rouge et le Noir*, ed. Xavier Bourdenet, Pierre Glaudes, François Vanoosthuyse (Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2013) 308.

<sup>61</sup> Lyon-Caen, "Le Rouge et le noir: Le Langage en Representation," 313-314.

Julien finds himself navigating a linguistic as much as a social labyrinth. The Abbé Pirard warns him after his encounter with the tailor, “ne faites pas connaître le son de votre voix à ces Parisiens-là. Si vous dites un mot, ils trouveront le secret de se moquer de vous.”<sup>62</sup> To speak at all is to reveal vulnerabilities and open oneself for ridicule and attack, and to navigate the linguistic world of the city, Julien must learn its new language.

Initially, he views the Parisian language as “une langue étrangère qu’il eût comprise et admirée, mais qu’il n’eût pu parler,”<sup>63</sup> a speech full of “secrets de langage qui manquent à nos pauvres provinciaux.”<sup>64</sup> The narrator highlights the foreignness of proper French to Julien when the latter cannot even spell *cela* correctly, adding an extra “l” to the dismay of Monsieur de la Mole.<sup>65</sup> Eventually, Julien studies and masters this new language. He notes that “on parle bas à Paris, et l’on n’exagère pas les petits choses,”<sup>66</sup> and observes a discord between polite words in public and hidden laughter. Slowly, his speech adapts. Monsieur de la Mole succeeds in his goal of removing all provincial traces from Julien, cloaking first his body in dignified blue, and second his speech in the calculated language of Parisian society. Julien learns to dissimulate, to read social cues and navigate discourse that obscures meaning. His speech becomes urban as much as his outward appearance and mannerisms. After months spent being groomed by Monsieur de la Mole, the narrator notes that “Julien était un dandy maintenant et comprenait l’art de vivre à Paris.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 264.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 306.

Julien's transformation and the emphasis on language that permeates the novel must be understood within the context of the evolution of the French language in relationship to urbanization during the nineteenth century. In 1863, 8,381 of France's 37,510 communes spoke no French at all – almost a quarter of the population. Another half million children could speak or understand it to some extent, but could not write in French.<sup>68</sup> When Stendhal writes *Le Rouge et le Noir* in 1830, even fewer French claimed the French language as their mother tongue. Whereas the Ancien Régime did not prioritize linguistic uniformity, the Revolutionaries in the end of the eighteenth century knew that “the unity of the Republic demands the unity of speech... speech must be one, like the Republic.”<sup>69</sup> Under the old system of power, peasants speaking their local languages posed no threat to the stability of the nation. But the Revolutionary government “brought with it the concept of national unity as an integral and integrating ideal at all levels, and the ideal of oneness stirred concern about its shortcomings. Diversity became imperfection, injustice, failure, something to be noted and remedied.”<sup>70</sup> The emphasis on French as a general, rather than elite, language thus served a political role in direct opposition to the social structure of the Ancien Régime:

Linguistic diversity had been irrelevant to administrative unity. But it became significant when it was perceived as a threat to political – that is, ideological – unity. All citizens had to understand what the interests of the Republic were and what the Republic was up to, Barthélémy de Lanthemas told the Convention in December 1782....A didactic and integrative regime needed an effective vehicle for information and propaganda; but it could hardly have one if the population did not know French.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 65.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.



The Convention sought to abolish dialects and *patois*, replacing them with the “Language of the Declaration of Rights,” a project that did not succeed until the very end of the nineteenth century when education reforms, Protestantism, military service, and the spread of printed media began to drive out local languages.<sup>72</sup> The Revolution, and its language, remained a focus of primarily urban centers, with rural enclaves continuing in their native tongues and overall disinterest in national politics.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the urbanization of the nineteenth century entailed a necessary linguistic component, as the national language slowly supplanted the numerous *patois*. To dominate the country, the politically-charged city had to first force it to speak its own language.

Stendhal recognized the linguistic “savagery” of the rural masses in 1830, writing that the countryside between Bordeaux, Bayonne, and Valence was populated by people who “believe in witches, don’t know how to read, and don’t speak French.”<sup>74</sup> The narrator highlights this distinction by clarifying that he translates, rather than transcribes, the happenings from province: “Mais quoique je veuille vous parler de la province pendant deux cents pages, je n’aurai pas la barbarie de vous faire subir la longueur et les *ménagements* d’un dialogue de province.”<sup>75</sup> The provincial speech does not merit a written place within Stendhal’s text, highlighting on the narrative level an elevation of the urban language over the diverse languages still dominating the countryside. Thus, language exists in the text both as a manifestation of Julien’s urban evolution, and as a historical detail highlighting a tension between city and country with which urbanization grapples throughout the nineteenth century. The discussions of language within the novel

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 16.

mirror the linguistic power struggle of nineteenth-century France, the city forcing its speech on the country.

There remains one more important linguistic factor that pervades the text and provides an important thread to trace throughout the century. Under the Ancien Régime, the myriad of rural dialects reflected a degree of subjectivity and locality. For instance, how much land a man could work in a day, was referred to by the local word that would translate into “jour,” and denoted a quantity that necessarily changed from region to region, given the crop produced and other varied agricultural considerations.<sup>76</sup> Language and terminology can be understood as subjective, but also as tied to a concrete reality, as the word represented a very definite concept in the minds of its speakers. Conversely, the slow spread of the national French language imposed abstract associations on rural peasants:

Language is one technique for mastering reality. Local dialects had mastered the everyday world of the peasants’ experience, personified it in its details, coped with it. As urban speech edged those dialects out, the familiar became alien. New speech, new words, new forms did not permit the same easy, immediate participation in situations that time and habit had made familiar and that words had, so to speak, domesticated too. The new words were more abstract. The values and ideas they reflected were more distant. Intellectual effort was required to reestablish contact with objects and experiences.<sup>77</sup>

In the twentieth century, Saussure’s writings on semiology explored the divide between sign and signifier, establishing a fluid relationship that has had vast repercussions on established identities and definitions. Yet we can see that this process, this slow separation between words and a defined actuality tied to them, already permeates the process of urbanization and change in nineteenth-century France. As the city imposed its

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<sup>76</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 30.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

language on the country throughout the century, language became an abstracted system, less anchored in concrete meaning than in semantic necessity. It allowed the city to establish the terms and meaning of discourse.

Stendhal's novel highlights the beginning of this slow divorce between language and meaning, reality and fiction. In spite of the fact that the descriptions of Verrières and the countryside have all the guise of reality, Stendhal freely admits that he plays with truth and fiction in his novel: "Pour éviter de toucher à la vie privée, l'auteur a inventé une petite ville, Verrières, et quand il a eu besoin d'un évêque, d'un jury, d'une Cour d'assises, il a placé tout cela à Besançon, où il n'est jamais allé."<sup>78</sup> While there exist several towns in France named Verrières, Stendhal insists on the fictionality of his town that otherwise appears real. He likewise anchors a fictional portrayal to a real location when describing Besançon. The reader encounters Julien's process of urbanization as an actual trajectory of real locations, when it is instead an avowed geographical fiction that maps clashing powers and ideas of the city and country. This proves especially interesting in regard to the *Bildungsroman* structure of the novel. Bakhtin analyzed Goethe's novels to establish his theory of historical emergence, claiming that these novels rely on rich and lengthy descriptions of nature and settings to establish a real or historical time and place:

This is not an abstract geological and geographical landscape. For Goethe it reveals potential for historical life. This is an arena of historical events, a firmly delineated boundary of that spatial riverbed along which the current of historical time flows. Historically active man is placed in this living, graphic, visual system of waterways, mountains, valleys, boundaries, and routes.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 549.

<sup>79</sup> Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 37.

Yet in spite of Stendhal's vivid opening descriptions, he does not establish a geographical reality, but rather an elaborate fiction both with the trappings of the real, and openly false.

Stendhal's interplay between fiction and reality goes beyond his settings. Almost every chapter begins with a quote attributed to a well-known and erudite scholar, yet in reality, they too are fictions of Stendhal's imagination. One scholar noted that the novel never escapes – nor tries to – from an elaborate web of intertexts and “déjà-écrit,” building upon their authority.<sup>80</sup> Stendhal plays with this literary authority, ostensibly invoking it, yet detaching it from any actual existing intertext:

Script and its expanded form, the text, and ultimately fiction are being indicated as simulacra of (something masquerading as) the Real Thing. In any event, we see in this world of authentic texts (as, in fact, the author is to some extent doing with Ur texts) is at heart a duplicitous business equivalent to the *mise en cause* of authority and, at last, patricide.<sup>81</sup>

By attaching his imagined citations to established intellectual names, Stendhal convinces the reader to accept his fiction as fact, toying with the assumed reality of scholarly references. On a narrative level, Julien's own ability to memorize and parrot texts reflects this divorce between words, meaning, and truth. He wows clerical audiences with his ability to recite entire chunks of the Holy Scriptures or philosophical writings, when in reality, he just recites the words with no thought to their meaning, memorizing the words as a means to an end, but never learning them in the spirit of his religious formation. At another moment, he and Madame de Rênal fabricate a letter wherein “origins begin to lose their referential anchors, authenticity proves unfathomable, and the Word plays a subversive role in this comedy of falsification.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Lyon-Caen, “*Le Rouge et le noir*: Le Langage en Representation,” 310.

<sup>81</sup> Mossman, *The Narrative Matrix*, 106.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

The discord between language or words and an unchanging reality widens as the century progresses, and the novel proves fertile ground for analysis of this phenomenon, offering a study on the linguistic level of changing perceptions of reality. As Bakhtin explains, “Le roman, étant le seul genre en devenir, reflète plus profondément, plus substantiellement, plus sensiblement et plus vite, l’évolution de la réalité elle-même: seul celui qui évolue peut comprendre une évolution.”<sup>83</sup> Novels become spaces for this evolving reality to manifest itself. We cannot ignore the role that urbanization plays in this phenomenon, changing demographics and inflicting linguistic systems, both historically and in Stendhal’s novel and Julien’s life. The city demands that Julien learn a new language, one of obscurity and power, just as it is the city that slowly dictated the transformation of France’s diverse dialects into a unified tongue. This process of urban acculturation fundamentally altered the relationship with reality and language.

Roland Barthes asserted that “the city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language.”<sup>84</sup> Barthes highlights how the city exists as something to be read, and also establishes a discourse that questions many of those existing prior, setting itself up as a new language with its own rules. Fundamentally, the urbanization that characterizes the nineteenth century brings into question a myriad of established discourses in French culture and identity, and novels like Stendhal’s prove ideal ground for exploring these changes. What initially seems a simple conflict between Paris and province multiplies into something much larger and more nuanced. The *Bildungsroman* that traces Julien’s development also forces us to analyze a changing economy, evolving morality, tenuous social structures, and shifting conceptions of gender. Ultimately, novels that discuss or

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<sup>83</sup> Mikhaïl Bakhtin, *Esthétique et théorie du roman* (Paris: Gallimard Tel, 1978), 463.

<sup>84</sup> Roland Barthes, “Sémiologie et Urbanisme,” *Architecture d’aujourd’hui*, 2010 p. 11-24, 17.

portray urban transformation become spaces for these shifting relationships to take on personalized stories. The ambivalent relationship between words, established meaning, and reality that Stendhal portrays throughout his text will appear in other works highlighting urbanization throughout the century, as the fissure grows between word and meaning.

### ***Feminine Masculinities***

This fluidity in defined concepts is never more apparent than in the representation of gender within the novel and its relationship to urbanization. The economic, social, and political changes that developed alongside fluctuations in urban makeup all brought into question the established place of women in society, and in relationship with men. Stendhal does not ignore this aspect of Julien's urbanization experience. As he evolves from the country and Madame de Rênal, to the city and Mathilde, he is forced to confront a new sort of femininity, one embracing a power and agency that is coded as distinctly masculine.

At the core of the novel is a love triangle, wherein Julien falls in love with both Madame de Rênal and Mathilde. The novel "se construit incontestablement et explicitement sur une opposition assez radicale, systématique et schématique entre deux femmes incarnant des concepts, l'amour de tête face à l'amour de cœur."<sup>85</sup> Martine Reid discusses Julien's contradictory hybridity, as he oscillates between political and personal extremes throughout the entire novel, and recognizes the two female love interests as a way to respond to the contradictory nature of his identity:

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<sup>85</sup> Cécile Meynard, « Construction et mise en scène des personnages féminins dans *Le rouge et le noir* », *Relire Le Rouge et le Noir*, ed. Xavier Bourdenet, Pierre Glaudes, François Vanoosthuyse (Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2013) 215.

L'ombre portée de la Révolution et des images fortes qui occupent les représentations collectives, le mythe napoléonien mâtiné de grand agacement à l'égard d'une société « arrêtée » conduit ainsi Stendhal à la construction d'un personnage masculin hybride, séminariste sans foi, ambitieux fixé par l'amour, paysan aux rêves de dandy qui finira sur la guillotine, un Julien *anachronique* à bien des égards...à la fois homme de la Révolution, de l'Empire, et de la Restauration, l'humble prêtre et le lieutenant d'un régiment de hussards, le paysan et l'aristocrate à la mode, le provincial pauvre et le Parisien ennobli, le jeune homme et l'enfant.<sup>86</sup>

Julien's divided love for these two women must be understood not only as a way to reconcile the tensions of the era and novel, but also as points of evolution in his self-urbanization. I have already discussed the ways that Julien's urbanization is as much a progression from the two women who embody respectively the city and the country as it is a progression between these actual locations. His coming-of-age progression from the tender love of Madame de Rênal to the wild passion of Mathilde must also be read as a coming-into-urbanity from Vergy and Verrières to Paris. Yet a closer study of the three characters at the center of the romantic intrigue reveals more than just a progression from rural to urban as part of the *Bildungsroman* structure. The romance between Julien and each woman highlights changing gender constructs that hint at one of the greatest changes facilitated and manifested by urbanization, and less neatly understood in terms of simple binaries.

The initial presentation of Julien emphasizes not only his peasant and rural status, but also his inherent femininity. Madame de Rênal happily finds him to have "l'air timide d'une jeune fille," well suited for his role as tutor to her beloved children.<sup>87</sup> When she first sees him, Stendhal's description mimics all the characteristics of a romantic heroine:

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<sup>86</sup> Martine Reid, "Représentations de la différence sexuelle," *Le Rouge et le noir de Stendhal: Lectures Critiques*, ed. Martine Reid (Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2013), 151.

<sup>87</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 36.

[Il était] Presque encore enfant, extrêmement pale et [il] venait de pleurer. Il était en chemise bien blanche, et avait sous le bras une veste fort propre de ratine violette. Le teint de ce petit paysan était si blanc, ses yeux si doux, que l'esprit un peu romanesque de Mme de Rênal eut d'abord l'idée que ce pouvait être une jeune fille déguisée, qui venait demander quelque grâce à M. le maire.... Mme de Rênal regardait les grosses larmes, qui s'étaient arrêtées sur les joues si pales d'abord et maintenant si roses de ce jeune paysan.<sup>88</sup>

Julien exemplifies the traits of Romantic femininity, from his timidity, to his pale skin, to his emotional propensity. In the “poetics of gender in this novel, Julien represents the woman’s place.”<sup>89</sup> Julien’s femininity also mitigates any hesitation Madame de Rênal has toward him. Whereas an overly male figure would have intimidated the sensitive provincial wife, “la forme presque féminine de ses traits, et son air d’embarras” incite her admiration.<sup>90</sup> Madame de Rênal is the epitome of maternal femininity, and Julien’s childlike demeanor, his girlish face and bearing, allow her to feel capable of dominating him, albeit benevolently.

Julien, powerless to change his feminine impression, begins to play the part of a male seducer. While he does come to care deeply for Madame de Rênal, he initially seduces her as part of a prescribed role he believes a man in his position must play. He is young and naïve, yet he “prétendit encore jouer le rôle d’un homme accoutumé à subjuguier des femmes.”<sup>91</sup> After each initial encounter with Madame de Rênal, he asks himself “Ai-je bien joué mon rôle ? ‘ Et quel rôle ? Celui d’un homme accoutumé à être brillant avec les femmes.”<sup>92</sup> His conquest of her hand, and later her person, constitute

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

<sup>89</sup> Kelly, *Fictional Genders*, 41.

<sup>90</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 38.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.



“son devoir, un devoir héroïque.”<sup>93</sup> Stendhal repeatedly employs military terminology to describe Julien’s conquest, highlighting the masculine reality of his dreams (that of serving in the military like his idol Napoleon), and the feminine reality of his situation. Instead of going to war, Julien instructs children and woos their mother, who succumbs to his desires in large part because his feminine presence does not threaten her. Julien finds himself in a space of gender fluidity, both feminized by his appearance and Madame de Rênal’s feelings toward him, and compelled to play the masculine role of seducer, a role that “lui pesait si horriblement que, s’il eût pu suivre son penchant, il se fût retiré dans sa chambre pour plusieurs jours et n’eût plus vu ces dames.”<sup>94</sup> Julien (like Mathilde as well as we will see) is engaged in playing his role *like* a man, in an intentional and reflective act.<sup>95</sup> In this way he participates in what Judith Butler would later term performative gender, that of gendered responses being “an ‘act’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.”<sup>96</sup> Julien forces himself to play the role of seducer, acting out a male role that clashes with his inherent feminine presence.

When he encounters Mathilde, these shifting gender identities become even more apparent. Stendhal crafts Mathilde into a dominant male persona, contrasting with Julien’s feminine self. In spite of her beauty, Julien “lui trouva, en papillotes, l’air dur, hautain et presque masculin.”<sup>97</sup> This encounter occurs when Mathilde enters the library to find a book, transgressing the literary world that is otherwise presented as male and

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>95</sup> Reid, “Représentations de la différence sexuelle,” 135.

<sup>96</sup> Judith Butler, “Gender Trouble,” *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: Norton, 2010) 2551.

<sup>97</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 271.

suggesting that she is virilized by literary contact.<sup>98</sup> We learn that her voice “n’a rien de féminine”<sup>99</sup> and Julien initially recoils from Mathilde, but finally concludes: “Puisqu’elle passe pour si remarquable aux yeux de ces poupées, elle vaut la peine que je l’étudie. Je comprendrai quelle est la perfection pour ces gens-là.”<sup>100</sup> His project of seduction becomes a means of dominating her incarnation of the city and its ideals, a final triumph to his urbanization. But as Mathilde eventually avows to her father, “c’est moi qui l’ai séduit.”<sup>101</sup> Though his romances with both Mathilde and Madame de Rênal include frequent references to domination and his desire to “prendre” the woman in different aspects, it is simultaneously the women who elect their lover, permitting his seduction.<sup>102</sup> In spite of his desire to dominate Mathilde, Julien “oubliait son triste rôle de plébéien révolté”<sup>103</sup> and succumbs to her control, all while the narrator reinforces at every encounter the ways in which Mathilde stands as a human incarnation of Paris. Blinded by his infatuation, he ignores her “empire sur tout ce qui l’entourait.”<sup>104</sup>

Mathilde too plays a role. Nourished on the stories of eighteenth century heroines like *Manon Lescaut* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, she decides to act out the sweeping romance of her novels. Their relationship progresses in a series of calculated acts and fabricated dramas, Mathilde crafting a romantic narrative with herself at its center, and Julien oscillating between annoyance and the burning desire to succeed in winning a woman of such standing. Just as Julien’s conquest of Madame de Rênal took the form of a necessary task to accomplish, so too does Mathilde seek to “accomplir un devoir” in all

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<sup>98</sup> Mossman, *The Narrative Matrix*, 104.

<sup>99</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 307.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 468.

<sup>102</sup> Meynard, “Construction et mise en scène des personnages féminins dans *Le rouge et le noir*,” 229.

<sup>103</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 331.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

of her interchanges with her lover.<sup>105</sup> When she antagonizes Julien and he threatens her life, she happily concludes that he is now worthy of being her master.<sup>106</sup> Beyond the ridiculousness of this proof of love lies of course the fact that Mathilde masters every aspect of their relationship, with the narrator often speaking of the “tortures” to which she subjugates her *petit provincial* turned Parisian dandy. In regard to Julien’s inferior position and wealth, Mathilde blithely concludes, “Je lui donne tout cela. Mais sa pensée traitant un peu Julien en être inférieur dont on fait la fortune quand et comment on veut et de l’amour duquel on ne se permet pas même de douter.”<sup>107</sup> It is not until Mathilde finds herself pregnant that Julien manages any sort of authority over her. This illusion is fleeting, as Mathilde quickly seizes control, writing to her father and claiming responsibility. Shortly afterwards, the novel arrives at its climax with Madame de Rênal’s confession, Julien’s rapid return to the country, and his trial. As I noted earlier, Mathilde even dominates him in death, refusing his wishes for a simple grave and selecting instead an opulent marble sculpture.

Julien, the feminized masculine hero, does not exist apart from literary and historical precedent. The literature of the Napoleonic era and Restoration expressed “an anxiety that newly enfranchised men were to have no place in the reconstituted patriarchal order.”<sup>108</sup> Stendhal’s *chronique* strikes at the truth of instability and insecurity that typified this era:

A la Restauration par ailleurs, le masculin est en crise. Après la camaraderie « gauloise » des sans-culottes, après un héroïsme militaire rapidement transformé en mythe national, le retour des Bourbons apparaît

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 380.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>108</sup> Margaret Waller, *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993) 2.

aux yeux de certains comme un coup d'arrêt à cette virilité triomphante  
qui avait fait les beaux jours du « citoyen » délivré des délicatesses  
excessives du monde aristocratique.<sup>109</sup>

Julien's dubious masculinity, his association with feminine attributes, and his fluctuations between emotional excess and anger at his inability to perform his male role adequately can be read as a reflection of these political anxieties.

His characterization also reflects a trend of feminizing Romantic heroes. Margaret Waller describes the connection between the political reality and literary representation as follows:

The new Romantic version of man claims that he is barred from participating in the new paternal order and is thus unable to take advantage of its privileges. Nevertheless, this new avatar of masculinity would discover that in modern times a man wields far more power over a women when he bemoans his weakness than when he displays his strength.<sup>110</sup>

She asserts that the *mal du siècle* associated with these romantic heroes is an inherently male malady corresponding to a moment when men are rising in power over women and claiming the sentimental novel as their own, populating it with heroes like Chateaubriand's René, who eschew the traditional models of dominant masculinity for a more feminized presence. These men are defined by their introspection, their failure to conform to "standards of male behavior and achievement, whether social, sexual, military, or entrepreneurial, [which] call into question received ideas about masculinity and the options society makes available to men."<sup>111</sup> Waller highlights how each romantic hero deals with his feminine side differently, some resigning to their sentimental selves

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<sup>109</sup> Reid, "Représentations de la différence sexuelle," 150.

<sup>110</sup> Waller, *The Male Malady*, 3.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

while others struggle, lashing out in violent displays of hypermasculinity. Regardless of their feminine appearance or characteristics, these heroes maintain a position of power.

Ostensibly, Julien could thus be understood as a continuation of his romantic predecessors, another feminized romantic hero whose representation reveals “a nostalgia for older forms of patriarchy and an anxiety about the loss of old certainties of sexual difference.”<sup>112</sup> This position could be supported by his obsession with Napoleon, his frustration at his struggles to play the role of seducer, and his political ambitions. But Stendhal’s hero differs from the common representation of pensive, reluctant, and impotent males as characterized by René. Julien is both hyper-masculine, and consistently feminine, a seducer and the victim of seduction:

In short, Julien belongs to two opposing realms at once, an aporia echoed throughout the novel. Being neither peasant nor noble, neither priest nor layman, Julien has no real place. Because he differs from the other men, he is somewhat identified with women, yet he is not completely on their side either.<sup>113</sup>

He not only recognizes his own feminizing by the women in his life, but he aggressively and openly struggles with the duality of gendered identity under which both place him. He devotes little time in the novel to introspection or spiritual reflection, in spite of his educational role, bookish inclination, and time spent in seminary. Even the instances that initially seem like Romantic withdrawals from society, like his time spent in the hills discussed earlier, quickly turn into reflections on how to further his ambition and the life he hopes to find in the city. Unlike René who refuses sexual union, Julien is emphatically non-impotent, succeeding in both seduction and impregnation. Finally, Waller notes that the typical requirement for the eventual success of these feminized males is for the

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>113</sup> Kelly, *Fictional Genders*, 30.

heroine to be sacrificed.<sup>114</sup> While Madame de Rênal does follow Julien to the grave, Mathilde ends the novel very much alive and in control, having realized her dream of Boniface de la Mole. Julien proves the sacrifice necessary for the realization of her own romantic reveries.

If we cannot read Julien as another continuation of the Romantic feminized masculinity, how then can we understand the feminization of the male hero in relationship to the virilization of the female protagonists? We can approach this gender aporia through a cartography of Madame de Rênal and Mathilde representing rural and urban geographies, and Julien's urbanization between them. Madame de Rênal initially finds herself in a position superior to the feminized Julien, yet she does not subjugate or dominate him. She represents the maternal presence lacking from his childhood, a passive love in relation to Mathilde's active and aggressive passion.<sup>115</sup> She is the incarnation of the country, and Julien's relationship with her allows him to perform the quintessential male role of seducer and dominator. Conversely, his relationship with Mathilde is characterized with frustration and passion, as Julien seeks to exert his masculinity and finds himself in conflict with the virilized female persona of Mathilde. In regard to typical feminized romantic heroes, Waller argues:

In this brave new world, men may adopt feminine characteristics, but it is never a question of women taking over traits traditionally associated with men. Whatever their failings, men are still on top. Thus the breakdown of gender is a one-sided affair, which maintains rather than undermines the hierarchy of the sexes.<sup>116</sup>

But as discussed earlier, Mathilde *does* assume traits associated with men. She manipulates and controls her situation, seducing as much or more than she is seduced.

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<sup>114</sup> Waller, *The Male Malady*, 50.

<sup>115</sup> Martine Reid, "Représentations de la différence sexuelle," 138.

<sup>116</sup> Waller, *The Male Malady*, 33.

Whereas his love for Madame de Rênal highlights his femininity as means of seduction, his relationship with Mathilde demands a different analysis. The hierarchy of the sexes is called into question not by Julien's love for the woman who represents the country, but by the virilized girl who embodies the city.

Waller claimed that Romantic works "evidence some of the blurring of gender boundaries and the reversal of gender identities typical of later nineteenth century realist texts, which show gender itself as a fiction."<sup>117</sup> In the relationship between Mathilde and Julien we find gender boundaries already blurred, and these shifting gender constructs must be understood within the larger context of Julien's urbanization and Mathilde's incarnation of the city. Stendhal presents the city as a masculinized female subject that bestows women with agency. In spite of those who claim that both women who structure the novel find themselves "subjuguées par un homme irrésistible,"<sup>118</sup> Mathilde is not dominated at the end of the novel, asserting her own power and will in denying Julien his simple burial. The key to Mathilde's masculine power lies not in any aspect of her personality, but in her urbanity. The novel concludes with Julien's death and Mathilde's triumph. Though her betrothed deceased, she has enacted her own dreams and ambitions. This success can be, and has been, viewed in numerous manners, but in reading it in conjunction with Mathilde's identification with the city, and in regard to her masculine presence throughout their entire relationship, Stendhal offers an interesting portrait of urbanization.

In analyzing Mathilde's identification *with* and *as* the city, coupled with the gender hybridity at play within the novel, a portrait emerges of the city as the site of

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>118</sup> Reid, "Représentations de la difference sexuelle," 138.

blurred gender boundaries. I will discuss in later chapters how and why the city created new economic opportunities for women that upset gendered power constructs, but these factors do not come into play with Mathilde, a noble woman distanced from the working class. *Le Rouge et le Noir* does not offer a comprehensive portrait of life in the city. But it does establish, through the roles of country and city as performed by Madame de Rênal and Mathilde a trajectory of blurred and challenged gender conceptions that follows the arc of urbanization.

### ***Towards Chaos***

Through the *mise en question* of gender, language, and reality that accompanies Julien's urbanization, Stendhal highlights the power constructs upset by urbanization in the first half of the nineteenth century. He evokes the dominant Paris-province dichotomy and allows it to furnish a more nuanced series of oppositions. The changing industries, instable political structures, and shifting opportunities and roles all reflect themselves in Julien's upward, and urban-ward mobility. His very existence, that of a peasant who rises to the point of finding favor with a noble family, calls into question the social structures of the nobility and drives the de la Mole family to further promulgate the fiction of his being a *fils naturel* of a wealthy lord.<sup>119</sup> His ascension reflects the new order that followed the Revolution, as "the toppling of the Ancien Régime, in bringing down the twin authorities of Church and feudal state, forced France to situate her destiny outside the hierarchical strictures of the newly deposed caste system."<sup>120</sup> Monsieur de la Mole

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<sup>119</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 343.

<sup>120</sup> Mossman, *The Narrative Matrix*, 21.



accurately realizes that the danger to the established order lies not in the country, but in the urban centers and the rural people moving towards them:

Aujourd'hui messieurs, ce n'est plus un homme qu'il faut immoler, c'est Paris. Toute la France copie Paris. À quoi bon armer vos cinq cents hommes par département ? Entreprise hasardeuse et qui n'en finira pas. À quoi bon mêler la France à la chose qui est personnelle à Paris ? Paris seul avec ses journaux et ses salons a fait le mal ; que la nouvelle Babylone périclise. Entre l'autel et Paris, il faut en finir.<sup>121</sup>

In shifting power from rural estates, from Versailles, from the landed in the country to the city centers, France entered into a century where, to quote the exasperated Monsieur de la Mole, "il faut renoncer à toute prudence. Ce siècle est fait pour nous confondre ! Nous marchons vers le chaos."<sup>122</sup>

This chaos will continue throughout the century, but it leaves in its wake larger urban centers, changed demographics, and a new France concentrated in city centers. The authors of the nineteenth century weave tales of urbanization throughout their literary works, sometimes focusing directly on the growing influence of the city, and sometimes merely letting urbanizing forces seep into the plot, characters, and themes. Analyzing the treatment of urbanization in the nineteenth century novel allows us to question the city as a guiding function of the plot, but also as a catalyst for shifting identity, relationships with language, and gender. The *Bildungsroman* of Julien Sorel, where the coming of age correlates with a coming into urbanity and a questioning of long-established norms, traces the story of the century as a whole.

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<sup>121</sup> Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, 420.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 475.

## Chapter 2: The City that Forms and Corrupts: *Madame Bovary* and Inner Urbanization

My reading of Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir* employed urbanization as both a critical and a historical lens through which to approach the novel. The overarching plot structure of urban migration, coupled with the identity of key characters as associated with their level of urbanity, allows an application of urbanization on a historical and theoretical level. This reading highlights the power structures and established authorities upset by France's changing demographics, and nuances the frequently-cited tension between Paris and province. Yet can urbanization function as a critical approach for novels where this is *not* the case, where the plot does not center around a clear narrative of urbanization and where characters do not succeed in evolving towards greater levels of urbanity? How does a study of urbanization inform a reading of works where migration to the city is not the driving narrative?

In his writings theorizing and explaining the architectural decisions necessary for urban expansion and renovation, Ildefonso Cerdà proposed that urban life fundamentally exists of two states: movement and rest. His assertion is echoed in the opening lines of Lewis Mumford's lengthy treatise *The City in History*: "Human life swings between two poles: movement and settlement."<sup>1</sup> All architectural decisions of a city must thus support and facilitate these two objectives.<sup>2</sup> Cerdà's pragmatic observations communicate the tension at the heart of urbanization, that of balancing movement and stasis, of both promoting increasing populations and avoiding stagnant congestion. On a historical level

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<sup>1</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Cerdà, *La Theorie generale de l'urbanisation*, 26.

beyond any one city, scholars maintain that free movement between urban centers stands as one of the greatest catalysts of nineteenth-century urbanization, opening “possibilities sighed for but never within reach.”<sup>3</sup> Beyond the often-touted expansion of railroads and bridges, the creation in the latter half of the century of roads that could be used in all seasons allowed unprecedented mobility and expansion of opportunity.<sup>4</sup> Mobility and movement embody the essence of urbanization, both as historical fact and as theoretical concept. Their promise propels individuals to leave their rural surroundings and migrate to the city.

From the perspective of mobility and movement or lack thereof, as well as the inescapable lure of the city and its influence far beyond its borders, we can use urbanization to study novels where characters do not successfully or fully urbanize. Desiring the city, even if the desire remains unfulfilled, is enough to upset established norms and instigate power struggles. In this vein, I propose a reading of Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. Flaubert’s portrayal of the city and urban influence has been greatly discussed in regard to *L’Éducation sentimentale*, where Paris is above all a narrative instrument that “devient par la suite et très rapidement le véhicule *privilegié* des thèmes.” The city “manipule les personnages [et] elle amène les personnages à se manipuler entre eux.”<sup>5</sup> Flaubert uses the city in *L’Éducation sentimentale* to deliver a commentary on human nature and he “élabore ainsi une nouvelle image de la ville, un autre biais pour rendre compte de ce qui dans un roman est à la fois allusion au réel et véhicule de mythes

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<sup>3</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 217.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>5</sup> P.M. Wetherhill, “Paris dans *L’Éducation sentimentale*,” in *Flaubert, La Femme, La Ville: Journée d’études*, 1re Éd.e d. (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 132.

multiples et variés.”<sup>6</sup> Yet what I propose is not a study of merely the *city*, but of *urbanization*, of the process of moving towards a city or the idea of one. From this approach, we turn from *L’Éducation sentimentale* to focus on *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert’s novel less frequently discussed in terms of urban development. We can use urbanization as a way to understand the interior and moral evolutions of Emma Bovary. Throughout the novel, Flaubert highlights frustrated attempts to urbanize, Emma’s constant restructuring of her persona to emulate city ways, and a constant trajectory of movement that ultimately fails in transporting the majority of the characters beyond their original rural confines. Thus, *Madame Bovary* allows a study of urbanization as an interior phenomenon, in contrast with the exterior and concrete urbanization at play in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. Through Emma’s internal shifts in pursuit of urbanity, we can also read the country and city as embodying opposing conceptions of morality, materiality, and gender in nineteenth-century France.

### ***Movement and Stasis***

This is not to say that literal urbanization does not provide a subtle plot arc throughout the novel. Three pivotal characters – Emma, Charles, and Léon – all experience some level of urban evolution in their status throughout the novel. Emma’s trajectory can be understood as beginning in the cloistered convent, followed by her time on her father’s farm, her life in Tostes with Charles, her home in Yonville, and finally her frequent visits to Rouen to see Léon. Some progression towards larger urban centers characterizes this arc, certainly at its end with her weekly sojourns to the large city of

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<sup>6</sup> Wetherhill, “Paris dans *L’Éducation sentimentale*,” 123.

Rouen. Still, Flaubert highlights that all this movement, all these evolutions, promised a change that was not to come. On her first night in Yonville,

C'était la quatrième fois qu'elle couchait dans un endroit inconnu. La première avait été le jour de son entrée au couvent, la seconde celle de son arrivée à Tostes, la troisième à la Vaubyessard, la quatrième était celle-ci ; et chacune s'était trouvée faire dans sa vie comme l'inauguration d'une phase nouvelle. Elle ne croyait pas que les choses pussent se représenter les mêmes à des places différentes, et, puisque la portion vécue avait été mauvaise, sans doute ce qui restait à consommer serait meilleur.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of her hopes for the “inauguration d'une phase nouvelle,” the *ennui* that defines her life in one place consistently follows her to another.

Whereas Julien's process of urbanization was further embodied in his evolution between the rural Madame de Rênal and the urban Mathilde de la Mole, Emma's lovers do not align themselves as precisely. Bashful Léon initially attracts Emma, and rich descriptions of the countryside bookend their first outing to visit her child at the wet-nurse. But their relationship never solidifies before Léon leaves for the city and follows his own urbanizing trajectory. Even when the two reunite later in the novel, their affair does not imitate the objective urbanity of Julien and Mathilde's. Léon re-enters Emma's life sophisticated from his time in the city, regarding the small town of Yonville and experiencing “cette délectation mêlée de vanité triomphante et d'attendrissement égoïste que doivent avoir les millionnaires, quand ils reviennent visiter leur village.”<sup>8</sup> Homais marvels at Léon's newfound authority, questioning him on all the “moeurs de la capitale” and seeking to impress by peppering his speech with urban slang.<sup>9</sup> Léon is emboldened to

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<sup>7</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Le Livre de Poche Classique (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1999), 167.

<sup>8</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 388.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

seduce Emma after their meeting at the opera house because he feels himself her urban superior:

Auprès d'une Parisienne en dentelles, dans le salon de quelque docteur illustre, personnage à décorations et à voiture, le pauvre clerc, sans doute, eût tremblé comme un enfant ; mais ici, à Rouen, sur le port, devant la femme de ce petit médecin, il se sentait à l'aise, sûr d'avance qu'il éblouirait.<sup>10</sup>

The seduction of Emma even constitutes a literal exploration of the city, as the two lovers take their infamous carriage ride all over Rouen to consummate the affair. The conquest of a woman frequently corresponds with a journey across the city in Flaubert's works, obstacles arriving to prolong and frustrate the quest.<sup>11</sup> Léon's seduction of Emma can even be read as part of his own attempt to urbanize as "la femme se profile contre des monuments, choisis en même temps pour représenter d'essentiels aspects de la ville, et pour opposer d'autres obstacles aux désirs du héros."<sup>12</sup>

Still, the relationship between Emma and Léon avoids total urban association, as even the infamous carriage eventually exits the city. Much of their affair consists of outings to the country outside Rouen where "les bruits de la ville insensiblement s'éloignaient, le roulement des charrettes, le tumulte des voix, le jappement des chiens sur le pont des navires."<sup>13</sup> Apart from these excursions, Emma and Léon rarely leave their urban love nest, being thus in the city, but cloistered away such that when they embark on romantic trysts in nature,

ce n'était pas la première fois qu'ils apercevaient des arbres, du ciel bleu, du gazon, qu'ils entendaient l'eau couler et la brise soufflant dans le feuillage ; mais ils n'avaient sans doute jamais admiré tout cela, comme si

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

<sup>11</sup> Alison Fairlie, "La quête de la Femme à travers la Ville dans quelques oeuvres de Flaubert," in *Flaubert, La Femme, La Ville: Journée d'études*, 1re Éd.e d. (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 77.

<sup>12</sup> Fairlie, "La quête de la Femme à travers la Ville dans quelques oeuvres de Flaubert," 83.

<sup>13</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 385.

la nature n'existait pas auparavant, ou qu'elle n'eût commencé à être belle que depuis l'assouissance de leurs désirs.<sup>14</sup>

Their relationship, while the climax of Emma's own urbanization, falls short of full integration into city life and city ways.

Rodolphe, with his polished and worldly demeanor, his sexual experience and his frequent travels, could at first signal a certain level of urbanity. Yet Flaubert carefully constructs Emma and Rodolphe's affair around a series of rural encounters. Rodolphe's primary seduction is woven into the distribution of prizes at the *comices agricoles*, the interspersing of dialogues weaving together an enticement both political and romantic where the masses are portrayed like the animals on display. One woman is described as coming to the stage to receive her award "dans la fréquentation des animaux, elle avait pris leur mutisme et leur placidité."<sup>15</sup> The onset of Emma and Rodolphe's relationship reflects a distinct animality in this juxtaposition of agricultural fair and romantic seduction, even if fairs such as these served as moments for urban inventions and innovations to be presented to and accepted by country folk.<sup>16</sup> Rodolphe continues his seduction of Emma by leading her away from Yonville, high into the hills where Emma "fermait à demi les paupières pour reconnaître sa maison, et jamais ce pauvre village où elle vivait ne lui avait semblé si petit."<sup>17</sup> In the passages that follow, nature responds to the consummation of their relationship: "Ce fut comme un étourdissement ; [Emma] voyait les arbres, les chemins, les fossés, Rodolphe, et elle sentait encore l'étreinte de ses bras, tandis que le feuillage frémissait et que les joncs sifflaient."<sup>18</sup> Beyond their retreats

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>16</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 411.

<sup>17</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 261.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

into nature or Emma's garden, they never venture beyond Rodolphe's castle. Though Rodolphe reflects an urban worldliness that attracts Emma, their relationship remains anchored firmly in the country and nature. We cannot use the consistent progression between lovers who fully embody the country or the city to structure *Madame Bovary's* urbanization as we did in *Le Rouge et le Noir*.

In identity too we find less clear delineations between characters who embody the country and those who reflect the city than what exists in *Le Rouge et le Noir*. Our initial introduction to Charles is that "le nouveau était un gars de la campagne."<sup>19</sup> The description of his clothes and person consistently harkens back to this rural status, from his hair that is cut "comme un chantre de village,"<sup>20</sup> to his upbringing where he was allowed to run about barefoot – "comme les enfants des bêtes."<sup>21</sup> The narrator describes his childhood as follows:

Il suivait les laboureurs, et chassait, à coups de motte de terre, les corbeaux qui s'envolaient. Il mangeait des mûres le long des fossés, gardait les dindons avec une gaule, fanait à la moisson, courait dans le bois, jouait à la marelle sous le porche de l'église les jours de pluie, et, aux grandes fêtes, suppliait le bedeau de lui laisser sonner les cloches, pour se pendre de tout son corps à la grande corde et se sentir emporter par elle dans sa volée.<sup>22</sup>

Charles is described as growing like a tree, and when he succeeds at school it is exclusively in natural history.<sup>23</sup> We learn that he is cherished by his peasant patients for his humility,<sup>24</sup> and Emma bemoans that he carries a knife in his pocket – "comme un paysan!"<sup>25</sup> The first time that Charles and the père Rouault meet, Charles does not insist

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.



on emphasizing his status as a doctor, but rather identifies himself with the farmer through a conversation that centers on a dominant concern of rural France: wolf attacks.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, official bounties on wolves encouraged routine hunting to eliminate this deadly danger from the countryside. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the wolf threat diminished, due in large part to diminished natural environments and the disruption of roads and railways. The pervasive fear and lore of wolves that dominated the nineteenth century speaks beyond the statistics of actual wolf attacks to denote the strength of the wolf on peasant imagination:

For city dwellers the wolf was a storybook character, seldom closer than a tale from Jules Verne or the Comtesse de Ségur. But for people over great portions of France he was a howling in the night, a disquieting presence not far off, a hazard or even an interdiction of certain winter paths, and worst of all, a source of dreaded rabies.<sup>27</sup>

As Charles converses with the père Rouault about “ [le] temps qu’il faisait, des grands froids, des loups qui couraient des champs, la nuit,” he effectively summarizes the predominant concerns of the peasantry, those of agricultural success and survival.

If Charles seems otherwise to be the incarnation of rural peasantry and the countryside, we are left with the troubling fact that he is the doctor in the novel, a position often signifying science, intellect, and modern authority in nineteenth-century texts. One scholar described the role of the doctor in Victorian novels as mediating “between the fictive world and the “real” insights associated with medical knowledge,”<sup>28</sup> and ultimately becoming a “human index of modern material and physiological

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>27</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Tabitha Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel: Family Practices* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 2.

knowledge.”<sup>29</sup> Gillian Ni Cheallaigh observes the doctor as representative of paternal authority in nineteenth century French novels, especially in regard to infantilized patients in mental institutions.<sup>30</sup> Doctors populate various novels of the century as voices of authority or beacons of credibility, such as the doctor to whom Ourika confesses her woes in Claire de Duras’ novel *Ourika*, or the doctor who pronounces the inescapable genetic downfalls of Gervaise in Zola’s *L’Assommoir*. Balzac labels the doctor as one of the three professions in perpetual mourning, carrying the weight of society’s ills as well as the ability to heal them.<sup>31</sup> The doctor applies the lofty advances of science to the common man, allowing him a distinct authority in the nineteenth century, as science slowly came to be perceived as value-free and objective.<sup>32</sup> Flaubert also recognizes the importance of science integrated into literature, believing that “scientific observation and documentary exactitude in literature would produce that medical perspective on life, which he considered the only means of achieving great emotional effect.”<sup>33</sup>

Conversely, Charles lacks authority – either as a doctor or a dominant male. Flaubert equips him with this esteemed profession, and then denies him all the tropes of it. Charles proves himself a bumbling idiot who might have been happier as a peasant farmer, yet the novel opens on Charles obtaining an education and profession. He attends school, longing for the country all the while. We read of Charles gazing out over Rouen and imagining that in the distant countryside “Qu’il devait faire bon là-bas ! Quelle

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<sup>29</sup> Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> Gillian Ni Cheallaigh, “Erre Dans le labyrinthe de l’asile ou de l’écriture: The (Writing) Madwoman from the Attic to the Asylum, *Quand la folie parle: The Dialectic Effect of Madness in French Literature*, ed. Gillian Ni Cheallaigh, Laura Jackson, Siobhan McIlvanney (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 76.

<sup>31</sup> Balzac, *Le Colonel Chabert* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994) 129.

<sup>32</sup> Ian Dowbiggen, *Inheriting Madness: Professionalization and Psychiatric Knowledge in Nineteenth-century France* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), 160.

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Doering, “Madame Bovary and Flaubert’s Romanticism.” *College Literature* 8, no. 1 (1981): JSTOR, 2.

fraîcheur sous la hêtraie ! Et il ouvrait les narines pour aspirer les bonnes odeurs de la campagne, qui ne venaient pas jusqu'à lui."<sup>34</sup> Flaubert troubles his century's reliance on scientific authority by presenting Charles as so dismally inept in his own field. Charles submits reluctantly to his profession, bearing the title of doctor without lending any authority of credibility to the novel through his role.

Emma also resists easy identification, as Flaubert depicts her simultaneously as a hyper-sexualized embodiment of the country, and in a state of constant longing for the city in contrast with Charles' rural nostalgia. Her fictional forays while at the convent filled her head with lofty idealizations of a simple life where, like Paul and Virginie, someone, "va chercher pour vous des fruits rouges dans des grands arbres plus hauts que des clochers, ou qui court pieds nus sur le sable, vous apportant un nid d'oiseau."<sup>35</sup> In reality, it is she who waits on her father, managing his household instead of eating fruit on distant beaches. In a rare moment where Emma chooses reality over fiction, Flaubert emphasizes that, while novels imparted to her a flawed sense of romance and affection, they did not succeed in convincing her of the romantics of peasant life:

Si son enfance se fût écoulée dans l'arrière-boutique d'un quartier marchand, elle se serait peut-être ouverte alors aux envahissements lyriques de la nature, qui, d'ordinaire, ne nous arrivent que par la traduction des écrivains. Mais elle connaissait trop la campagne ; elle savait le bêlement des troupeaux, les laitages, les charrues.<sup>36</sup>

When Charles begins his visits to the farm, to the countryside he loves, he encounters Emma and sees in her a seductive image of peasant hospitality. The initial description of Mademoiselle Rouault is of her sewing, glistening with sweat and then offering him a drink, "selon la mode de la campagne." She takes a drink herself, tilting the cup back and

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<sup>34</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 65.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

“la tête en arrière, les lèvres avancées, le cou tendu, elle riait de ne rien sentir, tandis que le bout de sa langue, passant entre ses dents fines, léchait à petits coups le fond du verre.”<sup>37</sup> Charles’ infatuation with Emma’s sensuality begins amidst all the trappings of the country. For her part, Emma’s consent to Charles can be read as a first attempt to disrupt the monotony of her rural existence. After leaving the convent, she initially enjoyed managing her father’s household, but by the time Charles enters her life, “elle se considérait comme fort désillusionnée, n’ayant plus rien à apprendre, ne devant plus rien sentir.”<sup>38</sup> Her marriage to Charles could appear a first urbanizing step, as she becomes the wife of a doctor and moves from the farm to the village of Tostes, yet it is a false step.

Throughout the entire novel, Emma is ascribed an urbanity without logical origin. She is the daughter of a farmer who received a cloistered education before returning to keep house for her father, yet numerous characters find in her bearing an urban poise, or at least, the absence of rural influence. Charles’ mother worries about his attraction to Emma’s supposed cosmopolitanism, exclaiming, “une demoiselle de ville ! Allons donc ! leur grand-père était berger!”<sup>39</sup> Emma is the granddaughter of a shepherd, but she is consistently identified with refined or urban graces. She receives an invitation to the ball at Vaubyessard because the secretary comes to the house and remarks that she “ne saluait point en paysanne,” thus ensuring that an invitation would not be an embarrassment.<sup>40</sup> When Léon reflects on his first meeting with Emma, he marvels at his having conversed

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

with “*une dame*,”<sup>41</sup> and Rodolphe, upon his initial sight of the doctor’s wife declares to himself:

Elle est fort gentille ! se disait-il ; elle est fort gentille, cette femme du médecin ! De belles dents, les yeux noirs, le pied coquet, et de la tournure comme une Parisienne. D’où diable sort-elle ? Où donc l’a-t-il trouvée, ce gros garçon-là ?<sup>42</sup>

From the onset, Flaubert presents Emma as a character whose interior identification conflicts with her actual origins and she will spend the entirety of the novel constructing an urban existence that surpasses her reality. She views “tout ce qui l’entourait immédiatement, campagne ennuyeuse, petits bourgeois imbéciles, médiocrité de l’existence” as an “exception dans le monde, un hasard particulier où elle se trouvait prise” and works desperately to surmount this rural chance of birth.<sup>43</sup> At the Vaubyessard ball, Flaubert paints a picture of Emma’s internal tension. She twirls across the dance floor, living out her fantasies of grandeur, only to catch sight of the peasants pressed against the windows to watch the festivities:

Elle revit la ferme, la mare bourbeuse, son père en blouse sous les pommiers, et elle se revit elle-même, comme autrefois, écrémant avec son doigt les terrines de lait dans la laiterie. Mais, aux fulgurations de l’heure présente, sa vie passée, si nette jusqu’alors, s’évanouissait tout entière, et elle doutait presque de l’avoir vécue. Elle était là ; puis autour du bal, il n’y avait plus que de l’ombre, étalée sur tout le reste.<sup>44</sup>

Unlike the peasants, who gaze in and long to be accepted into a different society, Emma has managed to transgress a first threshold. Yet she remains ever conscious of her farm roots, her rural ties, aggressively striving to keep them at bay and in the shadows.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

Whereas we could read *Le Rouge et le Noir* in terms of concrete urbanization of plot and relationships between urbanity and identity, *Madame Bovary* demands a different sort of analysis. Rather than a linear progression between actual spaces, the novel addresses urbanization as a pervasive force that shapes and influences, but does not actually deliver all characters from their lot. We can study urbanization within this novel in terms of interior movement and evolution, a restructuring of thought as directed by the city.

Movement and stasis permeate every aspect of *Madame Bovary*, as much of the story consists of characters headed to and from various locations. Charles, who goes back and forth between the Bertaux farm and Tostes; Emma, who dashes to Rodolphe's castle daily; young Berthe, sent back and forth to her wet nurse at the impulses of her mother; the ever-present *Hirondelle* that carries Emma back and forth to Rouen; the carriage ride where Emma and Léon make love in transit. But in spite of the incessant movement of all the characters, there is a remarkable inability to actually change or progress that characterizes Emma herself. She is constantly moving, yet forever trapped in stasis, painfully embodied by the *Hirondelle* that clatters past as she lies dying, continuing to carry others forward and leaving her definitively behind. In one of her early conversations with Léon, Emma declares that "le dérangement m'amuse toujours; j'aime changer de place."<sup>45</sup> She perpetually tries to change locations and change stations throughout the entire book, to varying degrees of temporary success. When she falls ill towards the end of the first part of the novel, Charles assumes that "la cause de sa maladie était sans doute dans quelque influence locale, et, s'arrêtant à cette idée, il

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

songea sérieusement à aller s'établir ailleurs."<sup>46</sup> More correct than he realizes, Emma's physical wellbeing is tied to her longing to move to ever-greater urban centers, and she leaves Tostes in expectation of something better.

Flaubert prefaces the arrival in Yonville with a long paragraph discussing its access roads:

Jusqu'en 1835, il n'y avait point de route praticable pour arriver à Yonville ; mais on a établi vers cette époque un chemin de grande vicinalité qui relie la route d'Abbeville à celle d'Amiens, et sert quelquefois aux rouliers allant de Rouen dans les Flandres. Cependant, Yonville-l'Abbaye est demeuré stationnaire, malgré ses débouchés nouveaux. Au lieu d'améliorer les cultures, on s'y obstine encore aux herbages, quelque dépréciés qu'ils soient, et le bourg paresseux, s'écartant de la plaine, a continué naturellement à s'agrandir vers la rivière. On l'aperçoit de loin, tout couché en long sur la rive, comme un gardeur de vaches qui fait la sieste au bord de l'eau.<sup>47</sup>

His description highlights both the increased movement that roads and nineteenth century urbanization brought to towns throughout France, and a balking on the part of Yonville to participate in this progression towards modernity. This tension of movement and stasis strikes at the heart of an urbanization-focused analysis of *Madame Bovary*. In the episode that definitively reveals Charles' inadequacy as a doctor, that of his botched operation on Hippolyte's club foot, we see this again. Initially timid, Charles warms to the idea of this experimental operation when he is convinced that it will show Yonville's sophistication and progression – a true light shining forth in the countryside.<sup>48</sup> Yet this attempt to signal movement – both for Yonville and physically, for Hippolyte – fails and another doctor must come to rectify Charles' horrible error. Yonville remains as static as ever and Hippolyte ends the ordeal less mobile than before.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

In regard to Emma, Flaubert consistently highlights the movement necessary to Emma's affairs and the distance that she must travel in attempts to shake her *ennui*. In describing her routine journey to visit Léon in Rouen,

Emma la connaissait d'un bout à l'autre ; elle savait qu'après un herbage il y avait un poteau, ensuite un orme, une grange ou une cahute de cantonnier ; quelquefois même, afin de se faire des surprises, elle fermait les yeux. Mais elle ne perdait jamais le sentiment net de la distance à parcourir.<sup>49</sup>

Neither does the reader ever lose the feeling of the distance to cross. We travel alongside Emma all throughout the novel, racing through the fields in the early morning to steal into Rodolphe's castle, or bouncing along in the *Hirondelle* to join Léon. Emma's movement defines the reader's experience as much as it does the novel's focus.

Furthermore, her love is tied to this movement, and as she comes within sight of Rouen each week,

Son amour s'agrandissait devant l'espace, et s'emplissait de tumulte aux bourdonnements vagues qui montaient. Elle le reversait au dehors, sur les places, sur les promenades, sur les rues, et la vieille cité normande s'étalait à ses yeux comme une capitale démesurée, comme une Babylone où elle entraît.<sup>50</sup>

Flaubert's description propels Emma and the reader into the city and conveys the sensation of flowing over it.

But in spite of her constant movement, Emma finishes the novel trapped, abandoned by the lovers who defined her movement the entire text and incapable of escaping her financial situation. She spent the novel constructing an interior urbanity and identity yet it does not succeed in actually urbanizing her, actually allowing her to move on from Yonville or Charles. To understand this process of interior urbanization, it is

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.



vital to study first the lure of the city within the novel, and more specifically, the role that Paris plays in influencing Emma from afar. We will read the city not as mere geographic location, but as indicative of a powerful nineteenth-century influence reshaping the distant countryside. Following this presentation, we can study the way that Emma embarks on a process of self-urbanization to reconstruct the reality around her.

### ***The Lure of the City***

Emma longs for the city from the very beginning of the novel. Shortly after meeting Mademoiselle Rouault, we learn that she “ne s’amusait guère à la campagne, maintenant surtout qu’elle était chargée presque à elle seule des soins de la ferme.”<sup>51</sup> She longs to live in the city, lamenting the oppressive boredom of changing seasons in the country.<sup>52</sup> After disillusionment settles around her in her marriage to Charles, Emma wonders how she could have avoided her fate, and the city appears the only solution. She imagines the lives of her friends from the convent, certainly settled in happier situations: “Que faisaient-elles maintenant ? À la ville ? avec le bruit des rues, le bourdonnement des théâtres et les clartés du bal, elles avaient des existences où le cœur se dilate, où les sens s’épanouissent.”<sup>53</sup> She imagines the city as a site not only of sophistication and excitement, but also the possibility to escape a narrow destiny. Interestingly, as we will see in works focused on women in the city towards the end of the century, the city later becomes a place of entrapment where women cannot break free of their lot in life, such as Gervaise in Zola’s *L’Assommoir*.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

Emma's longing for urban life also leaves her susceptible to seduction. Rodolphe recognizes that the path to seducing Emma lies in appealing to her boredom and desire for the city:

Je crois [Charles] très bête. Elle en est fatiguée sans doute. Il porte des ongles sales et une barbe de trois jours. Tandis qu'il trotte à ses malades, elle reste à ravauder des chaussettes. Et on s'ennuie ! on voudrait habiter la ville, danser la polka tous les soirs ! Pauvre petite femme ! Ça bâille après l'amour, comme une carpe après l'eau sur une table de cuisine. Avec trois mots de galanterie, cela vous adorerait ; j'en suis sûr ! ce serait tendre ! charmant !... Oui, mais comment s'en débarrasser ensuite ?<sup>54</sup>

Though Rodolphe does not whisk Emma away to the city, and in fact their affair happens largely in the country as I have already discussed, he does woo her with his refined sophistication, his fashionable clothes, and his worldly demeanor, all things Emma associates with urban life.

Beyond a longing for the city as an abstract concept, *Madame Bovary* testifies to the ubiquitous allure of Paris in nineteenth-century literature and thought, highlighting again the province-Paris divide discussed in the previous chapter. The myth of Paris is everywhere, but "on lit dans le mythe une réalité urbaine."<sup>55</sup> The "mythical" portrayal of Paris that both structures nineteenth century representations, and persists even today, is described by one scholar as having five key components:

1. The urban and demographic dimension: Paris, the city *par excellence*, "la fourmillante cité."
2. The intellectual dimension: Paris as the center of civilization, the capital of the Enlightenment and the arts.
3. The historical dimension: Paris as the center of the Revolution.
4. The hedonistic dimension: Paris as the capitol of Pleasure.
5. The financial dimension: Paris, site of the new financial aristocracy and the Bourgeoisie.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>55</sup> Roger Bellet, preface to *Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Aspects d'un mythe littéraire*, 9.

<sup>56</sup> Dolf Oehler, "Mythologie parisienne. Lecture d'un poème de Heine: 'Soucis babyloniens,'" In *Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Aspects d'un mythe littéraire*, (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1984), 81-82.

To summarize, Paris exists in literature as “la rencontre et le conflit de l’industrie et de l’esthétique. Paris est la cité ambivalente, qui mêle le sacré et le profane, la prostitution et la personnalité.”<sup>57</sup> This heady combination of opportunity and debauchery perfectly sums up Emma’s longing for the city and the ways in which she will attempt to reshape her own identity into one modeled after mythic Paris. If Paris exists in *L’Éducation sentimentale* as “un lieu de métonymies et de métaphores, d’échos et d’anticipations,”<sup>58</sup> it also hovers omnipresent in the background of *Madame Bovary*, perpetually out of Emma’s grasp but ever driving her thoughts.

We saw this phenomenon in *Le Rouge et le Noir* as well, with Julien longing for and eventually obtaining, the capital. Emma likewise yearns for Paris, but she will never reach it, grasping instead at wisps of this far-off city in her everyday encounters. After the Vaubyessard ball, she treasures the viscount’s cigar case, imagining the loves and affairs that fill his life. She traces her fingers over the case daily, imagining that,

Il était à Paris, maintenant ; là-bas ! Comment était ce Paris ? Quel nom démesuré ! Elle se le répétait à demi-voix, pour se faire plaisir ; il sonnait à ses oreilles comme un bourdon de cathédrale, il flamboyait à ses yeux jusque sur l’étiquette de ses pots de pommade.<sup>59</sup>

While her initial plunge into reverie came from her infatuation with the viscount, he is soon eclipsed by fantasies of the city. It is the name of Paris, more than the reality of the viscount, that thrills her, settling itself over the belongings in her presence. The phallic cigar becomes a signifier of Paris as much as of him, and she grasps at the city through clutching this object. In her study *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania*, Avital

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<sup>57</sup> Bellet, preface to *Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Aspects d’un mythe littéraire*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> Wetherhill, “Paris dans *L’Éducation sentimentale*,” 131.

<sup>59</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 127.

Ronell proposed that *Madame Bovary* explores Emma's madness and her desire to "drug" herself and avoid reality. Ronell explains:

Like others before her, she experienced the dangers of a *belle âme* : raptures that cut her off from reality, hallucinated plenitude and pure communication, a kind of hinge on transcendental telepathy. Everything she tried out – religion, reading, love, rushes, getting dressed in the morning – had hallucinogenic, analgesic, stimulating, or euphorizing effects on her.<sup>60</sup>

Her assertion is correct, yet I would argue that the first obsession that takes hold of Emma, and the one that fuels all the others, is her insatiable desire for the city, for urbanity, and for Paris. A manic desire to self-urbanize becomes the fuel for all subsequent manias. It drives her affairs, prompts her excessive spending and debts, and fuels her false reality and lies. Following the ball, Emma sits at her window and watches people walking through the village, imagining them traveling as far as Paris:

Elle les suivait dans sa pensée, montant et descendant les côtes, traversant les villages, filant sur la grande route à la clarté des étoiles. Au bout d'une distance indéterminée, il se trouvait toujours une place confuse où expirait son rêve. Elle s'acheta un plan de Paris, et, du bout de son doigt, sur la carte, elle faisait des courses dans la capitale. Elle remontait les boulevards, s'arrêtant à chaque angle, entre les lignes des rues, devant les carrés blancs qui figurent les maisons. Les yeux fatigués à la fin, elle fermait ses paupières, et elle voyait dans les ténèbres se tordre au vent des becs de gaz, avec des marche-pieds de calèches, qui se déployaient à grand fracas devant le péristyle des théâtres.<sup>61</sup>

Emma transcends her reality of Tostes not only by imagining what life in Paris is like, but by attempting to walk her mind through the streets of the city, attempting to experience a physical reality that she knows nothing about. Flaubert emphasizes that Emma's imaginary cartography ignores concrete realities of city life, as her "walks" through the city ignore that "la vie nombreuse qui s'agitait en ce tumulte y était cependant divisée par

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<sup>60</sup> Avital Ronell, "EB on Ice," *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1992), 74.

<sup>61</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 129.

parties, classée en tableaux distincts. Emma n'en apercevait que deux ou trois qui lui cachaient tous les autres, et représentaient à eux seuls l'humanité complète."<sup>62</sup> Whereas later authors highlighting urban changes emphasize the deplorable conditions of various groups trapped in urban settings, Flaubert focuses solely on the mythic Paris that conforms to Emma's imagination, one of "une existence au-dessus des autres, entre ciel et terre, dans les orages, quelque chose de sublime."<sup>63</sup> What started as reveries about the viscount become fantasies about Paris, a pattern duplicated in her romantic encounters with Léon and Rodolphe. She loves the abstraction of both men more than their reality, just as she craves a Parisian existence far removed from its actuality.

As Emma grows more and more despondent with her life in Tostes, she wishes "à la fois mourir et habiter Paris."<sup>64</sup> Her constant agony of separation from the urban life that she feels would fulfill all her dreams is heightened by the fact that the myth of Paris surrounds her, reinforced by other characters. As the countryside changed throughout the nineteenth century, Paris remained the fixed point dictating its process of self-reflection:

The peasant was ashamed to be a peasant; he was ashamed to be uncivilized; he agreed with his judges that there was something valuable and vastly superior that he lacked, that French civilization and notable anything from Paris were clearly superior and clearly desirable: hence the vogue of the *articles de Paris*.... But for the peasant to know himself uncouth, he had first to become aware of a model for couthness.<sup>65</sup>

Urbanization created a network of knowledge that allowed the country to be aware of the city in a new way, highlighting its own differences and intensifying the contrast. In doing so, it laid out an elusive model to which the countryside responded and which it reflected. Flaubert highlights this relationship through various tiny details and remarks scattered

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>65</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 7.

throughout the novel. We learn that the *mairie* in Yonville is built “*sur les dessins d’un architecte de Paris*,” mimicking the capitol in the country.<sup>66</sup> When Emma loses her beloved dog in route to Yonville, her comrades regale her with tales of dogs who returned to their masters. Of course, these masters lived in Paris, a place where the lost – canine or human – find their way home.<sup>67</sup> Léon too grows impatient with his existence in Yonville and “Paris alors agita pour lui, dans le lointain, la fanfare de ses bals masqués avec le rire de ses grisettes.”<sup>68</sup> He fabricates a Parisian life in his imagination:

Il se meubla, dans sa tête, un appartement. Il y mènerait une vie d’artiste !  
Il y prendrait des leçons de guitare ! Il aurait une robe de chambre, un  
béret basque, des pantoufles de velours bleu ! Et même il admirait déjà sur  
sa cheminée deux fleurets en sautoir, avec une tête de mort et la guitare  
au-dessus.<sup>69</sup>

Like Emma, Léon is enamored by the trappings of this city that promises pleasure and freedom, reveling in thoughts of his sumptuous wardrobe, balls populated by *grisettes*, and the artistic bohemian existence. If Flaubert’s text seems laden with physical objects, it is because those like Emma and Léon imagine Paris in terms of its signifiers that can be purchased or touched. Urbanity is for them a series of possessions that create a new reality. Their fantasies of Paris differ in their details, yet the city acts as incarnation of desires fulfilled for both of them.

Of course, the myth of Paris in the nineteenth century is not without its counter-myth, those in the countryside who viewed the capitol as a dangerous place of debauchery and disease. When Charles learns of Léon’s plans to move, he shares his

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<sup>66</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 148.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

fears and his worries that Léon will succumb to typhoid fever in the city, known to attack students from the countryside.<sup>70</sup> Homais also fears for Léon's life in the city:

À cause du changement de régime, continua le pharmacien, et de la perturbation qui en résulte dans l'économie générale. Et puis, l'eau de Paris, voyez-vous ! les mets de restaurateurs, toutes ces nourritures épicées finissent par vous échauffer le sang et ne valent pas, quoi qu'on en dise, un bon pot-au-feu. J'ai toujours, quant à moi, préféré la cuisine bourgeoise : c'est plus sain !<sup>71</sup>

His fears express the sheer otherness of the capitol as viewed by province, as well as concerns that Paris proved especially dangerous to those who migrated there from the countryside. When Charles is inspired by urban science to try to operate on Hippolyte's foot and it fails, the doctor who comes to save Hippolyte angrily expresses similar disgust for "des inventions de Paris ! Voilà les idées de ces messieurs de la Capitale ! c'est comme le strabisme, le chloroforme et la lithotritie, un tas de monstruosités que le gouvernement devrait défendre !" <sup>72</sup> Perceptions of Paris prove sharply divisive, with rural dwellers either longing to live out an urban fantasy like Emma or Léon, or fearing the deathly influence of the city and its ways, like Charles and Homais.

Emma's dreams to live in Paris remain an unfulfilled goal, an unattainable endpoint of urbanization. Yet in the absence of actual movement towards Paris, Emma undergoes a process of interior and moral urbanization as she recreates herself to emulate the city. She begins by reading Parisian magazines, noting all reviews of store openings or theatre debuts and nurturing a cultural savvy completely useless in her daily life far from the capital: "Elle savait les modes nouvelles, l'adresse des bons tailleurs, les jours de Bois ou d'Opéra. Elle étudia, dans Eugène Sue, des descriptions d'ameublements ; elle

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 214

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

lut Balzac et George Sand, y cherchant des assouvissements imaginaires pour ses convoitises personnelles.”<sup>73</sup> The only outlet she finds for these urban tidbits is in discussions with Léon about “spectacles de Paris, titres de romans, quadrilles nouveaux, et le monde qu’ils ne connaissaient pas.”<sup>74</sup> This ability to cultivate knowledge of Parisian society reflects the “penetration of Paris print into hitherto printless regions,” and was the direct result of improved roads and more bookstores.<sup>75</sup> Emma’s obsession with Parisian reading material stands in direct contrast with Charles, who finds himself unable to read when he comes home in the evenings, falling asleep in his chair after several minutes.<sup>76</sup> Emma’s frustration with him grows as she begins to view herself more and more as an urban woman, and her husband ever more as an unsophisticated peasant.

As seeking refined companionship in Charles is out of the question, Emma tries to train her maid to respond to her like a Parisian aristocrat, and it is at this moment in the novel that her obsessive consumerism begins, filling her life with tiny urban luxuries to reflect her mental state. I will discuss Emma’s material obsessions in further detail later, but it is essential to note for now that her buying frenzy begins not with attempts to facilitate her affairs, but in a desire to construct an urban reality around her rural life. In spite of her efforts, *ennui* plagues Emma, driving her to foul moods and lethargy. Charles’ mother observes her daughter-in-law’s distemper and recommends that she wouldn’t have such emotional swings if she did forced labor, earning her living through manual work.<sup>77</sup> *Ennui* is frequently discussed in nineteenth-century literature, ranging from the suffocating boredom of those like Emma, to the more evolved *mal du siècle* that

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>75</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 465.

<sup>76</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 133.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.



plagued romantic heroes. This *ennui* also signals a changing work force, as country bourgeoisie were both without the long hours of peasantry, and without the entertainments of the city: “Many people in traditional societies may well have spent most of their leisure time being bored.... Those who did not work were largely concentrated in small towns, and there we find ennui practically a way of life.”<sup>78</sup> *Ennui* can only exist in a society where individuals can foster reflective boredom, and the demographic shifts of urbanization resulted in new populations freed from work and in possession of leisure time, if not always the means or opportunities to fill it. Ennui and urbanization develop in tandem arcs, with those like Emma languishing in their midst.

Madame Bovary *mère* finds further reason to critique Emma when she suspects her affair with Rodolphe. She rebukes her daughter-in-law, and Emma in turn drives her from the house, exclaiming, “quel savoir-vivre ! quelle paysanne !” at her mother-in-law’s prudish understanding of marriage and her audacious meddling.<sup>79</sup> As established and discussed earlier, Emma is no less a “paysanne” than Charles’ mother, perhaps even more so. In attributing this title to Madame Bovary *mère*, it is clear that she is characterizing the woman’s moral rigidity as a marker of rural values, in contrast to her own urbanized and enlightened state. Her moral alignment with the city continues throughout her affair with Léon. When he pulls her from the church into the carriage in their initial romantic rendezvous in Rouen, Emma initially balks at the boldness. Léon retorts that “cela se fait à Paris!” and his words “comme un irrésistible argument, la détermina.”<sup>80</sup> She is seduced, not by love for Léon, but by the assurance that these actions align with her cherished Parisian ideals. Though Léon might have initiated this encounter,

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<sup>78</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 235.

<sup>79</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 302.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

he quickly succumbs to the persona that she projects, marveling at his success in obtaining “une femme du monde, et une femme mariée ! une vraie maîtresse enfin.”<sup>81</sup> Emma has succeeded in transforming herself into “l’amoureuse de tous les romans, l’héroïne de tous les drames, le vague *elle* de tous les volumes de vers.”<sup>82</sup> Yet her artificial existence, her interior urbanization, does not successfully spirit her away forever from her rural reality.

The Parisian influence over province cannot be understood as merely the promulgation of fashionable taste. Rather, the myth of Paris reflects a project of political and cultural domination over the countryside. In Emma’s tragic demise, we can see the power exerted by the capital, its means of subjugating the rural imagination. Flaubert problematizes the myth of Paris by presenting it not just as an imaginary ideal, but as an entire mechanism to control provincials by directing their impulses. After years of constructing a physical reality of material possessions to match her urban fantasies, Emma’s debts consume her and she frantically seeks an escape. At this point in the novel, Flaubert’s language begins to hint at the idea of corruption, both in terms of the city having corrupted Emma, and her power to corrupt others. With this ending, Flaubert communicates contemporary fear of the city’s negative moral influence that accompanied nineteenth-century urbanization. In the late eighteenth century Jean-Jacques Rousseau described Paris as the high point of civilization that had subsequently corrupted humanity. “Les villes sont le gouffre de l’espèce humaine,” he wrote in *Emile*, hinting at a dichotomy between rural and urban morality that would only grow stronger as the

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

century progressed.<sup>83</sup> The city as corruptive force appears in multiple novels throughout the century, transforming innocent arrivals from the country into hardened urban dwellers characterized by moral laxity. Flaubert employs this dichotomy in *L'Éducation sentimentale*. In this “grand roman parisien,”<sup>84</sup> Frédéric’s education consists of movement between Paris and Nogent and in his amorous encounters and personal evolutions, “on ne peut être plus clair. La Ville corrompt, la Nature purifie. C’est du ‘rousseauisme’ intégral.”<sup>85</sup>

Emma’s corruption goes further. We read this corruptive implication in the description of Emma’s frantic attempts to borrow money from Rodolphe at the end of the novel. She embarks for his castle, “sans s’apercevoir qu’elle courait s’offrir à ce qui l’avait tantôt si fort exaspérée, ni se douter le moins du monde de cette prostitution.”<sup>86</sup> The image of a prostitute begging for handouts from a former lover is far from the woman that Rodolphe initially seduced. Her experiences, her time in the city with Léon, and her escalating frenzy to fabricate an alternate reality transformed her. When Rodolphe too refuses her, she ends her life, but not her influence. Flaubert describes the multiple layers of coffins needed to contain her corpse, but even they cannot contain her influence. Following her death, Charles undertakes his own project of self-urbanization, conforming himself to the image of the citified dandy that she admired: “Pour lui plaire, comme si elle vivait encore, il adopta ses prédilections, ses idées ; il s’acheta des bottes vernies, il prit l’usage des cravates blanches. Il mettait du cosmétique à ses moustaches, il

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<sup>83</sup> Hans-Joachim Lotz, “L’Image irréaliste, bizarre et mythique de Paris chez Balzac et Baudelaire,” in *Paris au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Aspects d’un mythe littéraire*, (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1984), 95-96.

<sup>84</sup> Wetherhill, “Paris dans *L’Éducation sentimentale*,” 123.

<sup>85</sup> Jacques-Louis Douchin, “Rosannette et la ville corruptrice ou quelques réflexions sur le ‘rousseauisme’ de Flaubert,” in *Flaubert, La Femme, La Ville: Journée d’études*, 1re Éd.e d. (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 142.

<sup>86</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 451.

souscrivit comme elle des billets à ordre. Elle le corrompait par delà le tombeau.”

Emma’s obsession with cultivating urbanity led her to a life of adultery, materiality, madness, and finally suicide, and Charles begins to adopt her mannerisms, prefiguring his own death. To understand more fully not just the allure of the city, not just the mythic appeal of Paris or its corrupting influence, but the actual changes to concrete and philosophical reality that urbanization wrought in nineteenth century France –the “corruptions” that plagued Emma – we can study the portrayal of consumerism, language, and gender within the novel, noting how each plays a role in her interior urbanization.

### ***Material Madness***

The perspective of urbanization has allowed us to better understand the origins of Emma’s true weaknesses and *folies*, her desire to identify herself with the city fueling her material addictions more than romantic dreams or affairs. When Lheureux initially comes to peddle his wares, it is telling that he emphasizes his trips to the city to select his products.<sup>87</sup> Emma proves powerless to resist the possibility of buying a tangible token of her internal reality, and this begins the descent into a dangerous materialism that will be her undoing.

In *Le Rouge et le Noir*, I similarly noted the importance of clothing in urban portrayal, but to different ends. Stendhal employs various outfits to signify Julien’s evolutions in urbanity, uniting these uniforms with the concept of urban identity. Julien’s clothing tracks and reflects his evolution and self-urbanization, granting him agency in the urban environment. The tailor reigns supreme in this power structure, capable of

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

creating status through new garments. In *Madame Bovary* we have traded the tailor for the shop clerk, the custom made-frocks of the urban elite for the ready-made garments sweeping the nation. In the second half of the nineteenth century, urbanization was accompanied by not only the industrial revolution, but also what Jules Michelet termed the “calico revolution,” cheap fabric enabling lower-class women to wear clothing beyond their drab working garments. The result of this innovation was that “peasants were beginning to look like everybody else.”<sup>88</sup> What was once a clear sign of one’s identity could now be purchased, and Emma clearly seeks to buy her way to a different identity.

In 1869, Thérion de Montaugé wrote that “poverty is measured by comparison. One cannot feel deprived of possessions and pleasures one is unaware of.”<sup>89</sup> Emma’s awareness of city life fuels her desire to emulate it, something lacking before urbanization spread across France: “This is what urbanization – or more precisely, the spread of urban values through the countryside – was going to change. New expectations, and new frustrations when they were not met; desires that became needs; the fading of the ages-old resignation and passivity.”<sup>90</sup> Urbanization and subsequent commercialization “resulted in the dispersal of markets into the countryside instead of their concentration in cities and towns.”<sup>91</sup> Emma embodies this liminal space that urbanization opens, one where those in the country could read of the city, shop its wares, and pine for its reality thanks to the influence of urbanization and the spread, not just of ideas, but of products. While she cannot dwell within an actual urban space, she can nevertheless grasp at its

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<sup>88</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 229.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>91</sup> Ted W. Margadant, “Proto-urban development and political mobilization during the Second Republic,” *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, Ed. John Merriman, (New York: Homes and Meier, 1981), 100.

trappings. Her subsequent dissatisfaction can be understood as a result of urbanization, which created “new routines, new assurances, new uses of space and new hopes, as well as new anxieties.”<sup>92</sup>

This slow dispersal not just of urban ideas and values, but of actual products from the city, manifests itself throughout the entire novel, most notably in the domain of clothing. Some wedding guests that come to celebrate the nuptials of Emma and Charles are described as having “des robes à la façon de la ville,” and Flaubert highlights how each guest dressed “suivant leur position sociale différente.”<sup>93</sup> In this strange intermingling of city styles and rural residents that urbanization facilitates, there is both the appearance of being able to dress one’s way to a different station, and the reality of birth and social status. We see this in the description of Emma’s own progression in her bridal attire. As Emma walks beside Charles in her wedding finery, actual pieces of the countryside cling to her dress and she must stop repeatedly to remove “les herbes rudes avec les petits dards des chardons” that stick to her overly long gown.<sup>94</sup> It is as if nature and rural life are determined to seize at her carefully chosen garments and hold her back from the more romantic future that she imagines awaits her.

Flaubert continues to pay close attention to the clothing worn by each character throughout the entire novel. Charles’ rural associations are attached to the boots he wears, “qui avaient au cou-de-pied deux plis épais obliquant vers les chevilles....Il disait que *c’était bien assez bon pour la campagne*.”<sup>95</sup> In contrast to her husband who welcomes appropriate dress for his profession and lifestyle, Emma pines for city fashions. When she

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<sup>92</sup> John Merriman, “Images of the Nineteenth-century French City,” 40.

<sup>93</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 86.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

passes through Rouen, she sees “des dames qui portaient à leur montre un paquet de breloques ; elle acheta des breloques.”<sup>96</sup> Her immediate impulse is to imitate the clothing of these urbane women. Emma’s obsession with purchasing and wearing her way to an altered reality escalates during her relationship with Rodolphe. At the *comices agricoles*, Emma and Rodolphe amuse themselves by mocking the outfits worn by the peasants, both of them infatuated with fine clothing and accessories. Though she is attracted to Rodolphe, she initially hesitates to go riding with him. She finally succumbs, not because of her affection for him, but because Charles insists that she buy a new skirt suited for riding and “l’amazone la décida.”<sup>97</sup> When Emma and Rodolphe contemplate running away together, the plans have a distinctly rural appeal:

Ils habiteraient une maison basse, à toit plat, ombragée d’un palmier, au fond d’un golfe, au bord de la mer. Ils se promèneraient en gondole, ils se balanceraient en hamac ; et leur existence serait facile et large comme leurs vêtements de soie, toute chaude et étoilée comme les nuits douces qu’ils contemperaient.<sup>98</sup>

Even their dreams are compared to their clothing – a constant obsession for Emma. She emerges from this reverie, this rural dream so far from her reality, and instantly summons Lheureux to purchase more clothing in preparation. The constant need to upgrade her wardrobe to suit her imagined existence proves her addiction and plays a central role in her undoing. But it also testifies to the changing economy of city and country in the nineteenth century. The influence of the distant city in Emma’s life both makes her *aware* of what she is missing, and makes her *capable* of attaining it. The combination of possibility and fulfillment prove an intoxicating, and ultimately deadly, drug.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

Beyond clothing, Emma's life reflects an obsession with a wider materiality that urbanization fostered through its increased network of shops and merchants. Shopkeepers replaced peddlers, as the rail and road system "struck hard at such subsidiary occupations as peddling, but even more so at the local manufacturing of the things peddled."<sup>99</sup> To highlight merely one example among many, industrialization allowed ready-made furniture to supplant the traditional livelihood of local village artisans. The "truly revolutionary change lay less in the furniture itself than in the fact that peasants now realized they could have homes like those of workingmen and artisans they had seen in the bourg."<sup>100</sup> The increased accessibility of purchasable goods allowed the country to emulate the city not only in how it dressed, but in all aspects of material consumption. As we see with Emma, urbanization permitted residents of the countryside to surround themselves with the trappings of the city. It allowed her moral urbanization to correspond to a fabricated physical existence with the illusion of urbanity. It transformed the city into a series of attainable signifiers, and Emma believes that possessing them imparts their entire reality.

Emma grooms herself and her home with all the luxuries that she can find, Rodolphe (and later Léon) acting as a catalyst for her material obsessions. The relationship between her love for her possessions and her love for her suitors becomes inextricably intertwined throughout the novel, as Flaubert details her physical preparations far more than her emotions:

C'était pour lui [Rodolphe] qu'elle se limait les ongles avec un soin de ciseleur, et qu'il n'y avait jamais assez de cold-cream sur sa peau, ni de patchouli dans ses mouchoirs. Elle se chargeait de bracelets, de bagues, de colliers. Quand il devait venir, elle emplissait de roses ses deux grands

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<sup>99</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 284.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.



vases de verre bleu, et disposait son appartement et sa personne comme une courtisane qui attend un prince. Il fallait que la domestique fût sans cesse à blanchir du linge.<sup>101</sup>

In passages like this, we are reminded of the almost suffocating materiality weighing down Emma, both physically and emotionally. Slathered in creams and potions, draped in jewelry, and excessively groomed, Emma presents herself to her lover completely dripping in the trappings of a wealth that she does not possess, with the final sentence of this paragraph reminding the reader of the constant effort to maintain her appearance. Emma's material desires soon govern every aspect of her life, with her dissatisfaction and need increasing at the same rate as her debt. In discussing how urbanization resulted in many people leaving their villages to seek fortunes in larger towns, Weber notes that this corresponded with increased displeasure with rural life: "If dissatisfaction rose rather than abated, it was because exposure to a different life created expectations that could not be fulfilled outside the towns; but also because there was an avenue of escape that had not existed before."<sup>102</sup> Certainly, Emma grows more dissatisfied with her life with every new thing she buys. Every new extravagance diminishes her enjoyment in those she already possesses. In the buying frenzy that accompanies her relationship with Léon, and the subsequent furnishing of her person and their love nest, she reaches new heights of material desire and disappointment:

Emma taisait quantité de ses extravagances, telle que l'envie d'avoir, pour l'amener à Rouen, un tilbury bleu, attelé d'un cheval anglais, et conduit par un groom en bottes à revers. C'était Justin qui lui en avait inspiré le caprice, en la suppliant de le prendre chez elle comme valet de chambre ; et, si cette privation n'atténuait pas à chaque rendez-vous le plaisir de l'arrivée, elle augmentait certainement l'amertume du retour.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 296.

<sup>102</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 284.

<sup>103</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 403.

Yet Flaubert does not let Emma's material construction of false reality continue unchecked. Emma's thoughts, long-occupied with her love interests, her urban infatuations, and her romantic dreams, soon center around her financial woes. To keep the creditors at bay, "elle se mit à vendre ses vieux gants, ses vieux chapeaux, la vieille ferraille ; et elle marchandait avec rapacité, – son sang de paysanne la poussant au gain."<sup>104</sup> Whereas Emma's voracious buying has been an attempt to emulate the urban materiality that she admires, her desperate need to make money is associated with her peasant ancestry.

Escalating money worries more frequently dominate nineteenth-century French literature in comparison with previous centuries. We find this financial preoccupation especially ubiquitous in the works of Balzac, where finances, fortune, and bankruptcy figure prominently throughout the *Comédie Humaine*. Flaubert quipped that Balzac's novels reflected "quelle preoccupation de l'argent et quel peu d'amour de l'art."<sup>105</sup> In *Père Goriot* (among others) Balzac depicts the instable society of the Restoration as one resulting in constant twists of fortune. It is an era of speculation, fraud, and ever-changing prosperity where money fuels the majority of the action. Goriot's very identity as a father is dependent on his ability to financially provide for his daughters, pouring out his "entrailles, son amour; il avait donné sa fortune en un jour. Le citron bien pressé, ses filles ont laissé le zeste au coin des rues."<sup>106</sup> When he has nothing left to give, he laments his lack of money, crying that he is "plus bon à rien, je ne suis plus père!"<sup>107</sup> Goriot speaks the truth that Balzac emphasizes throughout his entire work: "L'argent, c'est la

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 425.

<sup>105</sup> C.F. Zeek, "Balzac as a Business Man," *The French Review*, 25.2 (1951): JSTOR, 97.

<sup>106</sup> Balzac, *Père Goriot*, 114.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

vie. Monnaie fait tout.”<sup>108</sup> A constant threat of bankruptcy and ruin looms over Balzac’s characters in a way that is absent from works like *Le Rouge et le Noir*, and understandably so, as a democratization of subjects and a descent in social and economic class necessitates an increased interest in money. Balzac’s rhetoric of realism is inextricably intertwined with money, and one could argue that an integral part of all realism is an awareness of monetary agency.<sup>109</sup> We see this in *Madame Bovary* through the ever-eclipsing focus on financial ruin, as well as through the omnipresence of Lheureux, the salesman who represents the ability to buy one’s happiness or ruin. When Emma dies and is being prepared for her burial, “il lui semblait que, s’épandant au-dehors d’elle-même, elle se perdait confusément dans l’entourage des choses.”<sup>110</sup> This “entourage des choses” that she has spent the entire novel amassing ultimately suffocates her. Emma is a casualty of urbanization, in the sense that it gives her desires she cannot fulfill and the effort to do so results in her demise. In Flaubert’s summations of various characters’ lives following Emma’s death, we see a final glimpse of the material pleasures that urbanization slowly brought to the country. Among his other pursuits, we read that the pharmacist Homais “suivait le grand mouvement des chocolats,” introducing this delicacy to his customers.<sup>111</sup> The novel that began with young Charles Bovary in his rustic peasant garb, ends with the sophisticated arrival of chocolate.

### ***La Parole et la Ville***

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>109</sup> Armine Kotin Mortimer, *For Love or for Money: Balzac’s Rhetorical Realism* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>110</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 481.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

Beyond merely analyzing the trappings of urbanity, *Madame Bovary* provides an interesting study of changing relationships between language and reality that evolved alongside urban expansion in the nineteenth century. We have already studied this phenomenon in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, and a similar study can be pursued in *Madame Bovary*. Flaubert plays with the relationship between language and reality throughout the entire text. At several instances he inundates the reader with descriptions that cannot possibly exist, leading us into a linguistic web that has no exit into reality. The first well-known example is that of Charles' cap. This ridiculous accessory adorns Charles on his first day of school and is described as:

Une de ces coiffures d'ordre composite, où l'on retrouve les éléments du bonnet à poil, du chapska, du chapeau rond, de la casquette de loutre et du bonnet de coton, une de ces pauvres choses, enfin, dont la laideur muette a des profondeurs d'expression comme le visage d'un imbécile. Ovoïde et renflée de baleines, elle commençait par trois boudins circulaires ; puis s'alternaient, séparés par une bande rouge, des losanges de velours et de poils de lapin ; venait ensuite une façon de sac qui se terminait par un polygone cartonné, couvert d'une broderie en soutache compliquée, et d'où pendait, au bout d'un long cordon trop mince, un petit croisillon de fils d'or, en manière de gland. Elle était neuve ; la visière brillait.<sup>112</sup>

Any attempt to follow his description and imagine the actual physical object proves fruitless, bordering on impossible, the *casquette* being as ridiculous, nonsensical, and unclear as Charles' own pronunciation of his name and subsequent nickname of "charbovari." Similarly, the wedding cake served at Charles and Emma's nuptials spirals into the ridiculous in its description:

A la base, d'abord c'était un carré de carton bleu figurant un temple avec portiques, colonnades et statuettes de stuc tout autour, dans des niches constellées d'étoiles en papier doré; puis se tenait au second étage un donjon en gâteau de Savoie, entouré de menues fortifications angéliques, amandes, raisins secs, quartiers d'oranges; et enfin, sur la plate-forme supérieure, qui était une prairie verte où il y avait des rochers avec des

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

lacs de confitures et des bateaux en éclaes de noisettes, on voyait un petit Amour, se balançant à une escarpolette de chocolat, dont les deux poteaux étaient terminés par deux boutons de rose naturelle, en guise de boules, au sommet.<sup>113</sup>

The difficulty in picturing this cake reinforces the tension between dream and reality that underscores the entire novel. Barthes described Flaubert's realism as less about depicting clear fact and more about overwhelming the reader with gratuitous physical details, as evidenced by the hat and the cake.<sup>114</sup> Dorothy Kelly recognizes the different relationships with language in the text as dividing along gender lines, wherein

The men in the text relate reality to storytelling by starting from a specific trivial event and then generating a meaning from it, what one might call the realist (or constative) method. Emma and Charles' mother on the other hand, begin with a fiction, whether invented by them or taken from literature, and make that fiction into their trivial reality, what one might call the realizing (or performative) method.<sup>115</sup>

Ultimately, through both his own descriptions and direct dialogue about language, Flaubert "problematizes the relation between reality and fiction and reveals the autonomous power of a language and a fiction that can sometimes create a secondary reality."<sup>116</sup> In *Le Rouge et le Noir* I argued that the running commentary on language and communication contributed to and could be understood in terms of the urbanizing narrative arc of the novel and the historical problems with the French language developing alongside urbanization. Similarly, analyzing the oft-discussed theme of language and reality in *Madame Bovary* in light of urbanization allows us to posit language as one way by which characters experience urbanity.

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>114</sup> Kelly, *Fictional Genders*, 125.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

In addition to the linguistic ambiguities and impossibilities that Flaubert weaves throughout his descriptions, the text is marked by frequent discussions of language, vocabulary, and the ability or inability to speak, the latter being frequently associated with those most tied to the countryside. Notably, Charles lacks linguistic prowess and frequently the meanings of words elude him. While at school, he is described as “cherchant tous les mots dans le dictionnaire et se donnant beaucoup de mal.”<sup>117</sup> His troubles persist into his medical training where he encounters “tous noms dont il ignorait les étymologies et qui étaient comme autant de portes de sanctuaires pleins d’augustes ténèbres.”<sup>118</sup> He is rewarded for his diligence in slogging through his studies by a comparison to a *cheval de manège*. Charles’ difficulties in comprehension are not limited to his studies. After visiting Emma at her father’s farm, he returns home each evening to ruminate on “les phrases qu’elle avait dites, tâchant de se les rappeler, d’en compléter le sens, afin de se faire la portion d’existence qu’elle avait vécu dans le temps qu’il ne la connaissait pas encore.”<sup>119</sup> When he decides to ask for her hand in marriage, he finds himself completely speechless and “chaque fois qu’elle s’offrit, la peur de ne point trouver les mots convenables lui collait les lèvres.”<sup>120</sup> If Emma embodies attempts to urbanize, and Charles stands as the representative of the contented country life, we see in the latter both ignorance of linguistic subtleties, and a constant incapacity to express himself. He does not struggle against his silence, but rather embraces his limited expression: “La conversation de Charles était plate comme un trottoir de rue, et les idées de tout le monde y défilaient dans leur costume ordinaire, sans exciter d’émotion, de rire ou de

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<sup>117</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 59.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

rêverie. Il n'avait jamais été curieux, disait-il, pendant qu'il habitait Rouen, d'aller voir au théâtre les acteurs de Paris."<sup>121</sup> Charles lacks the grasping at urbanity that defines Emma and this complacency is reflected by a limited grasp on language.

Conversely, Emma exhibits a constant desire to emerge from silence and failed expression. She yearns to experience "ce que l'on entendait au juste dans la vie par les mots de félicité, de passion et d'ivresse, qui lui avaient paru si beaux dans les livres."<sup>122</sup> These words prove elusive in her own life. At the Vaubyessard ball she listens to the conversations swirling around her but finds it "une conversation pleine de mots qu'elle ne comprenait pas."<sup>123</sup> The language of the refined guests is above her, just as Charles' banal speech is below her, and she remains trapped in an in-between silence. When she grows disillusioned with her marriage, she longs to confide in someone but "les mots lui manquaient."<sup>124</sup> Even when she befriends Léon, she finds herself unable to speak. The two converse easily on the first encounter, yet when they meet again,

N'avaient-ils rien autre chose à se dire ? Leurs yeux pourtant étaient pleins d'une causerie plus sérieuse ; et, tandis qu'ils s'efforçaient à trouver des phrases banales, ils sentaient une même langueur les envahir tous les deux ; c'était comme un murmure de l'âme, profond, continu, qui dominait celui des voix.<sup>125</sup>

They connect on an emotional level, but their connection lacks verbal expression. Before leaving for Paris, Léon struggles to confess his feelings to Emma, "il se taisait, captivé par son silence, comme il l'eût été par ses paroles."<sup>126</sup> He does not succeed in finding the words, and as he departs, "il y eut un silence. Ils se regardèrent; et leurs pensées,

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 97

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

confondues dans la même angoisse, s'étreignaient étroitement, comme deux poitrines palpitantes."<sup>127</sup>

Emma and Léon suffer from this inability to communicate prior to urbanizing. Their desire for each other surpasses the vocabulary associated with rural morality and country life. The urbanizing that I have highlighted as associated with materiality and moral laxity also bestows an increased eloquence and altered speech. The narrator even comments on the limits of rural speech, introducing Yonville by saying that "on est ici sur les confins de la Normandie, de la Picardie et de l'Île-de-France, contrée bâtarde où le langage est sans accentuation, comme le paysage sans caractère."<sup>128</sup> This bland language stands in contrast to the intricacies of urban speech. As in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, urbanization serves both to embellish language, and move it further from reality. As Emma continues her self-urbanization, spending more and more time in Rouen with Léon, the narrator describes her existence as "un assemblage de mensonges, où elle enveloppait son amour comme dans des voiles, pour le cacher."<sup>129</sup> She lies more easily at every turn, the words pouring out as she constructs excuses and falsehoods to hide her affair. Beyond merely highlighting the increasing disconnect between language and reality through the person of Emma, the narrator interjects several direct commentaries about the power and dangers of language, citing it as "un laminoir qui allonge toujours les sentiments,"<sup>130</sup> and declaring that "la parole humaine est comme un chaudron fêlé où nous battons des mélodies à faire danser les ours, quand on voudrait attendrir les

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 210.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 404.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.



étoiles.”<sup>131</sup> The novel concludes on perhaps the saddest linguistic misunderstanding. The Père Rouault arrives after Emma’s suicide, not knowing his daughter was actually dead because the letter he received had been “rédigée de telle façon qu’il était impossible de savoir à quoi s’en tenir.”<sup>132</sup>

Urbanization brought new possibilities and realities to nineteenth century France and it also brought new words to accompany them. Emma grasps at this vocabulary, finding it beyond her and struggling to communicate all while ensconcing herself in urban artifacts. Charles avoids the elevated urban speech all together, continuing on in his peasant tongue without complexities or artifice. Meanwhile, Flaubert delivers the story of both to us in words and phrases that spin such intricate descriptions that we lose ourselves, only to find his words detached from any sort of imaginable reality. His descriptions, like that of Charles’ cap and Emma’s wedding cake, are lavish and decorative, but they escape physical reality, just like Emma’s attempts to obtain urbanity in both word and act.

### ***Urbanizing Movement and Shifting Gender***

In analyzing Flaubert’s famous utterance of “Madame Bovary, c’est moi,” Baudelaire explained:

Il ne restait plus à l'auteur, pour accomplir le tour de force dans son entier, que de se dépouiller (autant que possible) de son sexe et de se faire femme. Il en est résulté une merveille ; c'est que, malgré tout son zèle de comédien, il n'a pas pu ne pas infuser un sang viril dans les veines de sa créature, et que madame Bovary, pour ce qu'il y a en elle de plus

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 483.

énergique et de plus ambitieux, et aussi de plus rêveur, madame Bovary  
est restée un homme.<sup>133</sup>

This masculinized femininity can be unearthed on many levels, notably the linguistic one that I mentioned briefly earlier, where Emma “believes that behind signifiers, behind words, lie deep, significant meanings which one can grasp if one tries hard enough” and Charles’ “mode is the parrot-like production and repetition of sound without sense.”<sup>134</sup> As Emma virilizes throughout the novel, she adopts a more masculine relationship to language, turning towards concrete material pleasures instead of her empty dreams from the first half of the novel. Urbanization further allows us to understand the evolving gender identities in *Madame Bovary*, as Emma’s desire to urbanize entails a process of gender aporia, as it did for Julien. In keeping with the themes established in my analysis of urbanization in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, we can also study the way that Emma’s interior urbanization manifests itself through shifting understandings of gender, as well as the ways that other characters’ genders are presented in the novel as fluid concepts tied to their urbanity.

We cannot study the progressive virilization of Emma without also looking at the emasculation of Charles. From the very beginning of the novel, Charles assumes a subservient role to the women in his life, first his mother and soon his first wife, who “fut le maître.”<sup>135</sup> Following his wedding night with Emma, “c’est lui plutôt que l’on eût pris pour la vierge de la veille, tandis que la mariée ne laissait rien découvrir où l’on pût deviner quelque chose.”<sup>136</sup> He is enraptured with his bride, yet his doting takes on a

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<sup>133</sup> Charles Baudelaire, “Madame Bovary par Gustave Flaubert,” Bibliothèque Municipale de Lisieux, Last Modified September 10, 1997, <http://www.bmlisieux.com/litterature/ baudelaire/bovary.htm>

<sup>134</sup> Kelly, *Fictional Genders*, 123.

<sup>135</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 67.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

distinctly feminine air, as nothing in his person or demeanor conforms to traditional conceptions of masculinity. Emma grows dissatisfied with Charles' embodiment of manhood, questioning, "un homme, au contraire, ne devait-il pas tout connaître, exceller en des activités multiples, vous initier aux énergies de la passion, aux raffinements de la vie, à tous les mystères?"<sup>137</sup> Her description is telling in that it associates masculinity with knowledge, prowess, passion, cosmopolitanism, and refinements – all things lacking not just from Charles, but from what she finds in country life as a whole. We can read Charles' femininity as tied to his rusticity, and we shall find Emma's increased masculinity as tied to her growing interior urbanity.

Traces of Emma's status as outside the traditional spectrum of femininity exist long before she undergoes her process of self-urbanization. When Charles sees her for the first time, the narrator notes that "elle portait, comme un homme, passé entre deux boutons de son corsage, un lorgnon d'écaille."<sup>138</sup> After marrying, she throws herself into the traditional feminine role of a good wife, tending her home and seeing off her husband every day as he leaves:

Sur la grande route qui étendait sans en finir son long ruban de poussière, par les chemins creux où les arbres se courbaient en berceaux, dans les sentiers dont les blés lui montaient jusqu'aux genoux, avec le soleil sur ses épaules et l'air du matin à ses narines, le cœur plein des félicités de la nuit, esprit tranquille, la chair contente, il s'en allait ruminant son bonheur, comme ceux qui mâchent encore, après dîner, le goût des truffes qu'ils digèrent.<sup>139</sup>

This description of Charles leaving the house highlights the isolation of Emma, cloistered away not just in a domestic trap, but in a rural one, closed in by bending trees and the smells of the countryside.

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

Emma soon abandons her domestic zeal, turning her mind elsewhere for escape. When she moves to Yonville, we see traces of an increased masculinity tied to her desire to emulate city fashions. She “variait sa coiffure: elle se mettait à la chinoise, en boucles molles, en nattes tressées ; elle se fit une raie sur le côté de la tête et roula ses cheveux en dessous, comme un homme.”<sup>140</sup> Her masculinity becomes more prominent in her relationship with Rodolphe, though he is also represented as hyper-masculine, a far cry from submissive Charles or timid Léon. When Justin faints at the sight of blood, it is Emma who revives him, much to Rodolphe’s amazement that there exists a woman slow to faint.<sup>141</sup> She later steals into his house as he sleeps, exploring his belongings and chewing on his old pipes.<sup>142</sup> Her actions represent a masculine seizing of agency, as she watches him sleep, dominating him with her presence and gaze. Slowly,

Madame Bovary changea d’allures. Ses regards devinrent plus hardis, ses discours plus libres ; elle eut même l’inconvenance de se promener avec M. Rodolphe, une cigarette à la bouche, comme pour narguer le monde ; enfin, ceux qui doutaient encore ne doutèrent plus quand on la vit, un jour, descendre de *l’Hirondelle*, la taille serrée dans un gilet, à la façon d’un homme.<sup>143</sup>

Her interior evolution towards a created urbanity progresses in tandem with her masculine persona. In an effort to dress and act like a woman from the city, she also moves further from the traditional conceptions of femininity surrounding her in the country.

In her relationship with Léon, Emma is emboldened even more by the timidity of Léon’s caresses than she was by Rodolphe’s domineering presence.<sup>144</sup> Emma comes to

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 267-268.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

their urban love nest every week and assumes the role of the master over her lover. Léon “devenait sa maîtresse plutôt qu’elle n’était la sienne. Elle avait des paroles tendres avec des baisers qui lui emportaient l’âme. Où donc avait-elle appris cette corruption, presque immatérielle à force d’être profonde et dissimulée?”<sup>145</sup> It is less a question of where she learned this “corruption,” and more a question of fostering it, as she cultivated a new morality alongside her interior urbanity. She emulates the corrupt city, even if she does not inhabit it. For his part, Léon becomes less masculine as he resides in the city receiving his mistress, whereas Rodolphe maintains his hyper-masculinity at his country estate.

Thus, the city appears as a site where gender conceptions are shifting, allowing women a sort of masculine agency hitherto denied and subsequently cultivating in men a certain level of femininity. In desiring the city, Emma divests herself of traditional feminine attributes and assumes masculine ones. In *Le Rouge et le Noir*, we read Mathilde as an incarnation of the city to be conquered by Julien in his quest to urbanize, yet I also highlighted her frequent masculine nature and dominance of Julien. In Flaubert’s *L’Éducation sentimentale*, Paris “n’est donc jamais présenté à Frédéric comme une totalité, une synthèse, lorsqu’il l’aborde.” The Paris that remains just out of reach for Frédéric is dominated by Mme Arnoux, around whom the city functions as an “immense orchestra.”<sup>146</sup> In *Madame Bovary*, Emma desperately works to recreate herself into just such an incarnation of the city, and in doing so she adopts a masculine persona. In *Le Rouge et le noir*, I highlighted the urbanizing progression between the feminine,

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>146</sup> Marie-Claire Bancquart, “L’espace urbain de *L’Éducation sentimentale*: intérieurs, extérieurs,” in *Flaubert, La Femme, La Ville: Journée d’études*, 1<sup>re</sup> Éd.e d. (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 146-148.

maternal, and rural Mme de Rênal and the sometimes-masculine, dominating, urban Mathilde. Julien evolves from one woman to another in conjunction with his urbanization, while Emma's urbanizing process details a conversion of hyper-sexualized rural femininity to a masculine dominance as she is influenced by the city. Yet it is crucial to note that Emma's urban agency, her dominance, is as illusive and imaginary as the rest of her cultivated urbanity. While she might temporarily appear to be in control of her life, the façade crumbles when her debts mount. She becomes a casualty of the struggle between rural aspiration and urban promise, striving for the city and perishing in its pursuit.

### ***An Incomplete Urbanization***

Ultimately, no amount of imagined urbanity, no amount of material trappings from the city, no reclaimed agency or linguistic mastery succeeds in urbanizing Emma Bovary away from that “fatalité” that befalls her. Her debts suffocate her and her imaginary existence cannot even translate into the noble and romantic death she longs for. Emma's urbanization remains incomplete. The book ends with Charles also following the path of urbanization, to his own demise. Other characters managed to obtain success, locally or within a wider sphere, but the final character we must address is young Berthe Bovary. Ignored the majority of the novel, we learn that Berthe is eventually sent to earn her living in a cotton mill.<sup>147</sup> Her mother sought to urbanize, and Berthe has no choice but to take part in the industrial revolution working alongside French urbanization, albeit as one of the working masses rather than the elite imagined by Emma.

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<sup>147</sup> Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 501.

If Emma's urbanization fails, it nonetheless demands our attention and gives us a new critical lens through which to study this novel. In doing so, we can read the novel as a constant struggle between movement and stasis, peopled by those associated with their levels of urbanity. Flaubert highlights the malevolent power of Paris and its dominance over province, showing how merely the idea of the city can control, and how the capital embodies the fantasies or fears of various characters. While Emma undoubtedly participates in her own undoing, we can also read her as consumed and exploited by the distant city, its promises, and its commercial offerings. Emma's formation unearths the power struggle between city and country, masculine and feminine. It highlights how the city and the country represented two understandings of morality, marriage norms, and gender relationships. Emma's evolution in contrast with Julien's allows us to understand urbanization as an interior phenomenon even when devoid of complete exterior manifestations, as her entire conception of Parisian urbanity derives itself from her imagination. Furthermore, Emma's urbanization provides a new context in which to understand the relationships between reality, language, and gender that typify Flaubert's text. In regard to this final element, my shift from studying Julien, the feminized male who urbanizes, to Emma, the virilized female who longs to do so, opens the discussion about the relationship of woman, work, and the city, a discussion which I shall revisit in the following two chapters.

### Chapter 3: Mistresses of the Machine: Gender, Capitalism, and Zola's Parisian Landscape in *Au Bonheur des Dames*

In the urbanization of Julien and Emma, Paris was the climax of urbanity, the fixed point towards which both characters aspired. Yet even within the individual city of Paris, we find the forces of urbanization upsetting established authorities. In the next two chapters, we will shift our focus from the development of characters driven *towards* the city, to novelistic portrayals of urbanization *in* the city center, as the mythical Paris that shaped Julien and Emma was itself a site of conflict and transformation during the nineteenth century. By studying novels that focus on rural transplants making their way in the capital, we can use our understanding of urbanization to dissect the power struggles playing out in Parisian transformations.

Raymond Williams and Lewis Mumford both argued that the city cannot be distinguished from capitalism, as the country and city ultimately act as proxies in the struggle between two styles of commerce and production. Williams affirmed that the entire opposition between urban and rural life is “the critical culmination of the division and specialization of labor, which, though it did not begin with capitalism, was developed under it to an extraordinary and transforming degree.”<sup>1</sup> Mumford similarly contended that the goal of capitalism is to “introduce the modes of the marketplace, in a universal form, into every quarter of the city: no part of it was immune to change, if it could be brought about at a profit.”<sup>2</sup> If the city incarnates financial power and the domination of capitalism, this was not always the case. The nineteenth century chronicles the

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 304.

<sup>2</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 411.



transference of power and influence from the Ancien Régime with its landed gentry, to Paris and its urban marketplace. Émile Zola's *Au Bonheur des Dames* details the victory of a *grand magasin* over local boutiques, of capitalism over *ancien commerce*. By employing the schema used in both *Le Rouge et le Noir* and *Madame Bovary*, we can see how the urbanization of Paris pitted two political and financial structures against each other. The urbanizing trajectory of Denise Baudu becomes the narrative catalyst for this conflict, her movement highlighting the orders upset by urban change and helping us navigate the relationship between capitalism, the city, and changing conceptions of feminine agency.

### ***Feminine Migration and Urban Capitalism***

Emile Zola's *Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire* includes numerous works dedicated to life in Paris, where he exposes and confronts the ills and wrongs facing workers in France's capital. The ostensible goal of his oeuvre being a study of "la lente succession des accidents nerveux et sanguins qui se déclarent dans une race,"<sup>3</sup> Zola's depiction of the Rougon-Macquart family far surpasses his original desire to detail hereditary influence. His portrayal of one family tree allows a study of countless aspects of French life, history, and politics under the Second Empire. He excels especially in his depiction of city life and the urban plight in Paris. Zola's works create Paris as much as they record it, disseminating a specific social complexity and urban landscape that highlights the challenges faced by the working masses.

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<sup>3</sup> Emile Zola, *La Fortune des Rougon*, Dix-Neuvième Mille (Paris: G Charpentier et Cie, 1885), 1, Google Books.

If life *in* the city provides the setting and focus for some of his most iconic novels, a powerful urbanization lies just beyond each text. Several novels focus on members of the Rougon-Macquart family recently arrived in Paris and their process of urbanization facilitates Zola's critique, even if the actual journey predates the novel. The process of moving from country to city, and in some cases, back to the country, undergirds the entire family line as Adélaïde's children migrate from Plassans to Paris, and then scatter. The urbanization often precedes the narrative focus, but it nevertheless provides a critical lens to study character evolutions within the text. Transformations within the urban space continue to duplicate an entire urbanizing arc as Adélaïde's line tries to find their way in the city. In his descriptions of Paris, Zola constantly emphasizes not just the urban reality his characters face, but also the process that led to that reality, peopling his city with characters whose origins are omnipresent and continue to define them. Zola never allows his readers to forget that everyone is here from somewhere else, and this subtext defines his depictions of the city. His rural immigrants struggle against Paris as much as any human antagonist, and their arrival and desire to assimilate unearths an entire series of oppositions associated with the divide between country and city.

Zola's narratives of urbanization are distinctly feminine, reflecting the new opportunities capable of luring women from the countryside, promising work and freedom. It could be argued that his entire corpus is oriented around the woman, as it springs forth from Adélaïde and follows her maternal line before concluding with Clotilde in *Le Docteur Pascal*. Zola affirms that "la race des Rougon devait s'épurer par les femmes,"<sup>4</sup> even though his female characters suffer the entire gauntlet of mental illness and societal exploitation. Women dominate his two works where urbanization

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<sup>4</sup> Zola, *La Fortune des Rougon*, 61.

allows an especially interesting study. In both *Au Bonheur des Dames* and *L'Assommoir*, the story follows the urbanization of a woman from the country recently arrived in Paris, recognizing that urbanization allowed unprecedented financial opportunity for women. In the country, woman historically existed in a subclass of difficult work, restricted freedom, and male subjugation.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, the city offered employment and paths for women beyond marriage and children, even if it led to more segregation between the sexes. Whereas rural life entailed coed partnerships in many sectors, the urban workforce was increasingly divided by gender with women concentrated in areas such as domestic service, textile and garment fabrication, and domains such as laundering.<sup>6</sup> Segregated or not, their presence in the workforce increased throughout the nineteenth century, and by mid-century, they numbered about half of domestic servants in Paris, and also made up substantial portions of the labor force in other cities like Lyon and Lille.<sup>7</sup>

The relationship between capitalism and the female workforce troubled many in the nineteenth century, such as Jules Simon who viewed it through “the prism of paternalistic moralism,” fearing the consequences for women and the family.<sup>8</sup> “La femme, devenue ouvrière n’est plus femme,” Simon lamented in the preface to *L'Ouvrière*, a treatise on women in the workforce.<sup>9</sup> It is impossible to disentangle an analysis of women in the city from one of capitalism, as the latter paved the way for the former all while divesting women of traditional feminine roles and attributes, as we began to see in the gender aporia experienced by Emma, Mathilde, and Julien. Zola’s

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<sup>5</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 171.

<sup>6</sup> Moch, *Paths to the City*, 185.

<sup>7</sup> Louise A. Tilly, “Three Faces of Capitalism: women and work in French cities,” *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Merriman (New York: Homes and Meier, 1981), 169.

<sup>8</sup> Tilly, “Three Faces of Capitalism,” 167.

<sup>9</sup> Jules Simon, *L'Ouvrière*, (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette, 1861), 4, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k29191z/f8.image>.

urban heroines testify specifically to the relationship between the city, capitalism, and gender. Denise's evolution in *Au Bonheur des dames* highlights the changing economy of Paris and the consumerism driving the city's evolving landscape, whereas *L'Assommoir*, which I will discuss in Chapter 4, sheds light on the plight of the lower working classes through Gervaise's failed attempts to rise from poverty. Both texts serve Zola's purpose of presenting characters as products of their environment, case studies of Second Empire urban life. Yet we can also move beyond an analysis of the urban environment to a study of how these characters come to it and assimilate, looking at the levels of evolution within these works as tied to overarching trends of urbanization, even if the initial migration predates the narrative focus.

Though *Au Bonheur des Dames* was written after *L'Assommoir*, I am placing it first in my analysis, as it allows us to establish Zola's systematic understanding of Paris and explore the largest power associated with the idea of the city.<sup>10</sup> Zola's Paris is capitalism incarnate, and the arrivals from the country must navigate the new economy, themselves representative of an older rural order. He writes urbanization into his conception of Paris, depicting it as a conglomerate of all the other parts of France, defined by motion and evolution. He highlights the woman and her force in this new city and we can use *Au Bonheur des Dames* both to map Zola's urban landscape, and to extract the relationship between women, capitalism, and power established by urbanization. Lewis Mumford viewed capitalism as the force responsible for conflict within urban space, as it

undermined local autonomy, as well as local self-sufficiency, and it introduced an element of instability, indeed of active corrosion into

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<sup>10</sup> Zola himself recommended reading *Au Bonheur des Dames* before *L'Assommoir* in the suggested reading order he laid out in the preface to *Le Docteur Pascal*.

existing cities. In its emphasis on speculation, not security, upon profit making innovations, rather than on value-conserving traditions and continuities, capitalism tended to dismantle the whole structure of urban life and place it upon a new impersonal basis: money and profit.<sup>11</sup>

By charting Denise's ascension alongside capitalism's transformation of the city, we can read *Au Bonheur des Dames* as a story of urbanization constituting movement between two types of commerce instead of two geographical realities. From there, we can study Gervaise's various evolutions in *L'Assommoir* juxtaposed against this understanding of the city and contrasted with this success. My goal is not to simply revisit Zola's much-discussed representations of city, but rather to argue that the struggle often conceived in terms of a character against the city is in fact indicative of the many ways the city was pitted against itself as it underwent urbanization.

### ***The Miniature City***

Zola begins *Au Bonheur des Dames* by thrusting the reader directly into the story of one family's urbanization. The book opens with Denise and her brothers newly arrived from the countryside, "effarés et perdus au milieu du vaste Paris."<sup>12</sup> Zola details the misery that befell Denise, Jean, and Pépé after the death of their parents in Valonges and their decision that life could only improve by moving to the city. The early chapters include numerous references to Denise's former life, and in spite of the hardships they left, Denise experiences nostalgia for her rural past throughout the novel. She "étouffait, prise d'un besoin de plein ciel, rêvant de grandes herbes où elle entraît jusqu'aux épaules, d'arbres géants dont les ombres coulaient sur elle comme une eau fraîche."<sup>13</sup> She

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<sup>11</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 416.

<sup>12</sup> Emile Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 29.

<sup>13</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 179.

befriends Deloche, another transplant from her home region and together they dream of the freeing promise of nature where “il n’y a que de l’herbe, chacun enferme son morceau avec des aubépines et des ormes, et l’on est chez soi, et c’est tout vert, oh ! d’un vert qu’ils n’ont pas à Paris.”<sup>14</sup> Zola establishes a rural reference point in the first portion of the novel through recounting Denise’s former life and emphasizing her longing for the home she left.

Deloche and Denise are not the only characters whose origins appear in the text, as Zola continually introduces characters in terms of where they are from. Octave Mouret is marked as “un garçon tombé du Midi à Paris,”<sup>15</sup> with frequent comments on his *provençaux* ways. Bourdoncle appears to us as a “fils d’un fermier pauvre des environs de Limoges,”<sup>16</sup> and Bouthement is “né à Montpellier...envoyé à Paris par son père [et] il avait absolument refusé de retourner au pays.”<sup>17</sup> Pauline is from Chartres, her lover from Dunkirk, and other workers recorded as being from Besançon or Alsace. The customers similarly pour in from all corners of the map, such as Mme Boutarel, a patron who lives far from Paris and comes just a couple times a year to spend all her money on city luxuries. Everyone is from *ailleurs*, Zola populating his city with immigrants from all over France, writing urbanization into the story of almost every character in his urban setting. In doing so, he both perpetuates the Paris-province distinction so prevalent in French identity and literature, and problematizes it through displaying capitalism’s power in blurring this boundary. The mass production and distribution of clothing, wares, and

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 400.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

ideas that defined department stores like *Au Bonheur des Dames* served to shorten the gap between Paris and province.<sup>18</sup>

The numerous narratives of urbanization are not merely prologue material to *Au Bonheur des Dames*. Denise has reached Paris, but Zola immediately introduces a further urbanizing objective within the city. From the second Denise arrives, the eponymous department store fascinates her. She stands in the street between her uncle's small boutique and the gleaming store, between the old way of commerce and the new symbol of modernity, and feels herself drawn to *Au Bonheur*:

C'était un dédain irraisonné, une répugnance instinctive pour ce trou glacial de l'ancien commerce. Toutes ses sensations, son entrée inquiète, l'accueil aigri de ses parents, le déjeuner triste sous un jour de cachot, son attente au milieu de la solitude ensommeillée de cette vieille maison agonisante, se résumaient en une sourde protestation, en une passion de la vie et de la lumière. Et, malgré son bon cœur, ses yeux retournaient toujours au *Bonheur des dames*, comme si la vendeuse en elle avait eu le besoin de se réchauffer au flamboiement de cette grande vente.<sup>19</sup>

We have seen in earlier chapters how urbanization can be the confrontation of city and country, yet in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, we see this clash within the confines of Paris, a city still undergoing urban transformation. The conflict of country and city translates into a challenge of old ways by new ways, specifically in the realm of commerce. *Au Bonheur des Dames* reveals the way that urban transformation continues to challenge established norms even within a uniform urban space. Denise's urban transformation engenders a clash of conflicting economies at the heart of Paris' transformation, and we can read her ascension in regard to the department store as a process of urbanization analogous to others we have studied.

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<sup>18</sup> Ruth Iskin, *Modern Women and Parisian Consumer Culture in Impressionist Painting*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 183.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

The department store acts as a microcosm of Paris as a whole, and bears all the markers of the apex of urbanization. Described as “une sorte de vaste cité du négoce,”<sup>20</sup> and “petite cité phalanstérienne,”<sup>21</sup> *Au Bonheur de Dames* fascinates Denise, just as the city called to Julien and Emma:

C’était à la fois, en elle, une envie de se sauver et un besoin d’admiration qui la retenait. Elle se sentait perdue, toute petite dans le monstre, dans la machine encore au repos, tremblant d’être prise par le branle dont les murs frémissaient déjà. Et la pensée de la boutique du *Vieil Elbeuf*, noire et étroite, agrandissait encore pour elle le vaste magasin, le lui montrait doré de lumière, pareil à une ville, avec ses monuments, ses places, ses rues, où il lui semblait impossible qu’elle trouvât jamais sa route.<sup>22</sup>

Just as urban populations rose throughout the century, luring people from their rural norms and lifestyles, so too does the department store slowly dominate the city, replacing the previous system of commerce and reconfiguring the cityscape. Paris is slowly “mangé par le monstre,”<sup>23</sup> the neighborhood literally overshadowed by the store that looms above it. Baron Haussmann and his renovations receive a nod in Zola’s Baron Hartmann, who aids Mouret in subjugating the city to his “palais géant du commerce [qui] jette plus d’ombre sur la ville que le vieux Louvre.”<sup>24</sup> Haussmann referred to himself in his memoirs as an “artiste démolisseur,” recognizing the violence inherent in his transformation of Paris.<sup>25</sup> While we often conceive his actions in terms of urban projects, Lucien Dubech and Pierre d’Espezel viewed it as less the transformation of one city, and more the urbanization of numerous villages into a unified population: “Paris now ceased forever to be a conglomeration of small towns, each with its distinctive physiognomy and

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 451.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 366.

<sup>25</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 12.



way of life – where one was born and where one died, where one never dreamed of leaving home, and where nature and history had collaborated to realize variety in unity.”<sup>26</sup> Haussmann’s housing and street renovations encouraged the crowds that became synonymous with the urban experience. Zola emphasizes these same teeming masses of humanity inside of *Bonheur*, their “clameur montait entre les maisons blanches, ce fleuve humain [qui] roulait sous l’âme de Paris épandue, un souffle énorme et doux, dont on sentait la caresse géante.”<sup>27</sup> The customers inside the store mimic *la foule* of Paris. Mouret’s store embodies the changing realities of the city, from its rampant consumerism to its new religion where “les églises que désertait peu à peu la foi chancelante étaient remplacées par son bazar, dans les âmes inoccupées désormais.”<sup>28</sup> The new department stores are temples consecrated to what Baudelaire termed the “religious intoxication of cities.”<sup>29</sup> Mumford deemed capitalism a replacement for religion, claiming, “In a period of religious schism and corruption, capitalism appeared as a healthy, liberating activity, whose private gains would ultimately work public benefit.”<sup>30</sup>

Incessant movement characterizes the store in every aspect. Its cosmopolitan nature makes it a meeting ground for products that serve as proxies for distant places. Without leaving France, *Au Bonheur des Dames* delivers the material reality of the world to its patrons in the form of lace from Bruges and Brussels, or Venetian needlework.<sup>31</sup> We read of “des arrivages du monde entier, des files de camions venus de toutes les gares, un

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<sup>26</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 129.

<sup>27</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 453.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 489.

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 61.

<sup>30</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The City in History*, 415.

<sup>31</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 73.

déchargement sans arrêt, un ruissellement de caisses et de ballots coulant sous terre, bu par la maison insatiable.”<sup>32</sup> Zola characterizes the store as a hub for movement in and out of France, a hub that constantly expands its influence and reach. This “continuel flot des marchandises roulait avec la voix haute des grandes eaux,”<sup>33</sup> and is presented in contrast with the smaller stores that simply cannot maintain the same level of exchange. The motion that defines *Au Bonheur* can be divided into two types of movement: movement *within* the store, and movement *to* the store. Mouret’s genius lies in this two-pronged movement, and he builds it into both his store’s design and ideology. He skillfully distributes his wares across the store in a way that plays on his clients’ weaknesses:

Ce va-et-vient continuel de clientes les disperse un peu partout, les multiplie et leur fait perdre la tête ; secondement, comme il faut qu’on les conduise d’un bout des magasins à l’autre, si elles désirent par exemple la doublure après avoir acheté la robe, ces voyages en tous sens triplent pour elles la grandeur de la maison ; troisièmement, elles sont forcées de traverser des rayons où elles n’auraient pas mis les pieds, des tentations les y accrochent au passage, et elles succombent.<sup>34</sup>

His methods succeed, and we read of clients who try to make it through the store without purchasing something, only to falter before a product hitherto unsought but seized “dans une rage de désir inassouvi.”<sup>35</sup>

In the previous chapter, I presented Ildefonso Cerdà’s theoretical and architectural premise that urbanization must recognize the necessity of, and tension between, movement and stasis, before applying this concept to a study of both in *Madame Bovary*. In Zola’s novel we find a total rejection of stasis. The debate about capitalism centers on a discussion of movement, not simply money. Walter Benjamin

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

explored this relationship between movement and capitalism in Paris in his discussion of the arcades, concluding, “trade and traffic are the two components of the street.... The arcade is a street of lascivious commerce.”<sup>36</sup> In Zola’s text, the older stores typified by less movement and exchange are displaced and supplanted by *Au Bonheur* in favor of unceasing motion. Not only do the masses move through the store aisles in endless waves, but Mouret demands that the merchandise too be in perpetual motion, selling his inventory at the end of the season to avoid holding onto a “un modèle ancien ou une étoffe défraîchie.”<sup>37</sup> This business model keeps the store in perpetual motion, rejecting stasis for carefully curated chaos:

Mais où Mouret se révélait comme un maître sans rival, c’était dans l’aménagement intérieur des magasins. Il posait en loi que pas un coin du *Bonheur des dames* ne devait rester désert ; partout, il exigeait du bruit, de la foule, de la vie ; car la vie, disait-il, attire la vie, enfante et pullule. De cette loi, il tirait toutes sortes d’applications. D’abord, on devait s’écraser pour entrer, il fallait que, de la rue, on crût à une émeute ; et il obtenait cet écrasement, en mettant sous la porte les soldes, des casiers et des corbeilles débordant d’articles à vil prix ; si bien que le menu peuple s’amassait, barrait le seuil, faisait penser que les magasins craquaient de monde, lorsque souvent ils n’étaient qu’à demi pleins. Ensuite, le long des galeries, il avait l’art de dissimuler les rayons qui chômaient, par exemple les châles en été et les indiennes en hiver ; il les entourait de rayons vivants, les noyait dans du vacarme. Lui seul avait encore imaginé de placer au deuxième étage les comptoirs des tapis et des meubles, des comptoirs où les clientes étaient plus rares, et dont la présence au rez-de-chaussée aurait creusé des trous vides et froids. S’il en avait découvert le moyen, il aurait fait passer la rue au travers de sa maison.<sup>38</sup>

If we read escalating movement as a marker of urbanization in comparison with static rural life, then *Au Bonheur* is the climax of urbanization within the city that appeared to be the summit for the protagonists I analyzed in my earlier chapters.

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<sup>36</sup> Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 42.

<sup>37</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 352.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

As *Au Bonheur des Dames* appears as the apex of movement and cosmopolitan commerce, we can posit it as the end goal of urbanization within the text. Consequently, the movement of others towards the store can be read as a process of urbanization, even if the country exists only as prologue material. The various opposing forces for which the country and city act as proxies are very much in play in the tension between *Au Bonheur* and the surroundings stores. We can perhaps think of horizontal urbanization as that analyzed in the first two chapters, where characters aspire to move towards the city. In *Au Bonheur des Dames*, we find a sort of vertical urbanization, with the entire transformative process occurring within the single urban space of Paris. Both types of evolution provoke conflict between established authorities and power constructs. Notably, the urbanization within *Au Bonheur des Dames* provokes a clash between old commerce and new capitalism and between the genders, two distinct conflicts that are intertwined in Denise's evolution.

Zola's novel can be read as an extended seduction, of the women of the city by the store; of Denise by Mouret; and ultimately, of Mouret by Denise. The seduction of the store reads similarly to that of the city in the earlier novels I discussed, with the notable exception that this time the reader is privy to the machinations of the seduction, the calculations made to entice the women of Paris. In regard to his openness to a loss margin, Mouret quips that it is worthwhile "si nous attirons toutes les femmes et si nous les tenons à notre merci, séduites, affolées devant l'entassement de nos marchandises, vidant leur porte-monnaie sans compter!"<sup>39</sup> Once seduced, these women could easily be convinced to purchase other wares at full price, all while thinking they had obtained a bargain.

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

The name of the store announces its unequivocal association with the woman and introduces the question of gender into this text before the novel has even begun. A nineteenth-century ad for the fictitious store's actual contemporary of *Printemps* claims that the department store is "a palace for women, enchanted, full of caprice, where the woman reigns supreme." Zola referred to these stores as machines that devour their female clientele.<sup>40</sup> In the same manner that Julien's conquest of the city manifested itself in the conquest of Mathilde, Mouret's urbanization seeks total control over Parisian women. He is guided by "l'unique passion de vaincre la femme. Il la voulait reine dans sa maison, il lui avait bâti ce temple, pour l'y tenir à sa merci. C'était toute sa tactique, la griser d'attentions galantes et trafiquer de ses désirs, exploiter sa fièvre."<sup>41</sup> His conquest leads him to install elevators, serve refreshments, and distribute treats to children. The development of *Au Bonheur* is a prolonged seduction, a miniature city built to lure women from their homes. He draws them in with advertisements, low prices, and the promise of easily returning items, realizing that the Parisian woman "ne résistait pas au bon marché, qu'elle achetait sans besoin, quand elle croyait conclure une affaire avantageuse... Et la femme, qui résistait, trouvait là une dernière excuse, la possibilité de revenir sur une folie : elle prenait, la conscience en règle."<sup>42</sup> The multiple layers of seduction that drive the narrative interweave themselves with the urbanization that brought various characters to the city, as Mouret conquers Paris through the intermediary of its women. Yet he is also conquered by Denise, whose own urbanization culminates in their marriage. *Au Bonheur des Dames*, like *Le Rouge et le Noir* and *Madame Bovary*,

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<sup>40</sup> Tilly, "Three Faces of Capitalism: women and work in French cities," 173.

<sup>41</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 281.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

introduces a gender aporia in conjunction with the city and urbanization that demands our attention.

### ***The Women of the City, and the City as a Woman***

The characters that people Zola's oeuvre function as studies of their environment. They "suffer from the collective symptoms of the city, mimicking all that befalls it."<sup>43</sup> While many of the novels that comprise the Rougon-Macquart do not take place in Paris, his depictions of urban life prove especially striking in their portrayal of the victims of urbanization, the working classes struggling to make a new life in the city. As for the city itself, Zola paints it as "une femme qui dévore, qui possède l'homme sans cesse en danger de passivité, quand il est sensible et nerveux."<sup>44</sup> If *Au Bonheur des Dames* is about seduction, it is also about the city as an incubator and catalyst for shifting paradigms of gender. Zola both paints the city as ruled by women, and eating them alive, a tension expressed through the department store where,

une fine poussière s'élevait des planchers, chargée de l'odeur de la femme, l'odeur de son linge et de sa nuque, de ses jupes et de sa chevelure, une odeur pénétrante, envahissante, qui semblait être l'encens de ce temple élevé au culte de son corps.<sup>45</sup>

Mouret recognizes the power of urban women, their influence in the new capitalism emerging throughout the century. His store is both a palace to their influence, and a "mécanique à manger les femmes."<sup>46</sup>

Zola establishes the city as challenging traditional gender binaries from the novel's onset. Denise is the head of her family, caring for her two brothers like "une

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<sup>43</sup> Bancquart, *Paris "Fin-de-Siècle,"* 75.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>45</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 303.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

petite mère,” but also making the financial decisions that a patriarch would typically make, bringing her brothers to Paris and directing their new lives as much as possible. In contrast, her brother Jean “avait la beauté d’une fille, une beauté qu’il semblait avoir volée à sa sœur, la peau éclatante, les cheveux roux et frisés, les lèvres et les yeux mouillés de tendresse.”<sup>47</sup> Zola presents Denise’s decision to urbanize as an alternative to marriage, in spite of her uncle’s protests that “si tu avais trouvé un brave garçon, vous ne seriez pas tombés sur le pavé de Paris, toi et tes frères, comme des bohémiens.”<sup>48</sup> Denise’s staunch refusal of marriage or a lover until the very end of the book fuels the novel’s intrigue, but also underscores the possibility of choosing financial and romantic freedom in the city, something less possible in the country. Though her initial months in Paris include an infatuation with a coworker, her urbanization entails her maintained celibacy:

Elle ne retrouvait qu’ensuite, au fond même de sa nature de fille bien portante, la fierté et la raison qui la tenaient debout, dans son obstination de vierge. C’était par un instinct du bonheur qu’elle s’entêtait, pour satisfaire son besoin d’une vie tranquille, et non pour obéir à l’idée de la vertu. Elle serait tombée aux bras de cet homme, la chair prise, le cœur séduit, si elle n’avait éprouvé une révolte, presque une répulsion devant le don définitif de son être, jeté à l’inconnu du lendemain. L’amant lui faisait peur, cette peur folle qui blêmit la femme à l’approche du mâle.<sup>49</sup>

Though fear, of her own weakness and the domination both by love and by a man, drive her refusal of Mouret, they also provide her with an unparalleled agency at *Au Bonheur*. Unlike the increased moral laxity that characterized the urbanizations of both Julien and Emma, Denise’s urbanization develops in line with her provincial mores. Her refusal of Mouret and her treatment of her coworkers only increase her standing:

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

Elle était l'âme même de ce monde, elle seule importait, elle pouvait d'un mot précipiter ou ralentir le colosse, abattu à ses petits pieds. Cependant, elle n'avait pas voulu ces choses, elle s'était simplement présentée, sans calcul, avec l'unique charme de la douceur. Sa souveraineté lui causait parfois une surprise inquiète : qu'avaient-ils donc tous à lui obéir ?<sup>50</sup>

Ultimately, Denise's influence results in improved working conditions and resources, fictional details that prefigure actual twentieth century reforms.

Denise's position of influence within the store and her saintly abstinence force us to question Zola's message about female agency: is the woman controlled, seduced, and dominated like the Parisian women who are wooed and manipulated by Mouret's commercial methods, or is she ultimately the source of power in the city, sometimes controlled, sometimes controlling, but always a shaping force? In the space between the two positions, I propose we find a more nuanced view about the woman, the city, and urbanization, one towards which the previous works I have presented also point.

A latent feminine power undergirds Zola's novel, as it does other nineteenth-century representatives of the city. Stendhal used Mathilde to embody Paris in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, while Flaubert orchestrated Paris around the person of Madame Arnoux in *L'Education sentimentale*. Seduction acts as an intermediary for urbanization, a conquering of the woman and of the city conflated in a movement that, as we saw with Mathilde, upsets traditional gender binaries. In Zola's urban representation we similarly find associations of female power and questions of gender. The store acts as a proxy for the city, both the site of female power and of shifting gender paradigms, where the woman reigns and is ruled over in a struggle that pits rural origins against urban realities, man against woman, and old against new. In describing the death throes of the former, decentralized business model, Zola details the unbeatable competition offered by the

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.



massive stores before concluding that “elle bouleversait le marché, elle transformait Paris, car elle était faite de la chair et du sang de la femme.”<sup>51</sup> The city to be conquered is not only incarnated in one woman, but an entire mass of women to be seduced and gathered under the gleaming roof of *Au Bonheur* where “elles y sentaient une continuelle caresse de flatterie, une adoration épandue qui retenait les plus honnêtes. L’énorme succès du magasin venait de cette séduction galante.”<sup>52</sup> Women dominate Zola’s Paris and dictate the new capitalism:

Au milieu de cet air surchauffé, les femmes régnaient. Elles avaient pris d’assaut les magasins, elles y campaient comme en pays conquis, ainsi qu’une horde envahissante, installée dans la débâcle des marchandises. Les vendeurs, assourdis, brisés, n’étaient plus que leurs choses, dont elles disposaient avec une tyrannie de souveraines. De grosses dames bouscullaient le monde. Les plus minces tenaient de la place, devenaient arrogantes. Toutes, la tête haute, les gestes brusques, étaient chez elles, sans politesse les unes pour les autres, usant de la maison tant qu’elles pouvaient, jusqu’à emporter la poussière des murs.<sup>53</sup>

On an individual level, several women differentiate themselves from the masses as specific sources of power. Mme Aurélie reigns over the confections department; Henriette’s salon hosts the Parisian elite; and of course, Denise rises to a position of power and esteem. Conversely, the stores surrounding *Bonheur* and languishing in its shadow are associated with masculine characters, from the kindly Robineau who offers Denise a job when *Au Bonheur* turns her out, to her uncle’s store where cousin Genevieve slowly withers away under her father’s negligence. In this way, urbanization between the world of *ancien commerce* to that of the *grands magasins* appears a movement from the masculine world to one where women reign and gender boundaries are questioned.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

Yet if they reign, they are also exploited, manipulated, and ruled over. As Mouret quips, “Est-ce que Paris n’est pas aux femmes, et les femmes ne sont-elles pas à nous?”<sup>54</sup> Mouret realizes both the power that the women exercise over the city, and the benefit of manipulating their influence through his store:

Au sommet, apparut l’exploitation de la femme. Tout y aboutissait, le capital sans cesse renouvelé, le système de l’entassement des marchandises, le bon marché qui attire, la marque en chiffres connus qui tranquillise. C’était la femme que les magasins se disputaient par la concurrence, la femme qu’ils prenaient au continuel piège de leurs occasions, après l’avoir étourdie devant leurs étalages. Ils avaient éveillé dans sa chair de nouveaux désirs, ils étaient une tentation immense, où elle succombait fatalement, cédant d’abord à des achats de bonne ménagère, puis gagnée par la coquetterie, puis dévorée. En décuplant la vente, en démocratisant le luxe, ils devenaient un terrible agent de dépense, ravageaient les ménages, travaillaient au coup de folie de la mode, toujours plus chère. Et si, chez eux, la femme était reine, adulée et flattée dans ses faiblesses, entourée de prévenances, elle y régnait en reine amoureuse, dont les sujets trafiquent, et qui paye d’une goutte de son sang chacun de ses caprices. Sous la grâce même de sa galanterie, Mouret laissait ainsi passer la brutalité d’un juif vendant de la femme à la livre : il lui élevait un temple, la faisait encenser par une légion de commis, créait le rite d’un culte nouveau, il ne pensait qu’à elle, cherchait sans relâche à imaginer des séductions plus grandes ; et, derrière elle, quand il lui avait vidé la poche et détraqué les nerfs, il était plein du secret mépris de l’homme auquel une maîtresse vient de faire la bêtise de se donner.<sup>55</sup>

Mouret controls the female masses by appealing to their desires, but also, and perhaps more importantly, by becoming one of them. Zola does not describe him in feminine terms like Julien or Léon, nor does Mouret’s character reflect a gender aporia as it is typically represented. Still, Zola attributes Mouret’s success to the fact that “il était femme, elles se sentaient pénétrées et possédées par ce sens délicat qu’il avait de leur être secret, et elles s’abandonnaient, séduites ; tandis que lui, certain dès lors de les avoir à sa merci, apparaissait, trônant brutalement au-dessus d’elles, comme le roi despotique du

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

chiffon.”<sup>56</sup> The final step in the urbanization that brought Mouret to Paris is his ability to enter into the psyche of the urban woman and dominate her through appealing to her weaknesses and desires. Though Denise obtains urban success, we cannot claim that Zola’s Paris is one easily accessible to women and endowing them with great agency. *L’Assommoir* shows the limits to feminine freedom available in the city and *Au Bonheur des Dames* highlights that Denise’s success is tied to her willing embrace of capitalism.

### ***Money, Monsters, and Machines***

Zola emphasizes the violence inherent in this urban evolution through portraying the store as an unstoppable beast, devouring everything it encounters. He describes it as a machine, a factory, and a pulsing industrial force in contrast with the refined wares it offers. Denise’s first impression of the store attests to the dual natures of monster and temptress that the *Bonheur* encapsulates:

Denise eut la sensation d’une machine, fonctionnant à haute pression, et dont le branle aurait gagné jusqu’aux étalages. Ce n’étaient plus les vitrines froides de la matinée ; maintenant, elles paraissaient comme chauffées et vibrantes de la trépidation intérieure. Du monde les regardait, des femmes arrêtées s’écrasaient devant les glaces, toute une foule brutale de convoitise. Et les étoffes vivaient, dans cette passion du trottoir : les dentelles avaient un frisson, retombaient et cachaient les profondeurs du magasin, d’un air troublant de mystère ; les pièces de drap elles-mêmes, épaisses et carrées, respiraient, soufflaient une haleine tentatrice ; tandis que les paletots se cambraient davantage sur les mannequins qui prenaient une âme, et que le grand manteau de velours se gonflait, souple et tiède, comme sur des épaules de chair, avec les battements de la gorge et le frémissement des reins. Mais la chaleur d’usine dont la maison flambait, venait surtout de la vente, de la bousculade des comptoirs, qu’on sentait derrière les murs. Il y avait là le ronflement continu de la machine à l’œuvre, un enfournement de clientes, entassées devant les rayons, étourdies sous les marchandises, puis jetées à la caisse. Et cela réglé,

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

organisé avec une rigueur mécanique, tout un peuple de femmes passant dans la force et la logique des engrenages.<sup>57</sup>

In this passage, we find the store personified as a living organism, but one not entirely human. A dangerously seductive machine, luring women from the streets to be suffocated amongst the laces and fabrics, trapped between the gears that ceaselessly churn towards capitalism. The siren song of luxury goods emanates from the gleaming windows, calling Parisian women to blissful madness and commercial frenzy, feeding the beating heart of money that pumps life through every aisle. In the schema of urbanization that I find within Zola's text, that of the store acting as a city proxy, we find *Au Bonheur des Dames* taking on the motivations of the capitalistic society that fueled the industrial revolution.

Zola illustrates this conflict between the old and new approaches to capitalism in a way analogous to how former authors differentiated between rural and urban. He highlights the extinction demanded by urbanization, the eradication of old ways of life in the new cities, through the futile war waged against *Bonheur* by the surrounding shops. Robineau and Mouret enter into a race to undersell the other and steal customers until at last they "couchaient sur leurs positions, face à face, avec le massacre de leurs marchandises autour d'eux."<sup>58</sup> Zola evokes their conflict in military vocabulary, emphasizing the violence of urban change, the death that it requires of old ways and customs. *Au Bonheur* encroaches on more than the finances of the smaller shops, buying and developing all the real estate around them in a prolonged suffocation. Bourras fights to protect the tiny building that had sheltered Denise until at last, "le magasin envahirait l'hôtel, et ce jour était venu, le colosse tournait le faible obstacle, le ceignait de son entassement de marchandises, menaçait de l'engloutir, de l'absorber par la seule force de

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 43-44.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

son aspiration géante.”<sup>59</sup> Mouret’s store eventually kills not only the businesses it engulfs, but also their owners. One by one, the shopkeepers walk behind their fallen comrades as the funeral processions snake through the streets, an image of the extinction that befell their livelihoods. “Ça doit être drôle,” Denise muses, “pour les gens qui regardent défilier cette queue de faillites.”<sup>60</sup> Rather than merely showing the urbanizing evolution of a character externally (like Julien) or internally (like Emma), Zola illustrates the violence and death required by urbanization as a whole, the exploitation and extinction that massive demographic change necessitates. *Au Bonheur* is built on death, both figuratively in the demise of the stores surrounding it, and literally, as rumors that the corpse of Mouret’s first wife lies in the foundation haunt the novel.

Thus, in the seduction, domination, and exploitation of the woman of Paris by Mouret, as well as the violence that his endeavor inflicts on the *petit commerce* surrounding the *Bonheur*, we can read a narrative of urban advancement and shifting gender identity that shares many similarities with the others studied, while also shedding light on the actual transformations and casualties of the city in a way the other texts did not. There remains one final element to the seduction and domination in *Au Bonheur des Dames* that must be considered. While the book begins with Mouret seducing the women of Paris with his store, and attempting to seduce Denise, Denise rises in power in the store and ends by seducing Mouret. For much of the novel, the seduction of Denise by Mouret, and the Parisian women by his store, form congruent arcs. Denise realizes that everyone around her expects and facilitates her submission to his desires, yet she stands firm in the face of his seduction. This refusal ultimately grants her agency. As Denise

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

risers in power, a reverse seduction occurs and Mouret grows obsessed with retaining her.

Ultimately, Denise wins the conquest, eliciting from Mouret an offer of marriage:

En face de Paris dévoré et de la femme conquise, il éprouva une faiblesse soudaine, une défaillance de sa volonté, qui le renversait à son tour, sous une force supérieure. C'était un besoin irraisonnable d'être vaincu, dans sa victoire, le non-sens d'un homme de guerre pliant sous le caprice d'un enfant, au lendemain de ses conquêtes.<sup>61</sup>

Denise's victory marks a decisive reversal of gendered power, as Mouret's refusal to marry came from his belief that marriage weakened his "royauté de male sur les desirs épanchus de son peuple de clientes."<sup>62</sup> His ability to urbanize and conquer the women of Paris is an extension of his masculinity, and Denise's refusal to submit to him in her own process of urbanization speaks to the city as a site of new feminine power.

This power is not without complications. What proves more pertinent to my study of urbanization is Denise's relationship not just with Mouret in particular, but with the *grands magasins* in general. While she finds comfort and solace in the community of small shopkeepers and is fully aware of the violence perpetrated by Mouret's store, Denise proves the staunchest proponent of the *grands magasins*, representing a unique opinion and perspective throughout the entire novel. Mouret's motives in seducing the city are logical, both in regard to his own urbanization through domination of the feminized city, and in financial terms. When Bourras, Baudu, and Robineau stand against Mouret and fail, we can read it as a clash of old and new ways of life and commerce that urbanization incites. The men in the novel divide along fairly predictable lines of old versus new, the static city threatened by the urbanizing force from recent migrants.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 491.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

Yet Denise, the woman finding her way in the city, embodies a more complicated third position. All while working for Robineau and witnessing the inevitable devastation of her friends by *Au Bonheur*, Denise argues for “l’évolution logique du commerce, les nécessités des temps modernes, la grandeur de ces nouvelles créations, enfin le bien-être croissant du public.”<sup>63</sup> Denise’s understanding and acceptance of the need for the extinction of the old ways in favor of the new grows as she urbanizes:

Elle tremblait, elle sentait la chute inévitable ; mais elle n’osait plus intervenir. Ce fut là qu’elle acheva de comprendre la puissance du nouveau commerce et de se passionner pour cette force qui transformait Paris. Ses idées mûrissaient, une grâce de femme se dégageait, en elle, de l’enfant sauvage débarquée de Valognes.<sup>64</sup>

As with Julien, her coming-of-age journey is tied to a coming into urbanity, and in her case this evolution happens in full knowledge of the price of transformation. She witnesses the demise of her friends’ livelihood, and observes the personal toll of *Au Bonheur* on her family, as Colombar’s affair with Clara destroys Genevieve. Still, Denise “se trouvait comme emportée par une force, elle sentait qu’elle ne faisait pas le mal.”<sup>65</sup> In spite of the abuse she suffered at the hands of *Bonheur*, she defends it in her absence and returns to it when the opportunity arises. The violence of Mouret’s machine attracts Denise, even as she lives amongst its victims:

Mouret avait inventé cette mécanique à écraser le monde, dont le fonctionnement brutal l’indignait ; il avait semé le quartier de ruines, dépouillé les uns, tué les autres ; et elle l’aimait quand même pour la grandeur de son œuvre, elle l’aimait davantage à chacun des excès de son pouvoir, malgré le flot de larmes qui la soulevait, devant la misère sacrée des vaincus.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

Aware of the violence required by urbanization, Denise embraces it as a necessary sacrifice for practicality and potential good for the masses. Aware of Mouret's intentions, Denise nevertheless falls in love with him. Unlike the other urbanizing characters I have studied, Denise's evolution appears conscious of itself in a unique way. She chooses *Au Bonheur* and all it symbolizes while recognizing the price the new order exacts. The novel closes with Denise's return to the country, but only for a temporary stay. Mouret announces his intentions of marriage and his plan to bring her back to the city "à son bras, toute-puissante."<sup>67</sup> Their agreement occurs against the striking backdrop of the store filled with flowers, an explosion of nature in the middle of the city. In spite of the violence and aggression urbanization wrought throughout the entire story, Zola concludes on a hopeful note and the promise of a marriage.

Denise's relationship with the city helps us to understand Zola's conception of the capital and urbanization. Zola creates a parallel Paris instead of a realist representation, a poetic echo where some details have been changed to further highlight the marginality of inhabitants.<sup>68</sup> This marginality appears frequently in scholarship pertaining to Zola, as he gives urban dwellers a powerful voice. The Paris that Victor Hugo described as a beacon for humanity is dismantled and critiqued in Zola's oeuvre as a place where "ce phare n'éclaire pas également les hommes : certains sont aveugles à sa lumière, alors même qu'ils se trouvent à sa source."<sup>69</sup> We find this in the descriptions of the working conditions for shopgirls in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, the cruel treatment of Denise and others. But we also read Denise's defense of this system and her ability to enact social

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

<sup>68</sup> Bancquart, *Paris "Fin-de-Siècle,"* 119.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 105-106.



programs inside the store. The same capitalism that devours provides unprecedented opportunity.

What then can we deduce from Zola's representation of the continual urbanization and evolution at play in Paris, the end goal of urbanization for so many other novels? His city, like urbanization itself, is defined by movement, a constant and violent evolution that entails the extinction of old modes for new methods, an aggressive confrontation between genders, and a necessary upsetting of established orders. Zola's urbanization abuses, seduces, and devours. Yet it also liberates, empowers, and enriches, if only certain people.

### ***Motifs of the Machine: Water, Madness, and Meat***

In his writings on the "imagined" city created by literature, James Donald claims, "we come to this Paris through texts. But Paris also comes to us already as a text."<sup>70</sup> Donald argued that every urban author imparts to his representation of the city certain narratives he wishes to highlight. Zola is notable in this regard, transmitting Paris through a lens profoundly impacted by a view of the city as still urbanizing and frequently at war with itself. "If the city is an imagined environment, and modernity is an attitude more than it is an epoch," Donald asks, "then what have been the dominant images and metaphors through which the modern city has been mediated?"<sup>71</sup> When we analyze Zola's Paris we must pause to consider the motifs he employs to construct his urban landscape. In both *Au Bonheur des Dames* and *L'Assommoir*, Zola's characters experience Paris through certain reoccurring themes, each related to the process of

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<sup>70</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 44.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

urbanization, both on a historical level, and in terms of narrative focus. For those who would urbanize like Denise or Gervaise, Zola's Paris is typified by water, insanity, and meat consumption.

Zola uses nature and meteorological phenomena to emphasize the relationship between his characters and their urban setting. His oeuvre explores not only the hereditary influence on the individual, but also the ways in which humans function as a product of their environments. Zola's city becomes a natural world, the man-made structures of Paris melding into descriptions of the weather, wherein man is another part of the ecosystem, a

bête pensante, qui fait partie de la grande nature et qui est soumise aux multiples influences du sol où elle a poussé et où elle vit. C'est pourquoi un climat, un pays, un horizon, une chambre, ont souvent une importance décisive. Le romancier ne sépare donc plus le personnage de l'air où il se meut.<sup>72</sup>

Though a traditional understanding of urbanization conjures a tension between, and transition from, rural settings to urban, Zola's portrayal explores evolution in an urban environment that acts as an extension of the natural world.

Most notably, Zola associates Paris with a pervasive wetness, a labyrinth of rain, mist, and steam that obscures the city from those who would conquer it. He is not alone in this assertion, as Benjamin associated Parisian *ennui* with the ubiquitous rain that makes "everything more hidden, makes days not only gray but uniform."<sup>73</sup> Louis Veillot similarly spoke of the city as being "musty and close."<sup>74</sup> Bancquart aptly describes Zola's

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<sup>72</sup> Winston Hewitt, *Through Those Living Pillars: Man and Nature in the Works of Emile Zola* (Paris: Mouton, 1974) 26.

<sup>73</sup> Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, 104.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

Parisian tableau as one of “obscurcissement.”<sup>75</sup> The urbanization that Zola’s characters pursue consists of trying to navigate the veiled city. We find this in Denise’s early impression of *Bonheur*:

De l’autre côté de la chaussée, le *Bonheur des dames* allumait les files profondes de ses becs de gaz. Et elle se rapprocha, attirée de nouveau et comme réchauffée à ce foyer d’ardente lumière. La machine ronflait toujours, encore en activité, lâchant sa vapeur dans un dernier grondement, pendant que les vendeurs repliaient les étoffes et que les caissiers comptaient la recette. C’était, à travers les glaces pâlies d’une buée, un pullulement vague de clartés, tout un intérieur confus d’usine. Derrière le rideau de pluie qui tombait, cette apparition, reculée, brouillée, prenait l’apparence d’une chambre de chauffe géante, où l’on voyait passer les ombres noires des chauffeurs, sur le feu rouge des chaudières. Les vitrines se noyaient, on ne distinguait plus, en face, que la neige des dentelles, dont les verres dépolis d’une rampe de gaz avivaient le blanc ; et, sur ce fond de chapelle, les confections s’enlevaient en vigueur, le grand manteau de velours, garni de renard argenté, mettait le profil cambré d’une femme sans tête, qui courait par l’averse à quelque fête dans l’inconnu des ténèbres de Paris.<sup>76</sup>

*Au Bonheur* emits light and vapor, luring Denise in while continuing to retreat behind watery veils. A curtain of rain thwarts her gaze and her process of urbanization will entail penetrating the layers of water and steam that separate her from the store. The contrast between the wetness of the city and the lights gleaming within the store also emphasize its role as the end goal of intra-city urbanization: “Dans la grande ville, noire et muette sous la pluie, dans ce Paris qu’elle ignorait, il flambait comme un phare, il semblait à lui seul la lumière et la vie de la cité.”<sup>77</sup> The contrast between the natural rain that falls between Denise and the store, and the machine-produced vapor highlights the dualities of natural world and urban product present in the city.

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<sup>75</sup> Bancquart, *Paris “Fin de Siècle,”* 168.

<sup>76</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 57.

<sup>77</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 58.

Zola's interplay between water and light, rural and urban, the city as man-made yet permeated by the natural world reflects the visual tension at work in his artistic contemporaries, the painters of Impressionism. Baudelaire's christening of artist Constantin Guys as "Le peintre de la vie moderne," has long been used to denote Impressionism more broadly, as they coupled increased interest in the effects of light with subjects reflective of a new modernity.<sup>78</sup> Robert Herbert claims that this interest in light, especially in urban and industrial spaces, is facilitated by Haussmannization. Haussmann's renovations transformed Paris from a city of darkness to one of light. Herbert claims the Impressionists testify to a departure from the darker natural representations of the Barbizon school and Romantics, favoring instead lighted subjects.<sup>79</sup> He argues that even Impressionist rural scenes and landscapes testify to urbanization, manifesting a "reconciliation of city and country, of industry and leisure, of railroad and river, of metal bridge and green foliage, of industrial steam and natural wind. Steam and wind are forces which move things, and motion is the very essence of change."<sup>80</sup> Herbert views even the "pleasantness" of Impressionist paintings as tied to anxieties about urbanization: "The city cannot be divorced from the country, and once studied together, the relationship becomes clear between urban and rural upheavals on the one hand, and the painting of pleasant subjects on the other."<sup>81</sup> In style as well as subject matter, the industrial and urban elements "that Corot, Millet and Daubigny were unable to countenance, could now be assimilated into the poetics of painting."<sup>82</sup> Their love of light,

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<sup>78</sup> D'Souza and McDonough *The Invisible flâneuse?*, 5.

<sup>79</sup> Robert L. Herbert, "Industry in the changing landscape from Daubigny to Monet," in *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Merriman (New York: Homes and Meier, 1981), 161.

<sup>80</sup> Herbert, "Industry in the changing landscape from Daubigny to Monet," 154.

<sup>81</sup> Iskin, *Modern Women and Parisian Consumer Culture in Impressionist Painting*, 160.

<sup>82</sup> Herbert, "Industry in the changing landscape from Daubigny to Monet," 161.

desire to render “immediate, naïve sensory impressions,”<sup>83</sup> and interest in urban and industrial subjects juxtaposed with nature frequently resulted in paintings where the subject is veiled behind diffused light, metalwork, glass, mist, or merely veiled through the painting style which preferences color over clear linear delineations. We see this veiling frequently in the works of Claude Monet, who uses atmospheric elements and industrial structures to cloak his subjects in numerous layers. In *La Gare Saint Lazare* [Fig. 3.1], the iron scaffolding, glass panes, and steam form a series of veils over the train and other foreground figures. Similarly, Gustave Caillebotte’s *Paris, A Rainy Day* [Fig. 3.2] emphasizes the ubiquitous rain in Parisian street scenes, the background characters and buildings blurred behind a liquid screen. August Renoir’s *The Grand Boulevards* [Fig. 3.3] and Caillebotte’s *View Through a Balcony Grill* [Fig. 3.4] do not use water to obscure their subjects, but they nevertheless rely on the effects of sun, dust, and architecture to provide opacity to their depictions of city life.

The literal veil also appears in paintings, representing both contemporary fashions and uncomfortable urban reality. Marni Kessler contends that Haussmann’s renovations transformed Paris into a duststorm, the veil serving both a practical purpose and “limiting bourgeois women’s engagement with aspects of urban life and culture.”<sup>84</sup> Kessler views the veil as mirroring modernized Paris, from its grid-like form mimicking Haussmann’s street improvements, to the homogeneity it bestowed to Parisian women, echoed in the uniform buildings Haussmann built around the city.<sup>85</sup> Even in the Tuileries Gardens,

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<sup>83</sup> Herbert Muller, "Impressionism in Fiction: Prism vs. Mirror." *The American Scholar* 7, no. 3 (1938): 356, JSTOR.

<sup>84</sup> Marni Kessler, “Dusting the surface, or the *bourgeoise*, the veil, and Haussman’s Paris,” in *The Invisible Flâneuse? : Gender, public space, and visual culture in nineteenth-century Paris*, ed. Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 49.

<sup>85</sup> Kessler, “Dusting the surface, or the *bourgeoise*, the veil, and Haussman’s Paris,” 51 and 59.

Manet's concert-goers cannot escape the dust [Fig. 3.5], and Monet's *Woman with a parasol* [Fig. 3.6] carries Parisian fashion into the countryside, her face hidden by a gauzy veil. Impressionists, in style as well as subject, present the city not as a clear subject, but as one received through layers of fractured light, transformative steam or rain, and even physical veils.

Zola's representation of the city conforms to this aesthetic, as the reader discerns Paris through endless curtains of steam, rain, water, and even the fabrics hanging throughout the *Bonheur*. While Zola does not figure among the authors typically associated with literary impressionism, defined by Ferdinand Brunetière in 1879 as those who seek "à saisir l'insaisissable, et, dans une impression fugitive réussir à démêler, une par une, les impressions élémentaires qui concourent à former et produire l'impression totale,"<sup>86</sup> he nevertheless viewed the new style of painting as analogous to his own scientific realism.<sup>87</sup> His textual poetics, while frequently avoiding the "pleasantness" of Impressionism, exhibit a parallel quality to Impressionist aesthetics.

Interestingly, the Impressionists never painted the department store. There exist some paintings of isolated shops such as Degas' series of millinery shops [Fig. 3.7], Felix Vallotton's post-Impressionist series of woodcuts [Fig. 3.8-9], and we find the store present in advertisements and posters [Fig. 3.10]. Art historians have debated its occlusion, concluding that its absence from a school of painting associated with urban modernity speaks perhaps to anxieties about close associations with consumer culture, or perhaps to the department store's association with women and a "blind spot in the

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<sup>86</sup> Ferdinand Brunetière, "L'Impressionnisme dans le roman," *Le Roman naturaliste*, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1883). [http://obvil.paris-sorbonne.fr/corpus/critique/brunetiere\\_roman-naturaliste/body-5](http://obvil.paris-sorbonne.fr/corpus/critique/brunetiere_roman-naturaliste/body-5) Accessed 26 June 2017.

<sup>87</sup>J. Andrew Mendelsohn, "The Microscopist of Modern Life," *Osiris*, 2nd Series, 18 (2003): 153, JSTOR.

literature and visual culture of the bourgeois man – the *flâneur* – and as such, was more or less unrepresentable via a mode of painting – impressionism – which arguably organized itself around the ocular range of that city stroller.”<sup>88</sup> Zola, however, paints the department store in a vocabulary and style analogous to Impressionist aesthetics. The author frequently dialogued with the painters of Impressionism, reviewing the Exhibition of 1877, and including Impressionist painters as characters in both *Le Ventre de Paris* and *L’Oeuvre*. Degas produced his series of paintings highlighting millineries contemporaneously with Zola’s serial publication of *Bonheur*, which he read.<sup>89</sup> Zola’s Parisian poetics echo Impressionist aesthetics, yet his text fills the lacunae of Impressionist cityscapes. Whereas the Impressionists perhaps avoided the store from a desire to distance art from the world of commercial shopping or from the inability of the male gaze to penetrate the feminized department store experience, Zola does not shy from its representation. Instead, he not only actively engages in the store’s associations with capitalism and commercialism, but paints the store as the incarnation of these systems. He also does not recoil from the unsettling gender aporia experienced within the store. Zola invites the spheres of urban experience that trouble the Impressionist vision. Where the Impressionists balk in their representations of modernity, Zola continues to show urbanization’s unceasing progression.

Zola’s textual painting of cityscapes does not preclude the addition of traditional landscapes in the novel. Many of his characters experience a constant pull of the countryside, a sentiment echoed in the abundance of Impressionist landscapes that

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<sup>88</sup> Aruna D’Souza, “Why the Impressionist Never Painted the department Store,” in *The Invisible Flâneuse? : Gender, public space, and visual culture in nineteenth-century Paris*, ed. Aruna D’Souza and Tom McDonough (New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 130.

<sup>89</sup> Iskin, *Modern Women and Parisian Consumer Culture in Impressionist Painting*, 79-80.

chronicle weekend visits to suburban country retreats and seaside escapes a mere train ride from the city. I mentioned earlier Denise's longing for Valonges and its pastoral comforts. Similarly, her uncle Baudu laments the sale of his country home in the course of trying to save his business. The countryside exists as an escape valve for some of Zola's characters, promising freedom from the city's woes. They seek a return to nature in response to a deep need to escape some aspect of civilization, or to retrieve some aspect of a bygone era, such as Denise's longing for the pastoral landscape of her childhood. Weekend retreats to the countryside and dreams of rural homes continually remind the reader of where urban dwellers came *from* and what they could always return *to* if needed, even if this dream proves impossible, as we shall see in *L'Assommoir*. This longing enters into Zola's understanding of Paris itself, as

the city of Paris shares their desperate hunger for nature as it, too, looks "sans cesse à l'horizon, essoufflée, demandant du soleil et du vent." The dismal aspects of urban existence intensify the city dweller's anxious feeling of alienation from nature. [Zola] nurtures the lifelong dream of possessing his own little retreat in the country.<sup>90</sup>

The anxiety, longing, and tension of urbanization shapes Zola's naturalist representation of Paris.

This act of navigating Paris frequently results in another motif present in Zola's urban representation, that of madness. Mental illness features prominently in his works, "the sap which feeds the tree of the Rougon-Macquart."<sup>91</sup> While this madness will dominate *L'Assommoir* more powerfully, Zola nevertheless weaves it throughout *Au Bonheur des Dames*. Degas painted women calmly selecting hats [Fig. 3.7], but Zola's shoppers border on manic. The store reduces women to madness, as "les clientes, qui s'y

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<sup>90</sup> Hewitt, *Through Those Living Pillars*, 29.

<sup>91</sup> Yannick Ripa, *Women and Madness: The Incarceration of Women in Nineteenth Century France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1990) 2.



étouffaient, avaient des visages pâles aux yeux luisants... Les mains s'enfonçaient parmi les pièces débordantes, et elles en gardaient un tremblement d'ivresse."<sup>92</sup> Mouret's methods of seduction incite insanity in his female customers. One is described as paying with "les yeux élargis d'une malade"<sup>93</sup> while another succumbs to madness culminating in theft:

Depuis un an, Mme de Boves volait ainsi, ravagée d'un besoin furieux, irrésistible. Les crises empiraient, grandissaient, jusqu'à être une volupté nécessaire à son existence, emportant tous les raisonnements de prudence, se satisfaisant avec une jouissance d'autant plus âpre, qu'elle risquait, sous les yeux d'une foule, son nom, son orgueil, la haute situation de son mari. Maintenant que ce dernier lui laissait vider ses tiroirs, elle volait avec de l'argent plein sa poche, elle volait pour voler, comme on aime pour aimer, sous le coup de fouet du désir, dans le détraquement de la névrose que ses appétits de luxe inassouvis avaient développée en elle, autrefois, à travers l'énorme et brutale tentation des grands magasins.<sup>94</sup>

Her frenzy should remind us of Emma Bovary's, a similar desperation to amass material possessions in pursuit of greater urbanity. Interestingly, though I have noted the Impressionist's refusal to paint the department store, Degas did consider illustrating *Au Bonheur des Dames* with scraps of fabric, "[tapping] into Emile Zola's subtext that material goods have a corrosive effect on the female consumer."<sup>95</sup> We discovered this corrosive relationship between urban commodities and mental stability in *Madame Bovary*, and Zola illustrates a direct effect on mental health in *Au Bonheur des Dames*. If the store is the summit of urbanity, it is also the crux of insanity: "Le palais était construit, le temple élevé à la folie dépensière de la mode. Il dominait, il couvrait un

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<sup>92</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 313.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 484.

<sup>95</sup> June Hargrove, "Degas's *Little 14-year-old Dancer*: Madonna of the Third Republic?," *Horizons: Essays on Art and Art Research*, (Zurich: 50 Years Swiss Institute for Art Research, 2001), 150.

quartier de son ombre.”<sup>96</sup> The evolution towards madness that characterized Emma’s urbanization and *Au Bonheur*’s increased influence will also describe Gervaise’s tragic transformation in *L’Assommoir*, and it participates in the contemporary medical discourse about the effect of crowds on the mind. Gustave Le Bon published *La Psychologie des foules* in 1895, claiming that the omnipresent crowds served to weaken the family unit, while Henri Legrand du Saulle even singles out shopping as a menace to female sanity in *Les Hystériques*. By frequently incorporating the trope of madness into his urban subjects, Zola participates in the conversation on the mental toll of urbanization and enacts male fantasies of feminine mental instability. He promulgates the idea of the city as threatening female mental health and morality, as we will see more clearly in *L’Assommoir*.

A final motif present in Zola’s urban methodology in *Au Bonheur* that we will explore more in *L’Assommoir* is that of food, more specifically, meat. Zola’s works devote substantial energy to detailing the meals of their characters. The early chapters focus on the terrible meals provided at *Au Bonheur*, a sharp contrast with the delicious dinners Denise enjoys when she leaves to work for Robineau. Zola describes these meals in detail, taking special care to highlight the meat served. The lengthy defense of department store capitalism that I discussed earlier happens not in a salon, but around a table, the arguments woven into the descriptions of the roast and its accompaniments. When Denise returns to work at the *Bonheur*, the food improves, yet the culinary offerings do not disappear from Zola’s description, as the workers frequently discuss the day’s menu, focusing on which days include meat.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 450.

In general, the literature of the Third Republic is marked by a fascination with food, believed by some critics to be a possible substitute for sexuality that cannot be described.<sup>97</sup> Perhaps that is true in certain cases, yet Zola's refusal to shy away from sexuality in his works forces us to consider another explanation. Zola uses food as another way to discuss the changes of his era, and the descriptions in his urban works emphasize the culinary transformation that accompanied urbanization. Most notable in this transformation was the divide in bread and meat consumption between the country and the city, with country dwellers consuming less meat and dark bread, while the Parisian diet included more meat and white bread. While it is tempting to analyze this divide along merely economic lines, "wealth was only one factor in a more complex whole: sauce for the rural goose did not satisfy the urban gander."<sup>98</sup> In studying Zola's works with a critical focus influenced by urbanization, we can understand food as a vital detail in depicting the evolutions of urbanity. Beyond merely being descriptive, the economy of food and diet between the city and the country manifests the uneven relationship of power between the two: the country slaughters its livestock to feed urban appetites, and the city feasts on the country's labor. By constantly returning to the table in this novel primarily focused on the marketplace, Zola emphasizes an economy of labor and exploitation that exists between the country and the city.

*Au Bonheur des Dames* ends not with a total indictment of this system of exploitation, but with a marriage agreement, a historical referent anchoring Zola's love

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<sup>97</sup> Bancquart, *Paris "Fin-de-siècle,"* 12.

<sup>98</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 142.

story to the concrete narrative of Paris.<sup>99</sup> Zola's description of Paris establishes an urban landscape that proves essential to his other works. He peoples his novels of the city with people from Elsewhere, constantly highlighting the urbanization that precedes urbanity, the rural that lies behind urban, and the old that is fighting against the new. The narrative action of *Au Bonheur des Dames* only takes place at the final stage of urbanization, but it also highlights the movement and evolution towards the city at every level, characterizing Paris with perpetual motion. It exposes the violent extinction and commoditization demanded by capitalism. Furthermore, Zola's representation of the store and Denise's evolving relationship with it allows us to discuss a new sort of urbanization, a vertical one of the city transforming itself instead of the horizontal progression towards Paris that I discussed in earlier novels. The store replaces the city as the summit of urbanization, and the shifting perceptions of gender and identity appear in Zola's characters, reflecting the transformations of accepted female spheres wrought by capitalism. Finally, in his use of weather, food, and madness, Zola explores the evolving nature of the relationship between city dweller and urban ecosystem. Denise's assimilation into urban life unearths the numerous powers upset by urbanization, revealing Paris as a space continually defined by violent conflict and frantic movement and her urban success provides a powerful counter to Gervaise's failure in *L'Assommoir*.

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<sup>99</sup> Zola, *Bonheur*, 495. Men associated with management at *Coin de Rue* and the *Samaritaine* both married employees from their stores.

## Chapter 4: A City Beyond Saving: *L'Assommoir* and the Dream of Urbanization

In pivoting from a discussion of *Au Bonheur des Dames* to *L'Assommoir*, we descend in social class from the commercial world to “une oeuvre de vérité, le premier roman sur le peuple, qui ne mente pas et qui ait l’odeur du peuple.”<sup>1</sup> *L'Assommoir* recounts the story of Gervaise Macquart’s struggle to build a life for herself and her family in Paris, explores the plight of working class city-dwellers in northern Paris, brings to life the *quartier de la Goutte-d’or*, and faithfully strives to tell the story of the urban *ouvriers* in their own vernacular. Whereas *Au Bonheur des Dames* ended with an optimistic proposal, Gervaise’s story is one of ever-increasing misery that illustrates the casualties of urbanization, the poor workers “jetés sur Paris comme des bêtes, mais finalement dévorés par [la ville].”<sup>2</sup> Since its publication in 1877, scholarship and criticism of *L'Assommoir* have divided between those who posit that Zola illustrates the working-class’ own responsibility in their fate, and those who find Gervaise a victim of her surroundings. Both camps admit that heredity and environment combine to precipitate her fall, but the precise explanation of her doomed existence and genesis of her decline remain points of contention.<sup>3</sup> Coupeau’s accident, Gervaise’s own gourmandise and alcoholism, and Lantier’s return are just a few of the numerous moments in the novel that provide fodder for a wide range of perspectives as to when and why Gervaise’s tragic demise became unavoidable. I propose that rather than having a point of inevitable

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Zola, *L'Assommoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Bancquart, *Paris “Fin-de-Siècle,”* 10.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Donaldson-Evans, “Miasmatic Effluvia: *L'Assommoir* and the Discourse of Hygiene,” *Medical Examinations: Dissecting the Doctor in French Narrative Prose, 1875-1894* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 75.

decline, *L'Assommoir* can be better mapped by studying the urbanization that defines Gervaise's metamorphosis. Instead of reading Gervaise's evolution as a genetically inevitable progression towards alcoholism, gluttony, and mental illness or a story of victimization due to environmental factors, we can understand her trajectory as a rise and fall in urbanity. Through Gervaise's struggle to succeed in the new urban space, Zola problematizes the entire promise of urbanization and its ability to enrich rural migrants. The other novels studied have all explored narratives of urbanization and highlighted the powers and systems forced into confrontation by a character's movement from country to city, yet *L'Assommoir* exposes the entire fiction of successful urbanization as such. He contrasts Gervaise's dreams of urban possibilities with the reality faced by many rural migrants and exposes the idealism of urban planners and theorists as flawed. Gervaise's body becomes a site to map the exploitative relationship between city and country furthered by urbanization.

In the most basic sense, Gervaise arrives from the country, seeks urban success, and then directs her dreams once more to her provincial origins when that success turns to failure. The moments that seal Gervaise's fate are the moments where Zola identifies her as most "urban." Mary Donaldson Evans, who analyzes Gervaise's fall through the lens of nineteenth-century medical and hygienic discourse, recognizes that

Gervaise Macquart sees her troubles begin when she is transplanted to a new geographical space. However, whereas the degradation of the Goncourts' *bourgeois* occurs when she *leaves* Paris, that of Zola's working-class woman appears to be the ultimate consequence of her *arrival* in the French Capital.<sup>4</sup>

She describes Gervaise upon arrival as "encoded as the incarnation of freshness and health" that Zola attributes to the country, but slowly corrupted and destroyed by the

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<sup>4</sup> Donaldson-Evans, "Miasmatic Effluvia," 75.

physical and moral filth associated with the profession of a laundress.<sup>5</sup> Evans illustrates how Gervaise's work poisoned her, extending her analysis to Zola's relationship with science, medical practice, and miasmatic theory, the belief that tainted air and noxious fumes caused certain diseases. Her early assertion of geographic transplantation as the genesis for Gervaise's troubles reminds us to study Gervaise's rise and fall in terms of urbanization. We read of Gervaise becoming like the city, and eventually being destroyed by it. Moreover, a critical reading oriented to the subtext of urbanization that structures Gervaise's evolution allows us to look afresh not at what *happens* at the end of the novel (her death and decay under the stairs), but what *does not happen* to complete an urbanizing-deurbanizing arc as we have found in other novels: she fails to return to the country. In this manner, we can understand Gervaise not merely as victim or agent, but as a tragic blend of both that becomes a failed *bouc-émissaire* for the new urban reality.

Like Emma Bovary, Gervaise's life fluctuates between movement and stasis, a struggle to raise her station and a frustrating inability to do so permanently. Like Denise, she travels to the city to seek a new life, except her impetus to urbanize comes from her relationship with Lantier, who "devait m'établir blanchisseuse et travailler de son état de chapelier. Nous aurions été très-heureux."<sup>6</sup> The tragedies that befall Gervaise in her simple quest for happiness debunk this familiar urbanizing dream. We once again find Paris defined by movement as it was in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, yet Gervaise seems trapped in the middle of the motion, pushed about yet never advancing:

Elle avait vu, le matin, s'éveiller le peuple ouvrier, le travail géant de Paris. À cette heure, le pavé échauffé par les besoins du jour allumait une réverbération ardente au-dessus de la ville, derrière le mur de l'octroi. C'était sur ce pavé, dans cet air de fournaise, qu'on la jetait toute seule

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>6</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 35.

avec les petits ; et elle enfila d'un regard les boulevards extérieurs, à droite, à gauche, s'arrêtant aux deux bouts, prise d'une épouvante sourde, comme si sa vie, désormais, allait tenir là, entre un abattoir et un hôpital.<sup>7</sup>

Gervaise eventually remarries, rises in wealth and opportunity, and opens her own business. The descriptions of her as *provincial* slowly fade as she learns to speak and act like her urban neighbors. Her path of upward urbanization mimics aspects of Denise's rise, yet Gervaise cannot sustain success. She slowly loses her family, fortune, and health, and her decline causes those around her to once again speak of her rural origins. Though the entire novel details Gervaise's life in the city, the arc of her success and failure testifies to an urbanizing process similar to the others we have studied.

There is, however, an important difference in Gervaise's evolution. Beyond a simple rise and fall, the novel includes multiple duplications, repetitions, and mirror images. Thus the urbanizing arc can be mapped as a sort of distorted chiasm that fails to deliver Gervaise back to the country. Events leading to Gervaise's urban climax can be charted against their doubles as she declines. The other texts I have studied have all included arcs of urbanization and deurbanization, yet in contrast to *L'Assommoir*, these arcs have focused primarily on the quest to urbanize, with the deurbanization consisting more of a rapid failure and death, as in the case of Julien or Emma, or a momentary urban exodus with promise of return, as in the case of Denise. Gervaise's evolution is different, as her point of highest urbanity occurs in the center of the novel, and her rise and fall consist of mirrored moments and experiences, rather than a more linear progression.

The chiasmic structure is frequently used in mapping Biblical or poetic texts, though it also lends itself to broader literary analyses. A chiasm highlights the duality of events and experiences, forcing a "crisscrossed" understanding of a text that places

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.



mirrored elements in relation to each other and emphasizes a center point isolated from its double. This conception of experiences and their reflections has manifestations beyond the realm of literary analysis, seen notably in the writings of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who evokes the chiasm as indicative of the relationship between subjective experience and objective existence. While I employ the chiasm as literary structure rather than philosophical ideology, I cite Merleau-Ponty's use to emphasize that this structure reveals a unique relationship between experiences, one that transcends concrete existence. In applying the chiastic structure to Zola's novel, we can better chart both the realization of Gervaise's urban dreams as she ascends, and the perversion of those same dreams as she falls. Mapping *L'Assommoir* as a chiasm emphasizes the progression and regression of her urbanity, and it hints at the metaphysical relationship Zola establishes between Gervaise and the city.

On several occasions Gervaise proclaims her simple dream as "de travailler tranquille, de manger toujours du pain, d'avoir un trou un peu propre pour dormir, vous savez, un lit, une table et deux chaises, pas davantage."<sup>8</sup> With this hope she summarizes three domains of promise that the city held for rural migrants: work, food, and lodging. These three form parallel sides of a chiastic structure that maps Gervaise's rise and fall. While all three of these developments happen in the city, they all have their beginnings and ends tied to rural origins with the center more closely aligned with the highest level of urbanity. Studying Gervaise's evolution alongside similar developments in urban planning and reality allows us to navigate our way through the chiasm and understand Gervaise's failure both to be delivered from, and to deliver, the city. Zola's chiasm is

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<sup>8</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 61.

flawed, consisting of perverse distortions rather than mirrored reflections, and we will analyse how this failed chiasm does not return Gervaise to the country.

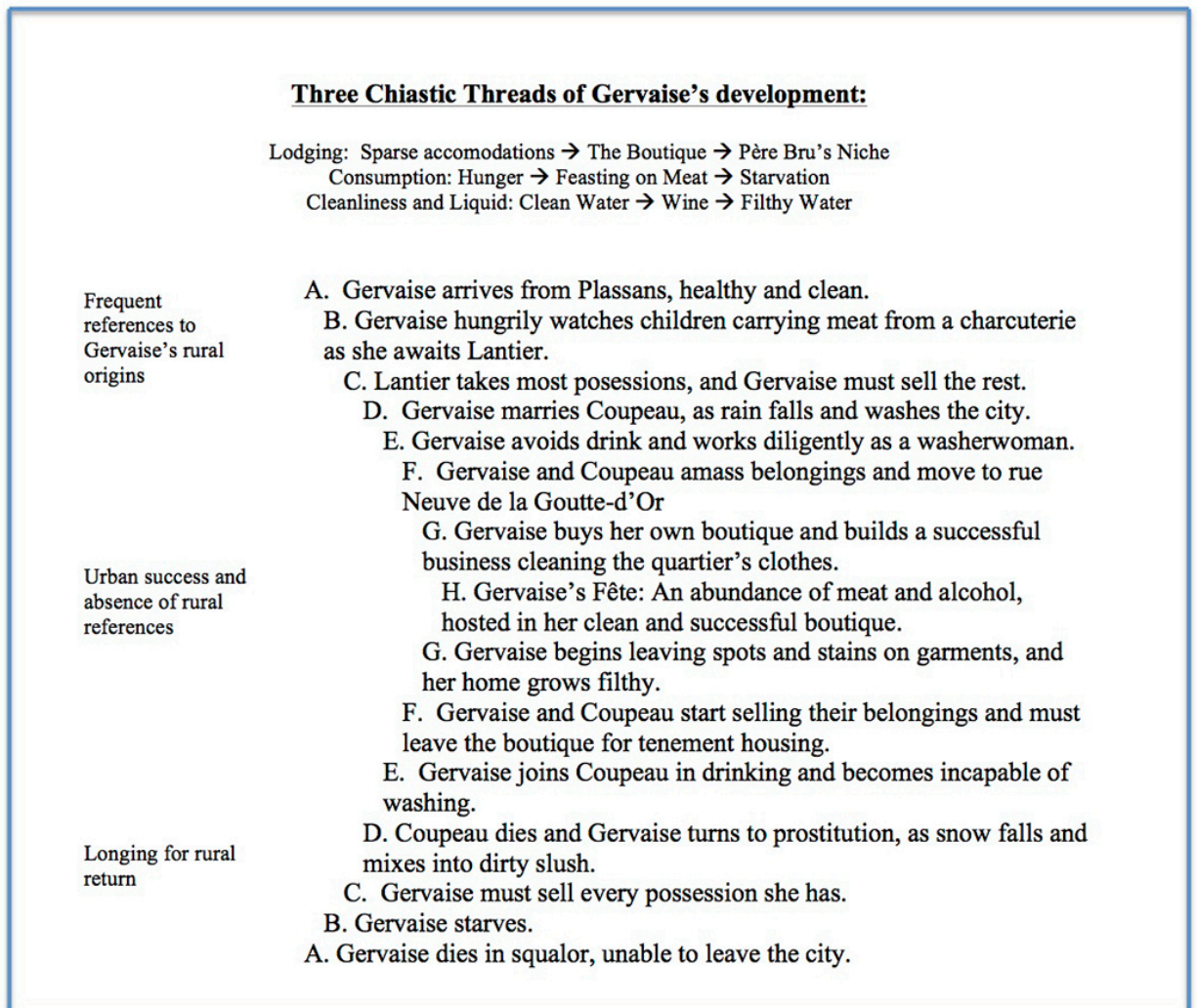


Figure 4.1. Three Chiastic Threads of Gervaise's Development

I will first study the evolutions in Gervaise's lodging within the book and the relationship between materiality and identity that Zola describes in urban life. Secondly, I will address the depiction of consumption and diet, with the meat-laden feast of Gervaise's fête marking the high "urban" point, followed by the descent towards starvation. Lastly, I will analyze the evolution of Gervaise's work, both in the concrete sense of her business rise and fall as a laundress, and in the metaphoric progression

between cleanliness and filth. The tragic ending concludes the chiasm and unites all three, as Gervaise inhabits Père Bru's niche, plagued by a dirtiness she cannot wash away, and has been laid to waste by alcohol and hunger. She does not make it out of this urbanizing arc and back to the country, and this failed attempt to deurbanize demands as much attention as her actual urbanization. A reading of *L'Assommoir* informed by a critical study of urbanization allows us to understand these evolutions as intertwined in a way beyond mere correlation. In *L'Assommoir*, Zola elevates the description of the exploitative nature of the city beyond the realms of capitalism. James Donald claimed that we must understand the city "as an attempt to imagine not only the way we live, but above all the way we live together... The city has always stood not only for the vanities, the squalor and the injustice of human society, but also for the aspiration to civilized society."<sup>9</sup> These aspirations fueled many nineteenth-century urban renovations, yet Zola's work not only questions their efficacy, but highlights their role in perpetuating exploitative systems. If *Au Bonheur des dames* used urbanization as a catalyst for the conflict between old and new economies and markets, *L'Assommoir* uses one woman's urbanizing quest to force a confrontation between the entire relationship between city and country, ultimately illustrating the urban toll on rural life, virtue, sanity, and purity.

### ***"Un Trou un peu propre"***

Approaching *L'Assommoir* from the perspective of urbanization causes us to consider the novel in terms of progression towards an urban climax, and directs our attention to the tension between movement and stasis. Zola inscribes movement into the text on every level, cramming his descriptions of Paris with as many street names as

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<sup>9</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, xi.

possible, avenues and boulevards spiraling out across the city from almost every page. In *Madame Bovary*, we dissected the infamous carriage ride of seduction across the city, and the equivalent in *L'Assommoir* is undoubtedly the wedding procession that wanders through central Paris:

On s'était engagé dans la rue de Cléry. Ensuite, on prit la rue du Mail. Sur la place des Victoires, il y eut un arrêt. La mariée avait le cordon de son soulier gauche dénoué ; et, comme elle le rattachait, au pied de la statue de Louis XIV, les couples se serrèrent derrière elle, attendant, plaisantant sur le bout de mollet qu'elle montrait. Enfin, après avoir descendu la rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, on arriva au Louvre.<sup>10</sup>

The movement takes on a temporal dimension once the party enters the Louvre, “des siècles d'art passaient devant leur ignorance ahurie, la sécheresse fine des primitifs, les splendeurs des Vénitiens, la vie grasse et belle de lumière des Hollandais.”<sup>11</sup> The nomadic wedding party wanders through space and time, equally uncomfortable in both.

Yet though Zola's narration details endless movement, the characters also seem trapped in a perpetual stasis, unable to ultimately evolve beyond their rank in society or leave the quartier. The world of *L'Assommoir* is small, confined to a single neighborhood with brief moments beyond to punctuate the text. While we cannot discuss an urbanization that details a move to the city, we can nevertheless explore Gervaise's evolution in terms of urban advancement. Zola emphasizes her rural origins at the beginning and end of the novel, and such references are absent in the middle of the text, at the peak of Gervaise's urbanity. Early on we learn that she “n'ayant point encore le coup de gosier de Paris. Virginie, a donc ! C'est las de rouler la province, ça n'avait pas douze ans que ça servait de paillasse à soldats, ça a laissé une jambe dans son pays... Elle

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<sup>10</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 99.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

est tombée de pourriture, sa jambe.”<sup>12</sup> Gervaise’s leg proves a rural remnant that she drags about with her, a constant reminder of her origins that she can keep hidden, but never erase. She references her formative years in the country frequently in the early chapters of the novel, both in reflections on time spent with her family, and in moments of madness, such as her attack on Virginie, where Gervaise beats her “comme elle battait autrefois à Plassans, au bord de la Viorne, quand sa patronne lavait le linge de la garnison.”<sup>13</sup>

In her evolution from rural to urban identity, and then back to rural, Gervaise’s urbanization might not entail a change of geographic location, but it certainly constitutes a progression in housing. Her trajectory highlights an important shift in the primary focus in regard to the urban poor. Whereas the leading socioeconomic issue in the era of the French Revolution had been how to feed the poor, the focus shifted in the second half of the nineteenth century to their living quarters.<sup>14</sup> Idelfonso Cerdà wrote at length about the utmost importance of habitation in urban planning, concluding that

La maison-habitation est le premier parmi les éléments de l’urbanisation. Elle y joue le même rôle que la famille au sein de l’organisme social... Si la famille est la base de l’organisme social, si de son bonheur dépend le bonheur de la société, si elle a besoin d’un abri, si cet abri conditionne profondément sa vie privée et social, la société ne pourra pas être bonne dans le sens philosophique, moral, et politique de ce mot, tant qu’elle n’offrira pas des conditions de stabilité au sein du progrès naturel. Elle ne le pourra pas, tant que la famille n’aura pas une habitation qui la rende heureuse.<sup>15</sup>

If the department store was for Zola a microcosm of the city in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, Cerdà elevates a familial apartment to the level of “une urbe en miniature, une urbe

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>14</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 146.

<sup>15</sup> Cerdà, *La Theorie generale de l'urbanisation*, 136.

élémentaire et originelle.”<sup>16</sup> His architectural designs reflect these concepts in their proposal of buildings with single-family apartments connected to communal livings spaces, a version of the tenement housing structures that proliferated across large cities in the nineteenth century. Cerdà recognized that

l’urbanisateur doit essayer d’offrir aux familles de toutes les classes sociales le logis approprié à leurs manières de vivre respectives et qui, tout en réunissant les qualités propres du logement moderne, soit d’un coût proportionné aux ressources de chacun. Le logement constitue le premier besoin de l’homme social, quelle que soit la classe à laquelle il appartient.<sup>17</sup>

Cerdà’s aspirations find their French manifestation in his contemporary the Baron Haussmann and his transformation of Paris under Napoléon III. One scholar claimed Haussmann’s urbanization as “against society” in comparison with Cerdà’s utopian view of the city and its possibilities, yet both men embody the increasingly predominant concern of urban planners: housing for the working masses, as well as appropriate quarantine of the filth and illness associated with the lower classes.<sup>18</sup> In contrast with Cerdà’s idealism however, Haussmann “saw Paris largely as a space for economic exploitation.”<sup>19</sup> While he did erect some housing for the working classes, his renovations sought first to facilitate the most efficient circulation of troops, goods, money, and inhabitants, just as Mouret organized his department store around the maximum transmission of goods and services in *Au Bonheur des Dames*. Haussmann mapped a political and economic agenda onto the cartography of Paris, transforming and modernizing the city in line with the objective of maintaining power and increasing prosperity. Integral to his modernization of Paris was “a combination of faith in the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>17</sup> Cerdà, *La Theorie generale de l’urbanisation*, 198.

<sup>18</sup> Antonia Lopez de Aberasturi, preface to *La Theorie generale de l’urbanisation*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 46.

application of scientific principles with a program of centrally directed public investment.”<sup>20</sup> Mathew Gandy argues that Haussmannization is an attempt to rationalize urban space, imposing on the city a form of capitalistic order. Fererick Hiorns praised Haussmanization, claiming that through it, “the evils of long-continued civic neglect were redeemed and Paris placed in the forefront of modern cities by imaginative reforms applied to the most onerous of human problems,”<sup>21</sup> while others lamented its role in systematically eradicating entire neighborhoods, solidifying segregation of working class laborers, and facilitating militaristic control of the city. While unequivocally controversial, Haussmann’s renovations did reflect “a belief that if you could get space right, if you could organize all the bits of the city in the right configuration, then the social problems would go away.”<sup>22</sup> Through Haussmann’s renovations, “a link was established between body, home, and street.”<sup>23</sup> This symbiosis between human and city that numerous urban planners identified in the nineteenth century resonates in Zola’s representation of city dwellers. The residents of *le quartier de la Goutte-d’or* are affected by and affect the city around them. We find this horrifically in Gervaise’s ultimate demise, her body rotting into the walls that house her.

Haussmann is criticized for intensifying the misery of displaced urban poor. If bourgeois and *flâneurs* such as Baudelaire complained of finding themselves in an “artificial city in which they no longer felt at home,”<sup>24</sup> the urban proletariat frequently find themselves altogether unwelcome as they move through the new city. We see this in

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew Gandy, “The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (1999): 27, JSTOR.

<sup>21</sup> Gandy, “The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space,” 23.

<sup>22</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 60.

<sup>23</sup> Donaldson-Evans, “Miasmatic Effluvia,” 82.

<sup>24</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 47.

the unease experienced by the wedding party as it wanders central Paris, and even in Gervaise's own sense of trepidation as she traverses her quartier. Gervaise's rise and fall throughout the novel entails a constant movement between living spaces in search of comfort and tranquility. While the novel includes numerous moves for Gervaise and her family, none of them constitutes a large geographical change, the narration rarely straying from the *quartier de la Goutte-d'or*. She begins in a tiny apartment shared with Lantier, moving to the Hôtel Boncoeur once married to Coupeau. As their fortunes improve, Gervaise and Coupeau move their family to a larger apartment on the rue Neuve de la Goutte-d'Or. Eventually, they move into her laundry boutique. When Gervaise's troubles escalate she begins to retrace her steps through ever-smaller apartments until finally finishing her days in the niche formerly occupied by the père Bru.

Zola emphasizes the lodging of each character as he introduces them, highlighting individuals as extensions of their environment, just as earlier novels I discussed presented characters as reflections of their urbanity. The novel opens on Gervaise's distress as she awaits Lantier: "Lentement de ses yeux voilés de larmes, elle faisait le tour de la misérable chambre garnie, meublée d'une commode de noyer dont un tiroir manquait, de trois chaises de paille et d'une petite table grasseuse, sur laquelle traînait un pot à eau ébréché."<sup>25</sup> Her crisis manifests itself in an inventory of her home, her dire situation reflected in the sparse furnishings. After establishing Gervaise in her home, Zola zooms out to provide a more holistic view of the quartier where "l'hôtel se trouvait sur le boulevard de la Chapelle, à gauche de la barrière Poissonnière. C'était une masure de deux étages, peinte en rouge lie-de-vin jusqu'au second, avec des persiennes

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<sup>25</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 20.



pourries par la pluie.”<sup>26</sup> In a manner analogous to Balzac’s realism and presentation of characters in *Père Goriot*, our initial impression of Gervaise is framed by her home, which is in turn situated within the neighborhood. Zola takes a similar approach in his presentation of other residents, with subsequent chapters taking pains to describe the lodging of multiple characters. His descriptions corroborate Benjamin’s assertion that “the nineteenth century, like no other century, was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person.”<sup>27</sup>

We come to understand the residents of the *quartier de la Goutte-d’or* in terms of their homes and objects, but also to understand their habitations as characters in their own right, living organisms that populate the city. When Coupeau escorts Gervaise to meet his family, she is cowed before the massive building, “surprise de cette énormité, se sentant au milieu d’un organe vivant, au cœur même d’une ville, intéressée par la maison, comme si elle avait eu devant elle une personne géante.”<sup>28</sup> The building where the Lorilleux live unfolds before Gervaise like a labyrinth:

Le corridor s’allongeait toujours, se bifurquait, resserré, lézardé, décrépi, de loin en loin éclairé par une mince flamme de gaz ; et les portes uniformes, à la file comme des portes de prison ou de couvent, continuaient à montrer, presque toutes grandes ouvertes, des intérieurs de misère et de travail, que la chaude soirée de juin emplissait d’une buée rousse. Enfin, ils arrivèrent à un bout de couloir complètement sombre.<sup>29</sup>

The foreboding scene falls far from the imagination of nineteenth-century urban planners like Cerdà who believed “le meilleur moyen à atténuer les maux sociaux [était] d’améliorer les conditions de l’habitation.”<sup>30</sup> He idealistically presumed that “à partir de

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 220.

<sup>28</sup> Zola, *L’Assommoir*, 66.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>30</sup> Cerdà, *La Theorie generale de l’urbanisation*, 140.

ce moment, un grand nombre de familles, amalgamées autour d'un petit espace commun, menèrent une vie commune. Quel magnifique spectacle ! Quelle édifiante association urbaine ! Quelle morale ! Quelle hygiène ! Quelle société !”<sup>31</sup> In contrast, Gervaise walks the halls of the building and

se sentait toujours le cœur gros, tourmentée d'une bête de peur, qui lui faisait fouiller avec inquiétude les ombres grandies de la rampe. À cette heure, l'escalier dormait, désert, éclairé seulement par le bec de gaz du second étage, dont la flamme rapetissée mettait, au fond de ce puits de ténèbres, la goutte de clarté d'une veilleuse.<sup>32</sup>

By transforming the architecture of the city into another set of characters, Zola focuses his narrative on the reality facing the poor working classes struggling to carve out their living in the city. The physical city furnishes a series of antagonists that Zola's characters must combat. The buildings suffocate and entrap their residents, highlighting the incongruence between the visions of urban planners and their realization. Zola uses Gervaise's urbanization to underscore this discord, problematizing the success of city planning and renewal in regard to the benefit for the lower classes.

The tenement reality depicted early in the novel also clashes with the urban dreams Gervaise fostered before coming to the city. The accusations she hurls at Lantier in the opening scene focus on his inability to provide a home for her and their sons: “Il fallait, en arrivant à Paris, au lieu de manger ton argent, nous établir tout de suite, comme tu l'avais promis.”<sup>33</sup> Her goals in urbanizing consistently return to a desire for appropriate lodging. Discontent and desire for a better home continue to define her early marriage to Coupeau as,

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>32</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 84.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

ils s'abominaient, à l'hôtel Boncœur ; ils trouvaient ça dégoûtant, plein de sales fréquentations ; et ils rêvaient d'être chez eux, avec des meubles à eux, qu'ils soigneraient. Vingt fois, ils calculèrent la somme nécessaire ; ça montait, en chiffre rond, à trois cent cinquante francs, s'ils voulaient tout de suite n'être pas embarrassés pour serrer leurs affaires et avoir sous la main une casserole ou un poêlon, quand ils en auraient besoin.<sup>34</sup>

They dream and save, save and dream, until finally able to afford an apartment on the rue Neuve Goutte-d'Or where Gervaise "croyait retourner en province ; pas de voisines, pas de cancans à craindre, un coin de tranquillité qui lui rappelait une ruelle de Plassans, derrière les remparts."<sup>35</sup> For a time, they are happy, an emotion directly attributed to their lodging.

Gervaise's aspirations grow and she longs for a laundry boutique of her own. She learns of the availability of "une boutique très propre, juste dans la grande maison où ils rêvaient d'habiter autrefois,"<sup>36</sup> and cannot ignore the lure of her own business and a new home. Just as Emma Bovary posited the summit of urbanization as Paris and wandered its imaginary streets in her head, Gervaise "dessina les lieux, sur la marge d'un journal. Et, peu à peu, elle en causait, mesurait les coins, arrangeait les pièces, comme si elle avait dû, dès le lendemain, y caser ses meubles."<sup>37</sup> When she eventually succeeds in obtaining the shop, her emotions fluctuate between joy and fear:

Le jour de la location, quand les Coupeau vinrent signer le bail, Gervaise se sentit le cœur tout gros, en passant sous la haute porte. Elle allait donc habiter cette maison vaste comme une petite ville, allongeant et entre-croisant les rues interminables de ses escaliers et de ses corridors. Les façades grises avec les loques des fenêtres séchant au soleil, la cour blafarde aux pavés défoncés de place publique, le ronflement de travail qui sortait des murs, lui causaient un grand trouble, une joie d'être enfin près de contenter son ambition, une peur de ne pas réussir et de se trouver écrasée dans cette lutte énorme contre la faim, dont elle entendait le

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

souffle. Il lui semblait faire quelque chose de très hardi, se jeter au beau milieu d'une machine en branle, pendant que les marteaux du serrurier et les rabots de l'ébéniste tapaient et sifflaient, au fond des ateliers du rez-de-chaussée. Ce jour-là, les eaux de la teinturerie coulant sous le porche, étaient d'un vert pomme très-tendre. Elle les enjamba, en souriant ; elle voyait dans cette couleur un heureux présage.<sup>38</sup>

This passage reveals several important elements of Gervaise's urbanization as understood through the evolution in her lodging. As Denise directed her movement towards the department store in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, housing represents the fulfillment of urbanizing dreams in *L'Assommoir*. This house is "vaste comme une petite ville," a city unto itself. Gervaise's joy is tempered by fears of the suffocating struggle for survival that pervades every aspect of the building, the knowledge that work and home have been united in such a way that struggles in one jeopardize the other.

This passage also unites the motif of water with Gervaise's progression in housing. I will discuss the role of water in the novel's progression in greater detail later, but for the moment it is important to note that the humidity presented as integral to Zola's conception of the city in *Au Bonheur des Dames* also pervades Gervaise's living space at the summit of her urbanization in *L'Assommoir*. As Gervaise signs the lease for her boutique, she pauses to worry about what will happen if she one day cannot pay the rent, shivering against the damp of the building that closes around her.<sup>39</sup> Water defines Gervaise's livelihood and seeps through her home. Whereas the passage notes the green color of the water flowing outside, it is the color blue and its clean associations that dominate Gervaise's early days in the boutique. In spite of her premonitions and fears, she hopes that her possession of the boutique firmly establishes her urban success. From the vantage point of her new home, she has the impression of having conquered the city,

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

her imagination placing her at the end of a journey that stretches all the way back to her provincial roots:

La rue de la Goutte-d'Or lui appartenait, et les rues voisines, et le quartier tout entier. Quand elle allongeait la tête, en camisole blanche, les bras nus, ses cheveux blonds envolés dans le feu du travail, elle jetait un regard à gauche, un regard à droite, aux deux bouts, pour prendre d'un trait les passants, les maisons, le pavé et le ciel : à gauche, la rue de la Goutte-d'Or s'enfonçait, paisible, déserte, dans un coin de province, où des femmes causaient bas sur les portes.<sup>40</sup>

In spite of Coupeau's injury, apathy for labor, and drinking, Gervaise's ascension to business owner and her new home seem to fulfill her dreams before coming to the city.

Gervaise's decline and deurbanization began with an increased movement, a refusal of the stability that urban housing was intended to offer. This movement begins with Coupeau who "roulait dans le quartier, on ne savait pas bien où."<sup>41</sup> Gervaise then begins orchestrating her own movement around his, an endless dance around the quartier to avoid angering him. We learn that Coupeau rejects Gervaise's hard-won living quarters to "couchait sur un tas d'ordures, sur un banc, dans un terrain vague, en travers d'un ruisseau."<sup>42</sup> His actions and Gervaise's indulgences culminate in a series of debts that drive Gervaise into further motion. Zola details her frantic movement around the quartier to open new lines of credit, inundating the reader with names that craft a detailed labyrinth of streets before concluding that Gervaise "brûlait le quartier, elle avait des poufs tous les dix pas."<sup>43</sup> Whereas ideal urbanization should facilitate "une constante

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

alternance entre le repos et le mouvement,”<sup>44</sup> Gervaise’s ability for stasis falters and her living conditions spiral downward for the rest of the novel.

After being forced to give up the boutique, Gervaise and Coupeau first move into the same building inhabited by the Lorilleux, the ominous and dark tenement housing Gervaise feared early in the novel. The chapters once again open with detailed descriptions of lodging, as we wind our way through paragraphs that mimic the dark corridors they describe. We pass the lodging of other characters, most notably the “trou sans air, sous un petit escalier qui montait à la toiture, [où] couchait le père Bru.”<sup>45</sup> At last we arrive at their new home, “une chambre et un cabinet, pas plus...et encore la chambre était-elle large comme la main. Il fallait y faire tout, dormir, manger et le reste.”<sup>46</sup>

Whereas constant movement characterized the period before Gervaise’s move, her life in the new apartment is marked by total stasis:

Les premiers jours, la blanchisseuse s’asseyait et pleurait. Ça lui semblait trop dur, de ne plus pouvoir se remuer chez elle, après avoir toujours été au large. Elle suffoquait, elle restait à la fenêtre pendant des heures, écrasée entre le mur et la commode, à prendre des torticolis. Là seulement elle respirait. La cour, pourtant, ne lui inspirait guère que des idées tristes.<sup>47</sup>

Gervaise is incapable of the balance between movement and stasis, home and work, interior and exterior, that urbanization sought to facilitate. These aspirations are inscribed into the design of cities like Haussmann’s Paris, a patchwork of wide boulevards, high buildings, and public green spaces offering lodging, mobility, and natural spaces. His city sought to both cultivate the ends of capitalism, and further public health through providing means of movement and appropriate spaces for stasis.

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<sup>44</sup> Cerda, *La Theorie generale de l'urbanisation*, 130.

<sup>45</sup> Zola, *L’Assommoir*, 371.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 372.

Gervaise's inability to master this tension precipitates her expulsion from the urban space. We can contrast her with Denise, who embraced the movement required by the city in her adoption of capitalism. Denise thrived in the constant motion of the department store, facilitating movement of money, products, and customers. Her success depends on this ability to thrive and conduct the movement that defines the city, whereas Gervaise flounders and fails.

The material focus we studied in Julien and Emma's urbanization also manifests itself throughout Gervaise's evolution. In the same way that Julien's trajectory entailed ever-changing clothing and Emma's evolution necessitated the amassing of all sorts of urban luxuries, Gervaise's efforts at urbanizing can be traced through the transformation of objects in her life from clean to dirty. Rather than abstract reflections of urbanity or items to accumulate debt and reconstruct reality, the clothes and other physical objects populating Gervaise's world grow dirty and are constantly themselves on a journey in and out of her home.

On a practical level, Gervaise's employment as a washerwoman explains the constant comings and goings of clothing around her. At the high point of her urbanizing arc, the midpoint of the chiastic structure, her home merges with her business. She lives and works at the boutique, surrounded by the clothing of the quartier. Conversely, the beginning and end of the novel are marked by trips to Mont-de-piété to sell off her clothing. The juxtaposition of needing to sell off her own clothing, all while taking in that of others, "cette course-là, c'était une abomination, la grosse douleur dans son désespoir."<sup>48</sup> Zola presents clothing not as a stylistic choice, but an integral part of each character, all while situating it within the capitalistic economy of the city. The

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

descriptions of Gervaise and Coupeau's wedding valorize minutia of the participants' attire, highlighting each object in detail and frequently including the price. When Lantier returns with Gervaise's trunk, she watches him unpack it as if it reveals who he is, as if the objects and garments inside hold the secret to how he has spent their years apart.

The material focus extends beyond clothing to include all household objects that fill and define Gervaise's life. The first half of the book details Gervaise's increasing material possessions. When Lantier leaves her, the chapter that began with inventorying her belongings ends by chronicling her emptiness:

Il n'y avait plus, à un clou de la cheminée, qu'un petit fichu de femme, tordu comme une ficelle. Le lit des enfants, tiré au milieu de la pièce, découvrait la commode, dont les tiroirs laissés ouverts montraient leurs flancs vides. Lantier s'était lavé et avait achevé la pommade, deux sous de pommade dans une carte à jouer ; l'eau grasse de ses mains emplissait la cuvette. Et il n'avait rien oublié, le coin occupé jusque-là par la malle paraissait à Gervaise faire un trou immense. Elle ne retrouva même pas le petit miroir rond, accroché à l'espagnolette.<sup>49</sup>

He leaves her with nothing save some dirty marks on the washbasin.

The arc of Gervaise's lodging duplicates itself in her material possessions. Following her penniless state at Lantier's departure, her marriage to Coupeau and initial industry and liquidity allow her to purchase furniture to fill their new home. Zola lists the items, purchased "presque neuf," before concluding that "c'était pour eux comme une entrée sérieuse et définitive dans la vie, quelque chose qui, en les faisant propriétaires, leur donnait de l'importance au milieu des gens bien posés du quartier."<sup>50</sup> The new apartment and its furnishings give Gervaise hope that her urban hopes will be realized:

Elle eut une religion pour ces meubles, les essuyant avec des soins maternels, le cœur crevé à la vue de la moindre égratignure. Elle s'arrêtait, saisie, comme si elle se fût tapée elle-même, quand elle les cognait en

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.



balayant. La commode surtout lui était chère ; elle la trouvait belle, solide, l'air sérieux. Un rêve, dont elle n'osait parler, était d'avoir une pendule pour la mettre au beau milieu du marbre, où elle aurait produit un effet magnifique.<sup>51</sup>

Maternal affection and detailed care define this apartment. In this new home, surrounded by her new furnishings, Gervaise begins to dream of her business. She succeeds in buying the clock on credit and longs for the day when “ils iraient manger quelque part, à la campagne.”<sup>52</sup> The country returns in her imagination not as a home, but as a site for a leisurely outing, a temporary escape from her urban life facilitated by urban success. I discussed this new conception of the country as the weekend playground for urban dwellers in the previous chapter, and Gervaise participates in this new coding of rural space, longing for access to it even as she strives to identify as urban. Her new attitude to the country reflects the way in which “the Haussmanization of Paris was, above all, a process of redefining nature in metropolitan terms, or inscribing new patterns of social and spatial order within which nature was increasingly to be a focus of leisure and convenience rather than of material necessity.”<sup>53</sup>

If the first half of the book was a gradual amassing of objects, the second half is a slow dispersal. Gervaise is forced to leave much of her furniture for the Boches when departing the boutique, and the love and precision that characterized her housekeeping dissolve into carelessness and filth. She sells off her remaining belongings and clothes to feed her and Coupeau's addictions, until reduced to nothing, reminiscent of her beginnings in the empty apartment that Lantier had stripped bare. Yet rather than completing her urbanizing rise and fall of belongings and housing by returning to the

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>53</sup> Gandy, “The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space,” 32.

country of her origins, Gervaise's movement comes to a halt in père Bru's hovel. Bereft of all belongings, she ends her trajectory homeless and forgotten.

### ***Meat for the Masses***

The second chiastic structure that demands our attention and analysis through the lens of urbanization is that of Gervaise's consumption. The title and its referent to the bar where Coupeau drinks immediately prompts us to consider immoderation when discussing this novel. The consumable and addiction most frequently discussed with *L'Assommoir* is of course alcohol, but I will treat alcohol as tied to water in the evolution of clean and dirty later. More pertinent to my analysis than the transition from sobriety to addiction, is the evolution that characterizes Gervaise's eating, from hunger and a longing for bread, to a diet composed of meat, and then finally, back to hunger. We looked briefly at Zola's interest in urban diets in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, and *L'Assommoir* focuses even more profoundly on the meals (or lack thereof) of its characters. As Gervaise urbanizes, her diet transforms to one of increased meat, whereas the beginning and end of the novel – the most “rural” points – are characterized by the absence of meat, and ultimately, of any food.

The process of obtaining and preparing food consistently preoccupies Gervaise. Even in the immediate aftermath of childbirth, she does not shirk from preparing a meal.<sup>54</sup> The text incessantly refers to the culinary responsibilities and actions of each character, as someone is always in the process of purchasing meat, such as Mme Boche who narrates Coupeau's fall in between reminders that she was in route to “chercher un

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<sup>54</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 128.

gigot.”<sup>55</sup> The details slip into the edges of the narration, filling the novel with edible errands. While food in general is omnipresent, meat features especially prominently. It appears early in the text, as Gervaise searches for Lantier from her window and instead sees “une boutique de charcutier, pleine de monde, d’où sortaient des enfants, tenant sur leur main, enveloppés d’un papier gras, une côtelette panée, une saucisse ou un bout de boudin tout chaud.”<sup>56</sup> In her moment of despondency, she gazes longingly on urban dwellers moving about with meat in hand.

The prevalence of meat both highlights a major divide between the city and the country and points to the relationship of exploitation explored in *L’Assommoir*. Whereas the standard city dweller in the late nineteenth century averaged between 60-80 kilograms of meat consumption each year, the average for a Frenchman in the country was closer to only 22 kilograms.<sup>57</sup> A mid-century menu from the Parisian restaurant Les Trois Frères Provençaux boasted 46 beef dishes, hinting at the urban love of meat in contrast with the rural diet that testifies to a sparser table and a simpler, plant-based fare accompanied by coarse bread.<sup>58</sup> Language supports this idea, with Sunday clothes in some rural regions referred to as *les habits mangeant viande* – meat-eating garb, implying a weekly, rather than daily, appearance.<sup>59</sup> The daily quest for survival and food permeates the rural vocabulary:

The proverbs remembered the lean years, continually reminding country men, if they should need reminding, of the belly’s need to be filled with anything as long as it was filled, or even half filled. Language remembered

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>57</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 142.

<sup>58</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 423.

<sup>59</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 140.

them, too, rich with locutions that meant cutting things fine, eating just enough to stay alive, etc.<sup>60</sup>

Food, beyond being mere detail, inserts itself into shaping numerous aspects of reality. The diets of country and city dwellers hint at the relationships of power unearthed by urbanization. While many grains, cereals, and vegetables could be grown close to the city, meat arrived in Paris from much further afield, railways facilitating the easy transportation of cows that previously had to be fattened and walked to the city.<sup>61</sup> The city had always imported meat from the surrounding countryside, yet the imports skyrocketed in the nineteenth century, reflecting the explosion of the urban population and the possibilities of easy transportation.

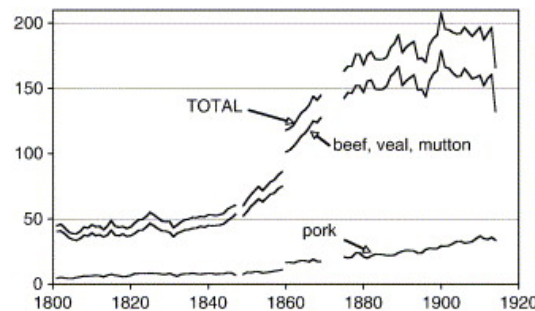


Figure 4.2. Meat inflows, Paris, 1801–1914,  $10^3$  tonnes/year.<sup>62</sup>

Meat on the table became a symbol of urbanity, not merely economic status, as be seen through its presence in the diets of Zola's urban poor. It is tempting to claim that the abundance of meat corresponds to a higher quality of diet and life in the city, but Lewis Mumford maintains that, "life was worse in cities, something often obscured by mortality rates, and here we should give more credit than we do to the increased food supply and

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>61</sup> G. Billen, S. Barles, P. Chatzimpiros, J. Garnier, "Grain, meat and vegetables to feed Paris: where did and do they come from? Localising Paris food supply areas from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century," *Regional Environmental Change*, June 2012, Volume 12, Issue 2: 325–335, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10113-011-0244-7>.

<sup>62</sup> Sabine Barles, "Feeding the City: Food Consumption and flow of nitrogen, Paris, 1801-1914," *Science of the Total Environment*, Volume 375, Issues 1–3, 1 April 2007: 48-58, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2006.12.003>

available fats (for soap) in the city.”<sup>63</sup> The varied diet obscures deeper truths about urban life.

The *Statistique Agricole Annuelle* records this meat as arriving from all over France, the countryside offering up its livestock to fatten the city. The constant presence of meat in the novel never lets us forget this unequal economy between the city and country, with the former feasting on the latter. In his process of problematizing the ideal narrative of urbanization, of questioning the city’s ability to perfect society and promote health, Zola composes a heroine who craves meat, yet cannot always obtain it. Gervaise longs to obtain urban success, to be among the meat-eaters. Her hunger and exploitation weave themselves into the relationship between rural and urban economies. In the same way that he emphasized the violence of capitalism in *Au Bonheur des dames*, Zola reminds us of the uncomfortable relationship between Paris and province through the constant presence of the slaughterhouse, where the spoils of the country meet their end. His representation aligns with the “unequal interaction between country and city” that Raymond Williams notes in British literature, the “case of a capitol city drawing the character of an economy and a society into its extraordinary centre: order and chaos both.”<sup>64</sup> The culinary obsessions that fill *L’Assommoir* reflect this dietary urbanity and exploitative relationship, even if we find ourselves among the lower classes that are not typically associated with decadent feasting.

Gervaise’s dietary evolution also draws her closer to gluttony, her inability to moderate her eating an initial corollary to Coupeau’s alcoholism. It is also a reflection of

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<sup>63</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 468.

<sup>64</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 147.

her origins, a fear of hunger associated with the peasantry that she maintains in her urban life and nurtures with her increased income:

Elle devenait gourmande ; ça, tout le monde le disait ; mais ce n'était pas un vilain défaut, au contraire. Quand on gagne de quoi se payer de fins morceaux, n'est-ce pas ? on serait bien bête de manger des pelures de pommes de terre. D'autant plus qu'elle travaillait toujours dur, se mettant en quatre pour ses pratiques, passant elle-même les nuits, les volets fermés, lorsque la besogne était pressée. Comme on disait dans le quartier, elle avait la veine ; tout lui prospérait.<sup>65</sup>

Her expanding waistline increasingly dominates Zola's descriptions. Gervaise's escalating gourmandise reaches its zenith at the elaborate feast for her *fête*, though this party is not the first meat-laden feast that Zola describes. At the meal following their marriage, Coupeau insisted that they serve a dinner complete with lamb, chicken, pork, and other varieties of meat. Gervaise slipped scraps of meat to the children as Coupeau imitated the animals to the delight of his guests.<sup>66</sup> Yet that dinner was merely an appetizer to the lavish feast that dominates a lengthy section of the middle of the novel.

Gervaise's feast is a decadent explosion of meat designed to leave the guests "ronds comme des balles, le ventre plein pour la semaine."<sup>67</sup> The weeks leading up to the event are devoted to endless discussions about the menu, the highlight of which was to be a "une oie grasse rôtie. On en causait avec des yeux gourmands...[L]a bête parut énorme, avec sa peau rude, ballonnée de graisse jaune."<sup>68</sup> The meal expands to include other meat, but the goose remains the centerpiece. Whereas Coupeau once entertained the wedding guests by imitating animals, Zola now begins to blur the lines altogether between human and animal, consumer and consumed. The goose "rôtissait devant une coquille placée par

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<sup>65</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 169.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

terre, contre le mur, à côté de la fenêtre ouverte ; et la bête était si grosse, qu'il avait fallu l'enfoncer de force dans la rôtissoire.”<sup>69</sup> Its expansive body reflects Gervaise's own corpulence. Grease all but oozes from the pages of the text, inundating the reader with the carnage of the meal as the guests transform into animals themselves, “piétinaient autour de la table. Tous avaient faim, bâillaient légèrement, l'air embêté.”<sup>70</sup> This presentation of the goose marks the highpoint of Gervaise's success in the city:

Il y eut une rentrée triomphale : Gervaise portait l'oie, les bras raidis, la face suante, épanouie dans un large rire silencieux ; les femmes marchaient derrière elle, riaient comme elle ; tandis que Nana, tout au bout, les yeux démesurément ouverts, se haussait pour voir. Quand l'oie fut sur la table, énorme, dorée, ruisselante de jus, on ne l'attaqua pas tout de suite. C'était un étonnement, une surprise respectueuse, qui avait coupé la voix à la société. On se la montrait avec des clignements d'yeux et des hochements de menton. Sacré mâtin! quelle dame ! quelles cuisses et quel ventre !<sup>71</sup>

Gervaise reigns over the table, serving the magnificent goose to her family and friends, sheltered in her own business and home. The Lorilleux regard the bird enviously, “suffoqués de voir une oie pareille sur la table de la Banban.”<sup>72</sup> Gervaise's friends dine late into the night, gorging themselves on rich food and turning away from the salad which “se mange sans faim.”<sup>73</sup> The women squabble over the carcass, as does the stray cat once all the party sleeps.

When she originally arrived in the city, Gervaise sought only “de manger toujours du pain, d'avoir un trou un peu propre pour dormir, vous savez, un lit, une table et deux chaises, pas davantage,”<sup>74</sup> yet her feast shows how far her urban reality has overshot her

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

rural imagination. Around her meat-laden table gather many chairs and people, grease running off the goose and onto the floor. She has succeeded professionally with her business, personally with her marriage and housing, and now she can extend her success to those around her. But if this dinner marks Gervaise's gluttonous climax, it also changes the course of her culinary evolution, and it marks Lantier's reentry into her life, as Coupeau invites him to the table. His invasion of her space, home, and eventually bed also entail requests that she return to cooking "à l'huile," or in the style of her Provençale origins.<sup>75</sup> Lantier's presence and influence over her meals, coupled with his tie to her rural origins, help to further unite the melding of urbanizing trends to Gervaise's evolution of diet.

Following the dinner, Gervaise slips towards starvation. In spite of her poverty, she grasps at any scrap of meat she can find, craving "des côtelettes, des choses nourissantes et légères."<sup>76</sup> Her deurbanization and fall entail less and less meat, a transformation in diet that runs parallel to her downgrade in lodging. In contrast to her shrinking living quarters and diminished nourishment, Gervaise's body swells, becoming "ronde, une vraie boule."<sup>77</sup> The novel increasingly focuses on starvation, an all-consuming hunger and homelessness that engulfs the reader. The only glimmers of hope that the cycle can be broken come from the promise of the country, such as at a dinner party hosted by the Boches where Virginie waxes poetic about rural life, or when Coupeau briefly works outside of the city and finds sobriety and liquidity. Zola offers hope that the urbanizing arch of the novel will return Gervaise to the country and save her from the starvation and squalor of the city. The country functions outside the realm of the novel as

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.



a safety valve, a potential escape that was in line with Zola's belief that Parisians felt "deprived of greenery."<sup>78</sup> But these hopes are not realized. The chiasm is distorted, with Gervaise trapped in the final stages, her body swelling and her stomach empty. The novel progresses like a dinner party, beginning with Gervaise's hopes of bread, passing through the levels of feasting, and ending with dessert. Yet it is Lantier, not Gervaise who completes the meal. As Gervaise lives in hunger, Lantier remains living in the boutique-turned-candy shop and "ne vivait plus que de bonbons."<sup>79</sup>

Studying food and gluttony in *L'Assommoir* in light of the changing trends of meat consumption and diet between country and city allows us to understand Gervaise's inability to moderate her intake as tied to her failure to assimilate into the city life. Furthermore, it illustrates the economic relationships of power and exploitation undergirding urbanization, as the city grows fat on the country. Gervaise is a casualty of this relationship, her own body reflecting this exploitative union as it grows obese all while starving. Tracing the changing references to food and meals highlights the dinner party thread that runs through the text, but it also leaves us frustrated at the ending. The chiasmic structure, the subtext of a progressing meal, and the parallels between the beginning and end fail when we arrive at Gervaise's starvation contrasted with her obesity, the way that her body takes on the filth, grease, and corruption of the urban space she inhabits. To understand not only Gervaise's exploitation, but why Zola depicts the city as requiring a rural sacrifice, we must turn to the final arc that structures the text.

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<sup>78</sup> Hewitt, *Through Those Living Pillars*, 29.

<sup>79</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 439.

### *Clean and Dirty, Water and Wine*

In *Au Bonheur des Dames*, I discussed the water that envelopes and obscures Zola's city, the steam and vapor that rises around the store, and the veils of water that Denise must pass through as she urbanizes. This watery understanding of the city is also present in *L'Assommoir*, yet it plays a different role. The water and steam in *Au Bonheur* allow us to analyze the natural versus industrial tension in urbanization, and they contribute to the conception of capitalism that Zola puts forth, evoking an Impressionist aesthetic as he textually paints the department store. In *L'Assommoir*, water joins wine on a spectrum of liquid that allows us to understand Gervaise's progression from cleanliness to filth, and sobriety to drunkenness. Like the other chiastic structures explored, this evolution is stunted, with the second half a perversion of the first. We can use urbanization to make sense of this distortion and weave the three structures together into a portrait of the exploitative relationship between country and city.

In the opening pages, Gervaise gazes out over the city through a veil of tears, and Zola uses water imagery to evoke the sense of drowning that Gervaise experiences in her urban life: "Elle revenait, le cou tendu, s'étourdissant à voir couler, entre les deux pavillons trapus de l'octroi, le flot ininterrompu des hommes, de bêtes, de charrettes, qui descendait des hauteurs de Montmartre et de la Chapelle.... Et la cohue s'engouffrait dans Paris où elle se noyait, continuellement."<sup>80</sup> The pages that follow detail a literal saturation, as we enter the *laverie* and Zola submerges the reader in descriptions of the dampness and humidity:

Un plein jour blafard passait librement dans la buée chaude suspendue comme un brouillard laiteux. Des fumées montaient de certains coins, s'étalant, noyant les fonds d'un voile bleuâtre. Il pleuvait une humidité

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

lourde, chargée d'une odeur savonneuse ; et, par moments, des souffles plus forts d'eau de javelle dominaient. Le long des batteries, aux deux côtés de l'allée centrale, il y avait des files de femmes, les bras nus jusqu'aux épaules, le cou nu, les jupes raccourcies montrant des bas de couleur et de gros souliers lacés. Elles tapaient furieusement, riaient, se renversaient pour crier un mot dans le vacarme, se penchaient au fond de leurs baquets, ordurières, brutales, dégingandées, trempées comme par une averse, les chairs rougies et fumantes. Autour d'elles, sous elles, coulait un grand ruissellement, les seaux d'eau chaude promenés et vidés d'un trait, les robinets d'eau froide ouverts, pissant de haut, les éclaboussements des battoirs, les égouttures des linges rincés, les mares où elles pataugeaient s'en allant par petits ruisseaux sur les dalles en pente. Et, au milieu des cris, des coups cadencés, du bruit murmurant de pluie, de cette clameur d'orage s'étouffant sous le plafond mouillé, la machine à vapeur, à droite, toute blanche d'une rosée fine, haletait et ronflait sans relâche, avec la trépidation dansante de son volant qui semblait régler l'énormité du tapage.<sup>81</sup>

The liquid vocabulary he chooses emphasizes the artifice of this water and its role in the industrial business of the *laverie*. The water is described as “joliment dure,” reddening the hands of the women.<sup>82</sup> Conversely, Gervaise recounts her beginnings as a *blanchisseuse* in Plassans where, “Ça sentait meilleur qu'ici... Il fallait voir, il y avait un coin sous les arbres... avec de l'eau claire qui courait.”<sup>83</sup> Zola establishes the dichotomy of the countryside and its clean waters against a city of dank humidity and soiled streams. Similarly, when Gervaise and Coupeau visit the Lorilleux, the oppressive moisture of the city closes around her:

Du fond de ces ténèbres, dans le coin humide, des gouttes d'eau, sonores au milieu du silence, tombaient une à une du robinet mal tourné de la fontaine. Alors, il sembla à Gervaise que la maison était sur elle, écrasante, glaciale à ses épaules. C'était toujours sa bête de peur, un enfantillage dont elle souriait ensuite.

The water that comforted her in Plassans becomes a foreboding presence in the city.

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Water continues to feature as the prominent liquid in the first half of the book. It soaks beyond Gervaise's professional sphere, driving her wedding party forward with a steady rain, eventually forcing them into the Louvre. Following their museum visit, the group climbs to the top of the column in the Place Vendôme. They survey the panorama of the city, watching the rain wash it clean, only for it to become dirty again, the work of the rain mimicking Gervaise's own occupation, an imitation that reproduces continually the entire novel. When Gervaise and Coupeau move into the boutique, the walls "pissaient l'humidité, et on ne voyait plus clair dès trois heures de l'après-midi,"<sup>84</sup> water dominating even the solid structures in the text.

Slowly, the ubiquitous water is replaced with free-flowing wine. Gervaise and other characters frequently note that "le vin est nécessaire à l'ouvrier,"<sup>85</sup> but the decisive moment when water turns to wine as the liquid focus comes at Gervaise's *fête* where "[le vin] coulait autour de la table comme l'eau coule à la Seine."<sup>86</sup> The city hitherto understood in terms of water, henceforth runs with wine. For in drinking, "Paris vous appartenait."<sup>87</sup> While various characters emphasize a distinction between wine and hard liquor, one elides into the other as alcoholism overtakes Gervaise. She ceases to work, turning instead to drinking alongside Coupeau, concluding that they might as well "boirons la monnaie ensemble."<sup>88</sup>

From the wine that gushes from the pages at the center of the novel, we do return to water towards the end, though with an important distinction. Gervaise's position as a washerwoman naturally associates her with water and its ability to cleanse and purify.

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

Zola carefully underscores this whitening and cleansing aspect of Gervaise's persona throughout the book. When her daughter Nana is born with "une petite frimousse bien noire," Gervaise is consoled that it will whiten out if she grows reasonably like her mother.<sup>89</sup> Zola ties Gervaise's ability to impart cleanliness and purity to her customers with memories of the country. At the peak of her success, she happily works in her laundry boutique where,

Les linges fumaient, on se serait cru en plein été ; et l'on était bien, les portes fermées, ayant chaud partout, tellement chaud, qu'on aurait fini par dormir, les yeux ouverts. Gervaise disait en riant qu'elle s'imaginait être à la campagne. En effet, les voitures ne faisaient plus de bruit en roulant sur la neige ; c'était à peine si l'on entendait le piétinement des passants.<sup>90</sup>

Surrounded by the water, the city noises muffled by snow, she imagines herself far from the city and its filth, and in the work of washing, she returns some of the rural purity she misses to the quartier. This purity also exists in Goujet, whose chaste and noble love – not to mention the cleanliness and propriety that surround him – paints a contrast to both Coupeau and Lantier. While all of the interactions between Goujet and Gervaise occur in the city, the country exists as the only possibility of their love reaching fruition. Goujet entreats her to leave Paris, to forsake the summit of urbanization, and go away with him. Gervaise declines, but she returns from their afternoons together with baskets of flowers and clings to his promise as a safety valve from the misery that increasingly surrounds her. She visits him in his forge, described in natural terms as an "étrange forêt,"<sup>91</sup> and there is a sort of primitive unrefined quality to the attraction between Gervaise, representing water, humidity, and liquid, and Goujet, constantly associated with heat, fire, and iron.

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

*L'Assommoir* is not the only text where Zola presents the country as a source of purity (moral and physical), capable of washing away the sins of the city. In *La Confession de Claude*, Claude arrives in Paris and falls in love with the prostitute Laurence. He longs for her to love him purely and sweetly in spite of her profession, but she refuses, with the notable exception of a pastoral interlude wherein she is momentarily cured from the corrupting urban influence. But once returned to the city, she forsakes this rural innocence and pure affection. Throughout the works of Zola, "in his return to nature, man trusts that nature will exorcise and purify him.... Purification is sought on physical, psychological, and spiritual planes."<sup>92</sup> We even see echoes of this in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, in spite of the novel's more optimistic representation of urbanization. Before she can marry Mouret, Denise must return to the country to erase the hint of impropriety that such a relationship could imply. After their decision to marry, Zola tells us that she will first return to Valonges for a month, "ce qui fermerait la bouche du monde, et qu'il irait ensuite l'y chercher lui-même, pour l'en ramener à son bras, toute puissante."<sup>93</sup> A period in the country renders the surprising couple respectable. This idea that a rural setting can wipe clean the evils of the city briefly proves true for Coupeau, who leaves his antipathy for work and drinking in Paris to spend several months working in the country:

Là, il fit près de trois mois, sans se soûler, guéri un moment par l'air de la campagne. On ne se doute pas combien ça désaltère les pochards, de quitter l'air de Paris, où il y a dans les rues une vraie fumée d'eau-de-vie et de vin. À son retour, il était frais comme une rose, et il rapportait quatre cents francs, avec lesquels ils payèrent les deux termes arriérés de la boutique, dont les Poisson avaient répondu, ainsi que d'autres petites dettes du quartier, les plus criardes. Gervaise déboucha deux ou trois rues où elle ne passait plus. Naturellement, elle s'était mise repasseuse à la

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<sup>92</sup> Hewitt, *Through Those Living Pillars*, 47.

<sup>93</sup> Zola, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, 495.

journée. Madame Fauconnier, très bonne femme pourvu qu'on la flattât, avait bien voulu la reprendre. Elle lui donnait même trois francs, comme à une première ouvrière, par égard pour son ancienne position de patronne. Aussi le ménage semblait-il devoir boulotter.<sup>94</sup>

We see the city streets characterized by liquor and wine, whereas the countryside cures and cleans him, mimicking the actions that country-born Gervaise performs in her daily work. Yet once returned to the city, the cleanliness, sobriety, industry, and hope of the country are suffocated and corroded. Coupeau resumes drinking, and Gervaise's finds herself incapable of her profession, becoming "sans soin, malpropre, perdant la tête jusqu'à oublier son métier."<sup>95</sup>

The necessity of cleansing permeates the novel on every level, and can be read in the light of the urbanizing arcs which structure Gervaise's evolution. Her descent from cleanliness to filth occurs both literally and symbolically, as she moves further from the country and becomes both dirtier herself, and less capable of removing dirt from others. She spends her days surrounded by piles of clothing, a "débâcle de malpropreté...cette mare grandissant."<sup>96</sup> The anecdotes, personalities, and experiences inscribed in each article of clothing become Gervaise's responsibility, and she the keeper of their secrets:

Et elle savait d'autres particularités, les secrets de la propreté de chacun, les dessous des voisines qui traversaient la rue en jupes de soie, le nombre de bas, de mouchoirs, de chemises qu'on salissait par semaine, la façon dont les gens déchiraient certaines pièces, toujours au même endroit. Aussi était-elle pleine d'anecdotes. Les chemises de mademoiselle Remanjou, par exemple, fournissaient des commentaires interminables ; elles s'usaient par le haut, la vieille fille devait avoir les os des épaules pointus ; et jamais elles n'étaient sales, les eût-elle portées quinze jours, ce qui prouvait qu'à cet âge-là on est quasiment comme un morceau de bois, dont on serait bien en peine de tirer une larme de quelque chose. Dans la

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<sup>94</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 373.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 436.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

boutique, à chaque triage, on déshabillait ainsi tout le quartier de la Goutte-d'Or.<sup>97</sup>

Gervaise's work is not merely to wash the clothes of the quartier, but to expunge symbolically the city of its filth. She receives piles of garments soiled by the lives of their wearers, and returns them clean – absolved of former sins and erased of previous stories. This description also hints at the price that her work will exact from her. From their clothing, Gervaise learns the stories of the quartier and acts as confessor to their secrets. She dirties herself so that they may become clean, and it is as if “elle se grisait de cette puanteur humaine...et il semblait que ses premières paresse vinssent de là, de l'asphyxie des vieux linges empoisonnant l'air autour d'elle.”<sup>98</sup> Donaldson-Evans situates this representation of Gervaise's task within the moralizing discourse of hygiene prevalent in the nineteenth century wherein “cleanliness has become a cardinal virtue,” and physical insalubriousness elides into moral filth.<sup>99</sup> This prevailing notion proved an impetus for Haussmann's renovations of the city, as his desire for wide boulevards, parks, and open spaces sought to make Paris a place of “space, air, light, verdure and flowers, in a word, with all that dispenses health.”<sup>100</sup> Haussmann is notable for his transformation of the Paris sewer system, motivated in part by the cholera epidemics of the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>101</sup> His recognition that a city must have a network of waterways to continually cleanse and sustain it, understanding Paris less as inanimate architecture, and more as living organism. In his *Mémoire sur les eaux de Paris*, Haussmann explains:

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>99</sup> Donaldson-Evans, “Miasmatic Effluvia,” 87.

<sup>100</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 57.

<sup>101</sup> The cause of cholera remained a debate for much of the nineteenth century, with scientists challenging the hitherto assumed miasma theory of contamination. Slowly, in the second half of the century, scientists like Filippo Pacini and John Snow convinced the scientific and medical community of water contagion.



Les galeries souterraines, organes de la grande cite, fonctionneraient comme ceux du corps humain, sans se montrer au jour; l'eau pure et fraîche, la lumière et la chaleur y circuleraient comme les fluides divers dont le mouvement et l'entretien servent à la vie. Les sécrétions s'y exécuteraient mystérieusement, et maintiendraient la santé publique sans troubler la bonne ordonnance de la ville et sans gâter sa beauté extérieure.<sup>102</sup>

Gervaise participates in this hygienic discourse. She is the secular priestess of this new urban space, scrubbing and toiling to preserve the appearance of cleanliness. Mumford claimed access to clean water as an essential limiting factor in a city's survival,<sup>103</sup> and Gervaise administers this water and struggles to sustain the city. In studying the networks available to poor women in nineteenth-century Paris, Leslie Page Moch and Rachel Fuchs wrote of the concierge, the midwife, and the laundress as powerful "nodes" of exchange, capable of directing and informing lowerclass society. The laundress "garnered power by virtue of the fact that her workplace gave her access to local information and her work gave her access to intimate details such as soiled sheets."<sup>104</sup> With this access came a social responsibility, as laundresses were frequently called upon to testify in cases of infanticide, pregnancy, and abortion.<sup>105</sup> The women charged with cleansing the city's laundry became the keepers of its secrets, the witnesses of its crimes, and in Zola's text, the sacrifice for its sins.

The early descriptions of Gervaise's work prefigure the failure that awaits her. Her ability to impart cleanliness erodes as alcohol eclipses water as the dominant narrative liquid. The descent towards filth begins when Lantier moves into the boutique, cramping their living space and encouraging Coupeau to drink ever more. One evening

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<sup>102</sup> Gandy, "The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space," 24.

<sup>103</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 549.

<sup>104</sup> Leslie Page Moch and Rachel G. Fuchs, "Getting Along: Poor Women's Networks in Nineteenth-Century Paris," *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 1993): 40, JSTOR.

<sup>105</sup> Moch and Fuchs, "Getting Along," 47.

Coupeau returns inebriated and Gervaise finds him sleeping in his own vomit, the room covered in bile. Unable to clean up the mess, Gervaise accepts the invitation of Lantier's bed. The physical mess she can now longer keep at bay translates into moral filth. Gervaise begins regularly frequenting Lantier's bed, not out of a resurgence of affection for him but because "elle le trouvait seulement plus propre, elle se reposait mieux dans sa chambre, où elle croyait prendre un bain."<sup>106</sup> Her desire for cleanliness prompts a *ménage à trois* that is a stark contrast to her chaste love for Goujet and their dreams of escaping the city.

"Peu à peu, elle s'abandonnait à un grand désordre,"<sup>107</sup> and Gervaise's personal filth translates into a decline in her professional skills. She leaves grease spots on shirts and loses stockings, retaining only clients like Mme Gaudron, "dont pas une blanchisseuse de la rue Neuve ne voulait laver le linge, tant il puait...ça sentait la ruine."<sup>108</sup> Her shop falls into squalor and disrepair, with Gervaise blind to its state:

L'humidité des linges séchant au plafond avait décollé le papier ; la perse pompadour étalait des lambeaux qui pendaient pareils à des toiles d'araignée lourdes de poussière ; la mécanique, cassée, trouée à coups de tisonnier, mettait dans son coin les débris de vieille fonte d'un marchand de bric-à-brac ; l'établi semblait avoir servi de table à toute une garnison, taché de café et de vin, emplâtré de confiture, gras des lichades du lundi. Avec ça, une odeur d'amidon aigre, une puanteur faite de moisi, de graillon et de crasse. Mais Gervaise se trouvait très bien là dedans. Elle n'avait pas vu la boutique se salir ; elle s'y abandonnait et s'habituaît au papier déchiré, aux boiserries graisseuses, comme elle en arrivait à porter des jupes fendues et à ne plus se laver les oreilles. Même la saleté était un nid chaud où elle jouissait de s'accroupir. Laisser les choses à la débandade, attendre que la poussière bouchât les trous et mît un velours partout, sentir la maison s'alourdir autour de soi dans un engourdissement de fainéantise, cela était une vraie volupté dont elle se grisait.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 329.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

This passage highlights several important considerations for my chiastic analysis. It underscores the return to water that characterizes Gervaise's final days, yet it is a perverted return. Water has reclaimed the building, seeping into the walls and peeling back the wallpaper, nurturing mold and its accompanying odor. While no longer characterized by water that bestows cleanliness, Gervaise's life remains drenched. The clean waters that she brought from the country through her early descriptions of washing, the purity she imparted to the quartier through the cleansing of their garments and erasing of their stories – these powers disappear and Gervaise cannot even recognize her failure. First unable to perform her duties for others' clothing, she can now no longer even clean herself.

Donaldson-Evans astutely studies the osmosis that characterizes numerous inhabitants of the *quartier de la Goutte-d'or*, each blending into his profession until we are not surprised that "Gervaise's body self-destructs after being permeated by the filth of others."<sup>110</sup> In Gervaise's transition from absolver of the quartier's sins through washing and restored cleanliness, to assumption of their filth in her own body, her functional symbolism moves from priest to scapegoat, from savior to sacrifice, as she assumes increasing levels of filth, impurity, and moral sin. Gervaise is not the only character Zola transforms into a *bouc-émissaire* for the urban body politic across his oeuvre. Her daughter Nana, while pursuing less ostensible cleansing, assumes the moral filth of the city in her role as a courtesan. Charles Bernheimer argues that Nana

becomes the sacrificial victim of the circulus. She attracts desire to herself, absorbs its noxious effects like the 'bonne fille' she is, and, in true scapegoat fashion, is sacrificed to restore health and balance of the social order, thereby allowing the novel to end... her body is the willing vessel for all the unrepressed sexual and excremental dross of the decadent

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<sup>110</sup> Donaldson-Evans, "Miasmatic Effluvia," 90.

aristocracy and affluent bourgeoisie, an accumulation that finally kills her.<sup>111</sup>

Nana's ultimate fate proves similar to her mother's, the final page detailing her rotting corpse. We find a less graphic assumption of guilt in Zola's short story "Le Grand Michu," which recounts the uprising of students protesting deplorable conditions and food at their boarding school. Their rebellion is led by a student known as le Grand Michu, a poor boy from the country. The students strike against the pitiful meals provided, ultimately barricading the dining hall. When the school threatens intervention from the authorities, the children begin to abandon their plan and escape through the window until only the Grand Michu remains. He alone is punished for the rebellion, willingly sacrificed by his classmates and exiled back to the country so that order might return to the school.

Zola's works repeatedly return to this sort of secular quotidian Christology, the idea of one individual assuming the collective guilt and cleansing the community. Gervaise's urbanization takes on the form of a redemptive circulus wherein her pure rural body becomes a space for alleviating urban filth. The only element remaining in her quest to purify is to abandon the city, to be cast out and take the dirtiness with her, leaving the city washed fresh and its sins forgotten. In the final stage of her deurbanizing, Gervaise should return to the country, both cleansing the city and completing her own urbanizing and deurbanizing cycle. But she does not. To understand the convergence of the three chiastic structures and Gervaise's stymied deurbanization, we turn to the final pages of the novel.

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<sup>111</sup> Charles Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 217.

## *A City Beyond Saving*

Gervaise ends the novel mired in filth, starving, and living in the tiny hovel formerly occupied by père Bru. The novel that began with her newly arrived in the city, her home and livelihood in jeopardy, ends likewise, yet this time there is no hope that she can avoid her fate. Throughout this analysis, we have followed the three chiastic structures that chart Gervaise's evolution: lodging, diet, and water/cleanliness.

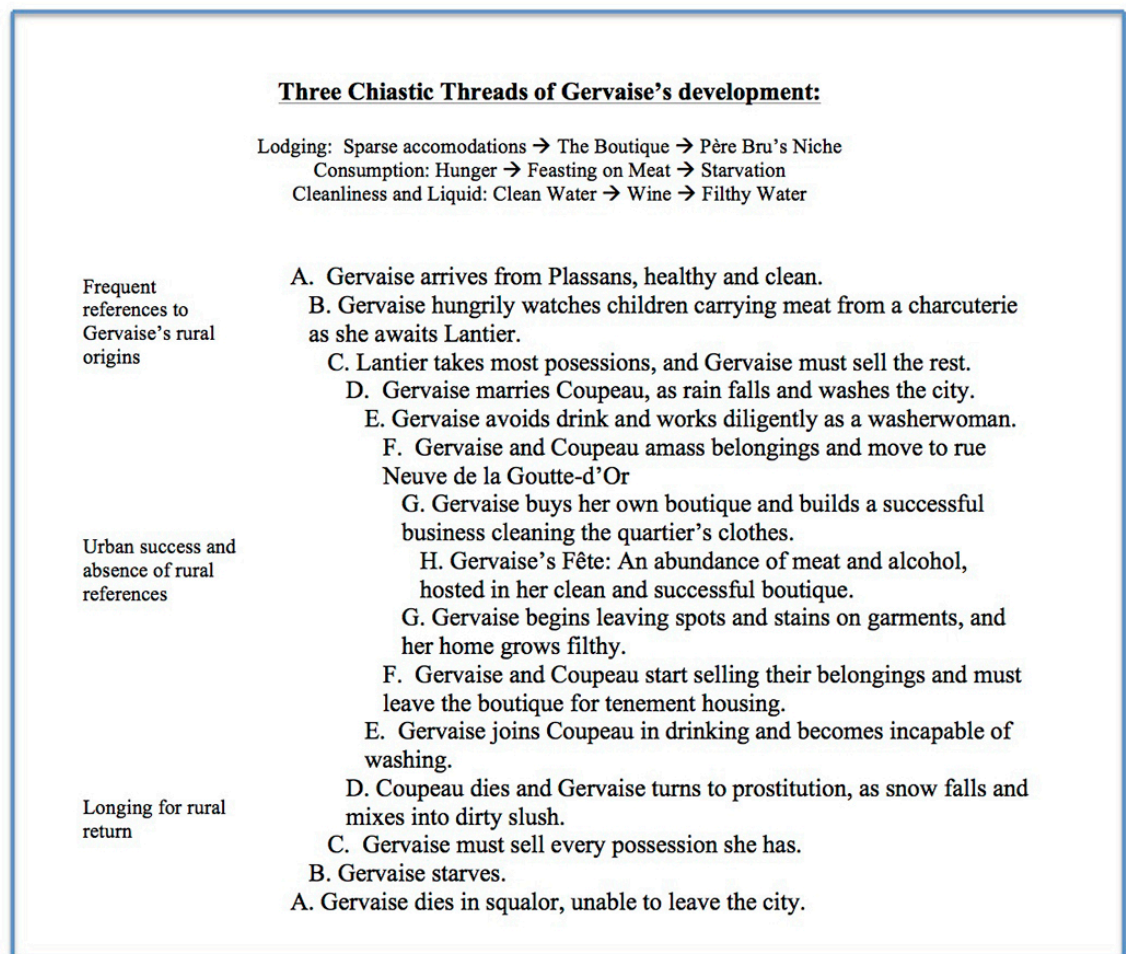


Figure 4.1. Three Chiastic Threads of Gervaise's Development

The historical details of urbanizing trends allow us to understand these evolutions as from a state representative of rural status, to urban, and then a return back to the rural state, yet a perverted one. When we read Gervaise's demise and the convergence of these three

arcs as the final stage of her (de)urbanization, we can understand her fall in an especially interesting manner. The arc of urbanization frequently translates into one of two endings, both of which we have seen thus far. First, there is the trajectory of those like Julien, whose urbanization and rise is followed by a deurbanization, return to the country, and final death in a rural setting. Similarly, Emma Bovary experiences an interior urbanizing rise and fall culminating in her death. Conversely, Denise's trajectory allows her to stay in the city, urbanize, and find financial and personal success. Gervaise's evolution follows an altogether different path, as her attempts to deurbanize fail and her inability to escape the city leads to her horrific death. Emma was a casualty of her own conception of the city, her death constituting more an inability to inhabit urban space, whereas Gervaise's entails a failure to escape it. Through her destruction, Zola emphasizes the third ending that faced many lower class workers who sought their fortunes in the city and became casualties of France's urbanizing machines. In so doing, he questions the objectives of urban planners and the promise of building fortunes in the city. Whereas *Au Bonheur des Dames* portrayed the city as coldly calculated capitalism, it nevertheless illustrated possible success for those who embrace the machine. In *L'Assommoir*, Zola casts aspersions on the entire movement of urbanization, as Gervaise is infested by the city she sought to cleanse.

In the final chapters, there is a symbiosis between Gervaise and the buildings around her. Her living quarters echo her hunger, her empty stomach reflected in the "silence de crevaision [où] les murs sonnaient creux, comme des ventres vides."<sup>112</sup> She lives among creatures facing similar fates, from the families "qui se mangeaient pour

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<sup>112</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 387.

tromper leur estomac,” to even the gnats that disappear, “faute de nourriture.”<sup>113</sup>

Gervaise’s hunger, coupled with the biological propensity for mental illness that she has exhibited the entire novel, began to erode her sanity. In a desperate attempt to stave off starvation, she and Coupeau disassemble and sell their bed and mattress, a disintegration of their beloved objects that reflects the deterioration of body and mind.

The city of Paris stands in stark contrast to the poverty and hunger facing Gervaise and Coupeau: “Ah ! la crevaision des pauvres, les entrailles vides qui crient la faim, le besoin des bêtes claquant des dents et s’empiffrant de choses immondes, dans ce grand Paris si doré et si flambant !”<sup>114</sup> After spending the entire novel moving from one lodging to another in a desperate attempt to achieve comfortable stasis, Gervaise enters a period of perpetual, yet frustrated, movement. She wanders the streets, until finally coming to a halt as the masses flow around her. Gervaise “laissait couler la cohue, indifférente aux chocs, coudoyée à droite, coudoyée à gauche, roulée au milieu du flot ; car les hommes n’ont pas le temps de se montrer galants, quand ils sont cassés en deux de fatigue et galopés par la faim.”<sup>115</sup> Hunger, exhaustion, and work propel the inhabitants of the city in constant movement. Incapable of finding rest, yet unable to participate in their rush towards provision, Gervaise flounders in midst of the crowd, an experience similar to the drowning sensation she encountered early in the novel. She eventually finds herself outside the home she shared with Lantier, remembering the hope she had in coming to the city and the miserable turn her life took. Her famished pilgrimage continues as she next relives the feast she threw at the summit of her urban success. Whereas she once dined on endless meat with grease flowing down the table, she now finds herself “en face des

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 465.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 481.

abattoirs qu'on démolissait ; la façade éventrée montrait des cours sombres, puantes, encore humides de sang."<sup>116</sup> As he has done in other moments, Zola inserts the hope of the country into Gervaise's miserable wanderings:

Un train passa, sortant de Paris, arrivant avec l'essoufflement de son haleine et son roulement peu à peu enflé. Et elle n'aperçut de ce train qu'un panache blanc, une brusque bouffée qui déborda du parapet et se perdit. Mais le pont avait tremblé, elle-même restait dans le branle de ce départ à toute vapeur. Elle se tourna, comme pour suivre la locomotive invisible, dont le grondement se mourait. De ce côté, elle devinait la campagne, le ciel libre, au fond d'une trouée, avec de hautes maisons à droite et à gauche, isolées, plantées sans ordre, présentant des façades, des murs non crépis, des murs peints de réclames géantes, salis de la même teinte jaunâtre par la suie des machines. Oh ! si elle avait pu partir ainsi, s'en aller là-bas, en dehors de ces maisons de misère et de souffrance ! Peut-être aurait-elle recommencé à vivre.<sup>117</sup>

In the first portion of the book, Zola presented the country as the site of Gervaise's origins, her birth and her early education. From the country flowed streams of pure water that taught Gervaise to clean, and in her quest to establish herself as a laundress, she attempts to bestow this gift on the filthy city. In these final pages, the country is the site of deliverance, the place where Coupeau was briefly cured, where Gervaise could, *peut-être* come back to life. The only glimmers of hope that Zola offers Gervaise come in the form of rural returns, yet in the syntax of those final phrases, we see that the possibility of departure is already past.

In a final desperate move, Gervaise turns to prostitution. She wanders the sidewalks, soliciting men and being denied. Zola highlights the network of prostitutes working the periphery of the city, the endless line that Gervaise encounters creating the affect of Paris being guarded by this ring of fallen women. His description highlights an important similarity between the work Gervaise now pursues, and that which defined her

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 483.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 483.



the rest of the novel. Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet, a public health specialist during the first half of the nineteenth century, conducted simultaneous research on the Paris sewer systems and prostitution in the capital, explaining that “prostitutes are as inevitable in an agglomeration of men as sewers, cesspits, and garbage dumps; civil authority should conduct itself in the same manner in regard to the one as to the other.”<sup>118</sup> Prostitution was viewed as a safeguard to bourgeois chastity, and these fallen women “have a place in society, albeit the lowest one, because they channel potentially subversive passions away from socially disruptive violence.”<sup>119</sup> In the same way that the sewers concealed and dispersed the city’s excrement, the network of prostitutes offers a clandestine (and yet, regulated) outlet for excess male desire. Alain Corbin describes this phenomenon:

The prostitute enables the social body to excrete the excess of seminal fluid that causes her stench and rots her. This indefensible image assimilates a category of women to both the emunctories, which, from the organicist perspective, discharge humors, secretions, and excretions and permit the survival of the social organism—here an ancient belief of the early Church Fathers is revived— and a drain, or sewer.... This second image links the prostitute less to waste or ordure than to the sewer or drain that prevents a fatal congestion and assures the elimination of excess sperm. It is necessary to understand the prevalence of pre-Pasteurian mythologies; cleaning does not necessarily mean washing—water and dampness are distrusted—but rather the elimination of filth.<sup>120</sup>

We see in his description the metaphysical understanding of prostitution. Women offer up their bodies as vessels to remove moral filth, the female body being “at once menace and remedy, agent of putrefaction and drain.”<sup>121</sup> The exploitative relationship between country and city reemerges as Gervaise turns from laundering away her quartier’s

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<sup>118</sup> Bernheimer, *Figures of Ill Repute*, 16.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>120</sup> Alain Corbin, “Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France: A System of Images and Regulations,” *Representations*, no. 14 (1986): 211, JSTOR.

<sup>121</sup> Corbin, “Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France,” 212.

transgressions, to offering up her own body to satisfy the city's appetites, a new iteration of her laundress' role of cleansing filth.

Gervaise does not succeed on either count. No longer able to wash the physical stains from the city, she fails to purge urban society of its moral filth as well. Into this picture of misery and failure, we can retrace the chiasmic presence of water. The liquid that began the novel warm and clean, is now dirty and cold, falling around Gervaise and turning dark under her feet where, "il lui fallut enjamber un ruisseau noir, une mare lâchée par la teinturerie, fumant et s'ouvrant un lit boueux dans la blancheur de la neige. C'était une eau couleur de ses pensées. Elles avaient coulé, les belles eaux bleu tendre et rose tendre !" <sup>122</sup> We read once again the description of Gervaise's dreams and their final deformation, finding our triple chiasmic structures woven together in a failed attempt to urbanize and an inability to deurbanize:

Elle se souvenait de son idéal, anciennement : travailler tranquille, manger toujours du pain, avoir un trou un peu propre pour dormir, bien élever ses enfants, ne pas être battue, mourir dans son lit. Non, vrai, c'était comique, comme tout ça se réalisait ! Elle ne travaillait plus, elle ne mangeait plus, elle dormait sur l'ordure, sa fille courait le guilledou, son mari lui flanquait des tatouilles ; il ne lui restait qu'à crever sur le pavé, et ce serait tout de suite, si elle trouvait le courage de se flanquer par la fenêtre, en rentrant chez elle. N'aurait-on pas dit qu'elle avait demandé au ciel trente mille francs de rente et des égards ? Ah ! vrai, dans cette vie, on a beau être modeste, on peut se fouiller ! Pas même la pâtée et la niche, voilà le sort commun. ce qui redoublait son mauvais rire, c'était de se rappeler son bel espoir de se retirer à la campagne, après vingt ans de repassage. Eh bien ! elle y allait, à la campagne. Elle voulait son coin de verdure au Père-Lachaise. <sup>123</sup>

Instead of the true country, all she can hope for is a little earth in the cemetery overlooking the city. Gervaise is denied this, as her deurbanizing trajectory never even

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<sup>122</sup> Zola, *L'Assommoir*, 495.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.

makes it that far out of the city. She moves into the hovel under the stairs formerly occupied by père Bru and exists, “le ventre vide et les os glacés.”<sup>124</sup>

If the other novels we mapped in terms of urbanization exhibited gender aporia as characters approached urbanity, Gervaise’s rise signals a slightly different relationship. We can trace some similarities to the virilized females we found in earlier novels, such as Gervaise’s increased financial support of the family. Yet more than finding her exerting masculine agency as the book continues, we find Zola asexualizing her altogether, uniting her more with objects, work, and lodging beyond any gender. Once the picture of feminine sensuality, Gervaise ends the novel unable to attract any human interest. Her time in the city serves to transform her into inanimate object more than a virilized woman. Emma Bovary accumulated objects, yet Gervaise seems to become them, material possessions representing human reality. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jules Simon’s 1861 text *L’Ouvrière*, devoted to studying the toll on female workers, claimed that the urban workforce embraced women, degrading the family unity by changing the moral constitution of women. “La femme, devenue ouvrière, n’est plus femme,” Simon asserted.<sup>125</sup> Earlier novels illustrated how the urban environment bestowed masculine attributes on women, yet Simon argues that it is the process of labor that strips women of femininity and the accompanying moral influence. We see reflections of this in Gervaise’s failure to purify the city and in her marital infidelity, yet Zola moves a step further. Gervaise’s life in the city is characterized by not only a decreased femininity, but a decreased humanity, her body melding into the objects and buildings around it and assuming their filth. No one notices when she finally dies until

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 517.

<sup>125</sup> Simon, *L’Ouvrière*, vi.

the smell of her rotting flesh attracts attention. The woman who aspired to clean the city finishes by rotting into its very walls. The scapegoat is thwarted, the urbanizing arc left unfinished, and the city continues in its filth. The arcs of Gervaise's lodging, diet, and watery work that we have traced through the novel lead, not back to the country, but to death.

In *Au Bonheur des Dames* Zola revealed urbanization as a conflict between capitalism and *ancien commerce*, between old and new ideas about economic fabric of France. He did not shy from representing the violent nature of the commodified city or the bourgeois victims of evolving financial markets. But the success of Denise, Mouret, and countless others arrived from the country within this new economy keeps the hope of urbanization intact, even if it offers realistic concerns. In *L'Assommoir*, Zola destroys the dream of finding a new life in the city. While Gervaise's own environment and predispositions offer some satisfactory explanations as to her decline, a reading attuned to the urbanizing arc of her development highlights a relationship of exploitation and unequal exchange between the country, the city, and those who embody these geographic realities. In spite of Gervaise's willingness to insert herself into the economy of the city, she remains marked by her rurality, her success prevented and the sacrifice of her body required to absolve the sins of the urban populace. In her failure even as a scapegoat, we find Zola not only exposing the exploitation of urbanization, but also problematizing the very goal of the new urban spaces themselves. He calls into question the idealism of Cerdà, Haussmann, and other nineteenth century planners to create cities capable of reordering society and effacing its ills, revealing the urban space as one imperfectable

and inhospitable to those seeking a better life. Corbin describes Haussmannization as “a social dichotomy of purification [that] strove to create in certain neighborhoods ennobled, well-lit, cleared, and purified public spaces.”<sup>126</sup> The new city is above all to be one that is clean and effective. Zola’s tale of a doomed laundress problematizes this goal of salubrity. If Gervaise fails to cleanse the city, it is because purification is impossible, and any illusion of it exists at the cost of rural sacrifice. *L’Assommoir* demands that we confront the human rot absorbed into the foundations of these new cities and it colors the dream of urbanization with the stains of reality.

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<sup>126</sup> Corbin, “Commercial Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France,” 217.

## **Chapter 5: Eastern Cities and Western Invention: Urbanization and Orientalism**

In tracing the evolution of characters throughout the nineteenth century in conjunction with the progressive urbanization of France, we have confronted the multiple ideas, fictions, and power constructs assumed by representations of the city and country. While all too frequently understood as a tension between Paris and province, I have argued that this reduction obscures the larger and more complex discourses at play. Each preceding chapter has explored other powers and authorities symbolized by the country and the city and shown how a character's urbanization precipitates a conflict between these entities. In this final chapter, I will transpose the concepts of urban and rural onto France's global agenda, studying the ways that Orientalist art and literature participate in both obscuring Eastern urban centers, and elevating Western urbanity. This could initially appear to be a departure from the preceding chapters, both in form and methodology. Instead of studying in detail the development of one character throughout a single novel in attempts to extract a theoretical perspective of urbanization, this chapter will study a variety of works using existing theoretical approaches in conjunction with the concepts of urbanization explored thus far. From Julien Sorel's urbanization between province and Paris, to Gervaise's evolution within Paris, this study has moved from concrete and literal conceptions of urbanization to ones that embrace abstract understandings of the city, the country, and movement between the two. This final chapter moves even further in this same direction, situating the conflict between urban and rural in the larger discussions of nation and identity at the core of nineteenth-century imperialism. It allows us to see how urbanization participates in other forces shaping the nineteenth century. In the preceding

chapters, I spoke at length about the gendered conflict inherent in urbanization, as well as the fundamental tension between movement and stasis that permeates works where urban movement provides a focus. Studying both of these in conjunction with Orientalism allows us to see how the two tensions, and multiple others I have explored, are assumed by the struggle between Occident and Orient.

This connection is nascent in works that analyze European urbanization. Eugen Weber describes the slow transformation of rural France by urban ideas, education, and culture as a

process of acculturation: the civilization of the French by urban France, the disintegration of local cultures by modernity and their absorption into the dominant civilization of Paris and the schools. Left largely to their own devices until their promotion to citizenship, the unassimilated rural masses had to be integrated into the dominant culture as they had been integrated into an administrative entity. What happened was akin to colonization, and may be easier to understand if one bears that in mind.<sup>1</sup>

He argues that inter-occidental colonization avoids the violence described by those like Fanon or Césaire abroad only because it benefitted from “time and skins of the same color.”<sup>2</sup> Raymond Williams concurs, reading the struggle for power between town and country as analogous to that of the West and its colonies:

The ‘metropolitan’ societies of Western Europe and North America are the ‘advanced’, ‘developed’, industrialized states; centers of economic, political, and cultural power. In sharp contrast with them, though there are many intermediate stages, are other societies.... Thus, a model of city and country, in economic and political relationships, has gone beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, and is seen but also challenged as a model of the world.... One of the last models of ‘city and country’ is the system we now know as imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 486.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 491

<sup>3</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 279. Williams also illustrates that British urbanization at home further fuels the exploitative city-country relationship and as British urbanization and transformation to an industrial and urban society would not have been financially possible without colonial development.

In unveiling the city and country as ideas and fictions created in opposition to each other, and in establishing the relationship between these two constructs as inherently exploitative, the methodology of urbanization that we have explored thus far allows us to broaden our cartography from France, to the colonial and imperial world.

Williams and Weber both wrote several years before Edward Said's seminal text *Orientalism* argued, "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them")."<sup>4</sup> This political vision, similar to that of urban centers over rural populations, belies "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony."<sup>5</sup> In the same way that I have illustrated how urbanization transforms actual geographies into cartographies of power, Said argues:

In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these.<sup>6</sup>

Said enumerates these associations, claiming that Orientalism posits "the Oriental [as] irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal.'"<sup>7</sup>

In discussing the fictions promulgated by the Western academic discipline of Orientalism, Said evokes numerous series of adjectives similar to the one above to describe the powers and identities associated with the ideas of Occident and Orient. He does not include an assumption of Occidental urbanity and Oriental rurality, yet I argue

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<sup>4</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 43.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



that the Occident-Orient relationship functions in a similar labyrinth of associations and references as that of the City-Country, and the study of one provides an interesting corollary to the other. This chapter poses the questions necessary to explore this relationship: Does French Orientalist literature and painting allow us to add urban and rural to the list of contrasts that Said enumerates under the headings of Occident and Orient? Furthermore, how does the Orientalist discourse reconcile the presence of established and modern urban centers in the East within this urban-rural dichotomy? Finally, if the Occident and Orient can exist as understandings of urban and rural, what “urbanization” or movement is possible between these two? Is the Orient permitted urbanization within the Occidental literary and artistic imagination?

This is by no means intended as an exhaustive study of urban issues in Orientalist art and literature. Rather, I seek to holistically illustrate how French imperialism displaces and embraces the ideas of urban and rural to further France’s political ideology abroad. This chapter will look at artistic and literary representations of Eastern cities to explore how Orientalist painters and authors represented the city in a way that deemed it less urban than Occidental cities. While I will reference several Eastern cities, my arguments will frequently center on representations of Constantinople, for reasons explained in the following section.<sup>8</sup> I will present novels by Flaubert, Pierre Loti, George Sand and Claire de Duras, travel journals of Théophile Gautier, and a wide selection of Orientalist paintings to explore intersections of urbanization and Orientalism. The

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<sup>8</sup> Several different sources are rumored to have given the infamous declaration that, “Africa begins at the Pyrenees.” It is perhaps less important who initially evoked this idea, and more important to note that the term “Orient” represented a broad swath of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and even Southern Europe. If *province* evokes any place “not Paris,” then it seems *L’Orient* increasingly represented locations “not-Occident.” Thus, while my study frequently focuses on Constantinople, I will highlight examples of urban representation from a wide swath of the Orient, not ignoring their differences, but rather reflecting the Occidental conception of *l’Orient*.

constructs of power and domination inscribed in these representations reveal the limits of urban/Occidental migration permitted to Oriental subjects. Ultimately, I hope to show that the methodology of urbanization established throughout this dissertation furnishes a new framework through which to understand the artistic and literary echoes of nineteenth-century imperialism.

### ***The Problematic City: Constantinople and the “Unfortunate” Reality of Modernity***

Before studying the *fictions* of Oriental urbanity, I must address the actual state of the Eastern city in the nineteenth century. Cairo and Alexandria were both large urban centers that fascinated the Western imagination for their rich and classical history. Yet the city most troubling to the Occidental visitor, and thus most in need of being fictionally recast as less urban, is Constantinople.<sup>9</sup> Turkey provides an interesting contrast to France, as the Ottoman Empire, while waning, had a long history of conquest in many areas that would later become European colonies. In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman government passed a series of modernizing reforms known as Tanzimat, frequently modeled on Napoleonic ordinances, Haussmannization, and French civic institutions. Constantinople looked to Paris as the ultimate model of urban modernity.<sup>10</sup> Between 1848 and 1882, there were six major regulatory laws passed to govern urban reform or administration. Among these were the Ottoman Law on the 1871 General Administration of Provinces, which mirrors the administrative division of France; the 1877 Provincial Municipality Code, which laid out plans for increased urban health and

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<sup>9</sup> This city appears in literature under a variety of names including Constantinople, Istanbul, and Stamboul, with this last name often referring to the inner city. I will be using Constantinople, as it was the name used by the Ottoman Empire throughout the nineteenth century.

<sup>10</sup> Zeynep Çelik, *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French-Ottoman Encounters, 1830-1914* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 5.

public safety; and the 1869 Regulation on Roads and Streets. In the same way that France sought to create urban order, salubrity, and modernity in the Parisian renovations, so too did the Ottoman government work to restructure Constantinople. The West did not ignore Tanzimat, with Napoleon III especially fascinated by the ways the Ottoman Government was reforming and modernizing its capitol.<sup>11</sup> Officially, European “political and economic interests in the region responded enthusiastically, turning the history of infrastructure projects into a history of foreign enterprise in the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, the relationship between the French and Ottoman empires is one imbued with a profound ambiguity. It is not one of open domination, as existed with France’s colonies in North Africa and elsewhere. Both empires were pursuing imperialistic goals and urban renovations. Yet in the Ottoman Empire’s financial reliance on the West, France nevertheless established itself as a dominant presence.

We see none of the parity between the two empires in the fiction and art of the nineteenth century. While there are many actual similarities between the two, especially in terms of urban planning, the Ottoman Empire’s departure from what was imagined as “authentic” Oriental behavior and emergence into a more familiar modernity proved disappointing for Western tourists and is thus obscured. Both threatened by the “cosmopolitanism of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious Ottoman Empire” and desperately seeking to “impose legibility premised upon racial and ethnic categories derived from contemporary European racial sciences,”<sup>13</sup> Occidental artistic and literary representations of the Orient were frustrated with the reality they found. Chateaubriand journeys to

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<sup>11</sup> Linda Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper, 1989), 36.

<sup>12</sup> Çelik, *Empire, Architecture, and the City*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Zeynep Inankur, Regina Lewis and Mary Roberts, *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism* (Istanbul: Pera Museum Publicans, 2011), 23.

Constantinople and laments that he cannot find the homeland of “Phocas and Bajazet,”<sup>14</sup> while Pierre Loti arrives in Turkey and finds not the Oriental Constantinople of his dreams, but “une caricature poussiéreuse de l’Europe [à] sa place.”<sup>15</sup> In Théophile Gautier’s lengthy travel journal of his time in Constantinople, he frequently mourns the modern elements of the city, rejoicing when he finds a detail that is “charmant et tout oriental [qui] poétise ce café aux yeux d’un Européen.”<sup>16</sup> These Oriental poetic touches are frequently some element of savage nature intruding on the city, comforting Gautier that it is not as tamed and urban as it initially appears. Donald A. Rosenthal argues that “the seemingly endless decline of Ottoman Turkey, and the tawdry Westernization of its capital, Constantinople, was another factor in turning the attention of the artist towards the more primitive sights of the North African desert.”<sup>17</sup> The reality of Constantinople proved unsettling for the Western imagination, and thus it had to be altered in representation, or escaped.

In 1898, Edouard Driault wrote *La Question d’Orient: Depuis ses origines jusqu’à nos jours*, arguing that “La question d’Orient est devenue le problème capital de la politique européenne.”<sup>18</sup> This “question” entails many aspects and concerns, yet in the sense that reconciling the actual Orient with the Occidental imagination problematized the binary understanding propping up discourses of power between East and West, artists and authors answered it by reimagining the city and by recasting centers of urban power as impotent and obsolete. The tropes of urbanization that we have come to associate with

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<sup>14</sup> Donald A. Rosenthal, *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting 1800-1880* (Rochester: Memorial Art Gallery, 1982), 112.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre-Eric Briquet, *Pierre Loti et L’Orient* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1945), 63.

<sup>16</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Constantinople* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1991), 135.

<sup>17</sup> Rosenthal, *Orientalism*, 41.

<sup>18</sup> Edouard Driault, *La Question d’Orient: Depuis ses origines jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Ancienne Librairie Germer Baillière, 1898), V.

urbanity in this dissertation – constant movement, capitalism, challenged gender relationships – are absent. Instead, we read of urban spaces that preclude movement, actual or metaphysical. To situate the Eastern city as less urban and weaker than the Western urban metropolis, artists and authors recast the city as a site of past glories, chaotic and undecipherable present, antiquated economies, and sensual femininity. The culmination of these layered qualities codes Oriental cities as easily conquered by Occidental military, personal, or artistic prowess.

### ***City of Ruins***

Said described the Occident-Orient relationship as one of power and dominance and Nochlin ascribes this as creating a picturesque mode where “time stands still.”<sup>19</sup> In discussing the paintings of Jean-Léon Gérôme, Nochlin claims the artist “suggests that the Oriental world is a world without change, a world of timeless, atemporal customs and rituals, untouched by the historical processes.”<sup>20</sup> The Oriental subject stands as removed from time, a true Other unaffected by the society’s progress. As a timeless being, the Oriental is both inferior to and sensationalized by his Western audience. When the seventeenth-century French playwright Racine staged his play *Bajazet* in a “modern” Turkish harem, he defended his departure from the respectable subjects of classical mythology by claiming that the public sees no difference in what is “à mille ans de lui, et ce qui en est à mille lieux. C’est ce qui fait, par exemple, que les personnages turcs, quelque modernes qu’ils soient, ont de la dignité sur notre théâtre. On les regarde de

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<sup>19</sup> Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision*, 35.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

bonne heure comme anciens.”<sup>21</sup> Claiming the Oriental world avoids the specificities of time aligns it with the perception that it is outside the responsibilities that plague modern societies. This exotic atemporality is frequently discussed in regard to the harem, a favored subject for Gérôme and many other Orientalist painters. Nochlin notes an “absence of work or industry”<sup>22</sup> typified especially well by the harem, where occupants do little else than bathe, play music, or partake in other leisurely pursuits. Without time or responsibility, the Orient is sexualized as a dull paradise where women wait aimlessly until they can satisfy the Oriental despot:

Both as a central feature of a supposedly unchanging Orient and as a place in which the ennui of one sex and endless waiting of the other were believed to exhaust all action, the harem could figure to the Western imagination as a place virtually outside of time altogether.<sup>23</sup>

*Pool in a Harem* [Fig. 5.1] exemplifies this Oriental picturesque. Gérôme paints his subjects in a harem that avoids a specific epoch. The outside world only creeps in through holes in the ceiling that allow light to filter through and illuminate the female bodies within. The women recline or sit, indicating no desire to work or move. The harem holds them still, captured in a paradise of pleasure and passivity.

Achieving the illusion of atemporality and passivity proves more difficult in representations of urban space, especially as Eastern cities such as Constantinople underwent modernizing renovations. If Oriental urbanity could not be recast as timeless, it could nevertheless be situated as part of the waning Ottoman Empire in regard to France’s rising imperialism. To emphasize this subtext of the Oriental city being a site of

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<sup>21</sup> Racine, *Bajazet* (Paris: Larousse, 2009), 44.

<sup>22</sup> Nochlin, *The Politics of Vision*, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Harems of the Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 233.

past, rather than present, glory and power, artists and authors construct it from ruins and static cityscapes.

Donald Rosenthal maintains that cityscapes make up only a tiny fraction of Orientalist subject matter. Though slightly more popular with British artists, representations of architectural or city scenes comprises a small minority of French Orientalist paintings.<sup>24</sup> While the subgenre of travel illustrations did exist, these works did not contribute to the Oriental fantasy in the same manner. Wendy M.K. Shaw concludes:

Orientalist painters created images of harems, Oriental despots, wild animals, Bedouin tribes, and slave markets that reified Western notions of Eastern delinquency while titillating the transparently sequestered desires of civilized male subjects to partake in the despotism and libidinous orgies they disparaged in others. In contrast, travel illustrations spoke the much more anodyne language of landscape... If anything, the reduced scale of their work in comparison to Oriental painting mimicked the casual sketch of that new being, the tourist, making it seem more accurate, a form of irrefutable reportage rather than interpretive representation.<sup>25</sup>

Shaw refers specifically to Thomas Allom and Reverend Robert Walsh's *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor*, c. 1839, a collection of detailed illustrations from the Turkish cities. Yet even in these less sensationalized representations of the city, Shaw notes a profound unease with the urban reforms of the Ottoman Empire.

Military and administrative reform represented the universalist success of the civilizing ideals of the white man's burden, so one might expect Europeans to celebrate it. [Yet] European travelers sought refuge in a timeless and unchanging East that could eternally satiate their nostalgia. Thus such travel literature supports the tropes of the timeless Orient, but instead of implicitly supporting the imperial power of Europe, questions

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<sup>24</sup> Rosenthal, *Orientalism*, 105.

<sup>25</sup> Wendy M.K. Shaw, "Between the Sublime and the Picturesque: Mourning Modernization and the Production of Orientalist Landscape in Thomas Allom and Reverend Robert Walsh's *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor*," *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism*, Ed. Zeynep Inankur, Regina Lewis and Mary Roberts, (Istanbul: Pera Museum Publicans, 2011), 115.

its desire to modernize the East in the preservationist impulse to thwart the predations of progress.<sup>26</sup>

In French Orientalist painting, we find a tendency to avoid both these ambivalences and representations of modernity, focusing instead on cities encroached upon by ruins. Prosper Marilhat painted numerous images of Cairo, including his grand *Ruins of El Hakem Mosque, Cairo* [Fig 5.2], where the ruins from this famous mosque substitute for any representation of the actual city. Similarly, in *View of the South of the necropolis in Cairo with the Citadel in the Background* [Fig 5.3], our view of the city in the background is mediated through the crumbling walls in the foreground, and modern urban traces obscured by remnants of former civilizations and glories. In Gérôme's *View of Cairo* [Fig 5.4], we have what appears at first glance to be a sweeping homage to a grand city. Gérôme paints the city, not as melting into the desert or completely dominated by ruins, as did Marilhat, but stretching into the horizon. His Cairo is large, densely covered in buildings and dotted with minarets. Yet when we look closer, we find that the viewer cannot venture further into the painting than the mosque without confronting the crumbling ancient city walls. Gérôme prevents us from forgetting neither glories past, nor future decline.

We receive the Eastern city as softened by the veil of antiquity in literature as well, as many visitors to the East, such as Chateaubriand, openly sought to rediscover the glories of early Christianity in the Orient.<sup>27</sup> In his lengthy travelogue of Constantinople, Théophile Gautier emphasizes the ruins of the city, the ancient walls that surround it and shut out modernity. Disappointed as he is with some westernized aspects of the city, Gautier revels in walking the aged ramparts of the city, “ce chemin qui circule pendant

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<sup>26</sup> Shaw, “Between the Sublime and the Picturesque,” 115.

<sup>27</sup> Briquet, *Pierre Loti et L'Orient*, 91.



près d'une lieue entre un cimetière et des ruines."<sup>28</sup> Once beyond the walls, Gautier muses that "il serait difficile de supposer une cité vivante derrière ces remparts morts qui pourtant cachent Constantinople... quelques minarets seuls lèvent la tête au-dessus de l'immense ligne des ruines, et témoignent que l'islam a sa capitale."<sup>29</sup> Visitors to Constantinople like Gautier and Pierre Loti are selective in what they see and share, such as Loti who never mentions the Hagia Sophia or Hippodrome, in spite of their prominence. Instead, Gautier fills the city with ruins and paints it as magical, ethereal, and antiquated. Long before he ever visited Constantinople, Gautier wrote, "Si jamais quelque chose a ressemblé à un récit des *Mille et une nuits*, si une cité de la terre peut réaliser cet idéal féérique que l'Europe a peine à concevoir, mais que l'Orient accepte sans peine, c'est Constantinople, à son premier aspect, quand on arrive par le Bosphore."<sup>30</sup> Gautier excitedly unites Constantinople with the famed Oriental tale, domes, minarets, and ruins dominating his conception of Constantinople, thereby reducing the Orient to Islam and long-ago grandeur. What he chooses to see, as well as what his account ignores, mitigates anxieties over the Ottoman Empire rivaling Western civilization. He is not forced to reconcile Turkish modernity and urban innovation with that of French urbanity.

We find similar representations in the novels of Pierre Loti. Loti authored numerous works firmly situated in the Orientalist genre, his stories frequently centering on the exploits of a handsome French sailor who journeys to foreign lands, and becomes the subject of adoration, desire, and worship from the Oriental subjects before returning

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<sup>28</sup> Gautier, *Constantinople*, 267.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>30</sup> Grant Crichfield, "Gautier's Orient: Mask, Mirage, and 'Décor d'opéra' in *Constantinople*," *Romance Notes* 32, No. 3 (1992): 264, JSTOR.

to Europe with little more than a twinge of regret. Loti's repetitive protagonist is the ultimate colonial fantasy, a virile occidental male who embodies both military and sexual domination. In Loti's early novel *Aziyadé*, we find both an interesting narrative of urban movement, and a telling depiction of Constantinople. The semi-autobiographical *Aziyadé* recounts the amorous exploits of the sailor Pierre Loti, primarily while he was stationed in Turkey. The similarities between the novel and Loti's own travel journals, as well as his bequeathal of his own name to the protagonist, create a work that avoids identification as either truthful biography, or avowed fiction. The narrator Loti begins in the Greek town of Salonique where he falls in love with the eponymous Azyadé, whisking her away from a harem and eventually moving with her to Constantinople, where he "becomes Turkish," assuming a Turkish name and perceiving himself as a member of the non-Western society. Eventually, Loti leaves Constantinople and Azyadé for the English countryside, a rural destination that nevertheless exists as more "urban" than the Turkish city.

Loti revels in the timelessness and antiquity of Constantinople, declaring that "les Turcs ne savent jamais leur âge."<sup>31</sup> He delights in explaining Turkish words to his readers: "Eski, mot prononcé avec vénération, qui veut dire antique, et qui s'applique en Turquie aussi bien à de vieilles coutumes qu'à de vieilles formes de vêtements ou à de vieilles étoffes. Les Turcs ont l'amour du passé, l'amour de l'immobilité et de la stagnation."<sup>32</sup> This love of immobility and stagnation, this preference for laziness and apathy towards the accelerated pace of modernity, typifies many Orientalist representations of city life, and rejects the emphasis on movement that was highlighted in

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<sup>31</sup> Pierre Loti, *Aziyadé* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), 104.

<sup>32</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 112.

Occidental urbanity. We see echoes of this in the proliferation of harem paintings, many of which represent an intoxicated languor. Time does not exist in the Harem, Linda Nochlin explains, as paintings such as those by Gérôme “suggests that this Oriental world is a world without change, a world of timeless, atemporal customs and rituals, untouched by the historical processes that were ‘afflicting’ or ‘improving’ but, at any rate, drastically altering Western societies at the time.”<sup>33</sup> Women pluck unambitiously at instruments, inhale from hookahs, and drape themselves across one another, such as in *Women on a Terrace in Morocco* by Rodolphe Ernst [Fig 5.5], an Austro-French painter who settled in Paris in the late 1870s. His women recline on a rooftop, a city on the hills behind them. They are in a haze of sensual laziness and removed from the hustle and bustle that authors such as Zola equated with urban existence. While the city exists in the distance, they are separated from it, unhurried by urban movement. Of course, Loti does not *truly* perceive Constantinople as being outside of time, providing just enough ruins to anchor it – if it must have a temporal anchor – to the past. He describes a similar experience as Gautier, walking the walls at the age of the city and observing, “Entre la partie habitée de la ville et ses fortifications s’étendent de vastes terrains vagues occupés par des masures inquiétantes, des ruines éboulées de tous les âges de l’histoire.”<sup>34</sup> Constantinople is a repository for the ruins and glories of the past, but never a testament to future modernity.

In addition to situating the city amongst ruins and timeless signifiers, Orientalists mark urban space as a site of past prominence by peopling it with characters and personalities from antiquity. Paintings of urban scenes can avoid the trope of ruins by

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<sup>33</sup> Nochlin, *Politics of Vision*, 36.

<sup>34</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 213.

fixing their entire subject matter in antiquity. Biblical and classical stories provide acceptably ancient subject matter, such as Alexandre-Gabriel Descamps' *Job and His Friends* [Fig. 5.6]. While the Biblical account of Job provides no indication of an urban setting, offering instead pastoral and rural details, Descamps imagines a narrow street scene and only the figures and title tie it with the ancient story. Descamps frequently situated Biblical scenes in streets more reminiscent of contemporary Turkish cities than the ancient Holy Land.<sup>35</sup> The presence of ancient characters in a more modern urban space antiquates it.

One of the most famous Orientalist novels also selects a subject from antiquity instead of less-comfortable Eastern modernity. Inspired by Polybius' history of the First Punic War in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* weaves sensuality, superstition, and exoticism into a tale of the Mercenary Revolt. Employed by Carthage during the war, the mercenaries rise up following a dispute over payment, and are ultimately defeated. Flaubert's original 1857 draft was entitled *Carthage*, as the struggle over possession of the city constitutes the majority of the novel's action. He later changed the title to *Salammbô*, naming it after the Carthaginian general's daughter. What remains a story of a city becomes at once equally the story of a woman, and the mercenaries' conquest of the city is mirrored in the soldier Mâthos' obsession with Salammbô, for, "the figuration of the oriental city of Carthage as the woman Salammbô... 'la Carthaginoise,' is a figural metonymy for the city of Carthage; she is a reduced representation of the city [which is at the same time] a metonym for the oriental world."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rosenthal, *Orientalism*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> Lisa Lowe, "The Orient as Woman in Flaubert's *Salammbô* and *Voyage en Orient*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 23, No. 1 (1986):46, JSTOR.

This elision is evident in the descriptions of Salammbô's body, which assumes qualities of the Oriental urban space. In the opening chapter, she descends the palace steps into the crowd of mercenaries, moving among them, speaking their languages, and agitating them with her presence and songs:

Salammbô n'en était plus au rythme sacré. Elle employait simultanément tous les idiomes des Barbares, délicatesse de femme pour attendrir leur colère. Aux Grecs elle parlait grec, puis elle se tournait vers les Ligures, vers les Campaniens, vers les Nègres ; et chacun en l'écoutant retrouvait dans cette voix la douceur de sa patrie. Emportée par les souvenirs de Carthage, elle chantait maintenant les anciennes batailles contre Rome ; ils applaudissaient. Elle s'enflammait à la lueur des épées nues ; elle criait, les bras ouverts. Sa lyre tomba, elle se tut ; – et pressant son cœur à deux mains, elle resta quelques minutes les paupières closes à savourer l'agitation de tous ces hommes.<sup>37</sup>

In nineteenth-century literature, the city often assumes a cosmopolitan identity, becoming a meeting place for all cultures and peoples in pursuit of urbanity. We find this in Zola's representation in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, the store welcoming goods and people from the world over in a temple of capitalism. Salammbô testifies to elements of this, allowing every man present to find echoes of his homeland in her words. Yet she simultaneously sings of ancient battles, inciting the men not to productive action, but to sensual agitation. In our first introduction to Salammbô, and to Carthage, she is intoxicating, sensual, and rooted firmly in the past.

The city will subsequently be presented likewise. When Mâthos returns to Carthage seeking Salammbô, the city stretches before him veiled in shadows, dotted with ruins, and spotted with the shimmering promise of riches:

La lune se levait au ras des flots, et, sur la ville encore couverte de ténèbres, des points lumineux, des blancheurs brillaient : le timon d'un char dans une cour, quelque haillon de toile suspendu, l'angle d'un mur, un collier d'or à la poitrine d'un dieu. Les boules de verre sur les toits des

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<sup>37</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Salammbô* (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1961), 15.

temples rayonnaient, ça et là comme de gros diamants. Mais de vagues ruines, des tas de terre noire, des jardins faisaient des masses plus sombres dans l'obscurité, et, au bas de Malqua, des filets de pêcheurs s'étendaient d'une maison à l'autre, comme de gigantesques chauves-souris déployant leurs ailes.<sup>38</sup>

This passage begins by insisting on the promise of hidden riches, yet this enticing promise is tinged with darkness, overshadowed by ruins, and compared to wild animals. The description continues by describing the animals asleep on porches, the absence of urban noise, and the perfume and smoke of burnt sacrifices rising over the city. Though Flaubert's novel is set in antiquity, his city bears the same markers of "modern" Oriental cities as presented by artists and authors like Loti or Gautier: the savage natural world encroaches on manmade progress in the form of animals; exotic odors and vapors appeal to the senses; ruins remind us that glorious achievements are in the past.

Flaubert's Carthage is also strangely silent, a useful element in emphasizing the difference between the modern advancing city of the West, and the stagnant, ancient Eastern city. Much of the action happens at night, the sleeping city or slumbering Salammbô easily dominated as "la nuit était pleine de silence, et le ciel avait une hauteur démesurée. Des bouquets d'arbres débordaient, sur les longues lignes des murs. La ville entière dormait. Les feux des avant-postes brillaient comme des étoiles perdues."<sup>39</sup>

Though Salammbô is introduced as speaking the tongue of every soldier and singing the ancient songs of the city, she is frequently reduced to silence. She speaks little when Mâthos takes possession of her body, says not a word when her father hurriedly passes his defiled daughter off in marriage, and silently anguishes and dies in the final pages.

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<sup>38</sup> Flaubert, *Salammbô*, 47.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

Like the city that “fut silencieuse comme un grand tombeau,”<sup>40</sup> Salammô is primarily spoken for, silenced, or allowed to speak only within the exotic discourse ascribed to the Oriental female.

In *Aziyadé*, Loti’s city is similarly silent, and Aziyadé herself never opposes the words of her western lover. Their initial meeting is in Salonique, a city of which “on eût dit une ville morte.”<sup>41</sup> Even when the couple moves to the larger Constantinople, Loti reminds the reader that “Tout cependant est silencieux dans Constantinople ... À onze heures, des cavaliers et de l’artillerie sont passés au galop, courant vers Stamboul ; et puis le roulement sourd des batteries s’est perdu dans le lointain, tout est retombé dans le silence.”<sup>42</sup> The constant urban cacophony that we found in representations of Paris is absent, replaced instead with silence. This silence, the ruins, and the atemporal imagery all communicate a city that does not participate in the noisy innovations of modernity, nor the movement associated with urbanity, remaining instead quietly fixed in the past. As such, it acts like its silenced female signifiers, incapable of speaking out and being spoken for instead by Western authorities.

### ***The Indecipherable City***

Yet to say that the Oriental city is spoken for is not to say that it is easily decipherable by the Occidental gaze. In their attempts to write cities like Constantinople, French authors frequently belie their own difficulties in reading these cities. In what could seem an initial contrast to my assertion that these cities are represented as quiet and antiquated, they are simultaneously represented as chaotic and inscrutable. Much to their

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>41</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 45.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

consternation, the authors and artists who seek to catalogue the Oriental city find it repeatedly hidden and obscured, rendered indecipherable and resisting their full understanding. Nochlin claimed that whereas Impressionist artists invite viewers to participate in a painting, in Orientalism, “our gaze is meant to include both the spectacle and its spectators as objects of picturesque delectation.”<sup>43</sup> Nochlin cites Gérôme’s *Snake Charmer* [Fig. 5.7], the image which also graces the cover of Said’s text, thus coming to signify Orientalism in the public imagination. The position of the older men and the boy forbid us from participating in the performance, and we remain beyond it. Nochlin asserts that the “defining mood of the painting is mystery,”<sup>44</sup> and while this painting is not ostensibly a portrayal of city life, a similar mood permeates urban representation.

When we do encounter urban settings in Orientalist paintings, they are frequently glimpsed in the background of otherwise closed and restricted spaces. They appear outside of darkened chambers, or in the background of a scene set on a rooftop, such as the Ernst painting discussed earlier. Similar constructions appear in Benjamin Constant’s *The Scarf Dance* [Fig. 5.8] and Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte de Noüy’s *The Dream* [Fig. 5.9]. The subjects are set above and apart from the city, one group enjoying music and dance, the other indulging in Oriental smoking and reverie. Rather than being the site of activity, the city appears as a distant site inaccessible to the paintings’ subjects. Even when an artist adopts a ground-level perspective, our visual access is perpetually thwarted. The gaze that is allowed to *flâner* through the streets of Parisian cityscapes is restricted and blocked, struggling in darkness. In paintings by Descamps, such as *Job and His Friends* discussed earlier, or *Oriental Night* [Fig. 5.10], our gaze is not allowed to

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<sup>43</sup> Nochlin, *Politics of Vision*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.



venture much beyond the highlighted figures. It is blocked by walls and darkness, closed in and held stationary. In Eugène Delacroix's *Street in Meknes* [Fig. 5.11], we find not so much a street stretching on into the city, but a darkened doorway and shallow depth of field that forbids further entry. When we do see into city streets, it is frequently through a doorway in the background of a painting, such as Jean-Léon Gérôme's *Dance of the Almeh* [Fig. 5.12]. The primary focus is the partially clad woman dancing in the foreground, with the besotted soldiers behind her a secondary focus. The city is only barely visible outside the doorway on the left hand side, and what we see is a narrow street, and another doorway. These glimpses of closed spaces, narrow passages, and repetitious doorways create a claustrophobic aura of thwarted movement that communicates a stifled and stagnant urbanity and renders our gaze incapable of mapping the urban space.

In contrast, French urban scenes often invite our gaze down boulevards and testify to perpetual motion. Consider Gustave Caillebotte's *Paris, A Rainy Day* [Fig. 5.13], discussed briefly in chapter 3. Though I mentioned the veil of rain present in the painting, this layer does not prevent our gaze from traveling down the streets behind of the couple. They stretch into the distance, creating a linearity conducive to ordered movement. Similarly, Auguste Renoir's *Pont Neuf, Paris* [Fig. 5.14] depicts a bustling Parisian bridge. Our gaze travels through the painting and into the city, just as numerous people and vehicles move freely about the urban space. While Camille Pissarro's *Boulevard des Italiens, Morning, Sunlight* [Fig. 5.15] does not show the actual road stretching into the city, the ordered building fronts, lines of trees, and masses of people hustling through their day communicate clearly that the urban space is meant to be moved through and

explored, something precluded in both the distant Oriental urban vistas such as Gérôme's *View of Cairo* [Fig. 5.4] or the glimpses of the city we catch through cracked doors.

We read a parallel urban experience of obstructed gaze and movement in accounts by Flaubert, Loti, and Gautier. When the narrator Loti first encounters Aziyadé, she is veiled and mysterious, only her eyes gleaming behind her veil, a “teinte vert de mer d'autrefois chantée par les poètes d'Orient.”<sup>45</sup> Constantinople appears to him in an analogous manner, slowly emerging from a veil of morning fog:

Le chœur passa, et se perdit dans l'éloignement. Par ma fenêtre grande ouverte, on ne voyait que la vapeur du matin, le vide immense du ciel ; et puis, tout en haut, quelque chose se dessina en rose, un dôme et des minarets ; la silhouette de la ville turque s'esquissa peu à peu, comme suspendue dans l'air ... Alors, je me rappelai que j'étais à Stamboul,- et qu'elle avait juré d'y venir.<sup>46</sup>

The city and his lover's promise to inhabit it elide into one, both mysterious entities that he intends to conquer. Loti rejects a concrete construction of Constantinople, showing it instead as a dream-like space constructed from ephemeral structures and vapors. He describes one mosque as “reste en l'air par magie, sans piliers, sans rien qui la soutienne.”<sup>47</sup> His refusal to recognize the solidity of the city codes Constantinople as the product of mythical fabrication, rather than human innovation. While the Western city stands as a testament to human progress and strength, the Eastern city exists as a magical accident. A similar aesthetic permeates the paintings of Constantinople by Félicien Ziem, including *Fantasia sur le Bosphore* [Fig. 5.16] and *Constantinople* [Fig. 5.17]. Both images have the signature domes and minarets of the city dimly visible through a gauzy veil of sky, icons of the East mysteriously shrouded in the background. They confirm

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<sup>45</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 45.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>47</sup> Briquet, *Pierre Loti et L'Orient*, 109.

Gautier's description of Constantinople as cloaked in a "nuage de fumée perpétuel, plus opaque que celui où cheminaient les dieux de Homère."<sup>48</sup> I explored the Impressionists' love of revealing the urban space as concealed by a layer of veils, rain, and mist in my third chapter, yet these do not appear associated with exotic mystery, but rather an interest in the blending of the natural and industrial forces. Oriental opacity does not derive from forces of modernity. Loti adamantly resists the idea that the obscurity he finds in Constantinople could be anything other than the inherent mystery of the Orient. He believes himself entitled to full access of the city, though there are the occasional moments where we see limits to his ingress. He walks the streets of his neighborhood and reflects, "Le regard ne plonge jamais dans une demeure turque. Si la porte s'ouvre pour laisser passer un visiteur, elle s'entrebâille seulement ; quelqu'un est derrière, qui la referme aussitôt. L'intérieur ne se devine jamais."<sup>49</sup> The city is full of doors to which he has no access, behind which lie unfathomable spaces. Loti masks his frustration at the limits imposed on his access through attributing it to the mysterious aura of the Orient.

Théophile Gautier embraces a similar ethereal understanding of Constantinople. He claims its glories are merely mirage, for,

quand on approche, le prestige s'évanouit, les palais ne sont plus que des baraques vermoulues, les minarets que de gros piliers blanchis à la chaux ; les rues étroites, montueuses, infectes, n'ont aucun caractère ; mais qu'importe, si cet assemblage incohérent de maisons, de mosquées et d'arbres colorées par la palette du soleil, produit un effet admirable entre le ciel et la mer ? L'aspect, quoique résultant d'illusions, n'en est pas moins vraiment beau.<sup>50</sup>

Gautier's representation of the city relies on theatrical allusions and dramatic language, the city an orchestrated spectacle he delights in viewing. As spectacle, instead of realistic

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<sup>48</sup> Gautier, *Constantinople*, 148.

<sup>49</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 199.

<sup>50</sup> Gautier, *Constantinople*, 113.

space, it remains an unsolvable and impenetrable mystery. Turkish women personify this problem, and thus, this city, for Gautier. They are “une immense population féminine, anonyme et inconnue, circule dans cette ville mystérieuse, change en bal de l’Opéra perpétuel, où les dominos n’ont pas la permission de se démasquer.”<sup>51</sup>

Gautier finds chaos underneath this mysterious opera, highlighting that Constantinople is a city where, “les rues ne portent à leurs angles aucune désignation... les maisons ne sont pas numérotées... [c’est un] dédale anonyme.”<sup>52</sup> Gautier’s irritation at the Turkish practice of unlabeled streets and unnumbered houses, at the “anonymous labyrinth” of Constantinople, underscores the second element of the Oriental city’s *illisibilité*. The Occidental gaze does obtain access to the Oriental city and it remains frustrated, encountering a chaotic and disordered space that it cannot assimilate into an urban discourse of order and progress. Gautier evokes the labyrinth of the city multiple times, aligning it with the mazes of antiquity and coding it as a dark mystery:

Je m’enfonçais dans un dédale de rues et de ruelles étroites, tortueuses, ignobles, affreusement pavées, pleines de trous et de fondrières, encombrées de chiens lépreux, d’ânes chargés de poutres ou de gravats, et le mirage éblouissant que présente Constantinople de loin s’évanouissait rapidement. Le Paradis se changeait en cloaque, la poésie se tournait en prose.<sup>53</sup>

This distortion of the ethereal drama of Constantinople that he imagined from afar reflects a frustrated inability to decipher the city, and the subsequent decision that there exists only disappointing ugliness beyond the mirage. What cannot be understood is compared instead to “rues de troisième ordre de Marseille ou de Barcelone.”<sup>54</sup> Flaubert’s Carthage is likewise chaotic, the city center “disparaissait sous un désordre de

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<sup>51</sup> Crichfield, “Gautier’s Orient,” 267.

<sup>52</sup> Gautier, *Constantinople*, 105.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

monuments.”<sup>55</sup> A similar disappointment awaits Mâthos when he removes the sacred veil from the temple and finds nothing underneath it.

We have already discussed the claustrophobic panoramas and glimpses in Oriental painting, and their converse in French urban scenes. Interestingly, if we compare paintings of Constantinople done by Ottoman artists, we find calm, order, and a complete absence of chaotic masses. Consider Ahmet Ziya Akbulut’s *Mosque of Mihrimah Sulan in Üsküdar* [Fig. 5.18] and *Impressions from Şehzadebaşı*, by an artist known as Ahmet [Fig. 5.19]. Both of these artists paint urban scenes that are clearly discernable, ordered, and completely devoid of either human presence, or fantastical exoticism. While the Oriental city proved chaotic and unreadable to the Occidental eye, its own artists perceive an ordered, logical, and modern space.

Whereas the urban-rural binary in France did not describe the opposite of urban as chaotic space, the transposition of this contrast onto the Imperial stage demands that Eastern cities adopt properties to place them in negative contrast to Western urbanity. If they cannot be relegated to total rurality, they are nevertheless established as less urban. In the final pages of *Aziyadé*, Loti returns to Europe and describes the order he finds there, where “tout est prévu, réglé, numéroté ; il y a des lois sur tout et des règlements pour tout le monde.”<sup>56</sup> He longs for the chaos and disorder of his beloved Constantinople, but his nostalgia does not entirely mask his pejorative comparison. In the same way that the accomplishments of the Ottoman Empire were obfuscated by relegating them to *les gloires passées* through the presence of silent ruins, Eastern urbanity is marked as

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<sup>55</sup> Flaubert, *Salammbô*, 57.

<sup>56</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 206.

illogical, inexplicable, and indecipherable through the presence of disorder and the prevalence of mysterious imagery.

### ***Antiquated Economies and Exotic Markets***

In analyzing *Au Bonheur des Dames* in the third chapter, I concluded that Zola's novel chronicles the clash of economic orders precipitated by changing urban spaces. Capitalism became synonymous with the new urban order, demolishing the old order without remorse. While they revel in the riches of the East and the hubbub of the bazaars, Orientalists are careful to portray urban centers as the antithesis of capitalism, highlighting instead the primitive and sometimes savage economies of the Orient. They delight in the titillating display of flesh and sensory goods perceived to constitute the Eastern economy, conveying a financial system easily inferior to that found in urban centers such as Paris or London.

Slave markets prove a popular artistic subject, such as Gérôme's *The Slave Market* [Fig. 5.20]. A shadowed male master surveys the selection of woman he may sell, all of whom testify to abject despair in their posture and demeanor. In another iteration of the same subject [Fig. 5.21], several men scrutinize a female slave. She has been disrobed, her body on full display as the men run their fingers across her teeth. Her blank expression at this indignity further serves to establish her as object more than person. Nochlin finds in the proliferation of slave market paintings "the fantasy of absolute possession of women's naked bodies [which] also lies at the heart of such typical subjects of Orientalist imagery."<sup>57</sup> She cites the "delicious humiliation" of the innocent slave girls as one that allowed European viewers to indulge in their fascination under the guise of

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<sup>57</sup> Nochlin, *Politics of Vision*, 43.

pity.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, there is very little of the “market” in slave market paintings by Gérôme and others. Our gaze is not allowed to move beyond the commerce of female flesh, reducing the economy to one of primitive and barbaric practices.

While not a slave, Salammbô in Flaubert’s novel nevertheless becomes a commodity in the economy of war and violence. She is “the forbidden sexual object of desire as well as the material object of exchange, the barricaded city and the virgin priestess, the infinite beauty of ‘la nature’ and the sacred, violent oriental world.”<sup>59</sup> Salammbô is traded and taken, valued and devalued, based on her worth to the mercenaries and the city. In place of modern capitalism, Carthage boasts a primitive and antiquated economy predicated on violence and sexuality. The mercenaries demand payment, yet instead of traditional monetary compensation,

Ils demandaient du vin, des viandes, de l’or. Ils criaient pour avoir des femmes. Ils déliraient en cent langages. Quelques-uns se croyaient aux étuves, à cause de la buée qui flottait autour d’eux, ou bien, apercevant des feuillages, ils s’imaginaient être à la chasse et couraient sur leurs compagnons comme sur des bêtes sauvages. L’incendie de l’un à l’autre gagnait tous les arbres, et les hautes masses de verdure, d’où s’échappaient de longues spirales blanches, semblaient des volcans qui commencent à fumer. La clameur redoublait ; les lions blessés rugissaient dans l’ombre.<sup>60</sup>

In the same way that the international wares and geographically diverse clientele in *Au Bonheur* established it as a cosmopolitan destination, Carthage is a meeting ground for diverse nationalities and peoples. Yet this is due to war, not expanded markets. Zola described the new capitalism as violent, devouring women and ending the livelihoods of established merchants. Still, Denise’s success in the novel forced us to consider his ambivalence about the new machine and its potential for increasing the common good.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Lowe, “The Orient as Woman in Flaubert’s *Salammbô* and *Voyage en Orient*,” 46.

<sup>60</sup> Flaubert, *Salammbô*, 11.

Conversely, the Oriental economy is presented as objectively barbaric, commodifying the female body and refusing logical economic progress.

Gautier writes at length about his own experience in the Turkish marketplace, avoiding encounters with slave markets, but detailing instead the daily act of shopping where “rien ne rappelle, même dans les plus belles rues de Constantinople, les splendides magasins de la rue Vivienne ou du Strand.”<sup>61</sup> In stark contrast to the shopping experience in *Au Bonheur des Dames*, Gautier remarks,

Ce qui frappe l'étranger à Constantinople, c'est l'absence de femmes dans les boutiques ; il n'y a que des marchands et pas de marchandes. La jalousie musulmane s'accommoderait peu des rapports que le commerce nécessite....Beaucoup de petits détails de ménage, laissés chez nous aux femmes, sont remplis, en Turquie, par des gaillards athlétiques, aux biceps renflés, à la barbe crépue, au large col de taureau, ce qui nous paraît assez justement ridicule.<sup>62</sup>

While the Occidental city is typified in numerous novels as a site of female agency such as that enjoyed by Mathilde or Denise, and acted as a site for challenging gender binaries, Gautier presents the Oriental city as dictated by hypermasculine jealousy, barring women from access to public spaces and commerce, while also becoming a site of feminized masculinity. The men he describes both signify a stereotypical physical masculinity, but also perform the more womanly “petits détails de ménage.” Gautier’s delight in the sexual availability of Turkish women (discussed later) and absence of any calls for reform forbid us from thinking he highlights the marginality of Oriental women. Rather, he exhibits a delighted voyeurism at the primitive sexual politics that dictate life in the Ottoman capitol. The attribution of women’s work to men associates Gautier’s

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<sup>61</sup> Gautier, *Constantinople*, 143.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.



Constantinople with kept women and emasculated men, hardly competitive with France's gender norms in urban centers.

Gautier does describe the Grand Bazaar in terms analogous to Zola's description of *les grands magasins*, which is fitting, as Walter Benjamin claims the early department stores to be modeled on Oriental bazaars.<sup>63</sup> Yet there exist key distinctions. The bazaar is "une ville dans la ville," but unlike the ordered enormity of its Parisian counterpart, it is a "labyrinthe où l'on a de la peine à se retrouver, même après plusieurs visites."<sup>64</sup> Gautier happily finds it peddling "vieilles armes, anciennes étoffes, orfèvreries bizarres, poteries singulières, ustensiles hétéroclites et d'usage inconnu."<sup>65</sup> Both the objects he highlights and the adjectives he employs to describe them align the Oriental economy with useless and outdated artifacts. Instead of recognizing the Grand Bazaar as the thriving economic center of the city, Gautier treats it as his own *cabinet de curiosités*, a museum of Oriental strangeness and a tribute to an antiquated economy. His delight turns to horror when he learns that Turkey imports and sells many British textiles, the bazaar acting not only as a monument to trivialities and exotic souvenirs, but to international trade and global markets: "une secrète fureur bouillonne en moi, et je souhaite que la mer engloutisse les vaisseaux qui portent ces abominations, que le feu détruise les fabriques où elle se tramant et que la Great-Britain s'évapore dans son brouillard."<sup>66</sup> He finds these "monstrousités modernes" to be dissonant with the "sereine harmonie de ton de l'Orient."<sup>67</sup> While his anger could, and certainly does, manifest some anxieties over British domination of the world stage compared to that of France, his objection focuses

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<sup>63</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 48.

<sup>64</sup> Gautier, *Constantinople*, 156.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

more on the inappropriateness of any modern and Western imports perverting Oriental harmony. His outrage at imports marring the purity of the Orient belies a staunch refusal to give Constantinople a place in the emerging global economy of the nineteenth century. Gautier wants the Orient to remain fixed in his notion of Oriental identity, inherently tied to economic inferiority to the West.

Gautier's refusal of modernity to Eastern marketplaces aligns with paintings of markets focused beyond the economy of bodies we saw in the slave market depictions. Alberto Pasini, an Italian artist who lived and worked in Paris, frequently painted market scenes, such as *Market Day in Constantinople* [Fig. 5.22], and *Market in Constantinople* [Fig. 5.23]. Both scenes typify his approach to Oriental marketplaces. Pasini selects outdoor venues where subjects peddle their wares in the street. His characters often sit, converse, and relax in the marketplace, as food spills onto the ground and animals mill about. There is a distinct pastoral simplicity to his urban markets, one that appeals to the imagined Oriental aesthetic.

If French urbanity was synonymous with cutthroat capitalism, we find exactly the opposite in Oriental cities, and instead discover qualities more frequently associated with rurality. The Oriental city becomes the site of primitive economies based on antiquated exchanges, sexualized marketplaces, and an absence of female influence and agency. Authors and artists avoid representations of the East inserting itself into global markets and exchanges, delighting instead in the sensational currencies of flesh and Oriental trinkets, thus removing any fear of financial competition from Eastern urban centers.

## *The Seductive City*

Though the Orientalists' representations of cities do not challenge traditional gender binaries, they are nonetheless associated with the female body and female characters, as were Occidental cities I discussed in previous chapters. I touched on this briefly in my discussion of Flaubert's *Salammbô* and Loti's *Aziyadé*, both eponymous women acting as incarnations of the cities that the male protagonists hope to conquer. When we initially meet Salammbô, we realize that she is to be read as the human embodiment of Carthage:

Derrière elle, de chaque côté, se tenaient deux longues théories d'hommes pâles, vêtus de robes blanches à franges rouges qui tombaient droit sur leurs pieds. Ils n'avaient pas de barbe, pas de cheveux, pas de sourcils. Dans leurs mains étincelantes d'anneaux ils portaient d'énormes lyres et chantaient tous, d'une voix aiguë, un hymne à la divinité de Carthage.<sup>68</sup>

Salammbô is flanked by two lines of priests, singing praises to the glory of Carthage. For the mercenaries celebrating below, she appears like the ethereal spirit of the city, descending to dwell among them. After this initial presentation of Salammbô as the human incarnation of Carthage's essence, her body becomes a site to map the riches and sensuality of the Orient as a whole:

Il y avait sur sa poitrine un assemblage de pierres lumineuses, imitant par leur bigarrure les écailles d'une murène. Ses bras, garnis de diamants, sortaient nus de sa tunique sans manches, étoilée de fleurs rouges sur un fond tout noir. Elle portait entre les chevilles une chaînette d'or pour régler sa marche, et son grand manteau de pourpre sombre, taillé dans une étoffe inconnue, traînait derrière elle, faisant à chacun de ses pas comme une large vague qui la suivait.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Flaubert, *Salammbô*, 11.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

The flesh of her arms is visible through her jewels, but the most enticing element of her sensuality is the golden chain between her ankles. The chain both signifies her virginity, and invites someone to break it, as indeed Mâtho will later in the novel.

Salammbô's status as city and exchangeable commodity continues to grow throughout the text. She is the priestess of Carthage's patron goddess, and when Mâtho steals the sacred veil from the temple, it is she that is blamed as misfortune befalls the city. The priest Schahabarim decides to sacrifice Salammbô's body in an effort to reclaim the cloak, instructing her to steal away to Mâtho's tent and submit to whatever he desires in exchange for the stolen *zaimph*. The sacrifice of her virginity restores sacred protection to Carthage, yet upon her return, her father immediately trades her to the general Narr'Havas in exchange for his defense of the city. Just as the mercenaries and Carthaginians wage war over possession of the city, so too is Salammbô's body passed back and forth as commodity and asset. The quest for one and the other elide into each other, possession of the woman and the city becoming synonymous. The pages hemorrhage blood and eroticism, tantalizing the European audience in a tale of violence and passion that appealed to every Oriental fantasy. Salammbô's own fascination and passion for Mâtho after he rapes her mirrors the interest of the European audience who craved tales of brutal sensuality from the East, even as they condemned its savagery.

While *Aziyadé* does not detail the same violent sexual exploitation as *Salammbô*, Loti nevertheless revels in Aziyadé's total submission to him. She is the perfect Oriental fantasy, passionate, exotic, and ravenous for his love. She tells Loti that she will die in his absence, begging to eat kisses from his mouth and serve him in any way he desires. He asks what she does in his absence, to which Aziyadé replies, "je m'ennuie ; je pense à toi,

Loti ; je regarde ton portrait ; je touche tes cheveux, ou je m'amuse avec divers petits objets à toi, que j'emporte d'ici pour me faire société là-bas.”<sup>70</sup> In this manner, Loti fulfills the Occidental imagination of the Oriental sultan who returns each night to a harem of women languishing in his absence and eager to please him.

His relationship with Aziyadé runs parallel with his discovery of Constantinople, as she imbues every impression of it he receives: “Tous ces bruits des nuits de Constantinople sont restés dans ma mémoire, mêlés au son de sa voix à elle.”<sup>71</sup> Loti also inhabits a sort of fantasy colonial space, where he “becomes Turkish” adopting a Turkish name and mannerisms, passing unobstructed between the European and Turkish neighborhoods. His joy at having total access to the city is tied to his ability to return home and claim Aziyadé:

Qui me rendra ma vie d'Orient, ma vie libre et en plein air, mes longues promenades sans but, et le tapage de Stamboul ? Partir le matin de l'Atmeïdan, pour aboutir la nuit à Eyoub ; faire, un chapelet à la main, la tournée des mosquées ; s'arrêter à tous les cafedjis, aux turbés, aux mausolées, aux bains et sur les places ; boire le café de Turquie dans les microscopiques tasses bleues à pied de cuivre ; s'asseoir au soleil, et s'étourdir doucement à la fumée d'un narguilé ; causer avec les derviches ou les passants ; être soi-même une partie de ce tableau plein de mouvement et de lumière ; être libre, insouciant et inconnu ; et penser qu'au logis la bien-aimée vous attendra le soir.<sup>72</sup>

Like the Oriental city, Aziyadé is silent and mysterious, sometimes unpredictable, yet constantly passionate. Loti frequently records the muezzin that echoes across the city several times a day, eventually attributing it not to Islam, but to the mystic aura of the Orient and Aziyadé:

Suivait la chanson, chantée chaque soir d'une voix douce, chanson longue, monotone, composée sur un rythme étrange, avec les intervalles

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<sup>70</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 108.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

impossibles, et les finales tristes de l'Orient. Quand j'aurai quitté Stamboul, quand je serai loin d'elle pour toujours, longtemps encore j'entendrai la nuit la chanson d'Aziyadé.<sup>73</sup>

Loti does not differentiate between experience of the city and his affair with Aziyadé, the two intimately intermingled in his mind.

The association of Oriental cities with hypersexualized women is indicative of a larger trend of feminizing the Orient. One scholar concludes,

The projection of the Oriental other as female is a figuration of 19<sup>th</sup>-century social and political crises [including] the crises of family, gender, and social structure in an age of rapid industrialization, urbanization, emigration and immigration. ...The problematic tensions within the French identity are rhetorically condensed into the topos of sexual difference between male and female.<sup>74</sup>

As I will discuss shortly, even representations of Ottoman soldiers are rendered feminine and impotent by French artists. Both the brash Oriental despot and the nubile harem woman share the same quality of supposed inferiority to the rational European male. We find this transmitted in representations of cities, where, in spite of Gautier's avowal that women are absent from the marketplaces, their presence provides the sensual aura of the city. Gautier imagines them behind every wall, every closed door obscuring a miniature harem. He conceives of no better element of an Oriental visit than when an old woman escorts you through a labyrinth of streets and delivers you behind closed doors, wherein you find a nest of cushions and a "sultane ruisselante d'or et de pierres, dont le sourire vous fait des promesses voluptueuses bientôt réalisées."<sup>75</sup> Indeed, Gautier places the artistic trope of the Oriental odalisque [Fig. 5.24-27] behind every closed door of the city.

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>74</sup> Lowe, "The Orient as Woman in Flaubert's *Salammbô* and *Voyage en Orient*," 45.

<sup>75</sup> Gautier, *Constantinople*, 235.

In representations of Occidental urbanity, the city-woman was disruptive and troubling. Her presence problematized conceptions of gender, demanded new agency, evoked the changing economic structures, and questioned urban idealism. Yet the Oriental city-as-woman forces none of these questions. Instead, her body assumes the sexual connotations of the Orient as a whole, offering them easily to the Occidental male imagination. She embodies the glittering cities of the Ancient East. She seduces and satisfies, and possession of her is conflated with domination of the city.

### ***A City to be Conquered***

To return to my original query, do these aspects of urban representation figure in the relationship of power Said laid out in *Orientalism*, and if so, how? If the Oriental city is consistently represented as ancient, mysterious or chaotic, financially antiquated, and provocatively feminine, it is because the culmination of these individual qualities codes it as a site easily conquered by the West. France did not colonize Constantinople, or several other large Eastern cities, yet in the representation of these urban spaces, we find an artistic, literary, and personal conquest in the absence of an official military one. The city in Orientalist art and literature is represented in such a way as to be constantly marked as less urban than European city centers, and conquerable by European artists and authors.

Given this objective, we find various sorts of domination present in literary texts and paintings, as well as actual urban planning projects across the Orient. In Flaubert's *Salammbô*, this domination takes the military form of the mercenaries' attack on Carthage and its reflection in Mâtho's desire to claim Salammbô, as he is "jaloux de cette

Carthage enfermant Salammbô, comme de quelqu'un qui l'aurait possédée.”<sup>76</sup> Though she is the incarnation of the divine essence and riches of the city, she possesses none of its power. Instead,

Elle avait grandi dans les abstinences, les jeûnes et les purifications, toujours entourée de choses exquisés et graves, le corps saturé de parfums, l'âme pleine de prières. Jamais elle n'avait goûté de vin, ni mangé de viandes, ni touché à une bête immonde, ni posé ses talons dans la maison d'un mort.<sup>77</sup>

Salammbô is a heady combination of sensuality and naiveté, both inviting seduction and implying that she will offer little resistance. As such, she is the ideal conquered subject and plays into the discourses of power Said laid out in *Orientalism*.

The barbarians do not triumph in Flaubert's text. Carthage prevails in defeating them, an accomplishment accredited in part to Salammbô's retrieval of the sacred veil from Mâtho's tent, followed by the alliance formed with Narr'Havas, both acts which commodify her body. The Carthaginians praise her marriage, yet at the summit of the celebration, Salammbô observes Mâtho's execution:

Alors, depuis le golfe jusqu'à la lagune et de l'isthme jusqu'au phare, dans toutes les rues, sur toutes les maisons et sur tous les temples, ce fut un seul cri ; quelquefois il s'arrêtait, puis recommençait ; les édifices en tremblaient ; Carthage était comme convulsée dans le spasme d'une joie titanique et d'un espoir sans bornes.<sup>78</sup>

Instead of joining in the merriment, Salammbô collapses in death. Flaubert explains, “Ainsi mourut la fille d'Hamilcar pour avoir touché au manteau de Tanit.”<sup>79</sup> Her death surpasses this simple explanation. Carthage won the battle, and Salammbô escaped Mâtho, yet his domination of her is evident in her inability to remain alive in his absence.

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<sup>76</sup> Flaubert, *Salammbô*, 59.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 352.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.



His death demands her own. And if she is tied to the city itself, it hints at the impossibility of Carthage maintaining its power.

The Oriental city in Flaubert's novel is shown as temporal and instable, capable of succumbing to foreign power. In discussing the issues of power and empire treated in Oriental texts, Lisa Lowe notes an important distinction between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century narratives:

The 18th-century French concern to establish an empire, and a national identity among the other continental European nations, is evident in this geographical trope. In contrast, the 19th-century crisis of western European individualism in the age of industrialization and expansionism in the non-European world is figured in the rhetorical framework of sexuality and romantic desire... The spatial logic we find in 18<sup>th</sup>-century travel literature, which asserts the geographical centrality of Europe and distances non-European others, is, in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century a gendered relationship; the occidental self constitutes a single, central male position, and non-European others occupy a marginal female position.<sup>80</sup>

What began as a more overt displacement of Occidental conflicts onto Oriental geographies, is recast as a gendered binary in which the female Orient is easily subdued. In the poetics of Flaubert's work, *la femme orientale* is the "exoticized world which is courted, penetrated, and made to produce, by the male pen."<sup>81</sup> While travel journals such as Gautier's noted a distinct absence of women from urban public life, they nevertheless associate the city with women to highlight the Orient's malleability, weakness, and penetrability.

*Salammô* features the gendered and politicized power struggle prominently and directly, yet this same will to dominate also permeates the writings of Loti and Gautier, albeit under a guise of more benevolent paternalism or empathy. Gautier revels in his

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<sup>80</sup> Lowe, "The Orient as Woman in Flaubert's *Salammô* and *Voyage en Orient*, 44.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

acquired knowledge of Constantinople, describing his experience in terms of a conqueror-explorer,

un capitaine Cooke dans un voyage d'exploration. Rien n'est plus amusant que de découvrir une fontaine, une mosquée, un monument quelconque, et de lui assigner son vrai nom sans qu'un drogman idiot vous le dise du ton d'un démonstrateur de serpents boas; d'ailleurs, en errant ainsi à l'aventure, on voit ce qu'on ne vous montre jamais, c'est à dire ce qu'il y a de véritablement curieux dans le pays qu'on visite.<sup>82</sup>

While Gautier's desire to experience authentic aspects of city life is commendable, his scorn at needing a guide to show him the foreign city, his delight at his Adamic role of naming all he finds, and his belief that he can obtain access to hidden delights of the city all speak to a confidence that he can easily dominate the Oriental city of Constantinople. Its secrets and treasures are available to him if only he seeks them.

Loti's attitude as he explores the city reflects a similar hubris. While Loti views himself as a truly sympathetic lover of the Turkish people and their culture, he nevertheless conceives of the Oriental city as existing for his pleasure: "Vous direz qu'il faut, pour en arriver là, un terrible fond d'égoïsme ; je ne dis pas le contraire ; mais j'en suis venu à penser que tout ce qui me plaît est bon à faire et qu'il faut toujours épicer de son mieux le repas si fade de la vie."<sup>83</sup> In *Aziyadé*, Loti creates a Turkish dream-world, "without fear of interference... he enjoys a freedom which is apparently absolute; he is not restricted by the limitations placed on one's freedom by society and morality."<sup>84</sup> Loti revels in his absolute access, remarking that, alongside a British friend, "nous avons bien couru ensemble par les vieilles rues de cette ville, aux heures les plus prohibées et dans

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<sup>82</sup> Gautier, *Constantinople*, 107.

<sup>83</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 49.

<sup>84</sup> Clive Wake, *The Novels of Pierre Loti* (Paris: Mouton, 1974), 57.

les tenues les moins réglementaires.”<sup>85</sup> Loti strives to reject the mysterious unreadability of the city by conquering its streets and demanding access to every forbidden corner.

Loti’s ability to act as both patron and conqueror, benevolent friend and despotic lord, is attributed not to his particular strength or skill, but to his mere presence as a Westerner in the East coupled with his simple desire to have access to all aspects of the city:

J'habite un des plus beaux pays du monde, et ma liberté est illimitée. Je puis courir, à ma guise, les villages, les montagnes, les bois de la côte d'Asie ou d'Europe, et beaucoup de pauvres gens vivraient une année des impressions et des péripéties d'un seul de mes jours.<sup>86</sup>

He proudly announces, “doucement je deviens Turk sans m’en douter.”<sup>87</sup> Though the presence of European military figures and civil servants was undoubtedly received with ambivalence in Constantinople, we read none of this in Loti’s account. Instead, everyone he meets instantly succumbs to him in blind devotion, eagerly submitting to his domination. “Sa personnalité est comme absorbée dans la mienne,” Loti explains of one particularly devoted friend, “je le trouve partout dans mon ombre, quels que soient le lieu et le costume que j’aie choisis, prêt à défendre ma vie au risque de la sienne.”<sup>88</sup> Loti receives the adoration of the Turkish people as natural and merited, unsurprised at their devotion. He selects a Turkish name for himself explaining, “on savait bien que je ne pouvais pas m'appeler Arif, et que j'étais un chrétien venu d'Occident ; mais ma fantaisie orientale ne portait plus ombrage à personne, et on me donnait quand même ce nom que

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<sup>85</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 55.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

j'avais choisi.”<sup>89</sup> Unfettered by resistance from the citizens of Constantinople and believing himself one of them, Loti enjoys a position of power over the city.

This domination is duplicated in his relationship with Aziyadé. When Loti initially meets her, “elle ne m'appartenait pas encore ; mais il n'y avait plus entre nous que des barrières matérielles, la présence de son maître, et le grillage de fer de ses fenêtres.”<sup>90</sup> The Occidental imagination found the despotic power of Turkish sultans and despots scintillating, reveling in the harem as a place of cruel power. Yet Loti is unfazed by “la présence de son maître,” viewing the incarnation of Oriental tyranny as inconsequential in the face of Occidental force. Indeed, we do not read of any real resistance from Aziyadé’s master, all obstacles dissolving before Loti. As for Aziyadé, Loti’s Oriental women are all “invested with a certain sameness, a lack of intellect, an attractive exterior concealing a generally simple but well-meaning disposition, and a desire to serve solely the handsome Occidental God who has somehow been miraculously transported to their native shores.”<sup>91</sup> The prowess of Oriental men is negated either by their devotion to Loti, or their easy capitulation, and the women fall at his feet in amorous raptures. Likewise, in Loti’s work, we find an easily conquered and adoring city awaiting the presence of handsome Occidental gods and welcoming their domination.

If Loti erases the obstacle of male resistance to his domination of the city and its women by portraying them as eager devotees, we find another approach in Orientalist painting. Ottoman soldiers furnish a frequent subject for Orientalist painters such as Gérôme, yet the representations of them often de-emphasize their military prowess. Instead, paintings of these Bashi-Bazouks highlight their laziness, revelry, and

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>91</sup> Irene L. Szyliowiez, *Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1988), 52.

incompetence. In Gérôme's *Bashi-Bazouk Singing* [Fig. 5.28], he paints the soldier in a state of clear intoxication. One shoe has already fallen off while the other will soon slide from his foot. His unsteady posture and tilted head further highlight his drugged state as a hookah stands beside him. The three men behind him also appear to have fallen victim, their postures lethargic. Gérôme frequently painted these mercenary soldiers under the influence of the hookah [Fig. 5.29-31]. While some Orientalist paintings spread the myth of the East through sensationalizing violence and bloodlust of the Oriental soldiers, the numerous representations of these intoxicated soldiers serve another purpose. Rendered less powerful and thus capable of being dominated, these emasculated and placid soldiers play into the discourses that Said lays out in *Orientalism* as "a relationship of power, of domination."<sup>92</sup> By depicting foreign soldiers as consistently under the influence of hookah-administered drugs, a common trope in harem scenes [Fig. 5.32-34], Western audiences could be reminded that, though the Orientals were savage and blood thirsty, they were without self-control and easily dominated:

Since it was Muslim soldiers that were often the major obstacle to the European male's domination, both sexually and politically, it was encouraging for Europeans to see them depicted, in Orientalist art, as languishing in the same lazy stupor as the harem girls.<sup>93</sup>

The paintings of Ottoman soldiers are not ostensibly urban scenes, yet they do participate in establishing a rhetoric of perceived Oriental capitulation to Western dominance, one furthered by narratives of the city.

Beyond the realm of imaginative production, we find a concrete pattern of another sort of domination in colonial urbanism. Throughout the nineteenth century, cities around

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<sup>92</sup> Said, "Orientalism," 1870.

<sup>93</sup> Ivan Davidson Kalmar, "The Houkah in the Harem: On Smoking and Orientalist Art," in *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking*, ed. Sander L. Gilman and Zhou Xun (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 226.

the world were rebuilt in a distinctly Parisian or French model. According to Zeynep Çelik, “The transformation of Paris under Napoléon III and Baron Haussmann, the prefect of the Seine, formed the model par excellence to which all references were directed (whether from Lyons and Brussels or Cairo and Istanbul).”<sup>94</sup> In urban projects across the Maghreb (where France exerted actual colonial power), and the Ottoman Empire (where it enjoyed financial and cultural influence), an architectural language was developed to emulate Occidental structures and styles in Oriental lands. In rebuilding Algiers, for example, planners turned towards Parisian Haussmanization, a “project for the capital [that] constituted the framework for the proposal for Algiers. A legible order dominated both schemes.”<sup>95</sup> In the same way that Haussmann’s renovations for Paris incorporated concerns about sanitation and hygiene into desires to control the proletariat, Algiers’ officials sought “large streets, grand boulevards, and spacious plazas” “all conditions of hygiene necessary to the conservation [of the European society].”<sup>96</sup> In designing the town of Bizerte in Tunisia, French engineer Eugène Résal envisioned

Grand avenues planted with trees will connect the old town to the new port; large streets will ensure circulation of sea breezes; drainage in all streets will contribute to the cleanliness; finally all precautions will be taken for hygiene.... The sweetness of the climate, the beauty of the country, will turn New Bizerte into a rival to the winter stations of Côte d’Azur.<sup>97</sup>

Though the goal was to bring European order and Parisian city planning to Oriental cities, the result was frequently the creation of dual cities, a European quarter adjacent to traditional “indigenous” areas. This bifurcation of the city characterizes Loti’s account of Constantinople, where he initially lives in the European area of the city, surrounded by

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<sup>94</sup> Çelik, *Empire, Architecture, and the City*, 71.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

Occidental sounds such as the music of Beethoven that wafts out of an open window.

When Aziyadé arrives, he is delighted to move to an area “turc et pittoresque au possible.”<sup>98</sup>

Colonial urbanism reflects an inability to conceive of urbanity outside of the Parisian or Occidental model, and an impulse to force distant geographies into the mold of Western modernity. If Paris is the “capital of the nineteenth century” as Walter Benjamin termed it, then this capital sought reproduction across the globe, a sort of architectural imperialism both in actual conquered territories such as North Africa, and in cities beyond the scope of French conquest, such as Constantinople. We find a compulsion to situate Oriental cities within the visual and architectural vocabulary of Paris, to which they will always fall short, thus elevating Paris as the ideal urban space.

In 1866, Victor Hugo wrote a short piece entitled *Éloge de Paris* reflecting this belief in the city’s dominant importance on the world stage. His work was the preface to *Paris-Guide*, a commercial publication designed for visitors to the Exposition Universelle. Hugo’s text proclaims Paris as the future of the world, the center of all artistic, intellectual, and cultural accomplishments, and the harbinger of world peace and universal prosperity:

Elle sera plus que nation, elle sera civilisation; elle sera mieux que civilisation, elle sera famille... cette nation aura pour capitale Paris, et ne s’appellera point la France; elle s’appellera l’Europe. Elle s’appellera l’Europe au XXe siècle, et, aux siècles suivants, plus transfigurée encore, elle s’appellera l’Humanité.... Avant d’avoir son peuple, l’Europe a sa ville. De ce peuple qui n’existe pas encore, la capitale existe déjà... Le fœtus des nations se comporte comme le fœtus de l’homme, et la mystérieuse construction de l’embryon, à la fois végétation et vie, commence toujours par la tête.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Loti, *Aziyadé*, 83.

<sup>99</sup> Victor Hugo, *Éloge de Paris* (Paris: Magellan & Cie, 2010), 15, 17, and 18.

Hugo's hyperbolic and strange words nevertheless communicate a very prevalent sentiment in nineteenth-century French consciousness: Paris was not only the capital of the nation, but it symbolized all that *should* dictate the world. This city was viewed as the ultimate incarnation of urban vs. rural values, and as such it was tasked with urbanizing the world.

Hugo follows his prophetic opening with a discussion of previous great cities, careful to emphasize their *past* contributions to the world, as well as the ways that Paris now absorbs and embellishes all those same qualities. He cites Carthage and Jerusalem, yet claims that both were actually chrysalis forms of Paris, denying them their own histories and situating them within a Francocentric narrative. He details the accomplishments of Constantinople, Palermo, and Athens, yet describes them as precursors to Paris' actions in the Revolution and years following.<sup>100</sup> In listing many Eastern cities, Hugo allows Paris to absorb all their contributions to Western culture. Yet when confronting the cities of Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome, he must find a way to elevate Paris above these three pillars of Western religion, thought, and government. He succeeds by conceiving that, "elles vivent en Paris. Paris est la somme de ces trois cités. Il les amalgame dans son unité. Par un côté, il ressuscite Rome, par l'autre, Athènes, par l'autre, Jérusalem. Du cri du Golgotha, il a tiré les Droits de l'Homme."<sup>101</sup>

Ultimately, Hugo resumes, "Paris, c'est la dispersion de l'idée."<sup>102</sup> This idea of Paris, the same idea that fascinated Julien Sorel, drove Emma Bovary to madness, and promised new futures to Denise and Gervaise takes on a global significance when the urban-rural dichotomy is displaced onto the imperial scope. The summit of French

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<sup>100</sup> Hugo, *Éloge de Paris*, 46.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.



urbanity creates a mold into which “lesser” urban spaces are forced, ostensibly for their own benefit. The preservation and promulgation of this ideal helps us understand both the representation of Oriental cities, and their reconstruction as satellite Parisian spaces.

### ***Impossible Urbanization***

The many Orientalist literary and artistic representations communicate the ease with which travelers from the West forayed into the East to craft the invented Oriental city. Yet if the Orient is represented as rural or less urban in relationship to France, what “urbanization” can we analyze between Oriental lands and Occidental spaces? Though the urbanizing protagonists I have studied thus far frequently meet with tragic ends and an inability to definitively inhabit urban space, we do see them first adopt urban personas, genders, and mannerisms. In conjunction with the preceding study of Oriental cities, let us briefly discuss two Oriental women who attempt urbanization and are not only denied success, but are not permitted the urbanizing metamorphosis that emerged in the previous chapters.

In spite of the Oriental women his protagonists love in almost every novel, Pierre Loti never allows these lovers to leave the Orient. As one scholar explains, “Oriental women are depicted as “simple, primitive, dependent, often helpless, and they appear to worship the hero as though he were God.... After their conquest by the Occidental man, however, they are unable to live.”<sup>103</sup> His exotic women function as part of the spaces they inhabit, fixtures incapable not only of departing, but of existing at all after they have experienced the Occidental male. Indeed, we find very few women from the Orient peopling Occidental nineteenth-century fiction. When they do emerge, it is frequently in

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<sup>103</sup> Szyliowiez, *Pierre Loti and the Oriental Woman*, 12.

the role of domestic service. Both George Sand's Noun in the novel *Indiana* and Claire de Duras' eponymous *Ourika* offer interesting case studies of impossible urbanization from Orient to Occident. Both women inhabit liminal spaces as foreigners who have been raised as members of French families, yet find themselves incapable of fully assimilating into society. Let us briefly consider these two women and their impossible urbanizations.

George Sand's 1832 *Indiana* traces the romantic exploits of Indiana, a French woman raised on the Ile Bourbon, off the coast of Madagascar. She has returned to France alongside her brutish husband, the Colonel Delmare, her longsuffering cousin Ralph, and is accompanied by her loyal servant Noun. In France, Indiana becomes embroiled in an affair with the eloquent rake Raymon. Eventually, her husband dies, Raymon reveals his perfidy, and a disgraced Indiana returns to the Ile Bourbon alongside Ralph, who at last declares his love and the two marry. Yet if Indiana moves freely between the exotic island of her birth and metropolitan France, her servant does not enjoy the same privileges. Noun too arrives in France and develops an affair with Raymon, yet her story ends in tragedy.

Noun is Indiana's double in many ways, having been brought up at her side and repeatedly referred to as her "soeur de lait," Indiana's sister by nature of having been nursed together. Imperialism, far from being the focus of the novel's intrigue, nevertheless supplies background geography and several important characters, and also furnishes a system of domination that orders all the characters, silencing some and letting others speak. Noun, the embodiment of the Ile Bourbon, is the exotic counterpart to Indiana's delicate beauty. She is described as

grande, forte, brillante de santé, vive, alerte, et pleine de sang créole  
ardent et passionné, [elle] effaçait de beaucoup, par sa beauté

resplendissante, la beauté pâle et frêle de madame Delmare ; mais la bonté de leur cœur et la force de leur attachement étouffaient entre elles tout sentiment de rivalité.<sup>104</sup>

Noun and Indiana stand as the romantic ideal of a possible relationship between colonizer and colonized, where bonds of love rather than domination bind the two together. This patronizing benevolence comes further into play when both the colonel Delmare and Ralph become aware of Noun's relationship with Raymon. The two discreetly say nothing, leaving Noun the romance that will ultimately claim her life.

Noun's affair with Raymon predates that of her mistress, and the narrator describes the tryst as one where the man exerted little effort to seduce the hot-blooded Creole woman: "Il l'avait abordée par désœuvrement peut-être, et le succès avait allumé ses désirs ; il avait obtenu plus qu'il n'avait demandé."<sup>105</sup> Raymon realizes that he is taking advantage of Noun, yet the devotion she bestows upon him lets him "se crut désormais justifié ... en continuant de creuser l'abîme où elle devait tomber."<sup>106</sup> In the passages describing their meetings in the woods, the narrator denies Noun a name and refers to her frequently as "the Creole," perhaps imitating Raymon's own perception of her as something he had a right to claim. After Raymon falls in love with Indiana, the narrator summarizes Raymon's love for Noun as nothing but a sensual response, whereas his love for Indiana consumed his entire soul.

Indiana leaves for Paris and Raymon pursues her, an urbanizing movement that Noun is powerless to emulate. Noun can be read as a perfect example of what Gayatri Spivak would term the "subaltern," someone "caught between detested superiors and feared natives" and maintaining a complex relationship with power, as both subordinate

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<sup>104</sup>George Sand, *Indiana* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 60.

<sup>105</sup> Sand, *Indiana*, 73.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

and resistant.<sup>107</sup> A native of the exotic homeland that lingers in the background of Sand's entire novel and contrasting sharply with the dark modernity of France, Noun's position as both inferior to her white masters, and yet a member of their intimate household leaves her with no clear basis of rights. Comments in the narration reveal that Noun accompanied Indiana on social outings, yet she remains subordinate to her mistress.

Whereas changes in language marked the urbanizing trajectories of Julien, Emma, Denise, and Gervaise, Noun is denied this linguistic advancement. The many letters of Indiana, Raymon, and Ralph appear fully transcribed in the text, yet the letter Noun sends Raymon after he ends their affair is notably absent. Using Indiana's paper, wax, and notably, her language, Noun writes a letter to Raymon that is described in dismay by the narrator as lacking even the most basic understanding of spelling and grammar:

Hélas ! La pauvre fille à demi sauvage de l'île Bourbon ignorait même qu'il y eût des règles à la langue. Elle croyait écrire et parler aussi bien que sa maîtresse, et, quand elle vit que Raymon ne revenait pas, elle se dit : "Ma lettre était pourtant bien faite pour le ramener."<sup>108</sup>

Noun's fumbling attempts at the French language only open her to ridicule and her words do not merit a place in the text.

Linguistic evolution is one of the lifestyle changes I have highlighted in a character's urbanization, along with changes in clothing, such as Julien's revolving jackets, Emma's constantly upgrading wardrobe, and even the garments that fill *Au Bonheur des Dames*. In this domain Noun is similarly thwarted. In a final effort to win back Raymon, Noun tries to impersonate Indiana, donning her clothes and jewels and enticing Raymon into her mistress' bedchamber. Raymon recognizes her by the way her

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<sup>107</sup> Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Ed. Vincent Leitch (New York: Norton, 2010), 2111.

<sup>108</sup> Sand, *Indiana*, 77.

larger, more sensual body cannot be contained by Indiana's dress yet still he accepts her, imagining it is Indiana the whole time.<sup>109</sup> Noun attempts to put on the clothing, language, and mannerisms of her colonizer to speak and seduce, but to no avail. After Raymon discards Noun definitively and turns to Indiana, Noun commits suicide. The first part of the book ends with Indiana fainting at the sight of her beloved servant floating in the river. Noun's "urbanization" between Oriental island and Occidental France failed, as she was denied the agency, language, and new demeanor required to urbanize.

We find a similar narrative in Claire de Duras' 1823 novella *Ourika*. The text draws inspiration from the journals of the Chevalier de Boufflers, and his gift of a young Senegalese girl to the wealthy Madame de B. Ourika grows as a member of the family, raised in all the graces of Parisian womanhood. The first-person narrative, structured as an confession made by the ailing Ourika to a doctor after cloistering herself in a convent, recounts the *prise de conscience* of her race, difference, and the impossibility of existing in Parisian white society.

Ourika knows herself to be beloved by Madame de B, professing "j'y passais ma vie, aimée d'elle, caressée, gâtée par tous ses amis, accablée de présents, vantée, exaltée comme l'enfant le plus spirituel et le plus aimable."<sup>110</sup> Yet even in this protective cocoon, with all the privileges of a Parisian young lady, Ourika is situated within an Othering construct. She is "vêtue à l'orientale" as she sits at the feet of her benefactor, listening to the conversation around her without entirely comprehending it.<sup>111</sup> While aware of her blackness, she is innocent of its connotation in her society. Madame de B, eager to parade

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>110</sup> Claire de Duras, *Ourika* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1994), 7.

<sup>111</sup> Duras, *Ourika*, 8.

Ourika's graceful dancing before her friends, organizes a ball wherein her charge performs a dance incarnating her birthplace:

Je devais représenter l'Afrique. On consulta les voyageurs, on feuilleta les livres de costumes, on lut des ouvrages savants sur la musique africaine, enfin on choisit une *Comba*, danse nationale de mon pays. Mon danseur mit un crêpe sur son visage: hélas! Je n'ai pas eu besoin d'en mettre sur le mien; mais je ne fis pas alors cette réflexion.<sup>112</sup>

Her joyful innocence soon dissipates. When Ourika overhears a conversation about the impossibility of a marriage equal to her station yet permissive of her race, she instantly sees herself as "négresse, dépendante, méprisée, sans fortune, sans appui."<sup>113</sup>

Ourika slowly begins to spiral towards despair and illness. Her despair comes not from innate distaste for her blackness, but from a deep anguish at her exclusion from marriage and motherhood. She laments: "Les liens de famille surtout me faisaient faire des retours bien douloureux sur moi-même, moi qui jamais ne devais être la soeur, la femme, la mère de personne!"<sup>114</sup> Here we must pause to analyze the geography of the text. Initially, Ourika is brought from Senegal to Paris and the home of Mme de B. Once her health begins to fail, they move to the outskirts of the city, and it is here that Ourika's feelings of isolation and despondency grow. Charles, Mme de B's grandson and Ourika's dearest friend, visits from Paris regularly, yet his visits grow shorter and less frequent as he falls in love with a Parisian heiress. Ourika feels the distance when he leaves her, feels her exile from Paris and her exclusion from his love as symbolic of her denial of any hope for marriage and family. In this liminal space, exiled from the Paris of her upbringing and the rural Senegal of her birth, neither black slave nor white socialite, Ourika suffers.

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Margaret Waller notes that Ourika “lacks the prerogative of mobility,”<sup>115</sup> and in imagining urbanization as a structure to understand movement between Orient and Occident, we see that Ourika is unable to urbanize. We can find in her failure an interesting contrast with the urbanization of Occidental subjects such as Emma Bovary or Denise Baudu. While Emma seemed largely uninterested in the traditional role of wife and mother, and Denise initially disregarded marriage in favor of pursuing work in the city, Ourika desperately longs to embrace the traditionally feminine pursuits of home and hearth. Her stymied movement comes not only from being cast out of society, but from being refused entrance into the same roles that other urbanizing women rejected. Ultimately, Ourika comes to view her feelings, and her love for Charles as a “passion criminelle... Ce désir de tenir ma place dans la chaîne des êtres, ce besoin des affections de la nature, cette douleur de l’isolement, c’étaient les regrets d’un amour coupable.”<sup>116</sup> Denied access to French urbanity and society, Ourika perishes.

The failure of Oriental subjects such as Noun and Ourika to carve out lives in France, not to mention their initial lack of choice in being brought to Occidental lands, shares an essential link with representations of cities in Orientalist literature. Both displaced Oriental women and the cities of the East are denied any agency in French fictional narratives and imagery. To mitigate the Oriental city’s threat to competitive modernity, Orientalists represented it as ancient or timeless. To preserve its mystery and allow themselves room for invention, they described it as chaotic and unreadable. To dampen its financial vitality, they filled it with antiquated markets peddling in exotic

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<sup>115</sup> Margaret Waller, introduction to Claire de Duras, *Ourika*, xv.

<sup>116</sup> Duras, *Ourika*, 41.

slaves. To render it imminently conquerable, they embodied it as a sexualized, yet submissive, feminine persona. In response to this urban space that threatens Western dominance and avoids clear understanding, French authors and artists invented their own sparkling Eastern cities. Finally, they deny the movement and immigration that typified nineteenth-century France to extend to those who pass between Orient and Occident.

In French urban migration and evolution, the binary between city and country allowed us to map the conflicting identities, economies, and powers of the nation. As characters urbanized, their accession of agency upset established orders and revealed evolutions in gender norms, language, and commerce, as well as problematized the entire discourse of urban planning and renewal. But when this binary is transposed onto France's imperial agenda, we find not a parallel experience, but a desire to recreate the Eastern city and obscure all in it that could provoke Western anxieties. The cartographies of power discussed in earlier chapters shift, reimagining the entire Occidental space as urban, and reinventing the Oriental city so it may never challenge this geography.



## Conclusion: The General Struggle

In the final book of Proust's *À la Recherche du temps perdu*, the narrator returns to Paris during the First World War. He finds the city transformed, a Paris "bien différent" from the one he last saw at the war's onset. The social structures that defined Parisian society for the entire oeuvre have shifted, the Verdurins ascending to power in the new society. The narrator walks the city in darkness several times throughout *Le Temps retrouvé*, wartime restrictions on nocturnal light rendering it "encore plus noir que n'était le Combray de mon enfance... Et même d'autres éléments de nature qui n'existaient pas jusque-là à Paris faisaient croire qu'on venait, descendant du train, d'arriver pour les vacances en pleine campagne."<sup>1</sup> The narrator's description evokes a spectral image of Paris darkened and returned to nature, reflecting a shift in perception of the city in the twentieth century. The "long nineteenth-century" finally draws to a close with the outbreak of World War I,<sup>2</sup> and Proust's work marks a *passerelle* between the literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>3</sup>

It is fitting that this study that opened with Eugène de Rastignac's passionate challenge to Paris ends with Proust's narrator silently walking darkened streets. The "age of great cities" that Robert Vaughn christened has metamorphosed into something different, into an age where these same great cities experience destruction and occupation. Urbanization defined the narrative of nineteenth-century France, describing

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<sup>1</sup> Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 42.

<sup>2</sup> The concept of the "long nineteenth century" is defined by Eric Hobsbawm as stretching from 1789 to 1914. Hobsbawm explores his analysis in the trilogy of works entitled *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848*, *The Age of Capital: 1848-1875*, and *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914*.

<sup>3</sup> This is the major thesis of Antoine Compagnon in *Proust entre deux siècles*, where Compagnon explores the paradoxical position of Proust's work as bridging not only two historical eras, but two aesthetic and structural literary approaches.

economic and demographic growth, and offering a framework to understand larger shifts in French society. The preceding chapters have explored how the process of characters pursuing urbanization upsets established power structures embodied by the country and the city and forces conflicts that represent the competing authorities and ideologies of nineteenth century France. Characters who transition from rural to urban states (geographic and actual, or interior and moral), force confrontations between a whole series of power constructs embodied by the country and city. Their evolution allows us to explore a reshuffling of authority, reality, language, and gender in nineteenth-century France. From the literal urbanization of Julien Sorel in *Le Rouge et le Noir*, to the moral urbanization of Emma Bovary in *Madame Bovary*, to the transformations of Denise and Gervaise in *Au Bonheur de dames* and *L'Assommoir*, to the forbidden urbanizations of Noun in *Indiana* and Ourika in *Ourika*, and the Eastern city reimaged in *Aziyadé* and *Salammbô*, I have shown how actual rural and urban geographies become cartographies of power wherein the country and city communicate an entire set of forces competing for agency.

Yet what happens as we move beyond the nineteenth-century? What becomes of the narrative of urbanization? Proust's darkened streets and the similarities the narrator finds with the countryside are symbolic, not of an absence of cities and urbanization in novels following the nineteenth-century, but of a decisive shift. Raymond Williams argues that the focus on the city and the country changes in the twentieth century, with narratives searching out other signifiers to represent competing powers.<sup>4</sup> Eugen Weber concurs, and posits that by the dawn of the first World War, there had been "a change that represents in retrospect the great cultural event of the time: the end of a profound

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<sup>4</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 284.

division of the mind [due to] to the rural world's increasing intercourse with the urban world."<sup>5</sup> Weber surmises that the long nineteenth century ends with France's peasants becoming Frenchmen, the steady course of urbanization complete and the country imbued with many aspects of French urbanity.

Marie-Claire Bancquart views even the myth of Paris as fixed in the nineteenth-century and diminished in subsequent years:

Les écrivains qui montent aux tours de Notre-Dame n'ont plus le regard de Victor Hugo ; ceux qui se trouvent devant le Panthéon ne pensent plus comme Michelet. Paris a cessé d'être un grand corps, un vaisseau, une conscience collective ; plus encore, il a cessé d'offrir aux individus la possibilité de projeter en lui leurs désirs, et de les sublimer en un mythe harmonieux.<sup>6</sup>

Bancquart notes a literary drifting away from Paris towards the end of the nineteenth century, such as Zola who "dit adieu aussi à une ville, maîtresse malaisément domptée, avec laquelle il vit depuis vingt ans," and turns instead towards "une autre œuvre...utopique et campagnarde."<sup>7</sup> Whereas Bancquart views a sort of disintegration of an urban aura, Lewis Mumford laments what he views as the "Megalopolis" which emerges as unchecked urbanization in the twentieth century, the "last stage in the classic cycle of civilization, before its complete disruption and downfall."<sup>8</sup> He views twentieth-century cities as reflecting a "deep contempt for organic processes that involve maintaining the complex partnership of all organic forms, in an environment favorable to life in all its manifestations."<sup>9</sup> On a less pessimistic note, Michel Max Raynaud maintains that it is not necessarily that urbanization ceased in later centuries, but that the nineteenth

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<sup>5</sup> Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 495.

<sup>6</sup> Bancquart, *Paris "Fin-de-siècle,"* 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>8</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 525.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 527.

century is a unique moment where the novel and the city metamorphose in tandem: “il y a une véritable osmose qui aboutit à l’invention réciproque d’un regard et d’un geste.”<sup>10</sup>

The two diverge in the twentieth century, but do not disappear.

While they differ on what happens in the twentieth century, socio-critics agree on a unique focus of urbanization within the nineteenth century, in spite of the fact that there of course remain rural populations and city renewal in the twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries. Of the twentieth century Williams explains:

This social character of the city – its transitoriness, its unexpectedness, its essential and exciting isolation and procession of men and events – was seen as the reality of all human life. ... There might still be a contrast of the city with the country, drawing on the older senses of rural settlement and innocence. But the contrast would work the other way: of consciousness with ignorance; of vitality with routine; of the present and actual with the past or the lost. City experience was now becoming so widespread, and writers, disproportionately, were so deeply involved in it that there seemed little reality in any other mode of life.<sup>11</sup>

The culmination of urbanization was not that every citizen achieved urbanity, but that, as Williams finds in the twentieth century, the urban experience proved the ubiquitous and assumed common experience. Williams goes on to explain,

Struggle, indifference, loss of purpose, loss of meaning – features of nineteenth-century social experience and of a common interpretation of the new scientific worldview have found, in the City, a habitation and a name. For the city is not only, in this vision, a form of modern life; it is the physical embodiment of a decisive modern consciousness.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas the city and the country exist in nineteenth-century literature to embody competing ideologies and authorities clashing in France’s urbanizing process, this conflict appears, if not resolved, then displaced in the twentieth century, leaving us a city embodying the modern consciousness.

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<sup>10</sup> Raynaud, “À nous deux... la ville,” 39.

<sup>11</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 234.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

If urbanization does not furnish the dominant framework for understanding evolution and confrontation in twentieth century novels, then what vestiges remain? James Donald writes of the twentieth century as haunted, an idea proposed first by Jacques Derrida as the *spectre*, the “elusive pseudo-materiality” that haunts everyday life.<sup>13</sup> T.S. Eliot tied this loss of meaning in the city and sensation of haunting to a loss of faith as “the city, it seemed, was what man had made without God.”<sup>14</sup> This foreboding absence gains historical credence when we consider the way the urban space manifests the atrocities of the twentieth century. The darkened streets that Proust’s narrator walks remind us of the cruel wars that marked Paris, London, and other European urban centers during the twentieth century, the city testifying to layers of construction and destruction. We see this in Céline’s 1932 *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, where the city is omnipresent in Bardamu’s voyages, be it Paris, New York, Toulouse, or Detroit. The forests and villages ravaged by war, Céline rejects any remnant of urban idealism. Similarly, in twentieth century cinema, the city becomes a “fragmentary experience....especially in film which as a medium contains much of the intrinsic movement.”<sup>15</sup> Consider for example works like Jean Rouch’s film 1962 *Chronique d’un été*. In one notable scene, a woman named Marceline reflects on her deportation during the Second World War. The camera pans backwards and we receive Marceline’s story framed by the cavernous walls of Les Halles market, built during the reign of Philippe-Auguste and later modernized in the 1850’s. The market was demolished in 1970 and replaced with a shopping mall and gardens. Thus, the city recorded by Rouch’s film is haunted first by the Parisian deportation as recounted by Marceline, and secondly, to the modern viewer, by our own knowledge that

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<sup>13</sup> Donald, *Imagining the Modern City*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 240.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

the walls which framed her testimony in the film were soon to be destroyed. In the twentieth century, the urban space appears haunted by its own history.

In his writings about Barcelona, city-planner and urban theorist Idelfonso Cerdà claimed that “l’histoire de l’urbanisation est donc l’histoire de l’homme.”<sup>16</sup> The preceding chapters have all explored the ways not only that urbanization allows us to frame the human story, but how it forces conflicts that defined human experience in nineteenth-century France. The individual stories of Julien, Emma, Denise, Gervaise, Aziyadé, Salammbô, Ourika, and Noun moving between and inhabiting rural and urban spaces calls into question existing notions of gender, identity, and reality. If Cerdà is correct, this story cannot definitively end with the passing of the nineteenth century. Urbanization might recede from focus, as changes in urban conception render this narrative less dynamic. The city and the country might cease to incarnate the major oppositions reshaping society. But they will ever persist as key markers in human experience. Mumford claimed that the city is “the best organ of memory man has yet created,”<sup>17</sup> one “capable of transmitting a complex culture from generation to generation, for it marshaled together not only the physical means but the human agents needed to pass on and enlarge this heritage.”<sup>18</sup> This heritage does not end with the nineteenth century, though we see it change. In the final pages of *The Country and the City*, Williams discusses the dissipation of the literary focus on the conflict between rurality and urbanity in the early twentieth century: “Neither will the city save the country nor the country the city. Rather the long struggle within both will become a general struggle, as

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<sup>16</sup> Idelfonso Cerdà, *La Théorie Générale de L’urbanisation*, (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 87.

<sup>17</sup> Mumford, *The City in History*, 562.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 569.

in a sense it has always been.”<sup>19</sup> The nineteenth century provided a moment where this general struggle, of Old against New, man against woman, rich against poor, real against imaginary, nation against nation, assumed the guise of urbanization, the country and the city forced into a conflict that would ultimately reshape them both.

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<sup>19</sup> Williams, *The Country and the City*, 301.

## Appendix of Images

### *Images from Chapter 3*



Figure 3.1. Claude Monet, *La Gare Saint Lazare*, 1877. Oil on Canvas, 80 x 98 in. Musée D'Orsay. Available from <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/claude-monet-la-gare-saint-lazare>.



Figure 3.3. Gustave Caillebotte, *Paris, A Rainy Day*, 1877. 212 x 276. Oil on Canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Available from Art Institute of Chicago.





Figure 3.2. August Renoir, *The Grand Boulevards*, 1875. 50 x 61 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Henry P. McIlhenny Collection. Available from Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Figure 3.4. Gustave Caillebotte, *View Through a Balcony Grill*, 1880. Oil on canvas, 65.6 cm x 54.9 cm. Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. Available from the Van Gogh Museum.



Figure 3.5. Edward Manet, *Concert in the Tuilleries*, 1862. Oil on canvas, 118.1 x 76.2 cm. National Gallery, London. Available from WikiArt.



Figure 3.6. Claude Monet, *Woman with Parasol*, 1875. 100 x 81 cm. Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Available from the National Gallery of Art.





Figure 3.7. Edgar Degas, *The Millinery Shop*, 1879/86. Oil on canvas. 39 3/8 x 43 9/16 in. The Art Institute of Chicago. Available from The Art Institute of Chicago.

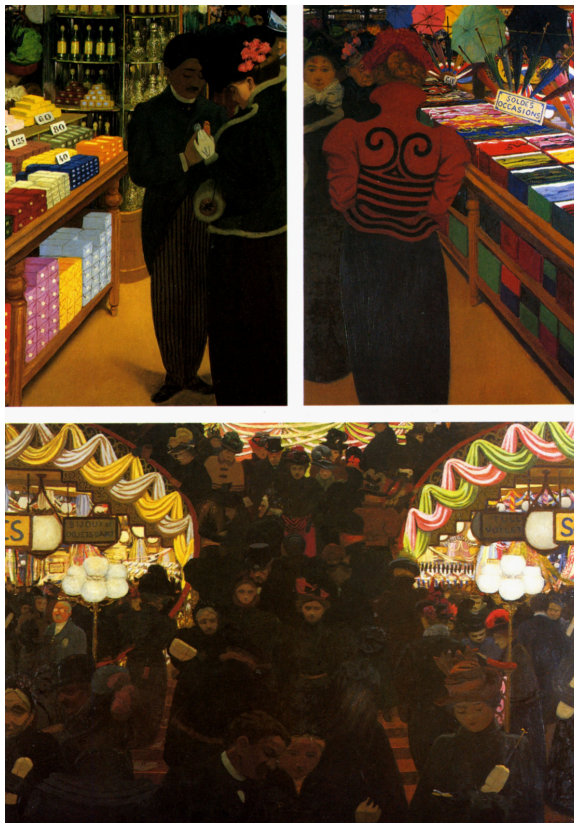


Figure 3.8. Félix Vallotton, *Le Bon Marché*, 1898. Triptych, oil on board, 70 x 50 cm, 70 x 50 cm, 70 x 100 cm. Private collection. Available from WikiArt.



Figure 3.9. Félix Vallotton, *Le Bon Marché*, 1893. Woodcut on wove paper. 7 15/16 x 10 1/4 in. Brooklyn Museum, Henry L. Battenman Fund. Available from Brooklyn Museum.



Figure 3.10. Jean-Alexis Rouchon, *Au Paradis des Dames*, 1856. Poster. 145 x 103 cm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Available from <http://multimedia.bnf.fr/visiterichelieu/grand/est10.htm>.



*Images from Chapter 5*

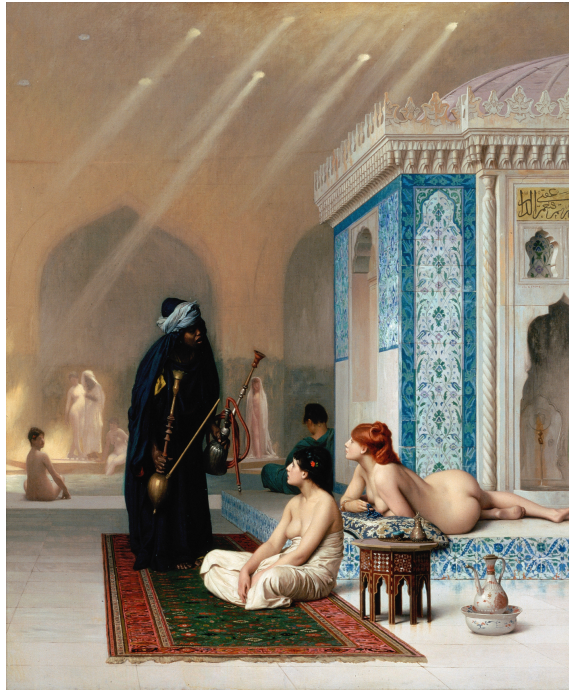


Figure 5.1. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Pool in a Harem*. 1876. Oil on canvas. 28.9 × 24.4 in. Hermitage Museum. Available from Wikimedia commons.



Figure 5.2. Prosper Marilhat. *Ruins of El Hakem Mosque, Cairo*. 1840. Oil on canvas. .85 meter x 1.31 meter. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Available from Wikimedia commons.



Figure 5.3. Prosper Marilhat. *View of the South of the necropolis in Cairo with the Citadel in the Background*. 1839. Oil on canvas. 33.5 x 51.9 in. Available from Artnet.



Figure 5.4. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *View of Cairo*. Not dated. Oil on canvas. Available from Wikiart.





Figure 5.5. Rodolphe Ernst. *Women on a Terrace in Morocco*. c.1880. Oil on panel. 28 x 36.25 in. Gallery of Koeps, Geneva. From *Women as Portrayed in Orientalist Painting*.



Figure 5.6. Alexandre-Gabriel Descamps. *Job and His Friends*. c. 1853. Oil on Canvas. 47x33 3/4 in. The Minneapolis Institute of Art. Available from Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 5.7. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Snake Charmer*. Late 1860's. Oil on canvas. 32 3/8 x 47 5/8 in. Williamstown, Massachusetes, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. Available from Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 5.8. Benjamin Constant. *The Scarf Dance*. Oil on canvas. 24 x 39.5 in. Poughkeepsie, New York, Vassar College Art Gallery. Available from Vassar College Art Gallery.





Figure 5.9. Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte de Noüy. *The Dream (The Dream of Khosru)*. 1874. Oil on canvas. 15.5 × 25.7 in. Cleveland Museum of Art. Available from Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 5.10. Alexandre-Gabriel Descamps. *Oriental Night Scene*. c. 1836. Oil on canvas. 23 13/16 × 20 3/16 inches Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection. Available from Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Figure 5.11. Eugène Delacroix. *Street in Meknes*. 1832. Oil on canvas. 18 1/4 x 25 1/4 in. Buffalo, Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Available from the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.



Figure 5.12. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Dance of the Almeh*. 1863. Oil on wood panel. 19 3/4 x 32 in. The Dayton Art Institute. Available from Research Gate.





Figure 3.3. Gustave Caillebotte, *Paris, A Rainy Day*, 1877. 212 x 276. Oil on Canvas. The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago. Available from the Art Institute of Chicago.



Figure 5.14. August Renoir. *Pont Neuf, Paris*. 1872. Oil on canvas. 29 5/8 x 36 7/8 in. National Gallery of Art. Available from National Gallery of Art.



Figure 5.15. Camille Pissarro, *Boulevard des Italiens, Morning, Sunlight*. 1897. Oil on canvas, 28 13/16 x 36 1/4 in. National Gallery of Art. Available from National Gallery of Art.



Figure 5.16. Félicx Ziem. *Fantaisie sur le Bosphore*. Oil on Canvas. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Marseille. Available from Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 5.17. Félix Ziem, *Constantinople*. c. 1860. Oil on canvas. 15.6 × 25.4 in. National Museum in Warsaw. Available from Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 5.18. Ahmet Ziya Akbulut (1869-1938). *Mosque of Mihrimah Sulan in Üsküdar*. Oil on canvas. 100 x 80.5 cm. Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Museum of Painting and Sculpture. Available from Turkishpaintings.com.



Figure 5.19. Ahmet, *Impressions from Şehzadebaşı*. End of nineteenth century. Oil on canvas. 75 x 101 cm. Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Museum of Painting and Sculpture. Available from *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism*.



Figure 5.20. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *The Slave Market*. 1871. Oil on canvas. 29.5 × 23.5 in. Cincinnati Art Museum. Available from Wikimedia Commons.



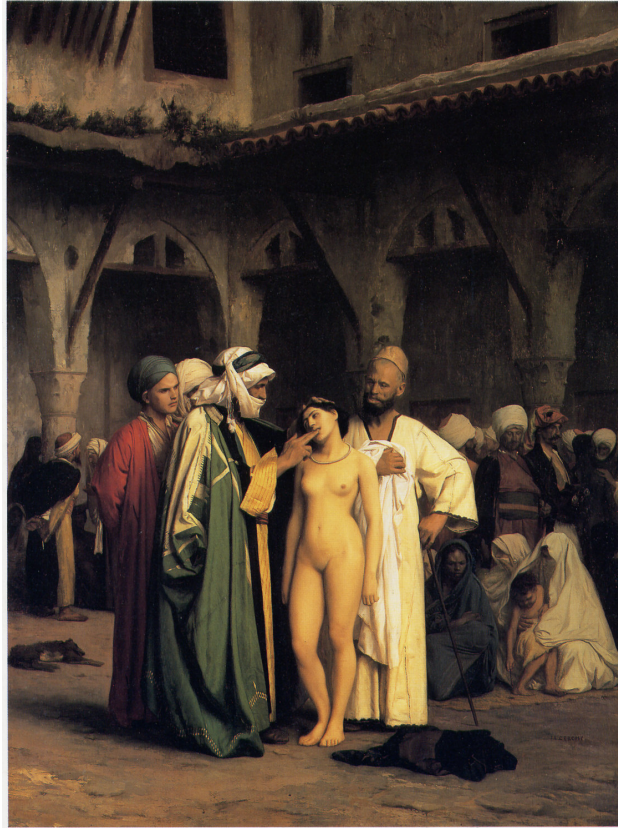


Figure 5.21. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *The Slave Market*. 1866. Oil on canvas. 33 5/16 x 24 15/16 in. Williamstown, Massachusetes, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute. Available from WikiArt.



Figure 5.22. Alberto Pasini. *Market Day in Constantinople*. 1877. Oil on canvas, Berkshire Museum. Available from Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 5.23. Alberto Pasini. *Market in Constantinople*. 1868. Oil on canvas. 23.5 x 40 cm. Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza. Available from Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza.

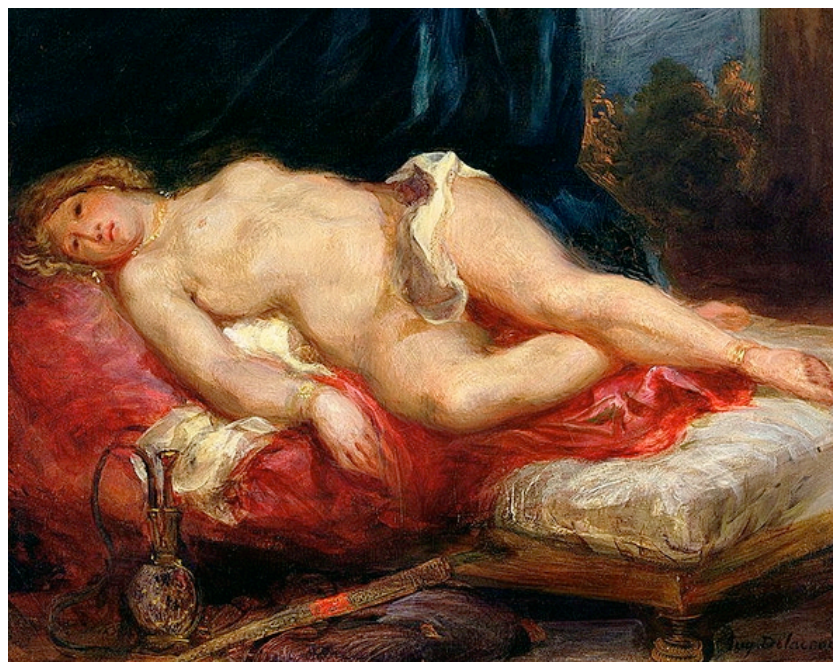


Figure 5.24. Eugène Delacroix. *Odalisque Allongé sur un divan*. 1827-28. Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. Available from Wikiart.org.





Figure 5.25. Léon François Comerre. *Odalisque au Narghilé*. Not dated. Oil on canvas. 21¾ x 32¼ in. Available from [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com).

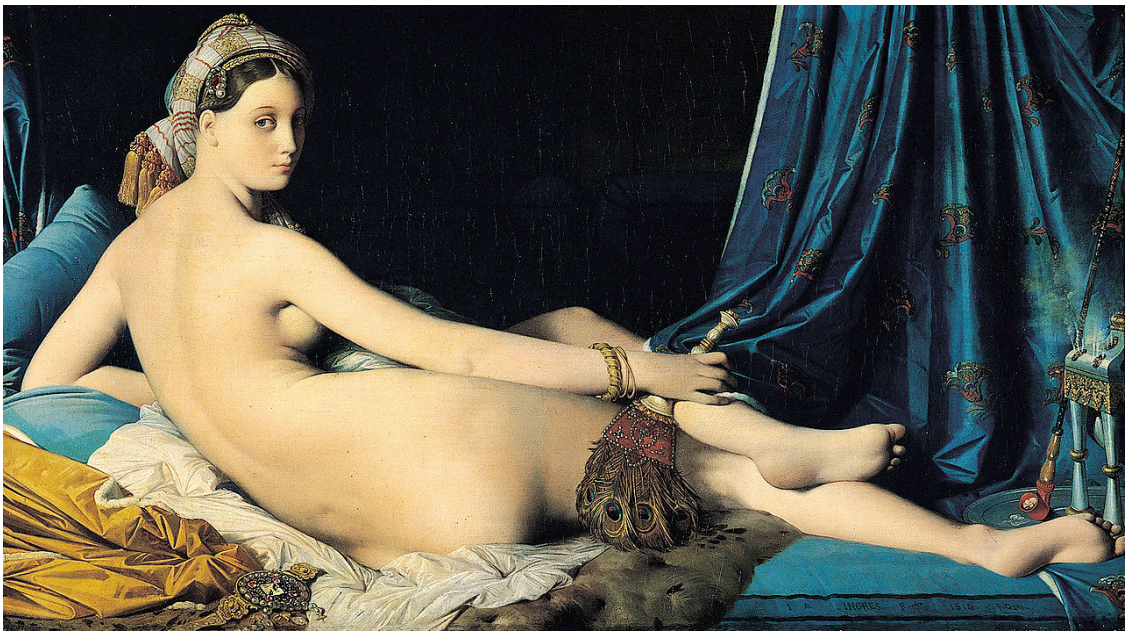


Figure 5.26. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. *Grand Odalisque*. 1814. Oil on canvas. 35.8 x 63.8 in. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Available from Wikimedia Commons.





Figure 5.27. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. *Odalisque à l'esclave*. 1842. Oil on fabric. 30 x 41.5 in. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore. Available from Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 5.28. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Bashi-Bazouk Singing*. 1868. oil on canvas, 46.3 x 66 cm. Walters Gallery, Baltimore, MD. Available from the Walters Gallery.



Figure 5.29. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Arnaut Smoking*. 1865. Oil on panel. 36.5 x 25.4 cm. Available from [www.jeanleongerome.org](http://www.jeanleongerome.org).



Figure 5.30. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Bashi-Bazouk Chieftain*. 1881. Oil canvas. 59.7 x 72.4 cm. Available WikiArt.





Figure 5.31. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Markos Botsaris*. 1874. Oil on canvas. Available from WikiArt.



Figure 5.32. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *The Narghile Lighter*. Oil on canvas. 21.5 x 26 in. Gallery Keops, Geneva. Available from Wikimedia Commons.

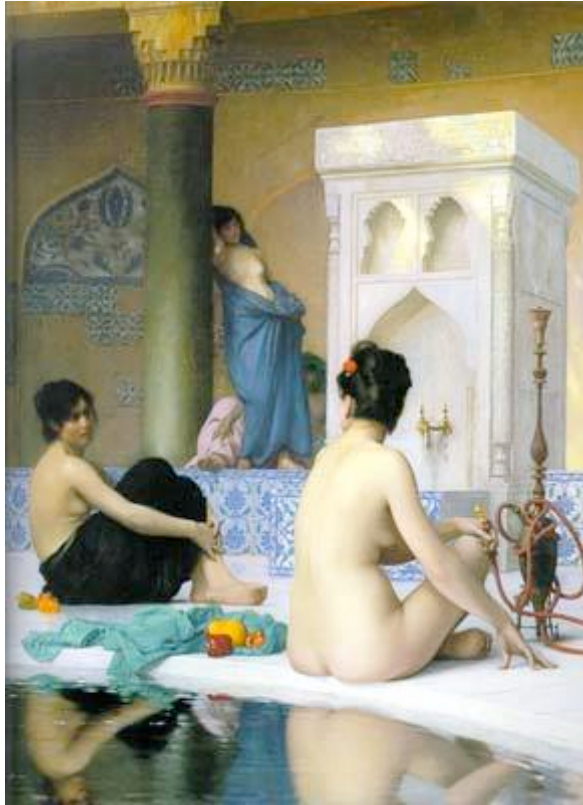


Figure 5.33. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *After the Bath*. Mid-nineteenth century. Oil on canvas. 32.5 × 26.3 in. Available from Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 5.34. Jean-Léon Gérôme. *Bath in the Harem*. Mid-nineteenth century. Oil on canvas. 31.89 x 39.37 in. Available from <http://www.jeanleongerome.org/>.

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