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"Mademoiselle De Maupin": A Close Reading and Study of the Process of Subjectivity in Theophile Gautier's Early Nineteenth Century Novel.

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“Mademoiselle de Maupin”: A close reading and study of the process of subjectivity in Théophile Gautier’s early nineteenth century novel

TeBeau, Rebecca Lucille, Ph.D.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1992

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MADemoiselle de Maupin: A CLOSE READING AND
STUDY OF THE PROCESS OF SUBJECTIVITY
IN THEOPHILE GAUTIER'S EARLY
NINETEENTH CENTURY NOVEL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of French and Italian

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes a close reading of Théophile Gautier's Mademoiselle de Maupin. The purpose of this reading is to explore subjectivity by first assuming that it is a process, enacted by the protagonist's explorations of their own identities, but not an object contained in their elaborations. This view of subjectivity implies both the representational strategies of the protagonists, as well as the narrative strategies of the text. Since Mademoiselle de Maupin's narrative structure is so inconsistent and self-conscious, the explorations of self within the text draw attention to both the fiction of identity and the "identity" of fiction as a continually (re)enacted process (subjectivity).

This conception of subjectivity builds on the collaborative works of Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus. They describe subjectivity as a structural elusiveness which constantly (re)forms itself and which cannot reside in representation, or indeed in any one structure. This conception of subjectivity is the result of a re-evaluation of desire as a positive force visible only through the connections it makes and breaks.

The structural elusiveness of Mademoiselle de Maupin manifests itself in a narrative and representational multiplicity. This multiplicity liberates the voices of the novel to the extent that they are free to question (enact)

the ambiguities and uncertainties of structural
(representational) identity. This query is then enlarged to
embrace the uncertainties of the poetic project as it was
being re-thought at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

INTRODUCTION

In 1834, Theophile Gautier published his first novel, Mademoiselle de Maupin. Its preface was a trenchant attack upon bourgeois literary readers and critics who enforced what Gautier believed (along with his generation) to be misguided utilitarian notions of art and artistic purpose. His preface asserted that beauty's (or art's) first and only duty was to serve itself and not the society in which it circulated. "Art for art's sake" was the slogan he employed to elaborate his ideas on the artist's liberation from servitude to public and/or critical expectations.

It is not surprising, then, that Mademoiselle de Maupin should reject conventionally linear form and a clearly developed moral message by proceeding in a disjointed and somewhat jumbled fashion. The intention to experiment, having been clearly announced, is then clearly manifest in the novel. Gautier freely uses several generic forms to advance the narrative rather than adopting one alone. He introduces parallel narratives which co-exist while resisting integration and he refuses to establish a privileged or central point of view to guide the reader as would be the case in a more conventional narrative.

For all this implied confusion, Mademoiselle de Maupin's plot is readily discernable. It combines the narratives of two central characters (d'Albert and Madeleine) who encounter each other through their mutual association with a third character (Rosette). First is the

story of d'Albert. He is an alienated young would-be-poet, who, we learn through his letters to a friend, is searching for a mistress, a woman who might embody his ideals of love and beauty.

This search leads him momentarily to Rosette, a recently widowed (our third character who does not narrate her own story). D'Albert's affair with Rosette proves torrid, but ultimately disappointing. She does not embody his ideals but, since the arrangement is convenient, he remains with her despite reservations. Rosette invites d'Albert to retire to her country chateau for a change of scenery with other guests. There he meets a dashing young man, Théodore de Sérannes, an acquaintance of Rosette's, to whom d'Albert is immediately drawn. The young man seems to conform to d'Albert's ideals of beauty. It vexes d'Albert to have found his ideal embodied in the wrong gender.

An abrupt narrative shift introduces a new set of letters, those of Madeleine de Maupin, who is disguised as none other than the dashing young Théodore de Sérannes. While Madeleine describes the chain of events marking her transformation from young woman to young man to her own letter correspondent, d'Albert's continuing letters describe his increasing attraction to the enigmatic young Théodore/Madeleine.

Théodore/Madeleine's presence at the chateau proves troubling to both d'Albert and Rosette. D'Albert is troubled by his attraction to another man, while Rosette had

always been in love with Théodore/Madeleine and is troubled by her inability to make Théodore/Madeleine return her love.

A certain amount of conventional comedy ensues because of this situation, and then a pivotal event reveals Madeleine's disguise to d'Albert. An amateur production of Shakespeare's As You Like It finds Théodore playing Shakespeare's Rosalinde and makes a relieved d'Albert believe that his ideal is attainable after all. Théodore becomes an obscured sign of the Ideal for d'Albert and when he sees Théodore dressed as Shakespeare's Rosalinde, he believes that he is seeing her as she truly is, as unobscured beauty. D'Albert finally takes the initiative to write to Madeleine and confess his feelings for her and his desire for a union.

Théodore/Madeleine is in the unique position of knowing that both d'Albert and Rosette love her. In fact, she knew even before they did themselves. Her original quest was to disguise herself as a man in order to "know" men as men do, and to better evaluate any man's capacity to love a woman. What she learns is ambiguous so she "settles" for sexual initiation; in this way at least, to know the pleasure a man can give. She decides to "oblige" d'Albert's desire for sexual union with her. After having made love to d'Albert, she leaves him while he sleeps, to seek out Rosette. She intends to leave the chateau and feels she owes Rosette an explanation. Their encounter is not described, but the narrator suggests that Madeleine's sexual initiation did not

confine itself to d'Albert. The novel ends with Madeleine's farewell letter to d'Albert. It is not known where Madeleine goes and neither d'Albert's nor Rosette's reactions to her departure are recounted.

Although this first novel of Gautier's is perhaps the best known and most often studied, it does not enjoy a prominent position amongst nineteenth century texts. This is unfortunate for a novel which Rosemary Lloyd rightfully claims "stands at the heart of nineteenth century aesthetic thinking."¹ The failure of this text to garner the full attention it deserves may be attributable to its elusive narrative structure.

This structural elusiveness is the main critical topic most often addressed in studies of Mademoiselle de Maupin as well as in other works by Gautier. Adolphe Boschot states in his introduction to an edition of Mademoiselle de Maupin that the novel "n'a rien d'un roman régulier, construit, charpenté, strictement confectionnée par un spécialiste." Pierre Albouy says that the novel is "tout encombré de contradictions mal démêlées," while René Jasinski remarks of Gautier, "myope, Théophile avait peine à ordonner les masses, à ménager les valeurs." Arne Schnack goes so far as to say that "le discours de Mademoiselle de Maupin me semble en quelque sorte mensonger en ce sens que l'exaltation ostentatoire de la beauté matérielle et tout extérieure dissimule une inquiétude des profondeurs qui jure sensiblement avec les "thèses" du roman." Poulet praises

Gautier's visual clarity but qualifies it by remarking that "ce gain correspond une perte. Ce que le thème gagne en netteté, il le perd en poésie. La netteté supprime les ombres et escamote la profondeur."

The lack of structure felt everywhere by critics of Gautier's work often provokes the assumption that there is a corresponding lack of depth or expertise in Gautier's work, as Jacquemin observes, "le regard vers l'ombre trop épaisse, comme vers la lumière trop vive, fait mal; c'est cette trace qui chemine sourdement dans l'oeuvre de Gautier, à qui il ne reste d'autre issue que les prestiges du verbe." Anne Bouchard characterizes Mademoiselle de Maupin as "le moins composite qui a d'emblée déconcerté la critique" and André Gide has an even harsher judgement to levy against Gautier, calling him "l'artisan le plus sec, le moins musicien, le moins médiatif que notre littérature ait produit."²

The resistance in Gautier to "commit himself" to a consistent narrative approach in Mademoiselle de Maupin and elsewhere in his work, has contributed to a similar lack of commitment on the part of critics to accept the challenge Gautier's narrative complexity poses. It is just this narrative elusiveness that defines this novel's importance to any understanding of nineteenth century aesthetics. As Lloyd further points out:

It is part of the novel's challenge to the reader that it abounds in hints that Gautier, through gentle mockery and irony, is distancing himself and us from the male protagonist and using the

novel to debate questions of love and aesthetics, rather than to set down a fixed code.³

Gautier's insistence on privileging the first person singular in compatible narrative forms sets up a complex internal dialogue between the characters as well as the narrative forms. This, coupled with a resistance to privileging one voice over another, and severely reducing the unifying role of the narrator, frees the dialogue to explore its own uncertainties about identity and aesthetics.

The initial search for personal identity through love, implicit in the narrative arrangements of the text, broadens to embrace larger questions of art and artifice as they become problematic within the search for identity. "We are challenged," Lloyd states, "to see the characters and their acts as allegories for the fictional act itself."⁴ As such, it is clear that the "search" or "exploration" of identity becomes more of an exploration of how identity is represented, or, more to the point, how representation is performed in reality and in art. We are led to suspect that the process is similar in both realms and this suspicion disorients the text, preventing it from speaking unambiguously on either reality or art.

With this insistence on process over product, an emphasis on the "how" rather than on the "what", in the text, I propose a close reading of subjectivity in Mademoiselle de Maupin. Subjectivity is understood as the process (the "how") that informs the production (or

construction) and exploration of identity (of self, of art). It is further understood, in my approach to the text, that subjectivity is desire, or the motivating force(s) which seem to link designating form (generic and/or representational) to signifying content (organized and organizing thematic tendencies or motifs) thereby "representing" that which representation seems unable to grasp, namely, its own desire. The narrative arrangements, in all of their discontinuity, seem collectively to represent the dynamics of desire (subjectivity) in the novel.

This study of subjectivity in Mademoiselle de Maupin, through a close reading, seems particularly well suited to the novel, since the novel's shifting narrative arrangements draw so much attention to its own processes of discovery and articulation on all levels. The claim that this novel "stands at the heart of nineteenth century aesthetics" (see note 1) can be demonstrated best by showing how the novel speaks to and of the issues and concerns of nineteenth century aesthetics. This task is already inscribed in the text. The novel raises these issues by first questioning its own status as art.

In chapter one of this dissertation, I will explain in greater detail the assumptions that frame my critical approach to the novel. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the epistolary, as the main generic frame of the text, followed by the first part of my reading of

Mademoiselle de Maupin. This discussion will embrace the first five chapters (epistles) of the novel and trace the establishment of its major themes and representational strategies.

In chapter two, the continuation of my reading will focus on chapters six through ten of the novel. This will involve a discussion of the first and most significant narrative shift, which is enacted by an unidentified narrator. Also, the introduction of the second protagonist's letters (Madeleine) is discussed as well as the importance of theatricality to the novel.

In chapter three, I complete my reading of the novel, discussing chapters eleven through seventeen. In these novel chapters, the two separate epistolary narratives "catch up" to each other in a present time shared by both before ending all together. It is also in these chapter that Shakespeare's play, As You Like It, "solves" the enigma of Madeleine's true gender for d'Albert.

In chapter four, a re-capitulation of my reading of the novel will be followed by a further critical discussion of subjectivity and the conclusions I have reached concerning the relationship between subjectivity and the narrative and thematic arrangements of the text. A conclusion resumes the importance of Mademoiselle de Maupin in nineteenth century studies.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Rosemary Lloyd, "Re-reading Mademoiselle de Maupin," Orbis Litterarum, 1986, 41, 19-32, p.19

2. Adolphe Boschot, Introduction to Mademoiselle de Maupin, Paris: Garnier, 1966, p.xxiv; Pierre Albouy, "Le Mythe de l'androgynisme dans Mademoiselle de Maupin," Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, LXXII, 4, Juillet/Aout, 1972, pp.600-608, p.608; René Jasinski, Les années romantiques de Théophile Gautier, Paris, 1929, p.315; Arne Schnack, "Surface et profondeur dans Mademoiselle de Maupin," Orbis Litterarum, 1981, 36, 28-36, p.29; Georges Poulet, Trois essais de mythologie romantique, Paris, 1971, p.111; Georges Jacquemin, "Théophile Gautier ou la peur de l'ombre," Marche Romane, 19, 1969, 129-134, p.134; Anne Bouchard, "Le Masque et le Miroir dans Mademoiselle de Maupin," Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, 72, no.4, July/August, 1972, 583-599, p.584; André Gide, Incidences, Paris, Gallimard, 1924, p.159.

3. Ibid., p.19

4. Rosemary Lloyd, "Speculum Amantis, Speculum Artis: The Seduction of Mademoiselle de Maupin," Nineteenth Century French Studies, 1986/87 Fall/Winter; 15 (1-2): 77-86, p.80

CHAPTER 1: READING THE FIRST FIVE CHAPTERS OF
MADemoISELLE DE MAUPIN

Critical Approach

In his reading of Gautier's last published novel, Spirite, Ross Chambers calls the novel an allegory of literary inspiration and a variant of the myth of the Muse.¹ It seems fitting, therefore, and aesthetically pleasing in the light of such an epiphany in Gautier's last novel, to call his very first novel, Mademoiselle de Maupin, an allegory of literary performance and, in the context of this discussion, an allegory of the production of subjectivity.

Mademoiselle de Maupin is a novel particularly determined by its emphasis on process rather than product. Notorious for its apparent lack of coherence, generically, thematically and representationally, the novel is often thought to lack depth. In fact, Mademoiselle de Maupin is rather tightly constructed and very coherent though its coherence is subtle and not chronologically or linearly constructed.

The novel organizes itself around self-generating discourses through the presentation of characters who write themselves in order to understand themselves. In so doing, the novel plays out the complexities of subjectivity, subject, subjects and representation, how they proceed through and in spite of the obstacles of composition. The novel's insistence on and interest in its own construction

and orchestration lends itself quite easily to a study of the production of subjectivity both in form and content.

Mademoiselle de Maupin is, superficially, about people searching for an understanding of their own identities by documenting and exploring their desires and experiences. As such, the formal arrangements reflect the narrative content in a unique way. A self-consciousness pervades the novel on several levels which questions, particularly, the processes by which one constructs art and identity. The point of departure and the ultimate goal of the search are gingerly posited in favor of all the terrain that lies between these two points. Consequently, the overall construction of the novel is choppy and discontinuous, an arrangement which reflects a reality more keenly felt than clearly understood.

Formally, Gautier limited himself to three genre forms: the epistolary form, third person narrative and theatrical dialogue. What is disconcerting especially in the novel, is that these forms co-mingle rather freely, and no one is privileged except by quantity, rather than quality, the epistolary. Also, each of the genre forms undergoes, at Gautier's hand, a slight deformation; none of the three is used according to tradition. Gautier reduces form to function and in the process significantly dispenses with convention.

Thematically, Mademoiselle de Maupin addresses a multitude of issues which can be reduced to an overall interest in desire and destiny, an interest which applies to

identity of self as well as to identity of art. The main two characters write about what they want (desire) and reflect on what it might mean (destiny). The result is an exploration of all the different ways to approach desire and deduce meaning from it. Each of the two characters represent, through their letters, just such a diversity of desire and destiny, and their struggles to control desire and achieve identity/meaning (destiny) reflect the same struggle of the artist to control form and content to achieve art.

The reading of Mademoiselle de Maupin proposed here will deal with the novel as I believe the novel deals with itself, which is to say, as an exploration of process, and by addressing that process as it proceeds in all its discontinuity. A reconstitution of a diachrony and linearity in either form or content for the purposes of critical clarity would not serve either the novel or my reading, precisely since the discontinuity of process is what is at issue here relative to both subjectivity and artistic composition.

A clarity of thought and intention will, however, be observed, and the understandings that form my approach are threefold: a formal understanding of allegory as a mode of expression which is both systematic and radical, a further understanding of allegory as it is used in the early nineteenth century (and by Gautier in particular) and a certain non-Freudian understanding of desire which informs

my reading of Gautier's intent with regard to the use of allegory in the novel.

I take my formal understandings of allegory primarily from Angus Fletcher's Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode. He begins, conventionally, by saying that allegory is saying one thing and meaning another. This, of course, can apply to any and all rhetorical figures but he does isolate qualities of allegorical diction that seem unique and not shared by other rhetorical figures. The most important it seems, is that:

The whole point of allegory is that it does not need to be read exegetically; it often has a literal level that makes good enough sense all by itself. But somehow this literal surface suggests a peculiar doubleness of intention, and while it can, as it were, get along without interpretation, it becomes much richer and more interesting if given interpretation.²

This quality of allegory, in many ways, defines the drama of Gautier's characters in Mademoiselle de Maupin as they encounter problems of self-identity. The representations of self/art need not be interpreted and yet appear richer when interpreted. This is an intimation of process attempting to justify itself, perhaps unnecessarily yet providentially.

Allegory is grounded in a re-enactment of a primary meaning, construction or presentation which then attracts or suggests a desire for (re)interpretation. This desire seeks an enrichment of the primary meaning and by extension it seeks also to transcend the primary meaning. This

(re)interpretation is not essential to fundamental meaning but is suggestive of the desire to transcend, break through or connect with something outside its own parameters.

This aspect of allegory seems to co-incide with the thematics of the search for identity represented, in Mademoiselle de Maupin, as a process of construction. A primary identity is posited and then explored enacting changes in that identity. These changes suggest a perpetual construction seeking to transcend itself or break away from itself, without success. For, to leave allegory is to leave identity as well as the "fundamental" meaning because allegory needs its parallel or double construction in order to be allegory. Allegory must retain its commerce with the "real" or "rational" in order to open up its connection with the transcendent. In this way, allegory straddles the material and the immaterial and thereby derives its power to represent this connection.

This double intent between designation and signification which is so a part of how allegory works seems also to reflect the way subjectivity works in the novel. I call the novel an allegory of literary performance and of the production of subjectivity because the novel continually re-news itself through this play between the material and the immaterial. The fictional characters conduct their searches for identity by writing allegories. The ebb and flow of their explorations correspond to the ebb and flow of allegory. There is a strong relationship between how

allegory works and how the characters narrate their searches and, on another level, how Gautier orchestrates the novel.

This understanding of allegory, as a mode of expression that mediates between the material and the immaterial, reflects an uncertainty towards both the material and the immaterial and by extension, an uncertainty towards the process that mediates between the two. This uncertainty towards the allegorical, or the process, is a central issue in the nineteenth century. Paul de Man demonstrates this uncertainty at length in his essay, "The Rhetoric of Temporality." He explores the protracted critical debate which began in the late eighteenth century, and persisted in the nineteenth century, which sought to re-define and malign allegory in favor of symbol, or symbolic diction. The essence of the debate revolved around the artist's relationship between subjective experience and the representation of that experience.³

Allegory was maligned for its mechanistic attachment to the material and rational (or literarily archaic) as well as its compositional clumsiness or obviousness which tended, it was thought, to dilute the power and primacy of an original experience. Symbolism was favored for its "liberation" from the material, rational and literarily archaic and for its transparent elegance in being able to retain, representationally, the power of an original experience.

What de Man demonstrates through his consideration of this debate is that those who value symbolism the most seem

unable to extricate themselves or their art entirely from the material considerations of allegory either in theory or in practice. De Man asks whether the debate itself, in light of its lack of grounding in a real sweeping shift in literary practice, might reflect a movement in the nineteenth century, towards an extreme or radical subjectivity (or inwardness) that seeks to escape a mechanistic commerce with the material (be it in the perception of nature or the adoption of literary antecedents).⁴ I take this to mean that those in favor of a more symbolic diction seek to escape a certain kind of mediation in art, especially temporal, that so strongly marks the allegorical, in order to rid their art of a "debilitating" process.

This debate, then, is no longer primarily literary or critical but metaphysical and involves a redefinition of the artist's relationship to himself and his art that is itself inscribed in the literature of the day. Gautier, himself, was no less affected by this debate although he did not, in his lifetime, develop critical attitudes that motivated him to enter into the fray more concretely. His work is marked, however, by this exploration of the artist's relationship to his art and he contributes to it on a less critically intellectual plane.

Allegory, in Mademoiselle de Maupin, is used formally by the characters to document a process (the search/construction of identity) of subjectivity and the

choice of allegory itself over other modes of expression to enact and orchestrate this process informs the nature of that process. My reading of the novel proposes to explore this relationship between allegory and subjectivity as it is enacted by the fictional characters as well as by Gautier. Identity is a product but subjectivity is the complex process that orchestrates the formation of identity. In this novel, allegory aligns itself with subjectivity insofar as it orchestrates (narrates) the formation and exploration of identity.

In order to make this parallel tenable in my discussion, something must be said regarding how subjectivity is approached in a text critically. As Angus Fletcher points out, in his discussion of allegory, we still have to contend with a considerable amount of "psychological and linguistic uncertainty as to what is going on when language is used figuratively."⁵

Linguistically, subjectivity is most often approached critically through an exploration of the formal arrangements which seem to individuate speakers or points of view (voices). Such studies approach subjectivity as the nexus of ideologies and tend to document the linguistic shifts of situation, point of view and attitude in order to reveal the play (or tensions) of ideologies as they coalesce in a text. Such studies privilege the social over the "personal" and although they question the various ideologies (subjectivities) that present themselves, they do not

question ideology itself, since they rely so heavily on the eternal presence of hierarchical ideology to ground their studies.

Psychologically, subjectivity is most often approached critically through an exploration of the archetypes of figural language that can be shown to reveal the tensions between a subject and society. These types of studies rely on a definition of subjectivity which is reduced to the dynamic between individual and society. Such studies are Freudian by nature and rely on a reductive overdetermination of figural language which documents the play between the unconscious and conscious tensions between subjectivity and society. Subjectivity, in such an approach, is seen as the nexus of conflict located entirely within the individual, or individuated voice.

What seems to be missing from both the linguistic and psychological approaches is a more dynamic and less restrictive understanding of desire (motivation, intent or purpose). Desire is something that traverses a text (reality) and orchestrates its linguistic (formal) and figural shifts by opening up and maintaining (or breaking) connections between the individual and the world. This is the understanding of desire that informs my critical approach to subjectivity. With such an understanding, subjectivity is desire and therefore the process that orchestrates the formal and figural shifts of the narration and of self-representation. The main orchestrating mode of

expression, in Mademoiselle de Maupin, is the allegorical and so I draw the parallel between the process of allegory and the process of subjectivity relative to (self)identity.

I have taken this definition of desire from the two collaborative works of Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus. They describe desire as a positive flow that makes and breaks connections, but the connections made cannot be defined exclusively as connections between subject (desiring) and object (desired). This would privilege the primacy of the subject and locate desire (subjectivity) entirely within the individual. The "reality" that is subjectivity (desire) is at work all around us and need not implicate human agents:

Desire is unaware of death, of negation, and the tragedies of the familialist Grand Guignol strike it as funny. Since negation is always related to the position of a subject, an object and a reference point, desire, being purely and intensely positive, changes round subjects and objects; it is flux and intensity. Insofar as the subject is bound up with a system of representation, the individual libido finds itself dependent on the capitalist machine which forces it to function in terms of a communication based on dualist systems. For desire to be expressed in individual terms means that it is already condemned to castration.⁶

Mademoiselle de Maupin, as a novel, is itself bound up in a "system of representation" and so are the fictional characters within its pages, but they struggle, as does the novel, to shake free of these bindings, or at least elude them somewhat. This is accomplished through the insistence on its own processes of representation formally and

figurally. All the flows that inform identity are explored, and although representation is sometimes stubborn, there is a willingness to abandon representation, or the idea of an arrested self-identity, in favor of change and movement.

Subjectivity, then, as a process, cannot be entirely located within a subject or a representation of a subject. It must be viewed as that which resists the subject by constantly struggling against the castration, or reductiveness, of self-representation. Subjectivity best "represents" all of the tensions, instabilities, contradictions and inconsistencies which are working against an arrested representation of self. Representation dominates and territorializes, delimits and controls while subjectivity and desire searches to escape, abandon and destroy.

Tendencies to control and delimit in the novel are implicit in the use of allegory while alternating tendencies to break through or abandon representation are implicit in other competing figural strategies. Such alternating strategies, such as, metaphor, synecdoche, hyperbole, irony, etc., are not used systematically in the novel and so tend to undermine or attack the processional march of allegorical development. In this way they offset the allegorical and further reveal the "reality" of subjectivity (desire) as discontinuous and non-totalizing.

The thematic organization of this dissertation chapter will not be observed in subsequent chapters as it is

designed as an overall preamble to my reading of the novel. Thematic organization in this chapter serves to explore originating strategies which introduce and establish the overall problematic relative to subjectivity.

The first part of my reading will embrace the first five chapters of Mademoiselle de Maupin, after a brief discussion of the epistolary. These constitute the longest uninterrupted epistolary series and privilege the first of three characters, d'Albert. His self-representational constructions are visible in his many letters which are contemporaneous with the events they describe; Rosette, on the other hand, does not "write herself" and it is clear that Madeleine's letters are written analeptically, after the fact. Consequently, it is her letters which pretend to have the last word, and her discourse is more organized due to "hindsight" and sequential action.

The first five chapters (letters) see the construction and consolidation of d'Albert's desire to have a mistress. He conceives it in the first chapter, realizes it in the second, exhausts it in the third, laments its emptiness in the fourth and contemplates its cessation in the fifth. Although there is a linear progression of sorts, his discourse is strongly marked by circularity.

He writes in circles going back and forth between the real and the ideal, the "moi" and the "refus du moi", the exterior and the interior. His engagement in the world is minimal and perfunctory, yet perceived as necessary. He

resents being both actor and spectator of his own reality and tries ultimately to deny one or the other role or to transcend them altogether. He is caught between the extremes he creates, and his weakness seems to be in taking things too seriously. His ironies (not Gautier's) are not strong enough to suspend the pathos of the impasse in which he finds himself.

Although he describes his "self" as depressingly united, this "self" reads as fragmented and multiple. This denial of his multiplicity causes him to seek to transform himself entirely into another being. I have organized my initial reading thematically to better see how d'Albert questions the reality of his self and to better reveal the constructions through which the self is problematized and isolated by d'Albert despite its multiplicity.

The Epistolary Form

The epistolary form, as a form, in Mademoiselle de Maupin dominates the novel almost completely. Fourteen of the seventeen chapters are letters and yet the novel is not generally classified as an epistolary novel. Furthermore, amongst the letters, and more notably, between the letters (the three letters taken over by third person singular narration) are dialogic exchanges which closely imitate the theatrical conventions with which the epistolary is most closely associated and often contrasted. Mademoiselle de Maupin is generally considered a genre monster because of

its resistance to any single genre form. In light of its consistent adherence to epistolary form, it would seem that the novel is not so monstrous as is thought. However, while the novel "qualifies" in almost all of the basic elements that determine epistolary discourse, it strangely escapes any real compliance with the conventions of the form as it is generally found and understood in literature.

Janet Altman, in her book Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form, broadly outlines the elements that determine epistolary thematics and discourse. She identifies three main aspects of the epistolary which have their own corresponding thematic tendencies. The first of the three is the adherence to the "I-you" discursive relationship. The letter-writer writes to a "confidant" which is usually either a friend or a lover. In the case of the former, the discourse is more generally marked by candor and a desire to communicate, and in the case of the latter, the discourse is marked by deception and a desire to manipulate. In both cases the role of the letter recipient is pivotal insofar as it remains a constantly determining factor in the production and elaboration of the discourse. Also, by association, the reader (external to text) is obliged to occupy the place of the letter recipient and further obliged to receive or "read" the letter in the place of the friend or lover. Consequently, there is a great deal of emphasis on the acts of discursive production /interpretation as such.

The second generally observed convention of epistolary discourse mentioned by Altman is the necessity of writing in the present tense. The present tense serves as a pivot for both past and future and highly determines the discourse as a whole. It further problematizes the act of discursive production as something spontaneous and marked by thematics which have short term goals. This is what separates epistolary discourse from autobiographical discourse: the latter generally assumes that what is being written about is dominated by the past tense. Present tense discourse presupposes that act itself supercedes content and highlights the tensions, contradictions and incoherences that past tense discourse seems more determined to control.

The third general attribute attached to epistolary discourse, according to Altman, is closely related to the second, and is referred to as temporal polyvalence. This is characterized by the necessity, imposed by the present tense, to jump back and forth between past and future and to consequently juggle many different kinds of enunciations--reflective, descriptive, action oriented or communicative--in and amongst this temporal variance. Also, the writer of letters writes "par étapes". Information under these conditions must be given in doses, and consequently the letter writer often engages in a great deal of personal, discursive stock-taking which is repeated and recast almost ritually in order to maintain a fluid flow of information. Keeping the reader "current" is the main short term goal

which must constantly renew itself, but which must also do so by beginnings, endings and repetitions.

These three determining (conventional) attributes of epistolary discourse all tend to insist upon the immediate, spontaneous evolutionary flavor of literary/discursive production and more importantly upon the organizational difficulties of production and performance under such conditions (animated present tense). An equal amount of attention is drawn to the act of interpretation from both the writer who often provides interpretation, and the reader, who must interpret for himself. Epistolary discourse, centered on the present, reveals the subject to be (paradoxically) de-centered, or rather quite literally dispersed, temporally and thematically, by the imperative of present tense.

Altman emphasizes that there are two thematically implicit elements that generically determine epistolarity. The first such element is the implicit and explicit desire for exchange which emphasizes the need for the letters to be written to someone in particular and which further emphasizes the need for response. Such feedback in turn highly determines the subsequent and continued epistolary exchanges. The second implicit and explicit thematic element of epistolary discourse is that the letters themselves constitute and fuel the intrigue of the novel. This emphasizes that everything which revolves around the letter itself, when it is written, sent, received, responded

to and consequently if it is sent, received and responded to has tremendous impact on the intrigue, and in fact constitutes the intrigue of the novel. The most notable example of this is of course Les liaisons dangereuses by Laclos, which Altman considers an epistolary novel par excellence.

Mademoiselle de Maupin, dominated by the epistolary form, explicitly conforms to Altman's three main markers of epistolarity: the I-you relationship, the adherence to present tense discourse and the maintenance of temporal polyvalence. Also, there is a desire for exchange. In reading the novel, we believe that the letters that d'Albert writes to Silvio, and later the letters that Madeleine writes to Graciosa are indeed letters solicited by, tailored to and read by their correspondents. We also have hints that these addressees are writing back. Although there is no obvious animated exchange, we never have letters from Silvio or Graciosa, there is an apparent desire for exchange. This desire for exchange is made problematic, since it would be more to the point to say that the desire for communication is stronger than the desire for feedback, implicit in the notion of exchange.

Gautier's novel, however, does not conform to generic epistolarity as described by Altman, in that the letter-form does not constitute and/or fuel the intrigue. It contains but does not constitute the intrigue. Gautier is not in any

serious way problematizing the epistolary exchange in and of itself.

He has rather reduced the epistolary form to just that, a form, curiously appropriating the structure while avoiding all of the assumptions and signifying baggage that usually (must?) accompany it. He has made the epistolary form conform to a function. The function of the epistolary form in Mademoiselle de Maupin is to afford use of the present tense while providing a non-totalizing, self-displacing window onto the production of discourse (non-totalizing because the letters are plural and do not reflect the totality of any one lived experience or the totality of a formed psyche).

The epistolary form in Gautier's novel emphasizes the processional nature of literary, discursive, thematic and personal constructions. Instead of problematizing discourse or the failure of discourse directly, he seems to problematize processes of (self-) construction. The repetitive nature of letters and the repetitive struggle which takes place in the present tense at the site of repetitive, reworked, transformed literary/discursive constructions emphasizes process or becoming and characterizes it as non-originating, non-terminating and non-totalizing.

Thematic Overview of First Five Chapters

On peint l'Amour avec un bandeau sur les yeux;
c'est le Destin qu'on devrait peindre ainsi.
(p.62)

Since it has not been determined in the novel whether destiny is psychological or transcendental in nature, it cannot be said whether the condition of blindness rests mainly in d'Albert or in the world. What seems more important is that d'Albert describes this condition of blindness as a fundamental obstacle to his desires and to the attainment of the epiphany he seeks:

Peut-être mon bonheur a-t-il passé à côté de moi,
et je ne l'aurai pas vu, aveugle que j'étais;
peut-être la voix a-t-elle parlé, et le bruit de
mes tempêtes m'aura empêché de l'entendre.
(p.79)

This blindness d'Albert explains as a result of his own interiority and self-absorption, which is somewhat paradoxical since the effort of self-reflection, the effort to see his own desires is what renders him blind. He suggests so himself:

Si j'agissais davantage, je n'apercevrais pas
toutes ces petites choses, et je n'aurais pas le
temps de regarder mon âme au microscope, comme je
le fais toute la journée. (p.98)

His extreme doubt concerning authority and control creates a vacuum in which he must puzzle out for himself the balance to strike between passive reflection and active participation, the relative merits of each. The extreme clarity of his interior fantasies, or ideal, has stunted his sight in reality. His blindness further impairs the

integrity of a whole identity and reduces his faith in the possibility of fulfillment.

Most of d'Albert's frustration stems from the notion of implicit and explicit barriers. These barriers block understanding, perception, faith and experience of the self, the world (real) and fantasy (ideal). D'Albert describes the effects of such blockage in many ways, but mentions the shroud, for example, and similar images of veiling consistently enough that these become dominant motifs of blockage. This occurs mainly at three levels: the linguistic, the representational (of the ideal, perfection, soul) and the physical. Although these levels freely interpenetrate, each building upon the other, they remain distinct due to d'Albert's conception of them, and, collectively, they represent a persistent blockage to meaning.

When d'Albert opens his letter to Silvio in the first chapter he writes:

Mais, puisque tu veux absolument que je t'écrive, il faut bien que je te raconte ce que je pense et ce que je sens, et que je te fasse l'histoire de mes idées, à défaut d'événements et d'actions...
(p.62)

and finishes up the thought in saying:

Aussi je serai exactement vrai, --même dans les choses petites et honteuses; ce n'est pas devant toi, à coup sûr, que je me draperai. (p.63)

This is a pretty straightforward gesture, since he has no "story" to tell, but he suggests, by the gesture, that we can either cover or expose ourselves at will with words, and

that one cannot be assumed to be telling the "truth". This statement is immediately followed with another image of the deceptive power of words:

Sous ce linceul d'ennui nonchalant et affaîssé
dont je t'ai parlé tout à l'heure remue parfois
une pensée plutôt engourdie que morte, et je n'ai
pas toujours le calme doux et triste que donne la
mélancolie. (p.63)

He first described his boredom in acquiescent tones but now goes back to re-interpret those words, revealing emotions other than what they might innocently express. The linearity of discourse often sacrifices *ampleur*, or a variety of dimensions, which cannot always be described in one sustained utterance. To achieve that *ampleur*, one must back up and reclaim and recast discourse to add dimension. What is implied is that discourse always already embodies many different levels of impact, understanding and "meaning" which are (or are meant to be) controlled by the speaker (or writer). Ultimately the words themselves are insufficient to communicate what one wishes to communicate.

D'Albert is exploring his own personality actively, by writing, by creating a representational construct, which is implicitly intended to convey or communicate some "truth" or secret knowledge, precisely because he promises to weave fantasies. In many ways, d'Albert presents this both as a need (for want of a story) and as a gesture of friendship. He alerts Silvio (warns him/promises him) that he will raise a barrier of silence on certain subjects that separates each from the "full" knowledge of the other. Implicit in this

intention is d'Albert's conviction that words (discourse) which might deceive can ultimately achieve transparency under certain circumstances, circumstances which depend heavily on the analytical powers of ones privileged audience. Silvio is the only "character" with which d'Albert is so discursively "free". His exchanges with both Rosette and Madeleine are more highly controlled stylistically and more guarded thematically. But it becomes strangely clear that d'Albert accepts no responsibility for the image of himself that he projects toward others.

Rather early on in the text, d'Albert's discourse betrays a dichotomy between his interior self-representation and the way in which he represents himself to others. D'Albert has a keen sense of "apparences" and yet seems simultaneously unable to conceive that he is projecting an image contrary to the psychic one with which he so strongly identifies. He glories in his own powers of analysis and yet does not recognize the double articulation that he is performing of his self in society. He only recognizes it as a deception when he is overtly controlling it. When he is not attending to it he believes it is not happening or forgets it is happening.

In the first chapter, after having attempted to explain to Silvio the various textures of his desires, he pauses to "contextualize" his recent discursive extravagances:

A entendre tout cela, on me croirait propre à
mettre aux Petites-Maisons; je suis cependant
assez raisonnable garçon, et je n'ai pas mis

beaucoup de folies en action. Tout cela se passe dans les caves de mon âme, et toutes ces idées saugrenues sont ensevelies très soigneusement au fond de moi; du dehors on ne voit rien, et j'ai la réputation d'un jeune homme tranquille et froid, peu sensible aux femmes et indifférent aux choses de son âge; ce qui est aussi loin de la vérité que le sont habituellement les jugements du monde.
(p.66)

Despite the honest intentions fueling this representation, there are interesting understandings of the power of representation in it. His throw-away reference to "les Petites-Maisons" serves superficially to provide comic relief, but at a deeper level there is more in this reference. He does not want the reader (us/Silvio) to think him unhinged based on the over-emphasis of the "apparence" of his preceding lyric explosion; he, rather, diffuses the image of insanity because lyric explosions are often associated with madness (self-delusions) suggesting a loss of control over identity reflected in linguistic extravagance and/or inappropriateness. He realizes the "image" such discourse projects and wishes to head it off in order to retain poetic power while deflecting negatively "identifiable" connotations.

This is followed by a dose of understated reality; that he is reasonable enough, and has not put many follies into action, which in fact means he has never put a folly into action. This pulls his discourse all the way back from its earlier extravagance. He makes it understood that his musings are "carefully" buried in the depths of his soul. "Carefully" because he knows that such discourse connotes

madness and he does not want to be thought mad. These qualifications all highlight the control he seeks to exercise on the image he projects.

Most striking is his closing sentence. From the outside, he is perceived as something he is not (which he is at least in form), and casually denounces the superficiality of a "world" which incorrectly interprets the truth of his personality based only on form. This seems an unintentional irony on d'Albert's part since he condemns society for perceiving him as he has projected himself. This exemplary exercise in discursive control ends up betraying him anyway.

This situation is further ironized when, in chapter III he relies entirely on Monsieur C*** to introduce him to a salon where he might hand pick a mistress. He puts himself entirely in C***'s hands saying:

Mais avant de rien dire de précis et qui m'engage, je voudrais bien que tu eusses la bonté de me faire voir celles des indulgentes beautés qui ont eu l'obligeance de se frapper pour moi, afin que je puisse choisir. --Tu me ferais plaisir aussi, puisque tu me sers ici de démonstrateur, d'y ajouter une petite notice et la nomenclature de leurs défauts et qualités... (p.91)

He is asking precisely for that "nomenclature" on the women that, when applied to him from without, he denounces as incorrect and misleading. Ultimately, he is asking to be misled as to the "real" knowledge of these women, in asking explicitly to be lead into a knowledge of them as potential mistresses. He needs the kind of deceptive knowledge that will allow him to conduct a "deceptive" double life (affair)

with one of them. These women are not prostitutes but are indeed prostituting themselves under highly controlled circumstances. In order to function efficiently in this atmosphere, d'Albert must also play a "role" that is controlled and based on certain representational constructs. Monsieur C*** tells him as much when he sees that d'Albert is acting like a rube:

--Que diable! tu vas me compromettre; je t'ai annoncé comme un phénix d'esprit, un homme à imagination effrénée, un poète lyrique, tout ce qu'il y a de plus transcendant et de plus passionné, et tu restes là comme une souche, sans sonner mot! Quelle pauvre imaginative! Je te croyais la veine plus féconde; allons donc, lâche la bride à ta langue, babille à tort et à travers; tu n'as pas besoin de dire des choses sensées et judicieuses, au contraire, cela pourrait t'être nuisible; parle, voilà l'essentiel; parle beaucoup, parle longtemps; attire l'attention sur toi; jette-moi de côté toute crainte et toute modestie... (p.87)

This quotation affirms in many ways the erroneous way in which society apprehends him, as "une souche" who is "sensé et judicieux". D'Albert objects to this view of him, as he said earlier to Silvio, but insofar as his actions are concerned d'Albert is passive to the extreme while being mentally (discursively) active. C*** is telling him in effect to translate that mental activity, which is internal and revealed only in letters to Silvio, into oral activity. In this way, d'Albert remains actively passive, but becomes rhetorically active in the salon; he learns to "talk a big game".

The barrier that separates the two representations of d'Albert (in his mind's eye and the eyes of society) remains insofar as d'Albert begins to learn to reduce the obviousness of it. D'Albert is still passive, but becomes more able to hide his passivity behind a strategic use of words, as he did in his reflections to Silvio. This transference of a strategic use of language from the internal to the external fields is more obvious when d'Albert obtains Rosette as a mistress and begins to "play out" his fantasies with her. D'Albert explores the dichotomy of the body and the soul while he is with Rosette insofar as his sexual fantasies are concerned and the barrier that his fantasies create separate him quite completely from Rosette.

The mind creates fantasies that the body acts out: this is what d'Albert does with Rosette. As always the case with d'Albert, however, the transition from the passive to the active is very difficult, and has the effect of rendering him more passive, and less convinced of the "reality" of action (physical action). Upon obtaining Rosette, he immediately focuses all of his attention onto the affair:

Je la vois toute la journée, et même toute la nuit, si je veux. Je lui fais toutes les caresses qu'il me plaît de lui faire; je l'ai nue ou habillée, à la ville ou à la campagne. Elle est d'une complaisance inépuisable, et entre parfaitement dans tous mes caprices, si bizarres qu'ils soient. (p.106)

D'Albert entertains with Rosette every sexual and social fantasy he can think of. He even acts out with her

an elaborate fantasy where he dresses as a bear and "ravishes" her, going so far as to rip her clothes off as would a bear attacking its prey. He does this, it would seem, to prove two things to himself: that he is a fully "authorized" social being, and as such in fact involved in a socially sanctioned, legitimate "affair" which is "real", that has meaning to him in the same way as it does to society. Society's imperative is that one must act and interact, and to do these two things would seem prerequisite to discovering meaningfulness in the human experience. D'Albert has considerable difficulty with both. Reality in the human experience is for him always problematic, because mediated, and the ideal of experience is only dimly apprehended. He would like to break through these barriers:

C'est avec Rosette que j'ai résolu, une fois pour toutes, d'éprouver si je ne suis pas décidément insociable, et si je puis prendre assez d'intérêt dans l'existence d'une autre pour y croire. J'ai poussé les expériences jusqu'à l'épuisement, et je ne me suis pas beaucoup éclairci dans mes doutes. Avec elle le plaisir est si vif que l'âme se trouve assez souvent, sinon touchée, au moins distraite, ce qui nuit un peu à l'exactitude des observations. Après tout, j'ai reconnu que cela ne passait pas la peau, et que je n'avais qu'une jouissance d'épiderme à laquelle l'âme ne participait que par curiosité. J'ai du plaisir, parce que je suis jeune et ardent; mais ce plaisir me vient de moi et non d'un autre. La cause est dans moi-même plutôt que dans Rosette. (p.111)

A "mistress" is a representation, itself an experience of mediation. D'Albert, having decided that he wanted one, determined to demystify this experience. In doing so he has

created another veil between himself and Rosette and society:

Aux yeux de tout le monde, j'ai une maîtresse que plusieurs désirent et m'envient, et que personne ne dédaignerait. Mon désir est donc rempli en apparence, et je n'ai plus le droit de chercher des querelles au sort. Cependant il ne me semble pas avoir une maîtresse; je le comprends par raisonnement, mais je ne le sens pas; et, si quelqu'un me demandait inopinément si j'en ai une, je crois que je répondrais que non. --Pourtant la possession d'une femme qui a de la beauté, de la jeunesse et de l'esprit constitue ce que, dans tous les temps et dans tous les pays, on a appelé et appelle avoir une maîtresse et je ne pense pas qu'il y ait une autre manière. (p.105)

Society's "ideal" to him is strangely empty. While he has achieved it, and reaps the respect and envy of his peers, that ideal has somehow betrayed him so that he feels he has achieved nothing. He is role-playing, acting out fantasies, pretending, and thinks he is the only one. Convinced utterly of Rosette's undying devotion and complete fulfillment, it does not occur to him that Rosette might also be playing a role, aware herself of his facade. D'Albert, who gets little satisfaction from this affair despite having acted it out so perfectly, does not even conceive of Rosette's possible dissatisfaction or indifference. D'Albert's interiority is so complete that while recognizing implicitly at many levels that everything one says or does is rife with chimeras he does not perceive the chimeras that constitute his own perceptions.

D'Albert continues to examine this curious failure and comes to the conclusion, again, that there is something

wrong with himself, something he may lack or of which he may be unaware. Curiously, this brings us to another conception of a barrier at the physical level. Although not stated outright, it becomes evident that d'Albert sees his body, his physical being, as-- so far as he is concerned-- the most significant barrier of all.

D'Albert conceives his desire, his soul, or his inner self to be a chaotic multiplicity which is varied, powerful and mysterious. He perceives the world in just the same way. It is varied, colorful, spiritual and possesses secret powers that he would like to penetrate. The main problem, he perceives to be his physical self. Like an enormous cork bottling up an all-powerful magic genie, his body and his senses keep him from this varied world. Form contains and controls content and d'Albert is convinced that his form too fully controls his content, just as the world (society) has forms that constrict its content and just as representation entails form which seems unable to ever definitively disgorge its content.

He draws a very strict line between the mental and the physical, concluding that the physical betrays the mental, and that the two are thus in perpetual conflict. His "natural" preference for introspection is such that his personal scorn for the physical and the active separates him from an enjoyment of the social. He cannot seem to "connect":

il s'agite autour de moi un pâle monde d'ombres et de semblants faux ou vrais qui bourdonnent sourdement, au milieu duquel je me trouve aussi parfaitement seul que possible, car aucun n'agit sur moi en bien ou en mal, et ils me paraissent d'une nature tout à fait différente. (p.109)

Once again we see his insistence on his deviation from the norm, the absolute certainty that he is different, and that no one else could possibly feel as he feels. This feeling is carried into his relationship with Rosette. The closer they get, the further removed he feels. His body participates while his mind wanders:

Les bras d'une femme, ce qui lie le mieux sur la terre, à ce qu'on dit, sont pour moi de bien faibles attaches, et je n'ai jamais été plus loin de ma maîtresse que lorsqu'elle me serrait sur son coeur. (p.110)

The frustration this situation creates is such that his soul sits in judgement of his carnal pleasures. D'Albert feels he is betraying himself:

Quel supplice pour cette pauvre âme d'assister aux débauches de mon corps et de s'asseoir perpétuellement à des festins où elle n'a rien à manger. (p.111)

D'Albert is ultimately searching for the "total" experience, one that would engage his entire being allowing him to forget himself, to forget the discrepancies and contradictions which structure his identity. Perhaps even ideally the perfect experience would transcend the physical altogether. The physical, his body, he perceives to be that element of sameness which prevents him from experiencing diversity as diverse. His body channels and filters his

perceptions and his mind is condemned to receiving experiences always on the same frequency:

Ah ne pouvoir s'augmenter d'une seule parcelle, d'un seul atome; ne pouvoir faire couler le sang des autres dans ses veines; voir toujours de ses yeux, ni plus clair, ni plus loin, ni autrement; entendre les sons avec les mêmes oreilles et la même émotion; toucher avec les mêmes doigts; percevoir des choses variées avec un organe invariable; être condamné au même timbre de voix, au retour des mêmes tons, des mêmes phrases et des mêmes paroles, et ne pouvoir s'en aller, se dérober à soi-même, se réfugier dans quelque coin où l'on ne suive pas; être forcé de se garder toujours, de dîner et de coucher avec soi... (p.112)

Here we see that d'Albert's youth and relative lack of experience become responsible for inflationary aspects of his thought processes. He admits freely, before having an experience, that he has in fact never had it before and then, when the experience has been achieved one time, d'Albert multiplies it in his mind. The experience thus becomes exhausted, as if he had had it several times. For example, in chapter one d'Albert states: "je n'ai donc pas encore eu de maîtresse, et tout mon désir est d'en avoir une." (p.68) and, after having acquired Rosette, in chapter three he laments: "Quelle fatalité me fait donc avoir toujours pour maîtresse des femmes que je n'aime pas." (p.119) This reflection shows how he convinces himself beforehand that every similar experience can be only the same as the first. It is clear how d'Albert can so easily retain the conviction that his passiveness is merited before the "reality" of mechanical repetition, since the mechanical

repetition is really a function of his own mental operations. His passiveness functions as a self fulfilling prophecy.

That barriers, or mediations, separate him from an understanding of desire, the ideal, or even himself, is evident and d'Albert implicitly understands this. However, d'Albert creates even more barriers. He blocks understanding as a function of his almost perverse desire not to act on his own behalf, convincing himself in advance that any action would be useless. This stubborn passivity fuels his frustration and shows the reason why d'Albert needs his blindness in order to retain the integrity of the constructions he has created in his mind.

D'Albert's frustration emerges in various forms in his discourse. In fact, his discourse revolves around the representation of frustration. Frustration is, moreover, the "raison d'être" of his letters, since making it clear to Silvio that he had nothing to recount, but could only describe his hopes, fears and general mental state. The overall theme evolving from his frustration is one of being unable to realize the ideal of a total sensory experience which might border on the spiritually transcendent.

Expressions of frustration, ideally conceived, tend to be rendered allegorically, and generally reflect his feeling that such things are for him unproblematic insofar as they are coherently expressible. Expressions of frustration, realistically conceived, tend to be metonymically and

synechdocally expressed insofar as they are not coherently expressible. There is a tension between these poles insofar as d'Albert would like to make real what is ideal and to make ideal what is real. Also, there exists a tendency towards discursive explosions of such intensity that they must be diffused with self-mocking ironies. These ironic gestures tone down the extravagances of the allegories and draw attention away from the fragmented incoherence of metonymic descriptions.

In chapter two of the novel, d'Albert describes his soul allegorically as a place where perpetual frustration reigns:

A toute heure du jour, il s'en envole quelque désir. Les colombes reviennent au colombier, mais les désirs ne reviennent point au coeur.--L'azur du ciel blanchit sous leurs innombrables essaims; ils s'en vont à travers l'espace, de monde en monde, de ciel en ciel, chercher quelque amour pour s'y poser et y passer la nuit: presse le pas, ô mon rêve! ou tu ne trouveras plus dans le nid vide que les coquilles des oiseaux envolés. (p.81)

This image is closely related to the metaphor of the magnet found in chapter one, which describes his being as a powerful magnet which should draw desires to it. The frustration lies in non-reciprocity, or the ideal that will not respond to his powerful desire. He implies that the world or the ideal is perversely cruel in its refusal to answer his call. This image is broadened and recast so as to represent the inherent and perpetual frustration of the human condition:

Nous nous sommes assis comme Adam au pied des murs du paradis terrestre, sur les marches de l'escalier qui mène au monde que vous avez créé, voyant étinceler à travers les fentes de la porte lumière plus vive que le soleil, entendant confusément quelques notes éparses d'une harmonie séraphique. Toutes les fois qu'un élu entre ou sort au milieu d'un flot de splendeur, nous tendons le cou pour tâcher de voir quelque chose par le battant ouvert. C'est une architecture féerique qui n'a son égale que dans les contes arabes. [...], un luxe tout assyrien. (p.84)

He paradoxically describes an earthly paradise that we create ourselves, and yet to which we have no access. This once again shifts responsibility for the inability "to connect" with the earthly paradise onto man's shoulders, and yet simultaneously implies that some unseen force chooses the "elected" who will be allowed to enter the earthly paradise. Also, the paradise is only glimpsed now and then, in all its virtuality and splendor, when the door appears to open to admit someone else.

The closer situations described are to d'Albert, the more inclined he will be to use allegory. When a situation mirrors one he is currently experiencing, he feels it to be coherently expressible. And more to the point, the closer the situation mirrors stasis, the more he will use allegory. However these moments are not sustained and always reined in with ironies:

Je me suis joliment laissé aller au lyrisme, mon très cher ami, et voilà déjà bien du temps qu je pindarise assez ridiculement. (p.85)

This gesture brings us back to the "reality" of the epistolary form, while indicating that such lyricism cannot

be sustained and controlled indefinitely. Irony breaks the spell that allegory casts but does not entirely diffuse the seriousness with which he speaks.⁷

When d'Albert figures the ideal and beauty, both of which are constructions of his desire, he turns to metonymy because these are things he has not experienced as wholes, but rather as suggestive fragments. His attempts to understand the ideal and beauty are, implicitly, attempts to understand, question and examine desire relative to artistic performance and production.

He first describes the effect of the ideal on the mind and the passions, and questions its source:

Qui nous a donné l'idée de cette femme imaginaire?
de quelle argile avons-nous pétri cette statue
invisible? où avons-nous pris les plumes que nous
avons attachées au dos de cette chimère? quel
oiseau mystique a déposé dans un coin obscur de
notre âme l'oeuf inaperçu dont notre rêve est
éclos. (p.82)

He suggests that the ideal is in some way the meeting of two worlds, each contributing a portion, and on which the mind builds and perfects. He further suggests (and/or questions) that some immortal power provides the initial suggestion of the ideal and that the artist, being perceptive and thus receptive to this hint, creates art, which mediates between the two worlds:

Est-ce Raphaël qui a caressé le contour qui vous
plaît? Est-ce Cléomène qui a poli le marbre que
vous adorez? Etes-vous amoureux d'une madone ou
d'une Diane? votre idéal est-il un ange, une
sylphide ou une femme? Hélas! c'est un peu de tout
cela, et ce n'est pas cela. (p.82)

Drawing on the multiple influences in art from pagan and christian traditions, he suggests that the arts all contribute to the suggestion of a whole, or an ideal. The tension between the physical, carnal or "pagan" influences and the spiritual, visual influences of christianity, suggests that d'Albert must wonder whether desire itself has not been fragmented over time, the synchronic ideal tainted by diachronic influences. Also, the reality that is nature, and which surrounds us daily, also contributes to this suggestive ideal, so that the arts, society, reality and nature exist in a metonymic relationship with desire:

Vous avez vu au prisme du désir, ça et là, un bel oeil sous une jalousie, un front d'ivoire appuyé contre une vitre, une bouche souriant derrière un éventail. Vous avez deviné un bras d'après la main, un genou d'après une cheville. Ce que vous voyiez était parfait: vous supposiez le reste comme ce que vous voyiez, et vous l'acheviez avec les morceaux d'autres beautés enlevés ailleurs.
(p.83)

The world is fragmented, veiled and opaque and desire dispersed through a prism; the mediating artist performs a plastic and/or mental assemblage by grafting together disparate elements from many sources in such a way that they appear to make a "whole". The process is exhausting and the gesture frustrating because such artistic creation has no "real" analogue, no actual referent.

While d'Albert envisions the ideal woman relative to her various parts, he envisions his own "beauty" in a cause-effect relationship:

Etre beau, c'est-à-dire avoir en soi un charme qui fait que tout vous sourit et vous accueille; qu'avant que vous ayez parlé tout le monde est déjà prévenu en votre faveur et disposé à être de votre avis. (p.154)

and in an extension:

Et celui qui joindrait à la beauté suprême la force suprême, qui, sous la peau d'Antinous, aurait les muscles d'Hercule, que pourrait-il désirer de plus? Je suis sûr qu'avec ces deux choses et l'âme que j'ai que, avant trois ans, je serais empereur du monde! [...] Un beau masque pour séduire et fasciner sa proie, des ailes pour fondre dessus et l'enlever, des ongles pour la déchire; --tant que je n'aurai pas cela, je serai malheureux. (p.154)

Such power is enobling and enabling and according to d'Albert, only a gift of birth. Either one has it or one does not. For him, beauty is not an objective reality, but rather, its own effect on people. In women, beauty is less dynamic and more visual:

Il faut bien des phrases brillantes et des traits scintillants pour valoir les éclairs d'un bel oeil. Je préfère une jolie bouche à un joli mot, et une épaule bien modelée à une vertu, même théologale; je donnerais cinquante âmes pour un pied mignon, et toute la poésie et tous les poètes pour la main de Jeanne d'Aragon ou le front de la vierge de Foligno. (p.149)

Despite the apparent double standard, it remains true regardless of gender that beauty cannot be described as a whole, directly, but rather indirectly, as it affects its beholder. Desire, also, cannot be described as desire, but rather only by its symptoms or effects. In both cases the rendition is fragmented and dispersed into a variety of sources.

D'Albert's desire is suspended between the banal, boring realities of modern society and the extravagantly heroic ideals of fantasy. This is to say that his desire (as a multiple flow or intensity) conflicts with its representation (reduction). He implicitly recognizes this excessive positive intensity and the multiplicity of his self and yet rejects them in the gesture that reduces both to unities. This gesture frames the self in terms of lack and finds the object lacking.

He tries to impose himself onto society while simultaneously attempting to impose his fantasies onto society. He searches for purpose and identity in a world that only offers function and utility. At one level, he is complicit with the reductive demands of society since he continues to comply, but, on another level, his constant frustration renders him non-complicit.

The beauty of nature and the suggestiveness of ancient architecture in certain landscapes leads him to believe that the material world may still hold mystery albeit veiled and opaque. Accessing this world, he believes, would be possible only to the privileged few (the sensitive--the poet) and on condition that the experience would be only momentary.

The beauty of poetry, painting and sculpture further leads him to believe that artists are somehow gifted and in touch with the Muse (destiny). Consequently, they are able to capture and perpetuate the mystery of a paradise here on

Earth. Artistic endeavor is elevated to an act or a performance which is deemed heroic in d'Albert's eyes because it redeems the sterility of the modern world. His initial reluctance to embrace an identity as a poet, in these chapters, represents his struggle to reconcile inner and outer realities, or more generally the imperative that makes this reconciliation contingent upon fulfillment.

Implicitly, he believes contradiction must be resolved to be a poet and that poetry transcends fragmentedness and dissolution, but that such resolution is impossible. He is too passively withdrawn, in these chapters, to attempt transcendence at this point and he will not attempt it until Madeleine/Theodore's appearance thoroughly shakes out of his spiraling self-analysis.

1. Ross Chambers, "Spirite: une lecture", in Archives des Lettres Modernes, 1974 (5) IV no. 153, 64 pp., p.4

2. Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, Cornell university Press, Ithaca and London, 1964, p.7

3. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983, p. 188

4. De Man, p.196

5. Fletcher, p.11

6. Félix Guattari, Molecular Psychiatry and Politics, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, p.72

7. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality", p. 13 "The reflective disjunction not only occurs by means of language as a privileged category, but it transfers the self out of the empirical world into a world constitutes out of, and in, language--a language that it finds in the world like one entity among others, but that remains unique in being the only entity by means of which it can differentiate itself from the world. Language thus conceived divides the subject into an empirical self, immersed in the world, and a self that becomes like a sign in its attempt at differentiation and self-definition."

CHAPTER 2: READING CHAPTERS SIX THROUGH TEN OF
MADemoisELLE DE MAUPIN

In the previous chapter, we saw how d'Albert's voice, in the epistolary form, dominated as the reader's only window onto the actions and passions constituting the intrigue of the novel. D'Albert's self-exploration, embodied in his letters, constitutes the territorialization of desires reduced to an agenda embracing the acquisition of a mistress (Rosette). This consolidation of desire to representation was in turn explored by d'Albert as a means of testing the limits of his desire (channeled into this representation) as well as his ability (capacity) to find a fulfillment in this representation that might match or transcend his initial desires. The result was an impasse necessitating the intervention of new narrative conditions.

The six chapters of Mademoiselle de Maupin, which follow d'Albert's epistolary exchange, respond to the implicit imperative for new conditions and new points of view created by his epistolary exchange. Serious questions about desire, individuality, subjectivity and the social reality on which these elements operate in the formation of representation have been raised by d'Albert's epistles. In order to pursue them, Gautier takes a radical turn away from the primacy of d'Albert's point of view, in order to transfer the power of self-generating discourse to those who have in no small way contributed to the constitutive

conditions of d'Albert's discourse--namely Rosette and Madeleine Maupin.

Gautier accomplishes this transition by dispersing the point of view rather than removing it altogether from d'Albert so as to enlarge the conditions of exploration. We are still dealing, ultimately, with a restricted field of exploration, where certain principles of exclusion still operate, but which is opened up sufficiently to allow for the expansion and exploitation of previous conditions in the narrative agenda. This is to say that, at first glance, much happens and changes due to the transition between the first five chapters of the novel and the beginning of the sixth chapter, but at the same time, key conditions have remained stable.

My discussion will now turn to chapters VI through X of Mademoiselle de Maupin, which constitute the densest portion of the novel. These are the densest due to the introduction of new points of view, new information concerning the conditions under which d'Albert "wrote himself", and the expansion and exploitation of discursive (rhetorical) structures that continue to privilege present tense discourse. The previously discussed themes of destiny, the veil (deception), allegory, etc.. continue to be operative, but the questions raised by such themes created an impasse of unproductive circularity. This impasse pitted the multiplicity of desire against the reductive impulses of

representation and resulted in d'Albert's subsequent denial of multiplicity and role-playing.

These following six chapters of Mademoiselle de Maupin respond to this impasse by the continued privileging of a present-centered discourse to advance the narrative (already shown to be implicitly multiple and de-centered), but now this discourse is no longer just contained in d'Albert's letters. Other ways of advancing the narratives, while still in the present, are employed. This is accomplished thematically by the transference of d'Albert's attention from Rosette to Madeleine. Narratively, the strategies of dispersal along the present tense continuum privilege the multiplicity and role-playing d'Albert sought to deny and are concentrated in the inscription of theatrical convention onto narrative modes. However, as with the epistolary, theatrical conventions provide a narrative frame that seems almost purely functional.

I will treat the next six chapters chronologically and organize them around a discussion of the various narrative strategies which have been added, beyond the epistolary, because of the impasse d'Albert has created. Imbedded theatrical dialogues highlight a relationship between multiplicity and present-centered discourses, which draws attention to a production (performance) of subjectivity. Chapters VI and VII constitute a radical transition from the primacy of d'Albert's epistolary discourse to other present-centered discourses. This transition de-centers and re-

deploys the narrative points of view. This introduces new conditions of "meaning" while still maintaining the previous insistence on the present tense.

Chapters VIII and IX will be discussed in terms of the new conditions of meaning which must now inform the re-continuation of d'Albert's epistolary discourse and how these new conditions affect the reader's altered perspective. Chapter X stands alone as Madeleine's first letter to her correspondent and will be explored for its similarity to d'Albert's self-representations, as well as for its difference relative to narrative arrangements. Also, her narrative attempts to totalize the evolving representation of Rosette begun by d'Albert. What will dominate throughout will be the continuing tension between the multiple and the single and how they work against each other in the present because of the re-deployment of the narrative forms and points of view.

Narrative Shift

Chapter VI of Mademoiselle de Maupin is not an epistle, but rather a complex transition orchestrated by an unidentified narrator. In the opening paragraph this narrator intervenes, supplanting the centrality of d'Albert's voice as the sole window onto narrative events. It is important to note that d'Albert has not been stripped of his power to generate speak for himself, but a general point of view is being enlarged by the narrator to include

the participation of other voices (Rosette, Madeleine and the narrator), which will speak for themselves.

Now that the three principal protagonists are at the chateau, all will be afforded opportunities to tell their own stories. The narrator is orchestrating this transition, making it understood that from this point on, in the novel, point of view will alternate.

The third person narrator announces his intention to transfer the window of observation and asserts his authority and control over, not the creation of discourse, but the ability to enter and re-enter diverse positions from which to "observe" the narration. This he accomplishes by insisting on his professed lack of control over the generation of discourses and by jealously maintaining a distance from the various windows through which we will participate in the narration. The impression is created, by this narrator, that his is just another discourse competing for the same present tense as all the others will; he professes no didactic function, beyond maintaining his distance to reinforce the impression that the reader/narrator share the same position:

En cet endroit, si le débonnaire lecteur veut bien nous le permettre, nous allons pour quelque temps abandonner à ses rêveries le digne personnage qui, jusqu'ici, a occupé la scène à lui tout seul et parlé pour son propre compte, et rentrer dans la forme ordinaire du roman, sans toutefois, nous interdire de prendre par la suite la forme dramatique, s'il en est besoin, et en nous réservant le droit de puiser encore dans cette espèce de confession épistolaire que le susdit jeune homme adressait à son ami, persuadé que, si

pénétrant et si plein de sagacité que nous soyons, nous devons assurément en savoir là-dessus moins long que lui-même. (p.161)

This opening paragraph introduces a theatrical vocabulary to describe the past, current and continuing narrative situations. D'Albert is the "digne personnage" who has been occupying "la scène" (the narrative, the page). This motif, thus applied, reduces d'Albert's epistolary exchange to a variation on the soliloquy. The narrator refers to d'Albert's soliloquy as being in the "forme dramatique" to which he promises to return. The narrator describes his own intervention as conforming to the "forme ordinaire du roman". This gesture is a highly self-conscious one in that, while the narrator intervenes to assert his power to shift and arrange points of view and presentations of discourse, he insists that there is nothing ordinary or classical about the novel thus far.

This self-conscious gesture serves to adjust the expectations of the reader. At the same time, it is intimated that in many ways to be a novel means having a narrator. Also, the theatrical motif re-inforces the introduction of alternating narrative points of view, like theatrical dialogue. All utterances (lines of dialogue, as well as epistles) are first marked with the name of their speaker.

The narrator is playing with the conscious expectations of the reader because his abrupt intervention immediately undermines the authority of d'Albert's discourse to secure

and assert the "truth" of the novel by being its locus and sole generator of meaning. D'Albert's "voice" has no more weight than any other voice in the novel, as it would have had the novel continued as it started. The reader must now de-center himself from the locus in which he placed trust (D'Albert and his narrative) and around which his understanding of the intrigue revolved. Shifting the primacy of point of view simultaneously shifts or undermines the reader's accumulated assumptions both of d'Albert and the "intentions" of his narrative. The "truth" of the novel, and the authority to generate a discourse that might secure a locus of "truth" or meaning is fractured, but not taken up, by the narrator. He intervenes only to affect the transition and intensify the dispersal.

The narrator affects his initial transition in chapter VI in three pages (pp.161-163) by assuming a largely descriptive function. He addresses the reader overtly on two more occasions in these three pages. His descriptive task follows the arrival of Madeleine/Théodore at the chateau to which d'Albert and Rosette have retired to socialize. This narrator takes up where d'Albert left off in the fifth letter when d'Albert describes his own arrival and adjustment at the chateau:

Tout ce qui m'enlève à moi-même m'est salulaire:
la société m'ennuie, mais m'arrache forcément à
cette rêverie creuse dont je monte et je descends
la spirale, le front penché et les bras en
croix. --Aussi, depuis que le tête-à-tête est
rompu, et qu'il y a du monde ici avec lequel je
suis forcé de me contraindre un peu, je suis moins

sujet à me laisser aller à mes humeurs noires, et
je suis moins travaillé de ces désirs démesurés
qui me fondent sur le coeur comme une nuée de
vautours dès que je reste un moment inoccupé.
(p.158)

D'Albert describes an imperative to break out of his own interior exclusionary space and welcomes the necessity which forces him to interact with the other guests. It is while adjusting to his new surroundings that he notices another new arrival (Madeleine/Théodore):

mais, dans tout cet essaim provincial, ce qui me
charme le plus est un jeune cavalier qui est
arrivé depuis deux ou trois jours. (p.159)

D'Albert escapes from his own passive interiority into the "provincial swarm" and it is in this new and different multiplicity that his attention is drawn away from Rosette and away from the exclusive interiority (assemblage) of his letters onto a new unknown. He immediately attempts to territorialize this "new arrival" by drawing him into his own understanding of reality (destiny). He does this through his assumption that Rosette will attempt to exploit the presence of the handsome new arrival to excite his jealousy. This re-emphasizes the circular impasse in which d'Albert is trapped. These are the exclusionary impasses that are bypassed by the narrator's intervention in chapter VI, and which were foreshadowed by d'Albert's discourse at the end of chapter V.

The narrator backtracks, overlapping d'Albert's introduction of Madeleine/Théodore, to describe her arrival. Since the narrator's vocabulary draws heavily on theatrical

referents, we understand that we will not remain long in omniscient descriptive prose, but will remain long enough to witness the transfer of voice to Madeleine/Théodore and Rosette. The intervention, itself, can be considered theatrical for the highhanded, mocking posture it assumes through the language and tone of the authority asserted after certain conventions of presentation have been long established.

The transition affected by the narrator in chapter VI, while abrupt, is subtle and gradually performed. It moves from narrative descriptive prose to a narratively controlled dialogic exchange between Madeleine and Rosette and finally to a straight theatrical dialogue such as one would find in a play script. The narrator must bring them into the same space before allowing them to speak. This transition is performed much like a narrative fade-in in which the narrator gradually effaces himself entirely. Before doing so, however, the narrator introduces enigmas which will remain operative for the rest of the novel: Théodore's deception, Rosette's relationship to Théodore, and Théodore's motivations.

In the three pages (p.161-163) leading to the first mini-transition to dialogic exchange, the narration describes "un jeune homme", not as yet identified as Madeleine/Théodore, and focuses on his arrival with his even younger page. The page, young and exhausted, is put to bed with great care and attention by his master. The narration

follows this action while at the same time describing the beauty of both the page and his master:

C'était un tableau assurément fort gracieux. --Il y avait dans l'opposition de ces deux genres de beauté un moyen d'effet dont un peintre habile eût tiré bon parti. (p.162)

The beauty of both the page and the master along with the extreme tenderness of the "tableau" introduces both androgyny as a transcendent, unidentifiable sort of beauty and sexual ambiguity relative both to their physical beauty and the nature of their relations. The master/page relationship is being made suspect, both as a function of beauty and as a function of the act of tenderness performed by the master. The ambiguities introduced in this context seek to imply either sexual and/or social inappropriateness, since both are male and one is a servant being tended by the "master". This, in turn, introduces "le jeune homme" to the reader as thus shrouded in an ambiguous mystique.

Questions of gender (sexual or social: are they really men?, if so, is their relationship "correct"?) are thus added to more general issues of identity and the representation of identity by this narrative intrusion/transition. The theatrical frame into which these issues have been encased by the narrative intrusion also emphasizes ambiguity and deception in the performance and production of subjectivity.

The narrator breaks out of his effaced prose stance twice more in these three pages of chapter VI to further

draw attention to the sexual ambiguity posited by his own discourse, simultaneously disavowing any responsibility for the generation of these impressions:

Le lecteur en pensera ce qu'il voudra; ce sont de simples conjectures que nous lui proposons: nous n'en savons pas là-dessus plus que lui, mais nous espérons en apprendre davantage dans quelque temps, et nous lui promettons de le tenir fidèlement au courant de nos découvertes. (p.163)

And if the ambiguities posited by this narrative break have thus far not been explicit, the narrator makes them so before dissolving into a more traditional prose/dialogue narration:

Quels étaient les liens qui unissaient le maître au page et le page au maître? Assurément il y avait entre eux plus que l'affection qui peut exister entre le maître et le domestique. Étaient-ce deux amis ou deux frères? --Alors, pourquoi ce travestissement?--Il eût été cependant difficile de croire à quiconque eût vu la scène que nous venons de décrire que ces deux personnages n'étaient en vérité que ce qu'ils paraissaient être. (p.163)

The narrator's use of "travestissement" for deception, is itself ambiguous and suggestive and plants in the reader's mind prior to the introduction of this character's own discourse an operative doubt as to his social and sexual identity. This, and other such doubts, introduced by the narrator, must also function retroactively to undermine the supposed integrity of the "totality" of d'Albert's self-representation. This undermining of d'Albert's discourse will become more complete once Madeleine and Rosette inaugurate their dialogic series.

The primacy of third person narrative dissolves into a sharing between the speakers (Rosette, Theodore) and the narrator who fills the spaces between utterances with indications of physical movement, gesture and position rather than the exclusively evaluative indications of before. This further activates the theatrical motif insofar as the narrator's utterances are reminiscent of the kinds of stage directions found between lines of dialogue in a play. Stage direction does not participate overtly in the production of discourse but strongly influences the reception of discourse by directing the reader/spectator's eye to and around the discourse.

The narrator thus eases us into their relationship through dialogic exchange between Madeleine/Théodore and Rosette. A very skillful mixture of prose and dialogue brings these two characters into the same space. It then establishes their prior acquaintance before the transition to straight theatrical dialogue. This, then, activates these newly operational points of view:

En effet, on avait frappé deux petits coups aussi doucement que possible sur le panneau de la porte. Le jeune homme se leva, et, craignant de s'être trompé, attendit, pour ouvrir, que l'on heurtât de nouveau.--Deux autres coups, un peu plus accentués, se firent entendre de nouveau, et une douce voix de femme dit sur un ton très bas: C'est moi, Théodore. Théodore ouvrit, mais avec moins de vivacité qu'un jeune homme n'en met à ouvrir à une femme dont la voix est douce, et qui est venue gratter mystérieusement à votre huis vers la tombée du jour.--Le battant entrebaillé donna passage, devinez à qui? à la maîtresse du perplexe d'Albert, à la princesse Rosette en personne, plus

rose que son nom, et les seins aussi émus que les
eût jamais femme qui soit entrée le soir dans la
chambre d'un beau cavalier.

--Théodore! dit Rosette. (p.164)

Once these two characters are together, the narrator relinquishes entirely his role for the duration of the exchange. Their ensuing dialogue, which runs almost to the end of the chapter, rapidly acquaints the reader with regard to Théodore, his relationship to Rosette, Rosette's relationship with d'Albert (from Rosette's point of view) and an indication of Théodore's most recent past activities since he last saw Rosette. Their easy, rapid banter completes the narrator's intervening gesture: the undermining of d'Albert's discourse and the primacy of the conditions of "meaning" established by that discourse especially concerning the representation of Rosette and the conclusions drawn by d'Albert based on this representation. D'Albert's authority and competence as an interpreter of events is seriously questioned.

The integrity of d'Albert's representation of Rosette is not undermined as a representation, but rather its accuracy from a more generally distanced view is questioned. The severity of d'Albert's self-deception is made more obvious and in many ways confirms d'Albert's own fear of self-deception. On many occasions (pp. 140, 141, 142) d'Albert wondered if he might be wrong about the quality of Rosette's love for him and each time he turned away from the possibility that she might be deceiving him. This turning

away facilitated his own accelerating self-deception. All that is certain is that d'Albert fails to properly "read" Rosette and Rosette's feelings about the quality of their relationship:

THEODORE.--Il vous aime fort sans doute?
 ROSETTE.--Je ne sais trop.--Il y a des moments où l'on croirait qu'il m'aime beaucoup; mais au fond il ne m'aime pas, et il n'est pas loin de me haïr, car il m'en veut de ce qu'il ne peut m'aimer.--Il a fait comme plusieurs autres plus expérimentés que lui; il a pris un goût vif pour la passion, et s'est trouvé tout surpris et tout désappointé quand son désir a été assouvi.--C'est une erreur que, parce que l'on a couché ensemble, on se doit réciproquement adorer. (p.166)

In a paragraph, Rosette sums up the tensions that fueled d'Albert's entire five epistles. Such a revelation, confirming d'Albert's self-deception simultaneously confirms Rosette's active deception of d'Albert. Consequently, d'Albert cannot be said to be pathologically incapable of interpretive depth. It reinforces d'Albert's intense interiority to the point of exclusion. D'Albert is too close to his own spiraling discourse and too occupied in maintaining the integrity of his own narrative from outside intrusions which might undermine his own suppositions.

Rosette's revelations to Théodore concerning d'Albert draw attention mainly to his youth and inexperience relative to their own. The inner turmoil so opaque to d'Albert is to Rosette transparent. Because of his inexperience, d'Albert conformed mainly to fantasies of having a mistress, based loosely on societal stereotypes concerning the "structure" and potential of desire in such a context. D'Albert was

willing to admit his inexperience before his relationship with Rosette (pp. 90, 75, 72, 68), but once involved, d'Albert convinced himself that his one experience would be an archetype that could but repeat itself in the future (pp. 112, 156). Once again this indicates d'Albert's denial of multiplicity and his reductive tendencies in representing life and life's possibilities to himself.

This dialogic exchange which conducts us almost completely to the end of the chapter adds dimension to Rosette's representation, forcing us to admit complexities to her character which were denied to her in d'Albert's representation of her. She has so easily seen through d'Albert's (self)deception because, it is implied, she has already learned a lesson that d'Albert has missed. Also, it is further implied that she has not learned this "lesson" directly from Théodore but rather indirectly because of her having known and loved him (to no avail). We learn later in Madeleine's epistolary exchange with Graciosa that Rosette was unhappily married to an old man and quickly widowed. Meeting Théodore provided a context which revealed her disillusion to her. Since she has never slept with Théodore, and professes love for him, she has concluded that the fulfillment of sexual desire is not necessarily a condition of love.

Rosette is not, however, immune to (self)deception. As d'Albert misreads Rosette, so Rosette misreads Théodore by failing to imagine (in light of considerable evidence) a

reason that might explain his inability to consummate their love. So, while d'Albert's self-deception is revealed, tainting his discourse as a source of authority, deception and self-deception do not stop operating, nor is deception contained only in d'Albert's discourse. These are still vitally operative in both Rosette's and Madeleine/Théodore's discourses.

The undermining of d'Albert's authority has alerted the reader to the presence of deception, and the narrator's intervention transfers this possibility of deception to the other characters as well. In essence, self-generating, self-representing discourses are thoroughly undermined as being authentic and/or closer to the "truth" of self-representation. The narrator also does his part to cast suspicion onto Théodore before allowing him to speak.

At the close of chapter VI, the narrator again intervenes to conclude the chapter. In the beginning of the chapter, after the first paragraph, the narrator's task was to bring these characters together before allowing them to speak. Once they share the same space and are settled in it, the narrator fades away allowing the characters to express themselves in theatrical dialogue. At the end of the chapter, the narrator's task is to separate the characters again, so that he can finish the gesture he began, which was to interrupt d'Albert and introduce new voices.

Omniscient narration is resumed and continued into chapter VII for reasons consistent with its use in chapter VI but in a more expanded (more traditional) manner due to organizational needs. The representation of the spatial arrangements and actions of the three simultaneously interacting characters (d'Albert, Rosette, Madeleine/Théodore) cannot be so represented in an epistle written by d'Albert. This is to say that epistolary, dialogic and/or theatrically dialogic discourses are unable to perform a narrator's task, which is to describe people in action. They privilege individuated voices and a narrator privileges action and description.

Chapters VI and VII represent an important transition from one kind of discourse, with one dominating voice, to other similar kinds of discourse with several voices. These two transitional chapters activate these altered conditions. This omniscient narrative tactic, coming when it does, is primarily an organizational device of receptive control. Only this device could efficiently accomplish its task under the conditions the novel has created for itself.

The first five chapters of the novel have set up an epistolary narrative arrangement which privileges one voice, and the novel seeks both to maintain and alter this arrangement. The privileging of a single voice in the present tense is something that will be maintained. What will be altered, is the centrality of only d'Albert's voice. Now, other voices will speak for themselves in a present

parallel to d'Albert's. This severely reduces the possibility of putting forth a traditionally linear narrative plot line. Interactive action is another victim to this arrangement as are scenes of intimacy. If each voice must be separate and independent of others, maintaining its own integrity at the time of its performance, then certain narrative sacrifices become necessary which are made up for (filled in) by the omniscient narrator.

D'Albert's epistles enjoyed the integrity of self-generation, interiority and the cohesiveness ascribed to a single voice, but sacrificed interaction, except during a moment of theatrical dialogue between himself and Rosette, that he recounted to Silvio (Ch. IV, pp.125-129). That moment was, however, implicitly analeptic in spite of the illusion of immediacy it created. Chapters VI and VII, which introduce new conditions of understanding, provide the interaction that d'Albert's epistles are unable to narrate. Although abruptly, the narrator establishes the mise en scène that will inform the continuation of d'Albert's letters and the addition of Madeleine's letters.

This shared context must have a meaning that does not necessarily conform to verisimilitude. It must, however, be a stable context which all characters inhabit simultaneously. Theatrical narrative strategies (particularly Shakespearean) enact this re-deployment of point of view by first putting everyone in the same place.

Only omniscient narration can, at this point, accomplish this transition and once it is accomplished in chapter VI, the new arrangements will strongly inform subsequent epistolary exchanges.

Chapter VII begins in Rosette's bedroom at the chateau and after coming full circle, ends at the chateau. The principal action, which shows the reader all of the characters together, is a hunt. All of the characters participate in the hunt: d'Albert, Rosette, Madeleine/Théodore, and his page, Isnabel. The hunt is important for two reasons: it allows us to see all of the characters act and interact without privileging anyone's discourse, something that epistolary and theatrical/narrative discourses cannot do; and it creates a situation in which an enigma posited in chapter VI (the master/page relationship) is partially revealed to the reader, thereby heightening through association another enigma (who/what is Théodore).

The hunt further allows the narrator to more sharply contextualize the surroundings as well as the interpersonal tensions which will inform the subsequent epistolary exchanges. Also, prior to the hunt, the scene that takes place in Rosette's bedroom serves to heighten the drama between the three principal characters. Their mutual deceptions are made more palpable and we see personal motivations shift throughout the carefully "scripted" three-way conversation. Also, the locus of the bedroom, in which

they all meet together for the first time, strongly suggests that the main tensions are sexually localized and that eventual "resolution" must be accomplished in that context.

Chapter VII opens in Rosette's bedroom. D'Albert arrives at the crack of dawn and the narrator reminds us that this enthusiasm on his part is not normal: *Dès qu'il fit jour chez Rosette, d'Albert se fit annoncer avec un empressement qui ni lui était pas habituel* (Ch. VII, p. 177). This opening remark on the narrator's part is innocuous but conveys the changes which have already taken place in d'Albert's demeanor since arriving at the chateau with Rosette.

These first three pages (pp.177-179) constitute a narratively directed dialogue between d'Albert and Rosette prior to Théodore's arrival. The narrative gestures are, during this exchange, limited to minor embellishments which indicate physical movement and proximity although the strangeness of d'Albert's renewed enthusiasm is often pointed out by the narrator through Rosette:

Savez-vous que, lorsque quelqu'un change tout à coup de caractère, et sans raison apparente, cela est de mauvais augure? (p.178)

Rosette also makes it known to us as well as to d'Albert that not only is his presence at so early an hour strange, but also his entire appearance is theatrically wrought, suggesting that he is playing some sort of game that is not being performed exclusively for her pleasure, but that d'Albert has "ulterior motives":

...mais pour ne pas parler toujours de moi, vous êtes, ce matin, d'une beauté et d'une fraîcheur nonpareilles, vous avez l'air d'un frère de l'Aurore; et, quoiqu'il fasse à peine jour, vous êtes déjà paré et godronné comme pour un bal. D'aventure, est-ce que vous avez des desseins à mon endroit? et auriez-vous monté un coup de Jarnac à ma vertu? voudriez-vous faire ma conquête? Mais j'oubliais que c'était déjà fait et de l'histoire ancienne. (p.178)

to which d'Albert responds, "Rosette, ne plaisantez pas comme cela; vous savez bien que je vous aime (Ch. VII, p. 178). This exchange is charged dramatically for several reasons. This is their first conversation that takes place outside of d'Albert's letters, and so, Rosette's observations are not being scripted by d'Albert. This allows the reader to evaluate her observations without privileging just d'Albert. We, as readers, have always known d'Albert's position with regard to Rosette, but now we know Rosette's as well. Her mocking tone has more weight for us now.

This scripted and controlled dialogue allows the reader to see d'Albert other than how he saw himself in his letters. The difference between d'Albert's self-representation and this dialogue's representation of d'Albert shows the reader that d'Albert now takes up with relish (and purpose) a theatrical demeanor and role which he denigrated in his letters. Rosette notices this and is intrigued. She has always, we know now, conducted herself theatrically with d'Albert and her continuing deception, now parallel to d'Albert's, becomes for Rosette (as well as for

the reader), an enigma. The enigma lies somewhere between his epistles and this dialogue. The arrival of Théodore further complicates this evolving theatrical scene.

The acting strain is perhaps more arduous for Rosette than for the others only insofar as Rosette is the unifying link that caused them to be brought together. She alone, at this point, knows both "men" and is the only one to have a fully evolved "itinerary" concerning both. She is involved with d'Albert and would prefer to be involved with Théodore. Also, her continuing association with d'Albert was secured through a promise exacted by Théodore. In chapter VI, Théodore asked her what her plans were with d'Albert now that he had arrived. Rosette intimated that she would attempt a gracious end to their association to which Théodore replied, "Gardez celui-ci pour l'amour de moi" (p.167). To please Théodore, Rosette readily agreed.

Knowing as we do now, the complete and current state of emotional ties between Rosette and d'Albert and between Rosette and Théodore, the arrival of Théodore at the height of Rosette's tête-à-tête with d'Albert further complicates our understanding of these characters. All of the non-epistolary arrangements add dramatic density to the interaction of these characters and are exploited to their fullest before Théodore/Madeleine is allowed to speak.

The spirited conversation taking place prior to Théodore's arrival is interrupted both by Théodore and the narrator. Only one brief exchange between Théodore and

Rosette is allowed in order to bring closure to the previous exchange:

--Où en étiez-vous? dit Théodore. J'ai peut-être interrompu une conversation intéressante: continuez, de grâce, et mettez-moi au fait en quelques mots.
 --Oh non! répondit Rosette avec un sourire malicieux; nous parlions d'affaires. (p.179)

Her remark is doubly duplicitous and shows the acting strain she would be under to continue her previous conversation integrating Théodore. She is trying to simultaneously maintain her "secret" complicity with d'Albert, knowing full well that Théodore would also be complicit with her deception of d'Albert. She, of course, does not wish to reveal her deception of d'Albert to d'Albert so as to keep her promise to Théodore; that she would continue her affair with him. Théodore is thus complicit with Rosette's deception, but she does not know his intentions therein.

As stated earlier, the narrator intervenes after this brief exchange so as to describe rather than to let develop the ensuing three-way exchange. The pressures, from previous knowledge and current complexities, that such a dialogue would be under would be too much and ultimately too inadequate to be fully revealed by theatrical narrative. Such a dialogue would also have to be quite long if all the complexities were to be directly treated and alluded to. Narration is thus resorted to to go more directly to the heart of things. It is an expediency which reveals that this exchange is not the "point" of the chapter but rather

the setting which prepares us for their afternoon together. It also reveals the power of mingling narrative strategies in order to lead the reader quickly to new understandings, precisely because it is so abrupt.

The roughly page and a half (bottom p.179 to top p.181) long narrative intrusion privileges d'Albert's reactions to the presence of Théodore. The narrator is making the reader accustomed to the interactions of the three characters together. This advances the reader's re-orientation away from the primacy of d'Albert's epistles. The reader "sees" three distinct characters with separate interests and motivations not determined by d'Albert's point of view. In this instance, in particular, the narrator highlights d'Albert's attitudes towards Théodore pointing out that rather than experiencing jealousy, he feels kindly towards Théodore:

D'Albert qui était venu chez Rosette avec l'envie de parler fort sèchement à Théodore, s'il l'y rencontrait fut tout surpris de ne pas se sentir en sa présence le moindre mouvement de colère, et de se laisser aller avec autant de facilité aux avances qu'il lui fit. (p.180)

Only relations of positive potential desire are being made operative in their conversation. There are no intimations of rancor, jealousy, or potential unpleasantness. There are, however, several intimations of intense curiosity concerning each's relationship to the other. With this exchange, the narrator transfers the curiosity amongst the characters to the reader. This narrative intrusion, after

having accomplished this task, takes us back to the conclusion of their conversation which revolves around their plans for the day. This gesture brings us to the hunt which is ultimately the "point" of the chapter and the last remaining task of the two chapter long transition.

The hunt serves many vital functions at this juncture in the text. It is under strict narrative control since self-generating discourses (epistolary, theatrical) are inadequate here: they privilege discourse over action in the present and cannot relay the visual objectivity needed to convey the series of events which comprise the hunt. The two chapter transitional series (Chs. VI and VII) has reunited all of the characters into a commonly shared space/reality and enacted discursive exchanges which have simultaneously confirmed and problematized this reality. Certain realities have been undermined and problematized and now these must also be confirmed collectively so as to legitimize the enigmas created by the narrator. This will provide us with the contextualization we will need to relate to future epistolary exchanges. Other equally important functions are realized through the hunt and will be discussed further on. In many ways, the hunt is a substitute and/or extension of the previous dialogic exchange conducted spatially:

Tout le monde fut bientôt prêt. D'Albert et Théodore étaient déjà à cheval dans la première cour, quand Rosette, en habit d'amazone, parut sur les premières marches du perron. Elle avait sous ce costume un petit air allègre et délibéré qui

lui allait on ne peut mieux: elle sauta sur la selle avec sa prestesse ordinaire, et donna un coup de housine à son cheval qui partit comme un trait. D'Albert piqua des deux et l'eut bientôt rejointe.--Théodore les laissa prendre quelque avance, étant sûr de les rattraper dès qu'il le voudrait.--Il semblait attendre quelque chose, et se retournait souvent du côté du château. (p.181)

The tensions introduced, then heightened, by the dialogic exchange are played out in the hunt. Each participant (character) tests the others by taking verbal and physical risks to draw attention to themselves. The page's presence rounds out the multiple tensions, in that he represents the deceptive, provocative link or barrier between Rosette and Théodore. The curiosity that links d'Albert to Théodore through Rosette is already established and the page problematizes the link between Rosette and Théodore which could have been construed as "settled". Rosette is thus not as complacent regarding the "understanding" she has with Théodore.

This physical play, which mirrors and extends the dialogic, is carefully controlled by the narrator who directs the readers attention to developing complexities and simultaneously agitated, provoked desires:

Théodore, comme le mieux monté et le meilleur écuyer, tatonnait la meute avec une ardeur incroyable. D'Albert le suivait de près. Rosette et le petit page Isnabel suivaient, séparés par un intervalle qui s'augmentait de minute en minute. L'intervalle fut bientôt assez grand pour ne pouvoir plus espérer de rétablir l'équilibre. (p.185)

Obvious as well as hidden agendas become more and more apparent and lead eventually to collusion/collision. Isnabel, the page, in attempting to match the reckless aggressiveness of Théodore, slams into a tree branch unseating himself from his mount. Rosette, in rushing to his aid, undoes his clothing to facilitate his breathing and discovers "his" true identity:

Rosette vit alors quelque chose qui aurait été pour un homme la plus agréable des surprises du monde, mais qui ne parut pas à beaucoup près lui faire plaisir,--car ses sourcils se rapprochèrent, et sa lèvre supérieure trembla légèrement,-- (...) --Une femme! dit-elle, une femme! ah! Théodore! (p.186)

This discovery, by extension, firmly establishes the sexual ambiguity and mystique of Théodore and simultaneously draws Rosette into the same context as d'Albert vis-à-vis Théodore. The transition started in chapter VI is now complete and the text will now, in subsequent chapters resume epistolary exchange. Narration, in orchestrating the transition has now re-oriented the reader to the new conditions which will transform and inform subsequent epistolary exchanges. There is, however, as mentioned previously, another important task fulfilled through the description of the hunt: the re-newal or re-enactment of the allegorical as a direct and potent link which now unites all characters to potentially similar destinies. This task enobles and/or legitimizes the space they now occupy and shows it to be an integral element which contributes to their shared destiny for the duration of the novel.

The hunt, as directed by the narrator, places our characters together in the forest around the castle, and sets them in motion. Their afternoon together is potentially revelatory in light of the previous three-way conversation which preceded. The reader now knows that the relationships between them are very complex and so this hunt sets the tone for the rest of the novel, which takes place at the castle. It is distinctly allegorical because of the framing of the scene.

In d'Albert's epistolary exchange, previous to this transition, deception and self-deception were operative. They were systematically supported and enhanced by certain thematic images, not to make of d'Albert an inept interpreter of reality, but rather to show how his self-deception was essential to the integrity of his own self-interest. D'Albert had come to conclusions about himself and the world by filtering out those elements that might interfere in the mental construction of his own "world". D'Albert figured himself and the world allegorically. He did this by active denial: of history, of family and of society. For him, these were not integral agents in his world. This facilitated his quasi-isolated, alienated view of himself and helped it to remain constant, repetitive and thus "natural". D'Albert's "nature", although artificially constructed and maintained, seemed to him a "natural given" of fate. What he constructed for himself was an allegory of his own life and thus his destiny. His constant recourse to

allegorical constructions and allegorically developed metaphors relative to himself, the (social) world and nature bear this out. His "world" was an isolated one and one in which only certain events and elements were operating to identify and fulfill his destiny.

The narrative intrusion that interrupts this development does not invalidate d'Albert's allegorical project. It reveals its artificiality by showing how close it was to exhausting itself. D'Albert's own uncertainty towards his "destiny", expressed through his minor but constant ironies, is taken up by the narrator in order to draw attention to his artificial orchestration of "destiny" to re-new it by placing d'Albert in a situation which will, certainly, re-invigorate his own orchestration of that destiny. Théodore's mystique and beauty re-news d'Albert's search for the ideal.

A larger irony is operating subtly here, in that, the narrator provides exactly what d'Albert needs to re-new his search. D'Albert will suppose that providence has supplied it. The narrator has supplied a whole new context rife with uncertainties that d'Albert will scramble to "code" into his own destiny. The artificiality is even more apparent, since the reader has a newer, more distanced, point of view which highlights this artificiality.

The key to this collective allegorical construct, as the hunt (the narrator) allows us to see, is in its locus at the castle in the forest. Geography is thus the enabling

element in this construct. Just as the narrative intrusion took on the task of bringing the principal characters into the same space, now it must valorize or justify that now collectively occupied space. The discursive exchanges in chapter VI and VII valorized the imperative of bringing them together (the multiple operative deceptions and enigmas are now apparent). The hunt now, in its own way, must valorize the geographic locale and show its effect on the interpersonal relations of the characters. It also makes the locale visible to the reader in a way which is consistent with how the characters see it.

This gesture was begun by d'Albert in chapter IV, prior to the narrative intrusion and foreshadows the task taken up and continued in the scene of chapter VII:

Il ne serait, peut-être pas hors de propos que je te fisse une petite description de la susdite campagne, qui est assez jolie; cela égayerait un peu toute cette métaphysique, et d'ailleurs il faut bien un fond pour les personnages, et les figures ne peuvent pas se détacher sur le vide ou sur cette teinte brune et vague dont les peintres remplissent le champ de leurs toiles. (p.134)

"Il faut bien un fond pour les personnages...", which is to say that these characters, so defined and delineated must have a geographical context which is in harmony, or is proper to them. This locale must work with and against these characters and must inform their movements (and discursive constructions) within it. The geography is being made operative, initially by d'Albert, and the subsequent narrative intrusion shows us around this locale through the

hunt. Once we are united with the characters in this space, the narration shows us the operative boundaries of the context. The narrator draws attention to his own orchestration of events which reveals d'Albert's orchestration of his own narrative and prepares us for Madeleine's orchestration of her narrative.

Once the hunt is underway, a lengthy narrative digression momentarily suspends the action taking place, to describe the forest in which they are hunting. It is not a virgin forest. Such a forest would have no power to affect the characters positively, since a virgin forest has no human history contained within it. This forest has considerable human history. It has been subtly but definitely shaped by a human presence, and a narrator. It is traversed by picturesque paths that have names and is strewn artfully with fountains and stones. It was shaped largely by the past inhabitants of the castle for maximum effect, just as it is now being shaped by a narrator for our characters. It is a "forêt héréditaire" (p.183) planted by great-grandfathers for great-grandsons. This forest has a lineage and legitimacy that parallels and supports its human presence.

This narrative digression activates a forest with magical properties that is a function of its still palpable yet mysterious past and which stands in contradiction to the modern world which surrounds it:

C'était une vraie forêt d'autrefois, avec de vieux chênes plus que séculaires et comme on n'en voit plus maintenant que l'on ne plante plus d'arbres, et qu'on n'a pas la patience d'attendre que ceux qui le sont soient poussés; (....); une de ces forêts touffues et sombres où se détachent admirablement les croupes satinées et blanches des gros chevaux de Wouvermans et les larges pavillons de ces trompes à la Dampierre, que le Parrocel aime à faire rayonner au dos des piqueurs. (p.183)

This forest creates a context in which time is suspended.

This forest remains unaffected by the modern world which surrounds it. The modern world is fast, destructive, perplexed and unappreciative of the creative gestures of the past. This forest is firmly rooted in a past economy of values and possibilities which no longer exists and this forest, as it is now, is precious insofar as another like it could not now be created. As it is, only the "privileged" understand it and modern society displays no sensitive impulse similar to that which originally shaped the forest.

It is into this context that our characters have escaped. In doing so, they momentarily escape the modern world from which they acquired their "problems". These "problems" now interlinked will, in some measure, be "resolved" in this magic space. Each of these characters invoke and activate the allegorical space because they each conceive of "life" in allegorical terms (d'Albert: pp. 80, 98, 112, 130-1, 138, 144-5, 152-5; Rosette: pp.168-170; Théodore: pp. 171-172) which is to say, in spatio-temporal terms informed by the mythic potential of destiny.

Time, space and destiny are main operative elements in allegory and by extension in this text. Time is not continuous and reassuring but rather discontinuous and menacing but still essential. Space can be orienting or disorienting and is usually both at once, the one always working simultaneously against the other. Destiny is the desire for an understanding of authentic self which emerges and evolves in time. These three elements are artificially mixed and made active when the characters are brought together and move about in this context, but it is understood implicitly as temporary.

This forest, in drawing from literary and artistic conventions, does not strive to conform to verisimilitude, on the contrary, it strives to be a reality unto itself, divorced from a contradictory reality which is always working against it. In this context the characters play out the nostalgia of an authentic self, authentically lived, but ironically, in the full knowledge of temporal discontinuity. Théodore, alone possesses this knowledge and d'Albert and Rosette will learn the lessons of the fallacy of prolongation in a world prone to constant change.

The narration takes up d'Albert's ironic gestures from his epistolary discourse and makes us see the artificiality of his self-alienation and its perpetuation through self-deception. The narrator's irony is both verbal and dramatic. Verbally, the narrator assumes a distant stance with regard to the characters and their now shared destiny.

His tone is one of affected naiveté and an unwillingness to explicitly commit to the control he asserted in bringing the characters together. Dramatically, the narrator's intrusive gesture in chapters VI and VII brings these characters together in an enchanted forest and sets up complex inter-relationships that directly imitate the mise en scène of Shakespeare's As You Like It. This orchestration foreshadows the description of the performance of this play in Chapter XI of the novel. Such control cannot be assumed nor asserted by any one character's discourse and this narrative assertion of control, coming as it does between self-generating discourses, functions for the reader analeptically as well as proleptically.

Immediately following this narrative intrusion are a series of three epistles; two are d'Albert's (Chs. VIII, IX) and one is Théodore's (Ch. X), his first epistle which initiates the explicit de-coding of the obvious enigmas concerning "his" identity. As the reader approaches this series, it is with a modified view towards a now fully activated allegorical construct, which sets down a primary narrative with the understanding that multiple interpretations are present/foreshadowed.

Re-insertion into the Epistolary

The "informed" reader is now returned to the epistolary series. Chapters VIII and IX are the resumption of d'Albert's letters to Silvio, written from the castle.

Chapter X is Théodore's first letter in the novel to her correspondent, Graciosa.

This series is important because it represents a shifted conceptual analysis by d'Albert which is strongly (implicitly) supported by Théodore's letter. Deception, which d'Albert rejected before in his earlier series, and which was valorized (activated) in the narrative intrusion, is now embraced by d'Albert.

This series is also important for d'Albert's active analysis of "history" which is itself strongly informed by deception. In d'Albert's first epistolary series, he longed for continuity with the past. Implicitly, it was understood that this was somehow impossible but d'Albert did not dwell on it. In this series, d'Albert explicitly rejects the continuity of history, both personal and social, and he identifies this discontinuity as the source of corruption and inauthenticity. It is his own analysis of desire which leads him to a socio-historical analysis of his desire and desire in general.

D'Albert begins the letter in chapter VIII by immediately problematizing the past. This is a new tactic in his letters because in his earlier letters he kept tenaciously to the present and the future, making only the barest references to his past and only to emphasize the confusion of his present condition. This gesture in this letter suggests that he has "decided" what history is and is no longer confused.

Writing to his childhood friend makes this gesture easier for him because he and Silvio have a shared "history" of childhood. He takes up the theme of childhood innocence in relation to history with Silvio in order to lead up to discontinuity and corruption because he wants to apprise Silvio of his new object of desire, Théodore. Because of the dramatic irony which places the reader in a position of superiority with regard to what's going on, d'Albert's carefully penned exegesis takes on comic aspects for the reader. The structure of his letter is for us rather transparent:

Oh quel beau temps c'était!--que nous étions angéliquement purs!
 --Nos pieds touchaient à peine la terre; nous avions comme des ailes aux épaules, nos désirs nous enlevaient, et la brise du printemps faisait trembler autour de nos fronts la blonde auréole de l'adolescence. (p.187)

He describes in great detail the ecstasies of youth and nature in perfect harmony which can be summed up by d'Albert's own phrase amidst his descriptive digression, "printemps au-dehors, jeunesse au-dedans" (Ch. VIII, p.188). This is short-lived and quickly followed by a shift in the development of his argument:

Hélas!--cela a peu duré, chez moi du moins,--en acquérant la science de l'homme, tu as su garder la candeur de l'enfant.
 --Le germe de corruption qui était en moi s'est développé bien vite, et la gangrène a dévoré impitoyablement tout ce que j'avais de pur et de sain.--Il ne m'est resté de bon que mon amitié pour toi. (p.188-89)

"Le germe de corruption," he goes on to characterize as his single minded search for perfect physical/spiritual fulfillment in beauty. Trafficking in desire has corrupted him and blunted his sense of moral goodness:

Ma conscience est une sourde et muette.
L'adultère me paraît la chose la plus innocente;
je trouve tout simple qu'une jeune fille se
prostitue; il me semble que je ne me ferais pas le
plus léger scrupule de pousser du pied dans un
précipice les gens qui me gênent, si je marchais
sur le bord avec eux. (p.189)

These words have no reality beyond their shock-value. He speaks in the conditional tense, which is to say, not from the reality of personal experience, but rather from an imaginative projection into the future. The "idea" of corruption is what makes him say them because he is trying to figure corruption to his friend, so as to prepare him for the revelation. He is trying to give his friend an idea of his evil, corrupt potential in his current frame of mind, because as he says himself: "et pourtant je ne suis pas méchant, je n'ai jamais fais de mal à qui que ce soit au monde, et n'en ferais probablement jamais; (Ch. VIII, p.190)

It should be said that the "past" d'Albert uses in juxtaposition to his present corruption is not loco-descriptive nor is it a past lodged in the sequential rendering of particular events in the past. It is simply the nostalgic harmony of youth and nature. To this he juxtaposes an adulthood rife with the destructive, consuming tendencies of desire. Desires which deviate in their flux from the socially sanctioned have rattled d'Albert so much

so that it jars him to the explicit recognition of discontinuity and fragmentation and only temporary control over states and events that are so understood.

He attempts to radicalize this state linguistically by isolating himself from Silvio, who d'Albert insists has somehow retained continuity with the past. D'Albert does not posit discontinuity as a general rule, but rather as a state of being unique to himself. Intense, multiple desires have been channeled by d'Albert into the search for beauty and while he temporarily arrested his "search" once involved with Rosette, the enigmatic troubling presence of Théodore has re-activated this preoccupation with beauty and desire.

In attempting to prepare Silvio for the revelation of his now violent attraction for a "man" he explains the qualitative shift of his desires from the "acceptable" to the "unacceptable", the continuous to the discontinuous:

Etreintes mortelles, morsures de tigre,
enlacements de boa, pieds d'éléphant posés sur une
poitrine qui craque et s'aplâtit, queue acérée du
scorpion, jus laiteux de l'euphorbe, kriss ondulés
du Javin, lames qui brillent la nuit, et vous
éteignez dans le sang, c'est vous qui remplacerez
pour moi les roses effeuillées, les baisers
humides et les enlacements de l'amour! (p.191)

He is describing desire as a multiple and discontinuous intensity of destructive potential. This kind of desire includes pain and danger. His most recent experience of desire (Théodore) has forced him to abandon stereotypically classical renderings of desire as all good and all positive. The violence of his feelings, coupled with the seemingly

"unorthodox" choice of desire-object (a man) has forced him to re-evaluate and re-contextualize desires into his own context because they are in such violent opposition to the social norm. This opposition has led him to conclude thus far that such desire must be located at the negative extremity of the moral barometer:

--C'est la plus déplorable de toutes mes aberrations, je n'y conçois rien, je n'y comprends rien, tout en moi est brouillé et renversé; je ne sais plus qui je suis ni ce que sont les autres, je doute si je suis un homme ou une femme, j'ai horreur de moi-même, j'éprouve des mouvements singuliers et inexplicables, et il y a des moments où il me semble que ma raison s'en va et où le sentiment de mon existence m'abandonne tout à fait. (p.195)

For maximum effect, he finishes the letter with his announcement that he loves a man. Again, the comic effect is considerable because throughout this laborious development the reader is well aware of where it leads and it is humorous to see him struggle so to prepare his reader without alerting him too soon. His description of his own imagined moral turpitude is hyperbolic if conditional but his argument is quite clear and the gesture is representative of the crumbling of his previous exclusive reality. The "magical" allegorical boundaries have disintegrated and he must now re-construct new operative boundaries so as to territorialize these new revelations of desire. The narrative intrusion (Chs. VI, VII) foreshadowed this eventuality and d'Albert's letter now confirms it. In

the following letter we see this struggle to reconstruct commence.

In chapter IX, d'Albert follows up on his revelation which dramatically concluded the previous chapter. He confirms that it is indeed desire that he feels for this person known to him as a man, and not simple friendship:

Cela est ainsi.--J'aime un homme, Silvio.--J'ai cherché longtemps à me faire illusion; j'ai donné un nom différent au sentiment que j'éprouvais, je l'ai vêtu de l'habit d'une amitié pure et désintéressée; j'ai cru que cela n'était que l'admiration que j'ai pour toutes les belles personnes et les belles choses; (p.197)

This reality in the face of its rather severe social ramifications forces d'Albert to explore desire and by extension his desire so as to determine two things: whether this new development is for him a momentary aberration or one which entails for him wider ramifications of homosexuality; and whether this "aberration" can be accounted for on the socio-historical plane.

D'Albert is compelled to transcend stereotypical understandings of desire to account for his current feelings and this provokes, in his letter, an exploration of desire which is largely historical, literary and social. The result is a deepening of his isolation. His exploration further confirms the discontinuity and fragmentedness of the temporal self.

D'Albert begins his exploration with beauty. Beauty is for him the source and motivation of desire and beauty is not necessarily gender specific, although early on d'Albert

concedes that it is usually associated with the feminine. Beauty transcends questions of propriety by being the sign of desire itself. He explores this link between beauty and desire. What is interesting is that it is at this moment that he chooses to actively embrace his identity as a poet in inaugurating his argument, a gesture he was until now never willing to do:

__O beauté! nous ne sommes créés que pour t'aimer
et t'adorer à genoux si nous t'avons trouvée, pour
te chercher éternellement à travers le monde si ce
bonheur ne nous a pas été donné; mais te posséder,
mais être nous-mêmes toi, cela n'est possible
qu'aux anges et aux femmes. Amants, poètes,
peintres et sculpteurs, nous cherchons tous à
t'élever un autel, l'amant dans sa maîtresse, le
poète dans son chant, le peintre dans sa toile, le
sculpteur dans son marbre; mais l'éternel
désespoir, c'est de ne pouvoir faire palpable la
beauté que l'on sent et d'être enveloppé d'un
corps qui ne réalise point l'idée du corps que
vous comprenez être le vôtre. (p.199)

We see the problem as d'Albert posits it. Pursuing beauty, primarily the male function, and possessing beauty, primarily the female function, are reduced to the artist (male) and the model (female). Possessing and feeling beauty is that which most attracts the artist and most mystifies the man's (artist's) perception of woman. But d'Albert has seen beautiful men in the past and he goes on to describe one (p.200) and the extreme effect his beauty had on him. He desired his beauty--not to possess him but to have been beautiful as he was so as to experience the social and sexual success of one so built. He, in this instance experienced jealousy and not desire. To this he

juxtaposes his reaction to Théodore's beauty saying,
 "Quoique Théodore soit très beau, je n'ai cependant pas
 désiré sa beauté et j'aime mieux qu'il l'ait que moi." (Ch.
 IX, p.201)

The difference for d'Albert here is that rather than becoming jealous of his beauty he prefers to admire and desire Théodore because he is beautiful. This difference in reaction to two beautiful men provokes d'Albert to develop a comparative exploration of Antiquity and Christianity in which resides two contradictory views of beauty and the value of beauty.

He invokes Antiquity to valorize and justify his attraction to Théodore and shows that Christianity has tampered with a reality that it could not accept:

--Ces amours étranges dont sont pleines les
 élégies des poètes anciens, qui nous surprenaient
 tant et que nous ne pouvions concevoir, sont donc
 vraisemblables et possibles. Dans les traductions
 que nous en faisons, nous mettions des noms de
 femmes à la place de ceux qui y étaient.
 Juventius se terminait en Juventia, Alexis se
 changeait en Ianthé. Les beaux garçons devenaient
 de belles filles nous recomposions ainsi le sérail
 monstrueux de Catulle, de Tibulle, de Martial et
 du doux Virgile. C'était une fort galante
 occupation qui prouvait seulement combien peu nous
 avions compris le génie antique. (p.201)

He admires Antiquity for its clarity, physicality and well defined parameters concerning the beauty of form. The modern world, formed by the pressures of Christianity, admires the formlessness of dispersed spirituality. This motivates him to discuss the reality, his inner reality,

that he creates mentally and linguistically to fend off the dispersion of modernity:

--Jamais ni brouillard ni vapeur, jamais rien d'incertain et de flottant. Mon ciel n'a pas de nuage, ou, s'il en a, ce sont des nuages solides et taillés au ciseau, faits avec les éclats de marbre tombés de la statue de Jupiter. (p.202)

This is a statement of allegorical intent which embraces the artist's task as well as that of the individual: to create, re-create and assemble operative agents so as to form a cosmos which is basically exclusionary yet open to constant change. This is also by extension a linguistic operation in which "worlds" are created in which one seeks refuge against the reality they work against.

D'Albert knows implicitly that his efforts are in many ways vain because even while asserting authenticity he implicitly recognizes the inauthenticity of discontinuity and fragmentedness. This chapter is the one where d'Albert recognizes explicitly his own strategies and begins to valorize the imperatives of deception, duplicity, role-playing and multiplicity as conditions of life:

La création se moque impitoyablement de la créature. Tout est indifférent à tout, et chaque chose vit ou végète par sa propre loi. Que je fasse ceci ou cela, que je vive ou que je meure, que je souffre ou que je jouisse, que je dissimule ou que je sois franc, qu'est-ce que cela fait au soleil et aux betteraves et même aux hommes. (p.208)

This is the low point of d'Albert's mood and his argument. In this statement he capitulates before the modern

"realities" of dispersed multiplicities, ultimate irrelevancy, entropy and discontinuous fragmentedness. Despite this recognition, which was before always implicit and now explicit, d'Albert once again re-groups and through an act of will he makes himself re-focus: "Il n'y a plus, hélas! qu'une chose qui palpite en moi, c'est l'horrible désir qui me porte vers Théodore." (Ch. IX, p.210)

His gesture to re-focus is one in which he re-asserts his allegorical nature in the resolution of his current "problem": "Voilà où se réduisent toutes mes notions morales. Ce qui est beau physiquement est bien, tout ce qu'est laid est mal." (Ch. IX, p.210). This authenticates his desire for the beautiful Théodore. He further reinforces this operative rule by figuring happiness as "un grand bâtiment carré sans fenêtre au dehors" (p.210) in which exists a beautiful artificial world replete with sky, sun, fountains of marble, servants extravagantly dressed and in which he states:

je serais là, immobile silencieux, un grand lion
privé sous mon coude, la gorge nue d'une jeune
esclave sous mon pied en manière d'escabeau, et
fumant de l'opium dans une grande pipe de jade.
(p.210)

This mini-cosmos holds the modern forces of separation and dissolution at bay. In it he enjoys the unity and control of a fully (artificial) authentic self, in the full knowledge of its artificiality and temporary nature:

Tu vois quel est mon Eldorado, ma Terre promise:
C'est un rêve comme un autre; mais il a cela de
spécial; que je n'y introduis jamais aucune figure

connue; que pas un de mes amis n'a franchi le
seuil de ce palais imaginaire (p.210)

It is a personal, temporary construction, a self context, in which he has the power to make operative any elements he chooses. He is invoking, in many ways, the positive power of deception as an imperative of "self" and further implying that it is multiple and re-generative:

Tu vois bien qu'avec des idées semblables je ne puis rester ni dans ce temps ni dans ce monde-ci; car on ne peut subsister ainsi à côté du temps et de l'espace. Il faut que je trouve autre chose.
(p.211)

One cannot subsist next to time and space but in time and space. The present is itself de-centered, and thus dispersed so only an act of will can "center" it, as d'Albert does. He continues with an exploration of beauty as conceived by the ancients and centers on their fascination with the Hermaphrodite. D'Albert seizes this theme so as to take Théodore out of the social male/female context and put him into a beauty context:

Ce qu'il y a de singulier, c'est que je ne pense presque plus à son sexe et que je l'aime avec une sécurité parfaite. Quelquefois je cherche à me persuader que cet amour est abominable, et je me le dis à moi-même le plus sévèrement possible; mais cela ne vient que des lèvres, c'est un raisonnement que je me fais et que je ne sens pas: il me semble réellement que c'est la chose la plus simple du monde et que tout autre à ma place en ferait autant. (p.212)

This momentary transcendence permits him to ponder the possibility that "he" could be a "she". Despite the artful digression, the pressures of the modern social context make it hard for him to accept that he desires a man and so he

arranges it so that he can entertain enough doubt to suspend his argument (and laborious justification) for the moment. He ends the letter on this confirmation of still operative social imperatives:

Si je venais à savoir avec certitude que Théodore n'est pas une femme, hélas! je ne sais point si je ne l'aimerais pas encore. (p.215)

D'Albert fully embraces deception since he is secretly counting on it in this case. It also actively engages him in a reality outside of his own. He admits that Théodore has made him come out of his shell and engaged him in a way which makes him see life as theatrical play--a play he is now willing to embrace as necessary:

Avant cet heureux jour, j'étais semblable à ces mornes idoles japonaises qui se regardent perpétuellement le ventre. J'étais le spectateur de moi-même, le parterre de la comédie que je jouais; je me regardais vivre, et j'écoutais les oscillations de mon coeur comme le battement d'une pendule. Voilà tout. (p.215)

Now he is willing to be actor and spectator of his own life, since he realizes explicitly that he actively excluded and continues to exclude and that he scorned the type of role-playing he now embraces. Narratively, this letter confirms the changes that were made imperative by d'Albert's previous epistolary exchanges and then made explicit in the narrative transition of chapters VI and VII.

Madeleine's first letter, chapter X, which follows this chapter, will now validate, for the reader, all of the suspicions previously posited concerning her true sex. Her letter provides reasons for her deception that are not

speculative but "authentic". Her reasoning and motivations seem more straightforward because they are analeptic. She has "events" to analyze in her letters and her self-representation is immediately parallel to d'Albert's because they are so alike. Only narrative strategy makes them different. Madeleine and d'Albert are in ironic juxtaposition, for the reader, since she is active where d'Albert is passive. Her letter also problematizes "history" as did d'Albert's but from a slightly different perspective.

Madeleine's discourse is immediately in opposition to d'Albert's in one important way: she has a well defined task with regard to her correspondent. D'Albert's epistolary discourse, in the novel, floats in a mental exegesis that has no pre-announced goal. D'Albert made it clear to Silvio that in lieu of "events" to recount, he would instead discuss his hopes and fantasies. Later, as he became involved with Rosette he had more to say of a "concrete" nature, but his discourse is more strongly marked by a lack of "grounding" in events.

In contrast to d'Albert's synchronic exegesis, Madeleine writes diachronically. She updates Graciosa, her correspondent, with regard to what she has done since last she saw her. She tells the story of her "travestissement" from its inception to its current manifestation at the chateau. Her discourse also provides the reader with the

"key" to the chronological order of events since her story precedes all the others.

It is still, however, a present-centered discourse, on the strength of its epistolary framing. In all, there are three letters in which Madeleine accomplishes the telling of her story and upon reaching the third letter Madeleine catches up with the present and then continues rendering current events at the castle. Events mark her discourse more strongly than d'Albert's discourse. Although she too offers analysis throughout her discourse, mirroring d'Albert's synchrony, her synchronic digressions are always subordinate to diachronic progression. D'Albert's discourse was more strongly marked by isolated passivity with regard to the world (society). Madeleine, too, is isolated but while interacting directly in "society".

The organizing themes in her discourse, as was the case in d'Albert's, are: deception, barriers, desire and destiny. Similar principles of exclusion also operate in her discourse in the same way they did in d'Albert's. History, society and family are the same elements which are excluded in the construction of her own self context but they are more concrete than in d'Albert's discourse. Continuous history ceases at the moment she takes on the male identity. This change in identity became feasible for her because her sole remaining relative, an uncle, had died and, once the disguise was affected, it was imperative to leave the place where she was best known in order to profit from her

disguise. Concrete events and decisions enacted these exclusions (of history, society and family) while, in d'Albert's case, these exclusions are less "concrete" and seem more to be the effect of deliberate narrative effacement. Both perform and affect the same exclusions but in different ways.

Madeleine begins her letter to Graciosa by mirroring the construction of d'Albert's most recent epistolary exchange (chs. VIII, IX). She begins in her shared childhood (history) with Graciosa so as to set up a strict distinction between the child that she was and the person she has become. She too associates childhood with harmony, continuity and innocence and figures this association in the same way as d'Albert: as the child in tune with nature:

C'était par un beau clair de lune, t'en souviens-tu? nous nous promenions ensemble tout au fond du jardin, dans cette allée triste et peu fréquentée, terminée, d'un côté par une statue de Faune jouant de la flûte, qui n'a plus de nez et dont tout le corps est couvert d'une lèpre épaisse de mousse noirâtre, et de l'autre côté par une perspective feinte, dessinée sur le mur et à moitié effacée par la pluie. (...); nous nous faisons mille de ces questions saugrenues que la plus parfaite innocence peut seule imaginer.--Que de poésie primitive, que d'adorables sottises dans ces furtifs entretiens de deux petites niaises sorties la veille de pension! (p.217-18)

In this setting they spoke of marriage, love and of the men they might one day marry and it becomes clear that the harmony and happiness they shared in this context retained its integrity only insofar as they remained complicit with their social destiny as women. It is precisely this

complicity that Madeleine was unable to maintain because of her perceptions of men:

une chose qui m'inquiétait principalement, c'était de savoir ce que les hommes se disaient entre eux et ce qu'ils faisaient lorsqu'ils étaient sortis des salons des théâtres: je pressentais dans leur vie beaucoup de côtés défectueux et obscurs, soigneusement voilés à nos regards, et qu'il nous importait beaucoup de connaître; (p.218)

Her early intuitive observation of other "contexts" which operate with other codes leads her directly to a deduction that d'Albert had put off and then only appropriated for himself: that people role play by appropriating masks and deceptions as they move from one context to another.

D'Albert associated active deception as being a strain only he endured, but Madeleine perceives it as being something perpetrated by others, specifically men; a subtle but somehow malicious performance designed to hide "truths" from women:

Tous, les jeunes comme les vieux, me paraissaient avoir adopté uniformément un masque de convention, des sentiments de convention et un parler de convention lorsqu'ils étaient devant les femmes. (p.218)

This observation leads her to see a whole network of deception operating before her eyes, yet obscurely, since she herself was not initiated into this network:

Je m'étais aussi aperçue d'une notable différence dans la manière dont on parlait aux femmes mariées; ce n'étaient plus les phrases discrètes et polies, enjolivées puérilement comme on en adressait à mes compagnes, c'était un enjouement plus libre, des façons moins sobres et plus dégagées, les claires réticences et les détours aboutissant vite d'une corruption qui sait qu'elle a devant elle une corruption semblable: je sentais

bien qu'il y avait entre eux un élément commun qui n'existait pas entre nous, et j'aurais tout donné pour savoir quel était cet élément. (p.219)

She associates marriage and, at the extreme, promiscuous sexual relations with men as her only "conventional" access to this code. She, however, wants to know this code prior to any commitment of marriage. She then decides that in order to gain access to this deceptive world she must appropriate the male guise.

Both Madeleine and d'Albert isolate the sexual relationship as being seriously flawed, but still the key source of access to the ideal. For d'Albert, it is self-reflexive, since the social legitimization concurrent with having a mistress gave him access to the very context that Madeleine is trying to penetrate. D'Albert and Madeleine also isolate this deception (playing at being a man) as being the source of corruption, discontinuity and fragmentedness. For both, trafficking in desire through deception is the corrupting influence.

Ironically, both start from the same premise and yet come to different conclusions. D'Albert felt that his empty life was transparent and in complete contradiction to his inner or real self. Consequently, he concludes that he is unintentionally perpetrating a deception on the world and that the only way to resolve the "discontinuity" is to make his life in some way conform to his inner fantasies, hence his ensuing relationship with Rosette. He ends up, as we

see, further deceiving (he thought) Rosette as well as himself.

Madeleine also feels that her life is equally transparent: "Le cristal le plus limpide n'a pas la transparence d'une pareille vie" (p.222). She, however, does not feel that she is practicing a deception on the world but rather the world is practicing one on her. She does not feel that the "world" of women is deceptively, but rather simply codified, and that to remain in such a context makes deception impossible:

Celui qui nous prend sait ce que nous avons fait à partir de la minute où nous avons été sevrées et même avant, s'il veut pousser ses recherches jusque-là--Notre vie n'est pas une vie, c'est une espèce de végétation comme celle de la mousse et des fleurs; l'ombre glaciale de la tige maternelle flotte autour de nous, pauvres boutons de rose étouffés qui n'osons pas nous ouvrir. Notre affaire principale, c'est de nous tenir bien droites, bien corsées, bien busquées, l'oeil convenablement baissé, et de surpasser en immobilité et en roideur les mannequins et les poupées à ressorts. (p.222)

She assumes, as does d'Albert, that women are easy to "read". However, it is rather obvious that the "impact" of Rosette's deception has escaped them both. They also both come to another similar conclusion: that these perceptions and conditions are affecting them alone. Their heightened perception is what isolates them in their self-conscious confrontations with deception.

These observations and realizations, in Madeleine's case, coincided with an event which decided her course of action:

La mort de mon oncle, le seul parent qui me restât, me laissant libre de mes actions, j'exécutai ce que je rêvais depuis si longtemps.-- Mes précautions étaient prises avec le plus grand soin pour que nul se doutât de mon sexe: j'avais à tirer l'épée et le pistolet; je montais parfaitement à cheval et avec une hardiesse dont peu d'écuyers eussent été capables; j'étudiai bien la manière de porter le manteau et de faire siffler la cravache..... Je réalisai ce que j'avais de bien, et je sortis de la ville, décidée à n'y revenir qu'avec l'expérience la plus complète. (p.221)

Her uncle's death released her from her pre-programmed social "destiny" allowing her to take it into her own hands. This becomes the source of her discontinuity and corruption. Since she associates the world of men with the locus of deception and corruption, taking on male identity will eventually make her complicit with the codes which inform this context. She firmly maintains that the world she left behind was without deception precisely because of the lack of freedom of movement and action:

notre vie est claire et se peut pénétrer d'un regard.--Il est facile de nous suivre de la maison au pensionnat, du pensionnat à la maison;--ce que nous faisons n'est un mystère pour personne; (p.221)

The restricted life of a woman leads her to perceive women as dismally simple creatures:

Nous sommes réellement prisonnières de corps et d'esprit; mais un jeune homme, libre de ses actions qui sort le matin pour ne rentrer que le matin, qui a de l'argent, qui peut en gagner et en disposer comme il lui plaît, comment pourrait-il justifier l'emploi de son temps?--quel est l'homme qui voudrait dire à la personne aimée ce qu'il a fait pendant sa journée et pendant sa nuit?--Aucun, même de ceux qui sont réputés les plus purs. (p.223)

To escape this simplicity, she imitates the men she seeks to know. Her release from family ties allows her to more easily dissolve her ties with society, thereby enacting a disruption of what she perceived as her continuous personal history:

Le tiroir où étaient renfermées mes robes, désormais inutiles, me parut comme le cercueil de mes blanches illusions;--j'étais un homme, ou du moins j'en avais l'apparence: la jeune fille était morte. (p.223)

By abandoning her childhood home, her female identity and taking up the guise of a man, she effectively isolates herself from history, family, society and the "male" society she seeks to penetrate as completely as she feels men have penetrated the female world. This allows her to take charge of writing her own history (narrative) on her own terms. All that is left for her to do is to displace herself from a now dormant reality.

The physical displacement is for Madeleine key since it makes her more and more self-conscious of the changes she had affected. D'Albert's isolation was less a physical performance and more a mental/linguistic performance, but for Madeleine her break with an earlier identity is more concretely associated with physical and geographical changes:

Quand j'eus totalement perdu de vue la cime des châtaigniers qui entourent la métairie, il me sembla que je n'étais plus moi, mais un autre, et je me souvenais de mes actions anciennes comme des actions d'une personne étrangère auxquelles j'aurais assisté, ou comme du début d'un roman dont je n'aurais pas achevé la lecture. (p.223)

As she rides further away from her previous home, she imagines she hears voices, speaking to her from the trees and bushes questioning her decisions and intentions and undermining her resolve (p.224), and yet the further away she goes the more she regains confidence from another interior voice that encourages her to continue on her way:

--Si tu as peur ma chère, retourne à la maison, va arroser mes fleurs et soigner mes colombes. Mais en vérité tu as tort, tu serais plus en sûreté sous ces vêtements de bon drap que sous ta gaze et ton lin. Mes bottes empêchent qu'on ne voie si j'ai un joli pied; cette épée, c'est pour me défendre, et la plume qui s'agite à mon chapeau est pour effaroucher tous les rossignols qui me viendraient chanter à l'oreille de fausses chansons d'amour. (p.224)

The link between space/context and identity is affirmed and now her identity will be as diverse and dispersed as the spaces/contexts she will inhabit. This is further affirmed by her description of her first "encounter" with men at an auberge. She is largely ignored when she first arrives and arranges for some food and drink. She struggles for an appropriate way to behave in this new context despite the fact that she is readily accepted and recognized as being a man:

J'avoue que je fus presque sur le point de regretter mes jupes, en voyant le peu d'attention qu'ils faisaient à moi.--J'en fus une minute toute mortifiée; car, de temps en temps, il m'arrivait de ne plus songer que j'avais des habits d'homme, et j'eus besoin d'y penser pour ne pas prendre de mauvaise humeur. (p.230)

Her heightened self-consciousness provokes a great deal of inner turmoil as she strives to act "normal" knowing only stereotypically what "normal" means in this context.

Consequently, upon being invited to join a group of young men who had just arrived, she attempts to insinuate herself amongst them by affecting a manner as insouciant as the one they project:

Je leur dis que j'étais un jeune fils de famille qui sortait de l'université, et qui se rendait chez des parents qu'il avait en province par le vrai chemin des écoliers, c'est-à-dire par le plus long qu'il pût trouver. Cela les fit rire, et, après quelques propos sur mon air innocent et candide, ils me demandèrent si j'avais une maîtresse. Je leur répondis que je n'en savais rien, et eux de rire encore plus. (p.231)

Her behavior is reminiscent of d'Albert's with the older gentleman when he was arranging to procure a mistress. She behaves just as naively and clumsily as he did. The ensuing conversation which revolves around experiences with women finds Madeleine completely unprepared to properly school her reactions:

Les choses énormes et inouïes que j'entendais donnaient à ma figure une teinte de tristesse et de sévérité dont le reste des convives s'aperçut et dont on me fit obligeamment la guerre; mais ma gaieté ne put revenir.--J'avais bien soupçonné que les hommes n'étaient pas tels qu'ils apparaissaient devant nous, mais je ne les croyais pas encore aussi différents de leurs masques, et ma surprise égalait mon dégoût. (p.233)

This male discourse in this context produces entirely different subjects than the male discourse that she was previously familiar with. Rather than thinking of this discourse as representative of a different subjectivity, or

indeed another manifestation of subjectivity in flux due to contextual constraints, she sees it as being the true discourse at the core of all others. Her reaction is as violent as d'Albert's when he was confronted with the disappointment of his unfulfilled relationship with Rosette. He questioned the validity and existence of the ideal, of a perfect transcendent love. D'Albert feared he had a defect that made him unable to attain the ideal or that the ideal was only a cruel deception. Madeleine thinks along similar lines: some corrupt flaw in men soils the ideal and/or makes it unrealizable:

Voilà donc la pensée qu'ils nous cachent sous tant de beaux semblants! Qui le dirait jamais à les voir si humbles, si rampants, si prêts à tout!-- Ah! qu'après la victoire ils relèvent la tête hardiment et mettent insolemment le talon de leurs bottes sur le front qu'ils adoraient de loin et à genoux! comme ils se vengent de leur abaissement passager! comme ils font chèrement payer leurs politesses! et par combien d'injures ils se reposent des madrigaux qu'ils ont faits! Quelle brutalité forcée de langage et de pensée! quelle inélégance de manières et de tenue!--C'est un changement complet et qui n'est certes pas à leur avantage. Si loin qu'eussent été mes prévisions, elles étaient bien au-dessous de la réalité. (p.234)

Both d'Albert and Madeleine suggest that the Ideal, the ideal Other so necessary to personal fulfillment, does not exist. Each comes to this conclusion through the discovery of the duplicity of male discourse. For Madeleine duplicitous male discourse uncovers a mask, previously maintained by another kind of discourse, which reveals to her the impossibility of the ideal. D'Albert also suffers

from the disappointment of the impossible ideal for similar reasons. His own discourse fails to produce the conditions necessary in his own person for achieving the ideal. He thinks he is flawed; to be male is to be flawed, since for d'Albert possession of beauty is unique to woman and to achieve union with beauty he must both recognize it and be capable of joining with it. He thinks he cannot.

There is a privileging of male subjectivity operating in this novel, which, although normal in a novel written by a man, is still somewhat curious. Male subjectivity is the site and source around which the various narrative strategies play out the intrigue of desire and identity. Madeleine's "problems" begin the moment she assumes the male guise and the complexity of her discourse is a direct function of this disguise. In putting on male dress, she simultaneously puts on male discourse and this discourse has the curious effect of making her complex. In spite of this privileging, there does seem to be a challenge to the traditional dichotomy which separates female simplicity from male complexity insofar as Madeleine is a woman. However, all of the sexual "confusion" is contained within Madeleine.

The novel as a whole performs consistently with a central premise which perceives male subjectivity as essentially problematic and ultimately emblematic of modern society's fragmentedness. Madeleine's eventual "socialization" as a male, which her subsequent letters bear

out, can be shown to support this continued "privilege" accorded to the production of male subjectivity.

Subjectivity, as a complex, multiple and fragmented process produced through discourse is uniquely male in the novel, while that which is female is strictly a representation produced by male discourse. Female discourse does not really produce itself in the novel, since Madeleine's disguise places her directly in the position of producing male discourse as the novel has defined it. All of Madeleine's discoveries are achieved through assimilation in the male world. She seeks to inhabit male discourse and is in turn, at least for a time, inhabited by male discourse.

Madeleine finishes her letter by finishing the description of her first experience as a "man" among men. When everyone went to bed, she was forced to share hers with her recent acquaintance, a good looking young man of twenty-four, who is, fortunately for her, rather drunk. She lies beside him fully dressed all night in a high state of tension pondering the ironies of her situation:

J'étais là, sur le dos, les deux mains croisées, tâchant de penser à quelque chose et retombant toujours sur ceci, à savoir: que j'étais couchée avec un homme. J'allais jusqu'à désirer qu'il s'éveillât et s'aperçut que j'étais une femme.-- Sans doute, le vin que j'avais bu, quoique en petite quantité, était pour quelque chose dans cette idée extravagante, mais je ne pouvais m'empêcher d'y revenir.--Je fus sur le point d'allonger la main de son côté de l'éveiller et de lui dire ce que j'étais.--Un pli de la couverture qui m'arrêta le bras fut la cause qui m'empêcha de pousser la chose jusqu'au bout: cela me donna le

temps de la réflexion; et, pendant que je dégageais mon bras, le sens que j'avais totalement perdu me revint, sinon entièrement, du moins assez pour me contenir. (p.237)

In order for her disguise to be maintained, she must refrain from showing or pursuing any desires towards men, which would be perceived as a weakness both of her resolve and of her self control as a woman. This situation causes an irony to work on her in her understandings towards men and women which radicalizes her isolation and self-consciousness:

Une effervescence subite, un bouillon de sang peut-il à ce point mater les résolutions les plus superbes? et la voix du corps parle-t-elle plus haut que la voix de l'esprit?--Toutes les fois que mon orgueil envole trop de bouffées vers le ciel, pour le ramener à terre, je lui mets le souvenir de cette nuit devant les yeux.--Je commence à être de l'avis des hommes: quelle pauvre chose que la vertu des femmes! et de quoi dépend-elle, mon Dieu. (p.237)

To be dominated by ones desires, or simply to desire, is a weakness, while to remain the object of desire is the position of greater power. The physical corrupts the spiritual agenda in Madeleine's view. D'Albert finds the physical lacking and containing nothing for the spirit to enjoy. Madeleine, a virgin, finds the physical pull of the senses disorienting :

Le corps est une ancre qui retient l'âme à la terre: elle a beau ouvrir ses voiles au vent des plus hautes idées, le vaisseau reste immobile, comme si tous les rémoras de l'océan se fussent suspendus à sa quille... (p.237)

The physical pull of desire disorients her from her plan which is to know men as men do. To do so she must affect a separation from the physical and in essence become

socialized and to conform to male social behavior. This task is not so easy, and yet the distance she must maintain from men and her desire is what constitutes purity and the ability to function on a higher plane. She does make it through the evening and as dawn breaks she counts herself victorious in not giving in to her desires. Her virtue (in this case her disguise/identity) is intact and she continues her journey joining the young men. At this point she suspends her tale promising to take up where she left off in another letter.

The chapter which follows, instead of continuing Madeleine's adventures, returns us to d'Albert's discourse. Although Madeleine's story is more to the point, and has already confirmed previous suspicions concerning her identity, the enigma of the circumstances that caused her to know Rosette and be now at the chateau is episodically suspended. Madeleine is a catalyst with regard to the timeframe embraced by the novel. Her presence has a profound effect on d'Albert and it is this presence which is now fueling d'Albert's discourse. So, we appropriately are returned to the present which is d'Albert's letter (CH.XI) in which he describes their presentation of Shakespeare's play.

Since the departure from d'Albert's domination of the novel we have witnessed the development of radical changes of tack taking place on various levels of the narrative (discursive articulation). There is a drastic departure

from the narrative (epistolary) development which had, until the sixth chapter, dominated and dictated the only avenues of reception for the reader. In these chapters of the novel (VI-X) epistolary discourse is suspended while an omniscient narrator intervenes to shift points of view and conditions of meaning. Once d'Albert's epistolary series is resumed, it is done so under these altered conditions of narrative production. D'Albert's epistles are now reduced to competing with other diverse discourses.

The narrative dispersal throughout this portion of the novel primarily problematizes the "authenticity" normally accorded to self-generating, present-centered discourses. This in turn problematizes the relationship between self and discourse so essential to the gesture of securing control of self identity. The deceptions revealed by the narrative play are supported throughout by the concrete, traditionally analeptic narrative introduced in Madeleine/Théodore's first epistle to her correspondent, Graciosa. The "history" of her physical disguise, which is the project of her epistles, thematically informs and supports the discursive narrative ploys. These ploys disperse subjectivity and interfere with its project to totalize; they equally de-center and destabilize the possibility for any locus of "truth" or "meaning" which also strongly interferes with a totalizing self identity.

CHAPTER 3: READING CHAPTERS SIX THROUGH TEN OF
MADemoiselle DE MAUPIN

The previous two chapters explored the establishment of an epistolary narrative strategy produced by a single voice (d'Albert's) and its subsequent undermining. The introduction of competing narrative strategies (and voices) intervened, challenging the primacy of d'Albert's narrative by diversifying the narrational control that each voice claimed for itself.

This portion of my reading addresses the remainder of the novel encompassing chapters XI through XVII. In these chapters, d'Albert writes his last letter to his correspondent, Silvio, (chapter XI) in what is properly the "climax" of the intrigue thus far. In this chapter, the preparation and performance of Shakespeare's As You Like It provides for d'Albert and the reader a dramatically ironic instance of intertextuality which "resolves" the enigma of Théodore's identity. What remains for d'Albert to discover is whether he can affect the self-fulfilling prophecy that this experience suggests to him. This, in part, is why this must be Albert's last letter to his correspondent, Silvio. This experience prods him to "act" for the first time in the novel and hence to abandon Silvio, his pivot.

The remainder of the novel, following this climax, is dominated by Madeleine's letters as they rapidly move to convergence with a present time shared by all characters. Her letters are so filled with information that, through

them, the reader can "reconstruct" chronologically all of the enigmas and loose ends that were previously so obscure. Since, in many ways, Madeleine is catalyst to d'Albert's "education", without her letters nothing makes sense. Her narrative provides the episodic fluidity that makes the larger allegory of the novel cohere.

Her letters reveal how completely she is foil to d'Albert. We learn that she is plagued by the same doubts, desires, and projects as he. Her response, however, does not conform to d'Albert's, and although she explores similar issues as d'Albert (and Rosette), her course of action is quite different. Her relationship to her own discourse is one significant example of this difference. D'Albert and Madeleine are both on a quest for identity, but while d'Albert's narrative represents an internal dialogue or debate which is static (or circular), Madeleine's represents a journey in the physical sense and is more closely identified with traditional allegory.

I shall continue treating the chapters chronologically and focus on Madeleine's narrative insofar as it informs and supports the themes which characterized d'Albert's discourse (destiny, desire and the rhetorical structures deployed to figure them). Also, I shall address the narrative strategies which continue to be in ironic opposition to self-generating discourses (Chapter XVI is again narrated by the unidentified omniscient speaker) and how this irony,

which runs throughout the novel, works with and against the fabric of the text.

Chapter XI is, narratively, d'Albert's most coherent letter to his friend Silvio. It is also the last letter d'Albert directs to his childhood friend in the course of the novel. It is the most coherent because it is tightly organized around one narrative goal: the genesis and execution of their amateur presentation of Shakespeare's As You Like It. It is the last letter addressed to his friend and because of its revelatory function it incites him to "act" for the first time.

Superficially at least, d'Albert embraces the imperative of role-playing and finds the experience of being lost in the active confusion of his pre-production responsibilities therapeutic. He forgets himself and temporarily lays aside his quasi-melancolic state. Ultimately, the result is that, due to the creative multiplicity in which he finds himself, d'Albert feels empowered to act independently on what he perceives to be a sign of impending self-prophecy. The revelation of Théodore's true sex is for him the vindication of his most disparate and frustrated desires, coalescing at the point of revelation and invested in her person. The "quest" on which he embarked in his first letter begins to approach closure and hence becomes more tightly focused.

Shakespeare's narrative strongly informs d'Albert's conviction and intensifies d'Albert's sense of prophecy as

does the narrative of the novel at large. D'Albert's "destiny" approaches "fulfillment" and he has "purpose" for the first time in the novel. Moreover, the blindness which makes d'Albert's agenda cohere is everywhere apparent and makes it obvious that he is temporarily bound to a short term goal. Madeleine's subsequent letters relentlessly work against d'Albert's, effectively deflecting the valorization and authentication of d'Albert's insistent gestures. The novel's patchwork narrative presentation also interferes with d'Albert's march towards "destiny" by serving as constant reminder of the blindness which insulates the articulation of his project.

D'Albert opens this chapter by enumerating a monotonous series of situations and scenarios. This enumeration is his most coherent articulation of the "ennui" which he feels marginalizes him socially and artistically. It is so coherent precisely because the accumulation of those mini-scenarios fully expresses his frustration through the constant assault of predictable social conventions on our daily lives:

il est ennuyeux de rendre l'argent qu'on avait emprunté, et qu'on s'était accoutumé à regarder comme à soi; il est ennuyeux de caresser aujourd'hui la femme qu'on aimait hier; il est ennuyeux d'aller dans une maison à l'heure du dîner, et de trouver que les maîtres sont partis pour la campagne depuis un mois; il est ennuyeux de faire un roman, et plus ennuyeux de le lire;.....;--il est ennuyeux d'être en hiver parce que l'on grelotte, et en été parce qu'on sue; mais ce qu'il y a de plus ennuyeux sur terre, en enfer et au ciel, c'est assurément une

tragédie, à moins que ce ne soit un drame ou une comédie. (p. 241)

Life itself, as it grinds by, step by predictable step, bludgeons the imagination and inevitably pollutes art. The repetitive syntax emphasizes his conviction. This progression leads fluidly into his main explicative project, to dismiss what he deems an exhausted, convention-ridden theater, in order to expound upon the theater of the fantastic.

The theater of the fantastic is, to d'Albert the last bastion of true artistic freedom and innovation and the only form of theater not yet riddled with oppressively predictable conventions:

Mais il est un théâtre que j'aime, c'est le théâtre fantastique, extravagant, impossible, où l'honnête public sifflerait impitoyablement dès la première scène, faute d'y comprendre un mot.
(p.242)

He values this theater because it is unconventional and not overtly rule-bound. Its extravagance heightens the strange and wonderful while not losing sight of the real and the familiar. The desired effects should not frighten, confound or challenge, but rather lull into calm acceptance of diverse stimuli and ultimately the free proliferation of desire itself; a state more commonly associated with the effect of narcotics and/or hypnotics:

Un rideau d'ailes de papillon, plus mince que la pellicule intérieure d'un oeuf, se lève lentement après les trois coups de rigueur. La salle est pleine d'âmes de poètes assises dans des stalles de nacre de perle, et qui regardent le spectacle à

travers des gouttes de rosée montées sur le pistil
d'or des lis.---Ce sont leurs lorgnettes. (p.243)

Details, rather than blending in, stand out in all of their abundant charm and overwhelm the whole they embellish. The parts overwhelm the whole yet refrain from dissolving to irrelevancy or mere function. That which is familiar remains so, but is stripped of the signifying weight of conventional forms. Signs are purely sensual (mostly visual) and have no responsibility to conform to the functions which usually define their presence so that internal (personal) desire be free to work on (with) the senses as they receive stimuli. D'Albert admires a theater which recognizes and announces itself as such, but one which deflects the conventional base which traditionally orchestrates its articulation.

The theater of the fantastic, as the name suggests, privileges the articulation of diverse, intermeshed sensual fantasies in the manner of a benign chain reaction. As such, each detail competes for attention while not conforming to an overriding moral or political goal. The setting must be insulated from serious social tensions if it is to fulfill its generally escapist project of fantasy. There are no obvious, exterior (conventional) contexts provided to inform the drama. Without such contexts, there is no "drama" in the conventional sense. This "purifies" the theater, liberating it to concentrate on a uniquely artistic immediacy and spontaneity:

Les personnages ne sont d'aucun temps ni d'aucun pays; ils vont et viennent sans que l'on sache pourquoi ni comment; ils ne mangent ni ne boivent, ils ne demeurent nulle part et n'ont aucun métier; ils ne possèdent ni terres, ni rentes, ni maison;..... (p.244)

This theater is entirely removed and insulated from the hostilities of the modern living experience and functions as a temporary haven from society. This type of theater provides an arena where desire can self-generate and proliferate without the resistences encountered in society. It is a place where "rien s'y oppose, ni les lieux, ni les noms, ni le costume." (p.245, CH.XI) It is d'Albert's conviction, moreover, that this kind of theater is a metaphor of modern reality (explicitly) and of literary performance (implicitly) insofar as unmediated (personal) perception is pitted against mediated (social) perception. This type of theater, moreover, could be construed as being more mimetic than traditional mimetic theatre. He is suggesting that "reality," even its most general conception, is always highly subjective and, therefore, very problematic:

Ce pêle-mêle et ce désordre apparents se trouvent, au bout du compte, rendre plus exactement la vie réelle sous ses allures fantasques que le drame de moeurs le plus minutieusement étudié. (p.246)

He supports the metaphor of the modern living experience, by pointing to his own inability to "fit in", to conform or to reconcile his multiplicity with what he perceives to be a hostile society, hostile by virtue of its generalized and generalizing mediative force. The theater

of the fantastic is, then, a metaphor for the modern living experience in that it articulates the disorder of his inner landscapes (multiplicity-his frustrated, impeded desire) as well as the beauty of them relative to society's dull, homogeneous surface. As a metaphor contributing to his allegorical project, this struggle is not insignificant, but a function of his destiny:

Ah! malgré l'étreinte furieuse dont j'ai voulu
 enlacer le monde matériel au défaut de l'autre, je
 sens que je suis mal né, que la vie n'est pas
 faite pour moi, et qu'elle me repousse; je ne puis
 me mêler à rien..... (p.249)

His internal multiplicity and diversity is constantly in conflict with the mediation of a society that seeks to rob him of his own desire. In this way, he feels he is flawed and thus in exile. But he has fashioned a sense of insular multiplicity applicable only to himself. By extension, he has this metaphor of the fantastic theater also function to represent the creative process as it struggles to liberate and arrest desire at the same time.

He moves at this point from passive articulation to active description in the development of his discourse, since he tells Silvio that these musings about theater led to the decision to mount a collaborative effort to present Shakespeare's play: Cela fit venir l'idée de la jouer.
 (p.253, CH.XI)

As director of their efforts, he is forced to ponder the disorder which reigns throughout rehearsals and pre-production preparations:

Depuis que l'on a parlé de jouer la comédie, tout est ici le désordre le plus complet. (p.256)

The frenzied pace of his newfound responsibilities, and the forced interaction with others to achieve an artistic goal, has a dual effect on d'Albert. Paradoxically, the exhausting disorder draws him out of his isolated ennui, exerting an almost therapeutic effect on his mood, while still making him conscious of his loss of control:

Un directeur de théâtre n'a pas le temps d'être mélancolique, et je ne l'ai guère été depuis quelque temps. Je suis tellement assourdi et assommé que je commence à ne plus rien comprendre à la pièce. (p.256)

He feels good but has lost all sense of control over the events in which he is participating and "leading". He ponders the ironies implicit in this strange and somehow exclusive dichotomy of action and reflection. He feels the ebb and flow of desire taking its own course, but is uncomfortable with being unable to capture its process representationally as it unfolds:

L'agitation est très peu profonde, et à quelques brasses on retrouverait l'eau morte et sans courant; la vie ne me pénètre pas si facilement que cela; et c'est même alors que je vis le moins, quoique j'aie l'air d'agir et de me mêler à ce qui se fait; l'action m'hébète et me fatigue à un point dont on ne peut se faire une idée;--quand je n'agis pas, je pense ou au moins je rêve et c'est une façon d'existence;--je ne l'ai plus dès que je sors de mon repos d'idole de porcelaine. (p.256)

This discussion of the theatre of the fantastic, in which he describes art's reception, leads him to ponder art's production. The relaxing calm he wishes to experience as a connoisseur of art is not something he can experience

while producing art and he attempts to explore why this might be so.

This leads him to further reflect on the paradox of creative (literary) performance, which he perceives, in its simplest articulation, as putting thought (*pensée/desire*) into action (*écriture/representation*). His immediate fear is identical to the one which led him to believe that he was imperfectly made for this world: that his multiplicity (uncontrolled desire) would impede artistic achievement and distinction:

Je ne puis rien produire, non par stérilité, mais par surabondance; mes idées poussent si drues et si serrées qu'elles s'étouffent et ne peuvent mûrir. (p.257)

He describes a situation in which his inherent disorder (multiplicity/desire) cannot achieve a coherent identity because of, he concludes, his uncontrollable, undifferentiated desire. Writing cannot adequately represent his desire because, once represented, these desires transform, and the metamorphoses render the written counterpart "obsolete":

--quand j'écris une phrase, la pensée qu'elle rend est déjà aussi loin de moi que si un siècle se fût écoulé au lieu d'une seconde, et souvent il m'arrive d'y mêler, malgré moi, quelque chose de la pensée qui l'a remplacée dans ma tête. (p.257)

He resents the betrayal that written representation seems to effect vis-à-vis his desire, but is prepared to blame the "imperfection" of his desire for not achieving formal stability prior to its representation in written discourse.

Yet unconvinced, he attempts to articulate this dichotomous struggle with an extended metaphor (allegory?) which attempts to articulate the poet's struggle with desire and discourse (his medium) in terms of the sculptor's with marble:

Prendre une pensée dans un filon de son cerveau,
l'en sortir brute d'abord comme un bloc de marbre
qu'on extrait de la carrière, la poser devant soi,
et du matin au soir, un ciseau d'une main, un
marteau de l'autre, cogner, tailler, gratter et
emporter à la nuit une pincée de poudre pour jeter
sur son écriture; voilà ce que je ne pourrai
jamais faire. (p.257)

Desire (thought) itself is an amorphous mass, whole and imposing, which should be sufficiently large to work with. This "bloc de marbre", itself a metaphor of his own desire, is relentlessly hewn (transformed) as he struggles to bring it into focus, by sculpting it (cogner, tailler, gratter) as a sort of pre-writing (thinking) skirmish. This is thought; the "reality" of desire as a heavy, unwieldy mass filling his mind. To be lost in his own desire and unable to control it, much less able to represent it, is what frustrates d'Albert. A poet, which is what d'Albert wants to be, must cultivate his desire and control it simultaneously.

In spite of his understanding of thought (desire) and action (representation) as distinct entities/operations, the former uncontrollable and the latter controllable, it becomes obvious that the formless multiplicity of thought/desire is in conflict with itself since action

(writing/representation) is also a kind of uncontrollable desire, also multiple and essentially formless. The distinction between an interior multiplicity and an exterior multiplicity is difficult to maintain. The specificity of language as exterior and inherently stabilizing is not viable and is subsumed (absorbed) by desire itself, desire being non-specific and omnipresent. His struggle remains wholly interior.

He continues to develop the metaphor, attempting to maintain his position on the distinctness of interior desire as opposed to its articulation, but can only do so by extending a contradiction:

Je dégage bien en idée la svelte figure du bloc grossier, et j'en ai la vision très nette; mais il y a tant d'angles à abattre, tant d'éclats à faire sauter, tant de coup de râpe et de marteau à donner pour approcher de la forme et saisir la juste sinuosité du contour que les ampoules me viennent aux mains, et que je laisse tomber le ciseau par terre. (p.257)

The idea, the as yet unmediated desire, is purely visual and quite whole. His struggle to represent it is one of linguistic violence: the harmonic but undifferentiated whole is broken up along a linguistic continuum; the struggle is to resist this discontinuity in order to reconstitute a whole. His desire resists any representation he attempts to impose on it. He cannot transform the vision into words. He is filled with desire and cannot articulate it because it resists the arresting transformation. He is describing the agony of the poet who cannot be a poet, he

believes, unless he can master the controlled articulation of desire. Desire proves too big and too unruly to manage. The representation of desire, he suggests, is achieved through its reduction and consequently its loss.

This agonizing struggle to represent his desire results in the almost total loss, or connection with that desire:

Si je persiste, la fatigue prend un degré d'intensité tel que ma vue intime s'obscurcit totalement, et que je ne saisis plus à travers le nuage du marbre la blanche divinité cachée dans son épaisseur. Alors je la poursuis au hasard et comme à tâtons; (p.257)

His intimate view of his own desire is lost during the process of representation. He loses sight of the blanche divinité, which was his project to transform (represent) desire because of le nuage de marbre, his now obscured original desire. Representation transforms his desire causing him to lose touch with the original motivation (desire) which produced the representation. He retains a sense of imbedded harmony, a nostalgia for the harmony and beauty of a Desire that endures in spite of its obscurity:

C'est une vanité innocente et permise, en quelque sorte, après ce que je viens de dire de cruel sur mon compte, et ce n'est pas toi qui m'en blâmeras, ô Silvio!--mais quoique l'univers ne doive jamais en rien savoir, et que mon nom soit d'avance voué à l'oubli, je suis un poète et un peintre!--J'ai eu d'aussi belles idées que nul poète du monde;....., si je pouvais ouvrir un trou dans ma tête et y mettre un verre pour qu'on y regardât, ce serait la plus merveilleuse galerie de tableaux que l'on eût jamais vue. (p.258)

Ultimately, this articulation of his artistic barriers valorizes the allegory of the theatre of the fantastic vis-

à-vis literary performance. Visual clarity and beauty remain and reign (imbedded nostalgia, a sense of the poet suffused with desire and intimately in touch with beauty) but they cannot articulate themselves with any unifying coherence. By extension, d'Albert's own conviction of self as "hero" is also valorized: his "curse" is that he is aware of both the imbedded harmony and of the forces which obscure it, preventing its "liberation".

Most intriguing are the mechanisms of blindness (persistent filtering) which operate in order to protect the integrity of his discursive project (allegory). D'Albert is entirely isolated within the "presentness" of his thoughts. He attempts to screen out the effects of exteriority in order to remain isolated and protected from changes that might affect his project. He wants to arrange events and their importance in his own way. He will not aggressively pursue avenues of thought that obstruct or delay his march toward the transcendent (e.g., that Rosette is not in love with him; that Théodore is really a woman; the importance of Madeleine's disguise to Madeleine; the unexplored possibility that Rosette and Madeleine might be aware of his intentions). He receives all stimuli as disinterested representation. Everything exterior to himself is treated as an object or as a sign to be interpreted, rather than as encounters with the desire(s) of the other. His discovery of Madeleine's disguise is revelatory because of this approach.

By refusing to anticipate events, despite ample evidence pointing to Madeleine's ruse, d'Albert defers his own excitement and relief. In this way, he retains a certain control over the destiny he has constructed for himself. He appears foolish only because the content of Madeleine's narrative reveals his blindness of alternative realities to the reader:

The question which d'Albert as artist and art critic has not asked,....., is the question of truth in art, whether truth can be named or unveiled. Playing her role "jusqu'au bout," Théodore/Rosalinde goes beyond the unmasking of Ganymede who, in Shakespeare's version unveils the un-masculine and most positively feminine Rosalinde. Image of the veiled text, his/her apparent mediation precludes the function of art as mirror which reveals some objective ideal or reflects the unique nature of a unified subject [.....]. If as a woman, Maupin or Rosalinde has a talent for acting and playing roles, she does not devote herself to any one--no uni-form defines her.¹

D'Albert's developing allegory approaches the crescendo he orchestrates during the rehearsals of Shakespeare's play, As You Like It. As Orlando (d'Albert) and Ganymede/Rosalind (Théodore/Madeleine) interact during rehearsals, d'Albert discovers that she is a woman disguised as a man. He allows (or forces) ironic intertextuality to further influence the revelation he experiences. Every disparate hope of beauty he ever sought coalesces in Madeleine:

L'image qui jusqu'alors ne s'était dessinée que faiblement et avec des contours vagues, le fantôme adoré et vainement poursuivi était là, devant mes yeux, vivant, palpable, non plus dans le demi-jour et la vapeur, mais inondé des flots d'une blanche lumière; non pas sous un vain déguisement,

dérisoire d'un jeune homme, mais avec les traits de la plus charmante femme. (p.264)

Also, everything associated with the moment and its locus participates in intensifying his conviction of the arrival of his destiny:

Un vif rayon l'éclairait de la tête aux pieds, et, sur le fond sombre du corridor qui s'allégeait au loin par-derrière, le chambranle sculpté lui servant de cadre, elle étincelait comme si la lumière fût émanée, d'elle au lieu d'être simplement réfléchie, et on l'eût plutôt prise pour une production merveilleuse du pinceau que pour une créature humaine faite de chair et d'os. (p.264)

Everything about and around her person ennobles the moment and heightens its revelatory nature. Every doubt he had entertained about himself and his tenuous musings of beauty are redeemed in this moment. While playing a scene with Ganymede/Rosalind, he wills a mutual understanding of the importance of his revelation into her reactions. This act of will advances him toward the fulfillment of his destiny (fantasy). Without her cooperation, the achievement of his goal is impossible, so it is imperative that he seek out her complicity and assume its presence:

Peut-être me suis-je trompé, et ai-je cru voir ce qui n'existait point en effet, mais il m'a semblé que Théodore s'était aperçu de mon amour, quoi que assurément je ne lui eusse jamais dit un seul mot, et qu'à travers le voile de ces expressions empruntées, sous ce masque de théâtre, avec ses paroles hermaphrodites, il faisait allusion à son sexe réel et à notre situation réciproque. Il est bien impossible qu'une femme aussi spirituelle qu'elle l'est, et qui a autant de monde qu'elle en a, n'ait pas, dès les commencements, démêlé ce qui se passait dans mon âme: (p.271)

His assumption of her complicity is a function of her value to him as a sign. He blinds himself to the possibility of her indifference. He worries only that he may not have the time nor the opportunity to perform the gesture which will secure his destiny: the declaration of his love for her:

Il faut absolument que je parle à Théodore d'une manière plus précise. Je me suis approché vingt fois de lui avec une phrase préparée, sans pouvoir venir à bout de la dire,--je n'ose pas; (....). Cependant la saison va finir, et bientôt l'on retournera à la ville; les facilités qui s'ouvrent ici favorablement devant mes désirs ne se retrouveront nulle part:--nous nous perdrons peut-être de vue, et un courant opposé nous emportera sans doute. (p.277)

This is a unique space and time which has opened up to certain events, and if he does not exploit it now, the moment will be lost forever. The pastoral isolation which filters out modern disruptions (p.277, CH.XI), and the dramatic irony enacted through Shakespeare's play (p.276, CH.XI) form and fill the allegorical space which d'Albert has created, and now he must finish off the gesture. He cannot bring himself to face her so he decides to tell her through a letter:

En rentrant chez moi, j'ai pris une résolution.--Puisque je ne pouvais me décider à parler, j'ai écrit toute ma destinée sur un carré de papier.--Il est peut-être ridicule d'écrire à quelqu'un qui demeure dans la même maison que vous, que l'on peut voir tous les jours, à toute heure; mais je n'en suis plus à regarder ce qui est ridicule ou non. (p.279)

He slips the letter into her room and places it on her table. So ends the most coherent articulation of his project. It is the most coherent, as stated earlier,

because of its organization around diachronic events. He digresses, as usual, but does not get lost in his digressions, nor does he bring them to closure through weak ironies of irrevelency. As an allegory, this letter is the final version of all his previous letters and essentially desides the debate he has been conducting with himself; it is, indeed, an allegory of his own language thus far. He has a project and imagines its culmination through the performance of Shakespeare's play. He allows various exterior events and signs to participate in the valorization of his project and ends with an independent "act" designed to procure his destiny.

The resumption of Madeleine's letters following this chapter reminds us of and distances us from the artificial integrity of d'Albert's allegorical construct, re-inserting us into a discourse which has its own larger allegorical project. Madeleine's project, and its articulation, share many themes with d'Albert's, but her relationship to her own discourse is quite different from his.

The resumption of Madeleine's narrative (the second of four letters comprising her story) once again returns us to a time prior to d'Albert's first letter (Ch.I) and consequently to an analeptic narrative midway through its project. The return to her narrative once again undermines d'Albert's discourse by providing contexts not consistent with d'Albert's presentation of overlapping themes. The novel continues to resist the primacy of a central, unifying

discourse (beyond the epistolary), but has not, since chapters VI and VII, resorted to omniscient narration to orchestrate a point of view which integrates the actions of all characters.

This second installment of Madeleine's narrative picks up where the first left off, at the Inn where she spent her first evening as a man among men. In this letter we are acquainted with a Madeleine much more at ease in her disguise and prepared to exploit its possibilities. As she describes her "holiday," as the guest of the young man with whom she shared a bed at the Inn, we learn that he is Rosette's brother. We meet Rosette at the castle where she lives with her Aunt. At the castle, Madeleine's musings reveal strong thematic similarities to d'Albert's most recent letter (Ch.XI). His allegory (the theatre of the fantastic) is taken up by Madeleine in her description of a tapestry, but not entirely supported and articulated in the same way.

Perhaps the most important element introduced in this letter is the moral conflicts and complexities not originally anticipated by Madeleine. Her continuing "socialization" and/or integration into the male world provokes an enduring ambivalence towards herself and her situation. She becomes more introspective as the chapter runs out and resolves to abandon a situation whose only resolution would entail the disclosure of her true identity. She is in no way prepared or willing to do so. Just as

d'Albert was unwilling to confess his lack of love to Rosette for fear of losing the comfortable arrangement, so Madeleine is unwilling to abandon her project when she is beginning to realize its potential.

In the opening paragraph of this letter and at many other moments throughout, Madeleine consciously addresses her discourse as discourse. By consciously, I mean she overtly draws Graciosa's attention to her words and expressions in an attempt to either amplify or reduce their significance:

Je t'ai promis la suite de mes aventures, mais en vérité je suis si paresseuse à écrire qu'il faut que je t'aime comme la prune de mon oeil, et que je te sache plus curieuse qu'Eve ou Psyché, pour me mettre devant une table avec une grande feuille de papier toute blanche qu'il faut rendre toute noire, et un encrier plus profond que la mer, dont chaque goutte se doit tourner en pensées, ou du moins en quelque chose qui y ressemble, sans prendre la résolution subite de monter à cheval et de faire à bride abattue, les quatre-vingts énormes lieues qui nous séparent, pour t'aller conter de vive voix ce que je vais t'aligner en pieds de mouches imperceptibles, afin de ne pas être effrayée moi-même du volume prodigieux de mon odysée picaresque. (p.281)

Many elements of discourse are being addressed in this passage. Like d'Albert, she is conscious of the conception of writing (representation/action) as intentionally formal and having the potential of embracing (and articulating) "objective truth". She approaches her letters to her correspondent in the same spirit as does d'Albert: as a duty, responsibility and promise of friendship. This is a perceived obligation to "make sense" or to secure "truth"

and articulate it coherently. This "duty" is more intense in d'Albert's narrative because it is closely linked to the "duty" of the poet to capture desire or beauty. The two friendships in the novel are nourished and maintained in the shared space of the letter. The letter is the renewable context, secured and prolonged as a link to the absent "other" (the friend, the reader). This is a burden (as well as a strategy) of representation; the "necessity" of creating a comprehensible, albeit discontinuous, "whole."²

Simultaneously, another conception of language is being recognized by Madeleine. This understanding incorporates "thought" (the absent "other" of writing) as a spontaneous, presence that writing fails to capture completely. It is this second conception that undermines the written word's capacity to "truly" represent. She suggests a hierarchy of forms by privileging spoken language as that which is closest to thought and hence the ideal. D'Albert did the same by offsetting internal "unmediated" desire from external mediated desire.

She, too, as d'Albert before, speaks of the discontinuity and dispersal of written discourse which interferes with the representation sought (intended). She also reveals the "paradox" of written discourse: it both exceeds and falls short of its goal. Her metaphor for this is fluid, while d'Albert's was mineral (*le bloc de marbre*). Madeleine likens the potential of linguistic mass to the "encrier plus profond que la mer" and the reductive product

to "chaque goutte" and, further on, to the "pieds de mouche imperceptibles". She expresses the despair of not being able to say what she intends (ou du moins en quelque chose qui y ressemble) as well as the panic that what she says will say more than she intended (volume prodigieux de mon odyssée picaresque). This is related to the relentless transformations of desire which are so hard to arrest with the written word.

She, nonetheless, blithely accepts these risks and constraints while d'Albert agonizes over his inability to control his discourse. D'Albert is fearful of his self-representation, while Madeleine seems hardly to be concerned with it. Thematically, the qualified similarities function to make of Madeleine and d'Albert two faces of one coin. Madeleine is painted as a "man of action" not given to reflection before the act, certainly not before she has some "act" to reflect on, and d'Albert reflects so much that it tends to impede his ability to act. Madeleine is likened to the amorphous transformations of desire (the sought after object) while d'Albert is likened to the poet, the seeker and would-be possessor of beauty.

D'Albert is continually suspending his narrative. It swirls, in ever narrowing circles, around an "idea" of the transcendent that he is attempting to create and attract simultaneously. His letters previous to the liaison with Rosette are more formless, as they are, in effect, defining the void in his life (and in his writing) that subsequent

letters will seek to fill. After his affair with Rosette and his introduction to Théodore, his narrative picks up more speed and direction. His letters build on sketchy ideas, of beauty, truth and transcendence, and proceed, seeking out (creating narratively) the embodiment of those sketchy ideas by interpreting the signs (Rosette, then Madeleine) he feels will lead him to his goal of "the ideal".

Madeleine allows her narrative to be broken up episodically, since hers is not an internal "quest" or a spiritual "search" by her own definition. Analepsis presupposes a well-defined, well plotted, diachrony and the "central" goal of Madeleine's narrative is to arrive at the "present" by describing the events and transformations which have already occurred. Necessarily, her letters are broken up into "vignettes" or installments containing tiny "plots." No one letter is meant to be a culminating point, in and of itself. Her narrative does not "build" or "expand" in quite the same way that d'Albert's does. D'Albert's project is born of his letters; Madeleine's project is not. D'Albert's discourse generates his quest while Madeleine's "quest" generates her discourse. They are alike only in their desire to articulate their respective "quests." D'Albert's discourse is attempting, overtly, to be art, while Madeleine's is not.

Another example of the novel's use of Madeleine as foil to d'Albert, and vice-versa, is found in Madeleine's

contemplation of an ornate, fantastic tapestry of a hunting scene. This strongly complements d'Albert's discussion of the fantastic theatre; she too admires fantastically rendered scenes filled with color and detail:

C'est une chose qui m'a toujours étrangement préoccupée, que ce monde fantastique créé par les ouvriers de haute lisse. (p.287)

Madeleine, however, has no overall rhetorical project or supporting vision to qualify her admiration of this art form beyond expressing a passion for scenes which so inspire the imagination. In other words, she does not intimately depend on the allegory her articulation creates, but remains curiously outside it. In this way it can be said that she is not, in this instance, supporting an overall allegory, but rather expressing a metaphor in support of d'Albert's internal debate on art. What contributes to allegory for d'Albert is an incidental metaphor for Madeleine.

She describes the tapestry in question, a hunting scene, in great detail:

Une des choses qui me frappèrent le plus, ce fut une chasseresse qui tirait un oiseau.--Ses doigts ouverts venaient de lâcher la corde, et la flèche était partie: mais, comme cet endroit de la tapisserie se trouvait à une encoignure, la flèche était de l'autre côté de la muraille et avait décrit un grand crochet; pour l'oiseau, il s'envolait sur ses ailes immobiles et semblait vouloir gagner une branche voisine. (p.287)

The functional needs (covering/decorating a wall) to which the tapestry responds interrupt and impede the harmony of the representation. The constraints and limitations of art (a bird with immobile wings) also interfere with the gesture

of the scene by suspending it indefinitely. This haunts Madeleine and leads her to articulate her discomfort in a way not entirely consistent with d'Albert's views:

Cette flèche empennée et armée d'une pointe d'or, toujours en l'air et n'arrivant jamais au but, faisait l'effet le plus singulier, était comme un triste et douloureux symbole de la destinée humaine, et plus je la regardais, plus j'y découvrais de sens mystérieux et sinistres.
(p.287)

Her sense of destiny is more universally inclusive than d'Albert's. D'Albert's destiny is his alone, one in which he alone is hero in an imperfect world. Madeleine's destiny is less exclusive yet she seems less convinced and indeed less concerned about her particular role in any larger human destiny. She does not address the question with as much passion as d'Albert, nor does she have as much invested in the concept as he. She is not the poet. Hers is not the task of securing and representing the "truth" of art. The belief in destiny entails a certain (cynical) fatalism, and the concept functions in both their discourses as a failsafe, to inject meaning into repetitive actions, desires and consequences. It "takes up slack" when "understanding" is impossible or confused, suspending meaning or deferring it indefinitely. Destiny, in d'Albert's discourse, simultaneously encourages and discourages despair, perpetuating his quasi-melancolic state. In Madeleine's case, it seems to signal ironic resignation; ironic because it is an empty verbal gesture. She is never resigned.

Such overlappings in each's themes put Madeleine and d'Albert in ironic opposition. The novel supports d'Albert's discourse by casting Madeleine as his "soulmate," while at the same time, it undermines this support through the irony that Madeleine only "appears" to be his potential ideal. The "reality" of her project exceeds d'Albert's suppositions and cannot be contained by his discourse in spite of the similarities, especially since it is her narrative that provides the momentum of the overall allegory of the novel.

Another thematic similarity they share is, of course, Rosette. Each's description of Rosette, and their relationships with her, reveal where and how they are similar and dissimilar with regard to her representations. In this chapter (letter), Madeleine's narrative reveals a chain of events which retrieves her various synchronic representations from chaotic dispersal and provides, at last, a diachrony into which her development as a character can be placed by/for the reader. Since Madeleine's narrative relates events which are diachronically previous to any of d'Albert's representations of her, Madeleine's narrative represents Rosette as she was previous to her affair with d'Albert. The "enigmas" of Rosette, first introduced in chapters VI and VII of the novel, are now retro-actively invested with new meaning. This operation undermines d'Albert's narrative once again by highlighting the interior transformations of his own desire as they

remain blind to exterior desires. Rosette's encounter with d'Albert is, from her side, invested with a different desire.

This "diachronically correct" (vis-à-vis the novel) representation of Rosette provides the reader with d'Albert/Madeleine's shared "exploitation" and/or "victimization" of Rosette. Each uses Rosette to further a personal agenda, artificially prolonging and testing the integrity of their respective constructs. The diachronic restoration of Rosette's representation serves also to reveal her as exploiter of circumstance as she attempts to further her agenda with Théodore/Madeleine. D'Albert never acknowledged Rosette as having (or as reacting to) her own complex desires and neither did Madeleine, in the beginning. Madeleine can, and does recognize Rosette's desire as individuated eventually.

In chapter X, Madeleine's first epistle reveals her initial intentions in donning a male guise and proceeds, describing the first "test" of her disguise's integrity. In this, her second epistle (chapter XII), she describes a second "test" of her capacity to successfully perpetrate such a disguise. The first test involved maintaining her ruse in the presence of men, while the second involved maintaining her guise in the presence of women.

She indeed fools Rosette's Aunt (p.290, CH.XII), so much so that the Aunt is moved to tears because of the resemblance she sees in Théodore to her dead son. This

gives her more confidence and she decides to pursue an endeavor that she announces, in her letter, as a mistake:

Ma légèreté naturelle me fit faire une imprudence dont je me repens cruellement, car elle a porté dans une bonne et belle âme un trouble que je ne puis apaiser gravement. (p.291)

The "imprudence" is illuminated as the project to "court"

Rosette:

Pour avoir parfaitement l'air d'un homme et me divertir un peu, je ne trouvais rien de mieux que de faire la cour à la soeur de mon ami.--Cela me paraissait très drôle de me précipiter à quatre pattes lorsqu'elle laissait tomber son gant et de le lui rendre en faisant des révérences prosternées, de me pencher au dos de son fauteuil avec un petit air adorablement langoureux.....; bref, je m'acquittais avec une scrupuleuse exactitude de tous les devoirs d'un cavalier servant. (p.291)

She courts Rosette to legitimize her male identity and to amuse herself. Performing all of the male rituals that impress women is uniquely satisfying to Madeleine, and in her success, she becomes cavalier in her attitude towards Rosette. She also laments the reality which prevents her from carrying her court to completion:

Je regrettais quelquefois de n'être pas véritablement un homme pour en mieux profiter; si je l'avais été, il n'aurait tenu qu'à moi, car notre charmante veuve semblait avoir parfaitement oublié le défunt, ou, si elle s'en souvenait, elle eût été volontiers infidèle à sa mémoire. (p.291)

She makes fun of Rosette's receptiveness, but since Madeleine set the tone of their relationship (p.291-292) she could not, without appearing strange, back away from her pursuit of Rosette's affections. After amusing herself thus, she intends to withdraw from the castle on good terms

with all and assumes that Rosette will soon "get over him". However, Madeleine's amusements backfire, at least as far as Rosette's feelings are concerned. Madeleine wanted only to play a game with Rosette, but Rosette responded with passion for Théodore, causing Madeleine to be unsure of how she should/could conduct herself:

Mais, en me jouant, j'avais éveillé une passion sérieuse et les choses tournèrent autrement.
(p.292)

Madeleine realizes that her performance may not be entirely responsible for Rosette's attraction to her:

Je crus d'abord que si je me fusse tenue avec elle entre les bornes étroites d'une froide et exacte politesse, elle n'aurait pas fait autrement attention à moi; mais en vérité, je fus obligée de reconnaître par la suite qu'il n'en eût été ni plus ni moins, et que cette supposition, quoique fort modeste, était purement gratuite. (p.292)

She learns more of Rosette, and realizes that circumstances are such that any handsome, attentive man would have stirred this passion:

Avant de m'avoir vue, Rosette ne connaissait pas encore l'amour. Mariée fort jeune à un homme beaucoup plus vieux qu'elle, elle n'avait pu sentir pour lui qu'une espèce d'amitié filiale;-- sans doute, elle avait été courtisée, mais elle n'avait pas eu d'amant, tout extraordinaire que la chose puisse paraître: ou les galants qui lui avaient rendu des soins étaient de minces séducteurs, ou, ce qui est plus probable, son heure n'était pas encore sonnée. (p.292)

She speaks of being an enabler in Rosette's destiny and she is distantly resigned to this since she, once again, seems excluded from the human destinies which surround her. She

seems to understand the tenuous relationship between desire and identity, discourse and performance:

La destinée de Rosette était de n'aimer qu'une fois dans sa vie et d'un amour impossible; il faut qu'elle la remplisse, et elle la remplira.
(p.293)

Having realized that the provocation and perpetuation of Rosette's passion may not be a response to her "personally", that is, not a response to Rosette's knowledge of who she really is (a woman in men's clothing), but rather to her performance, she is able to transcend this "reality". Rather than perceiving Rosette's passion as illegitimate or false, she accepts the fact that Rosette loves her for who she is to Rosette: a man, or simply an object of love and adoration.

Simultaneously, Madeleine recognizes and embraces the idea of a constantly evolving "identity"/desire, one which is not (always) consistent with physical reality nor with that reality's representation. Her concept of her own identity is strongly informed and shaped by her perceived identity. Dressing as a man, projecting a male identity, and being perceived and treated as a man in society, have made of her a man. At this moment, in these circumstances, she is a man and knows it:

la jupe est sur mes hanches et non dans mon esprit. Il arrive souvent que le sexe de l'âme ne soit point pareil à celui du corps, et c'est une contradiction qui ne peut manquer de produire beaucoup de désordre. (p.293-4)

Identity (le sexe de l'âme, or desire) is not always consistent with biology, which is to say that our identities are strongly informed by physical reality (context) but that even this physical reality can be circumvented, played with, as Madeleine is doing. She states that this can provoke a great deal of "disorder". Since our lives organize themselves around physical reality (order), tampering with or circumventing that order can "disorder" one's relationship to it. She has become displaced, a rootless traveler disengaged from the usual center or centers.

Madeleine has re-worked her own "reality" and has, in turn, had her newly appropriated identity work on her from without. This "bricolage", or manipulation (of the physical/material context) can be described as an allegorical process, or as a process of transformation since allegory relies on the possibility of change as integral to its project. As hero (narrator) of her own context (discourse), she performs a role within well defined limitations, in which operative rules dominate, but do not entirely dictate the performance:

A force d'entendre tout le monde m'appeler monsieur, et de me voir traiter comme si j'étais homme;--mon déguisement me semblait mon habit naturel, et il ne me souvenait pas d'en avoir jamais porté d'autre: je ne songeais plus que je n'étais au bout du compte qu'une petite évaporée qui s'était fait une épée de son aiguille, et une paire de culottes en coupant une de ses jupes.
(p.293)

She has deflected her previous "destiny" as a woman. That destiny was an allegorical construct whose operative

"enigmas" were pre-programmed. Through her disguise, she sidesteps this destiny, ignores it, not without conflict, and begins to see things in terms of temporary constructs enjoying their own autonomy by borrowing from (working against) the discarded.

When contemplating Rosette's love for her, she likewise temporarily discards immediate context (Rosette, herself, and their immediate "histories") to explore the "allegory of love". Madeleine recognizes that she has participated in an individuated moment or event. This event has (creates) its own identity and does so quite easily by ignoring (supressing) usual context and/or "reality":

Quelqu'un pense ou rêve à moi; on s'occupe de ma vie; un mouvement de mes yeux ou de ma bouche fait la joie ou la tristesse d'une autre créature; une parole que j'ai laissé tomber au hasard est recueillie avec soin, commentée et retournée des heures entières; je suis le pôle où se dirige un aimant inquiet; ma prunelle est un ciel, ma bouche est un paradis plus souhaité que le véritable; je mourrais, une pluie tiède de larmes réchaufferait mon centre, mon tombeau serait plus fleuri qu'une corbeille de noce; si j'étais en danger, quelqu'un se jetterait entre la pointe de l'épée et ma poitrine; on se sacrifierait pour moi!--C'est beau; et je ne sais pas ce que l'on peut souhaiter de plus au monde. (p.293)

A handsome thing, she says, to be claimed by and absorbed by someone's desire. To become transformed in someone else's reality is part of the allegory of love. Love as an allegory in which one is claimed and made to reveal and inform an alternate reality is exactly what d'Albert refused. Madeleine realizes that Rosette's love for her is not fully informed; it does not emanate from full

knowledge of her "identity", but she discards momentarily the conflicts of this situation to enjoy the gesture as it draws her into a "reality", making her destiny's prize. D'Albert denigrated and despaired of Rosette's love for him (insofar as he assumed she loved him). As long as he felt she was not loving the "real" d'Albert, he could not (and would not) admit such an image of love, as a transformation into "other". D'Albert's insularity creates an allegory of love which resists mutual transformation. For that matter Rosette does the same. Only Madeleine seems receptive to her own effect on others and her participation within such metamorphoses of reality.

Madeleine is compelled to leave the castle since, under the circumstances, she cannot continue to deceive Rosette without soon being found out. The maintenance of her guise is her first priority, so she opts to steal away before being compromised. The irony, which Madeleine recognizes, is that, if she were a man, she would have an affair with Rosette, just as d'Albert did, she might not reveal her intentions, as d'Albert did not. In any event, enough has been revealed in this chapter to show that no one character is without the taint of personal agendas (Sartrean "bad faith") that operate at the expense of others. Each intimates a belief in the "purity" of his or her respective goals. However, "methods" of any kind require an enactment of desire and its inevitable confrontation with other desires. Such confrontations are often destructive.

This destructive potential becomes most evident in the four chapters which finish the novel. Each, in its own way, represents the inevitable collisions which occur as discourses/selves exhaust themselves through the effort of reaching out to embrace goals. Since each goal in this novel finds its own representation in Madeleine, each exhausts itself in reaching out to her, and she deflects each gesture, frustrating its source.

Chapter XIII is d'Albert's last piece of self-generated discourse. It is written (addressed) to Madeleine and serves as his supreme act, a performative, which seeks to bring closure to his project or destiny. It is a stunning and comical rhetorical amalgam of all his previous letters to Silvio. He re-works the arguments and aimless musings he crafted for Silvio in order to understand himself and make himself understood. Now his letter is more urgent and more tightly constructed. Hyperbole and supplication maintain the urgency of the allegorical structure he creates in Madeleine's name. This he does to absorb Madeleine into his project, to render her complicit with it so she will participate in the epiphany of its consummation.

His strategies are simple and can be arranged loosely around three main concepts: woman, beauty and destiny. Each of these concepts contribute to the formation, ultimately, of his identity as a poet. Each for d'Albert is inseparable from the other two, precisely because they reflect the complex structure of sign, process and goal (woman, destiny

as orchestrated transformation and beauty). They are separate and multiple yet when they coincide, as he makes them coincide, they validate his allegorical project. His immediate goal is to persuade Madeleine to participate in his destiny or rather to enable him to achieve his destiny. He mixes an emotional brew which involves mild extortion, hyperbolic praise and the suggestion of a debt to be paid.

He gently extorts her attention and interest by revealing to her, in his opening paragraph, that he knows she is a woman. He wonders at her name ("true" identity), having only the stage names, Théodore and Rosalinde at his disposal:

Que je voudrais savoir votre nom de femme! il doit être doux comme le miel et voltiger sur les lèvres plus suave et plus harmonieux que de la poésie. Jamais je n'eusse osé vous dire cela, et cependant je serais mort de ne pas le dire. (p.317)

He is hesitant to confront her with her own ruse and yet he does so indirectly with his letter. He is not entirely sure of himself and not confident enough to confront her in her male guise:

Encouragé par tout cela et poussé par mon amour, je vous ai écrit, car l'habit que vous portez se prête mal à de tels aveux... (p.324)

Throughout the nine pages of his letter he tells her nine times explicitly that she is a woman (pp.317, 320, 322 (2X), 323 (2X), 324 (2X), 325.). He is almost entirely sure, but not quite. These declarations attempt both to apprise her of his secret knowledge and further convince himself of the knowledge. His declarations of her identity are

performative in nature: as they punctuate his discourse, they attempt to make it so by sheer repetition. That she be a woman is essential to his plea because of the integral relationship he has constructed between beauty as an unattainable abstraction (ideal, art) and beauty as an attainable reality (real, woman).

Possession of beauty is the vehicle on which rides his destiny. His conception of beauty is his sign of self-prophecy, and for d'Albert the epitome of human beauty is woman:

Mais vous êtes une femme, nous ne sommes plus au temps des metamorphoses;--Adonis et Hermaphrodite sont morts,--et ce n'est plus par un homme qu'un pareil degré de beauté pourrait être atteint; car depuis que les héros et les dieux ne sont plus, vous seules conservez dans vos corps de marbre, comme dans un temple grec, le précieux don de la forme anathématisée par le Christ, et faites voir que la terre n'a rien à envier au ciel; vous représentez dignement la première divinité du monde, la plus pure symbolisation de l'essence éternelle,--la beauté. (p.320)

That she be both a woman and a woman possessing a beauty that moves him is a double sign of prophecy: intellectually and emotionally. Intellectually, it coincides with his longings for a heaven on earth, the epiphany not accompanied by death. Emotionally, it gratifies his socialized self who found the possibility of homosexuality repugnant:

Je me colérais contre moi-même, je m'adressais les plus durs reproches d'être ainsi tourmenté par un semblable amour, et de n'avoir pas la force d'arracher de mon coeur cette plante vénéneuse qui y était poussée en une nuit comme un champignon empoisonné; (p.323)

and stronger still:

vous êtes femme, et mon amour n'est plus
répréhensible, je puis m'y livrer sans remords et
m'abandonner au flot qui m'emporte vers vous; si
grande, si effrénée que soit la passion que
j'éprouve, elle est permise et je la puis avouer;
(p.324)

His praise of her beauty has him invoking every myth, metaphor and analogy he can think of. She is to be placed amongst the highest, most precious and most prized. She is every material luxury, natural wonder and Greek god that might valorize his choice of her and make her understand her value to him. Her body itself is the promised land:

Où vous n'êtes pas tout est désert, tout est mort,
tout est noir; vous seule peuplez le monde pour
moi; vous êtes la vie, le soleil;--vous êtes
tout.--Votre sourire fait le jour, votre tristesse
fait la nuit; les sphères suivent les mouvements
de votre corps, et les célestes harmonies se
règlent sur vous, ô ma reine chérie! ô mon beau
rêve réel! Vous êtes vêtue de splendeur, et vous
nagez sans cesse dans des effleuves rayonnants.
(p.317)

His recognition of this beauty in her is wrapped up in his sense of destiny. This beauty has haunted him all of his life. As in previous letters to Silvio, he looks to his childhood and adolescence to give credence to his vision and to the longevity of his search. It takes on proportions of revelation, the cherished dream obscurely revealed in fragments of the past.

Recounting childhood and adolescent experiences he reveals to her the genesis of his destiny (search). He wishes to make her understand his obsession for an elusive beauty (both material and spiritual/intellectual) that

tantalized him because it was obscured. She is his sign of this beauty made real and that proves his obsessions of adolescence were indeed prophetic:

Tout enfant, je restais des heures entières debout devant les vieux tableaux des maîtres, et j'en fouillais avidement les noires profondeurs.--Je regardais ces belles figures de saintes et de déesses dont les chairs d'une blancheur d'ivoire ou de cire se détachent si merveilleusement des fonds obscurs, carbonisés par la décomposition des couleurs; (p.318-319)

Grand artworks, no longer retaining their original integrity, suggest concealed glory and beauty. He is intrigued by what he cannot see, and the sketchy blueprint provided by degraded artworks creates a murky ideal of a rarefied beauty easily conceived in the mind and yet perhaps materially unconceivable:

A force de plonger opiniâtement mes yeux sous le voile de fumée, épaissi par les siècles, ma vue se troublait, les contours des objets perdaient leur précision, et une espèce de vie immobile et morte animait tous ces pâles fantômes des beautés évanouies; je finissais par trouver que ces figures avaient une vague ressemblance avec la belle inconnue que j'adorais au fond de mon coeur; je soupirais en pensant que celle que je devais aimer était peut-être une de celles-là, et qu'elle était morte depuis trois cents ans. (p.319)

The promise of "true" beauty, suggested by these obscure visions, dominates, mediating all of his encounters with "real" women. Quite logically, all the women whom he has known (visually more so than physically) fall short of his ideal. What he is looking for, by his own admission, is a "doux fantôme" (p.319), a shadow, a phantom, someone whose beauty he can realize (concretize/conceptualize) himself:

Lorsque j'avancai en âge, le doux fantôme m'obséda encore plus étroitement. Je le voyais toujours entre moi et les femmes que j'avais pour maîtresses, souriant d'un air ironique et raillant leur beauté humaine de toute la perfection de sa beauté divine. Il me faisait trouver laides des femmes réellement charmantes et faites pour rendre heureux quiconque n'aurait pas été épris de cette ombre adorable dont je ne croyais pas que le corps existât et qui n'était que le pressentiment de votre propre beauté. (p.319)

He skillfully sets up the enormity of his ideal and his acquired connoisseurship in matters of beauty in order to authenticate his argument to Madeleine. Madeleine, her person, is the vessel in which his ideal of beauty has been concretely manifested to him. Her disguise, of course, is for d'Albert the "voile de fumée". Had Madeleine first been known to him as a woman dressed in women's clothing, this "shock of recognition," so essential to any realization of his fantasy, could not have been possible.

From the first, Madeleine has been a mystery to him, something veiled and perhaps unknowable. D'Albert was immediately intrigued by a beauty and grace strangely inappropriate to its masculine form. When he discovers that her masculinity is, in fact, a ruse, he feels vindicated and worthy of a reward for his skill and perseverance in seeking out and recognizing beauty in spite of deception. Since this chain of events responds to a personally conceived dynamic of ideal beauty made real, it takes on the power of a prophecy, a sign of his own destiny fulfilling itself.

He feels compelled to communicate the enormity of his need, in the face of this "sign," to Madeleine. He must

make her see the "logic" of his conclusions and react in a way which will respond to his idea of her "responsibility" in this matter. This letter has a uniquely rhetorical project; he must persuade her to participate in his "destiny". His praise of her melts into the desperateness which has characterized his struggle when in her presence, prevented by her "social guise" from approaching her:

Vous êtes venue, et j'ai dû reprocher son impuissance à mon imagination.--Mon tourment n'a pas été celui que je craignais, d'être perpétuellement en proie à une idée sur une roche stérile: mais je n'en ai pas moins souffert. J'avais vu qu'en effet vous existiez, que mes pressentiments ne m'avaient point menti sur ce point; mais vous vous êtes présentée à moi avec la beauté ambiguë et terrible au sphinx. Comme Isis, la mystérieuse déesse, vous étiez enveloppée d'un voile que je n'osais soulever de peur de tomber mort. (p.321)

This personal drama, composed specifically to confront Madeleine, reveals a somewhat sado-masochistic quest. He vacillates between intimidating Madeleine and abasing himself. The revelation of her secret, the sheer force and magnitude of his vision and the clarity of his convictions represent implied threats to Madeleine's distant stance. At the same time, his shameless declarations of desperate need and the elevation of her to near godhood puts him in the position of a suppliant begging to participate in her perfection. This letter is both warning and plea, designed so that she cannot respond indifferently to him. He closes with an ambiguous command, a word of advice that responds

simultaneously to his veiled threats and pleas, as well as to her curious duplicity:

jouez votre rôle jusqu'au bout, jetez les habits du beau Ganymède, et tendez votre blanche main au plus jeune fils du brave chevalier Rowland des Bois. (p.325)

D'Albert would have Madeleine play the role of Ganymede/Rosalind to Shakespeare's conclusion, which has the lovers united in marriage. In the play, it was Rosalind who initiated and affected her union with Orlando, who was unaware of her true sex/identity. D'Albert now urges her to do the same in his letter; to discard her male disguise and come to him as a woman. He implies that it is her destiny as well as his. He wants to enact a reality parallel with the play, to borrow and repeat the larger dramatic content. He seeks to re-create and inhabit an allegory.

Shakespeare's play is already an allegory of the journey into exile and the transformations that take place in the forest Arden. The castle retreat where d'Albert encountered Madeleine is suggestive of the forest Arden as is Madeleine suggestive of Rosalinde, the maiden disguised as the young man, Ganymede. Since allegory is the repetition of a certain kind of structure that has an internal logic which depends on that structure, d'Albert appropriates a certain amount of the internal logic proper to Shakespeare's play. This is pleasing to him because it nourishes his own allegory of exile, transformation and the search for beauty/identity.

Unlike Shakespeare's allegory, however, which only had to work towards identities that were temporarily obscured, but already established, d'Albert wishes to exceed allegory's infrastructure. The identity he seeks, and the identity that he thinks Madeleine represents, lay well beyond the structural bounds of allegory, since allegory straddles the material and spiritual worlds. D'Albert seeks a transcendent identity or even the briefest encounter with the transcendent and this would entail the destruction of the allegorical. Breaking the link with the material to achieve the epiphanic would mean abandoning the formal, the specific, and thus meaning. D'Albert is hesitant at this prospect and his apprehension is evident in his letter to Madeleine. This conflict expresses the desire to continue desiring (to observe Madeleine and dream of her from afar, or to remain in allegory) and the desire to have one's desire once and for all (to approach Madeleine).

Two epistles are Madeleine's last to her correspondent, Graciosa. Chapter XIV is short and recounts the comic role reversal that has Rosette aggressively seducing Théodore. Its main interest is in the narrative strategy of the epistle itself, which has dominated the novel, and which aggressively exploits the voyeuristic position of the reader.

Chapter XV is somewhat longer and much more pensive. Narratively, this is the chapter in which Madeleine recognizes her own participation in a "present" consistent

with all other characters. In this chapter, her discourse directly addresses her own desire and that of d'Albert and Rosette. In doing so, she reveals the very real anxiety she experiences regarding, not her identity per se, but her sexual nature.

From her first experiences in male dress, she realized that her ideal was unrealizable, and as she discusses this disappointment, she confronts the real and immediate crux of her quest. Sexual initiation and satisfaction is all that remains of her original quest. She announces her intent to fulfill that goal, but while still retaining the integrity of her own fabricated identity.

The identity (disguise) she has appropriated takes on an importance (function) that far exceeds its original purpose (utility). She exercises near total control over her persona and in turn can exercise a similar control over her environment and her encounters with others. While d'Albert envisions an encounter that far exceeds the boundaries of his allegorical progression, Madeleine discovers the creative forces of an allegorical process that constantly renews itself rather than seeking escape.

This short chapter (XIV) was promised to Graciosa as the description of Rosette's last desperate attempt to effect a union with Théodore. Each of our principal characters act once, almost desperately in an attempt to fulfill their own "destinies". D'Albert's letter to Madeleine (CH.XIII) is his act. Madeleine's is summed up in

her last letter to Graciosa (CH.XV) and Rosette's desperate act is indirectly recounted in this letter.

Chronologically, Rosette's attempt to realize her "destiny" is previous to d'Albert's attempt to do the same. Rosette's failure to "capture" her ideal (Madeleine/Théodore) prepares the reader for a similar failure on d'Albert's part. The events which comprise Madeleine/Théodore's encounter with Rosette come, chronologically, before all of d'Albert's letters although they are presented, narratively, well after the establishment of d'Albert's epistolary narrative.

A strict observation of diachronic events (which Gautier's presentation of the narratives suggests is not terribly pertinent) shows that Madeleine, as a catalyst (representing in this instance the power of any encounter to effect change) first provokes Rosette's interest and eventual seduction of Théodore (her ideal). Rosette's failure to seduce Théodore leads to a sort of despair and recklessness, evidenced by her decision to retire from her ancestral home and embrace a more decadent lifestyle. It is during this decadent retreat that she meets d'Albert (CH.II).

In this particular epistle, Madeleine describes, in more detail, Rosette's botched attempt at seduction. Previous encounters with Rosette convinced Madeleine that it would be more prudent to leave before further provoking

Rosette's desire. Unfortunately, Rosette comes to Madeleine's chambers before she is able to leave.

After having decided to leave Rosette's family home at the first opportunity (CH.XII), Madeleine sits pensively in her darkened room at the window. Hoping to catch Théodore unaware, Rosette makes her move on him in his room:

Rosette, ne voyant plus briller ma lampe et ne pouvant me distinguer à cause d'un grand angle d'ombre qui tombait précisément sur la fenêtre, avait cru sans doute que j'étais couchée, et c'était ce qu'elle attendait pour risquer une dernière et désespérée tentative.--Elle poussa si doucement la porte que je ne l'entendis pas entrer, et qu'elle était à deux pas de moi avant que je m'en fusse aperçue. Elle fut très étonnée de me voir encore levée; mais, se remettant bientôt de sa surprise, elle vint à moi et me prit le bras en m'appelant deux fois par mon nom: Théodore, Théodore! (p.327)

In spite of the comedy generated by this situation which continues throughout the chapter, a subtler form of humor is being enacted from without by Gautier. Throughout the novel, Gautier has been aggressively directing the reader's eyes through a series of illicit, sexually complex situations. Each character is defined by his/her visual relationship to the world and by the discourse which represents that relationship.

Implied homosexuality has been a problematic undercurrent throughout the novel's development. D'Albert is an effeminate fop, an oversophisticated amateur of the arts who pursues beauty in all things. Madeleine's association with her young travelling companion, Isnabel, has also provided an undercurrent of potential lesbianism

(visually/aesthetically) and now Rosette's attempted seduction of Théodore affords many opportunities for Gautier to exploit the visual spectacle of Madeleine and Rosette in various states of undress:

Il faut te dire que la belle n'avait sur elle qu'une mante de nuit en batiste excessivement fine, et la triomphante chemise bordée de dentelles que je n'avais pas voulu voir le jour de la fameuse scène dans le petit kiosque du parc. Ses bras, polis et froids comme le marbre, étaient entièrement nus, et la toile qui couvrait son corps était si souple et si diaphane qu'elle laissait voir les boutons des seins, comme à ces statues des baigneuses couvertes d'une draperie mouillée. (p.327)

Madeleine's acute discomfort arises out of her need to retain the integrity of her male identity. She herself is wearing only a robe and wants not to be discovered. At the same time, being a "man" means she must school her reactions so as not to give the impression that Rosette's "offer" is disturbing to her. She also wants not to embarrass or offend Rosette. When Rosette embraces Madeleine, Madeleine appraises her situation:

Moi, pendant ce temps-là, je passais machinalement mes doigts dans les longues boucles de ses cheveux déroulés; je cherchais dans ma cervelle quelque honnête échappatoire pour me tirer d'embarras, et je n'en trouvais point, car j'étais acculée dans mes derniers retranchements, et Rosette paraissait parfaitement décidée à ne pas sortir de la chambre comme elle y était entrée.--Son habillement avait une désinvolture formidable, et qui ne promettait rien de bon. Je n'avais moi-même qu'une robe de chambre ouverte et qui eût fort mal défendu mon incognito, en sorte que j'étais on ne peut plus inquiète de l'issue de la bataille. (p.328)

The battle to keep her composure totally absorbs Madeleine. At this moment Rosette declares her love. This declaration

is not unlike d'Albert's, of equal intensity, although lacking d'Albert's polish. Rosette, however, faces Madeleine to declare her love. Like d'Albert, Rosette charges that Madeleine, albeit perhaps inadvertently, triggered something in her and now has a responsibility to her:

J'étais calme, tranquille, presque heureuse avant de vous connaître.--Vous arrivez beau, jeune, souriant, pareil à Phoebus le dieu charment.--Vous avez pour moi les soins les plus empressés, les plus délicates attentions; jamais cavalier ne fût plus spirituel et plus galant. Vos lèvres chaque minute laissaient tomber des roses et des rubis; (.....) Une femme qui vous aurait d'abord mortellement haï aurait fini par vous aimer, et moi, je vous aimais dès l'instant où je vous avais vu.--Pourquoi paraissiez-vous donc surpris, ayant été si aimable, d'être tant aimé? N'est-ce pas une conséquence toute naturelle? (p.329)

Madeleine quite agrees with Rosette's assessment. She meant to attract Rosette and is in a quandary now that she has succeeded. She is also in a quandary because she is responding to Rosette's seduction and she is troubled by her own response. Madeleine flirted with Rosette for the sheer pleasure of wielding her "male" sexual persona. This was the ultimate test of her disguise's integrity, pure performance. Rosette, however, is quite serious.

Gautier exploits this situation by pushing the seduction scene to the very edge before Rosette's brother rushes in on the two women. Beset by guilt, Madeleine becomes quickly caught up in the emotional moment:

Cela me fit un effet singulier de sentir ainsi ruisseler sur ma joue cet intarissable courant de larmes qui ne partait pas de mes yeux.--Je ne

tardai pas à y mêler les miennes, et ce fut une véritable pluie amère à causer un nouveau déluge, si elle eût duré seulement quarante jours.
(p.331)

As this moment intensifies, the comic aspects are not lost on Madeleine:

Avec son peignoir blanc, ses bras nus, sa poitrine et sa gorge découvertes, presque de la même couleur que son linge, ses cheveux épars et son air douloureux, Rosette avait l'air d'une figure d'albâtre de la Mélancolie assise sur un tombeau. Quant à moi, je ne sais trop quelle figure je pouvais avoir, attendu que je ne me voyais pas et qu'il n'y avait point de glace qui pût réfléchir mon image, mais je pense que j'aurais très bien pu poser pour une statue de l'Incertitude personnifiée. (p.331)

In this particular instance, the visual cue permits Madeleine to construct an elaborate metaphor to identify Rosette in relation to herself and the situation. It hints at Madeleine's knowledge of Rosette's search for ideal love. Rosette's physical appearance, the color of her gown, the expression on her face and her bold and needy behavior suggest, to Madeleine, the "alabaster figure of Melancholy seated on a tomb." In spite of their physical proximity, there is no union and no feeling of unity in Madeleine's description. Madeleine conceptualizes a scene of distinct entities, miles apart. Since she cannot, physically, see herself, she has no visual cues to construct a similarly elaborate view of herself. She is uncomfortable and hesitant, confused as to what part she should play and what action, if any, she should take. Because of this she figures herself as "Uncertainty Personnified." The only

link between the two figures is the frozen character of both in suspension: alabaster and statue. The visually suspended, frozen image is, throughout the novel, the moment when ideal meets real. It cannot, itself, be prolonged but the gesture of the image captures the desire and its intent.

In this particular instance, these figures represent Madeleine's coping mechanism as she struggles to control the moment and re-direct its momentum. Her struggle is to re-establish the visual and discursive distance needed to sustain the control she seeks. The emotional and sensual onslaught affects Madeleine and she begins to lose herself in the pleasure of this unorthodox initiation into physical desire:

Rosette me nouait de plus en plus avec ses bras et m'enveloppait de son corps;--elle se penchait sur moi convulsivement et me pressait sur sa poitrine nue et haletante; à chaque baiser, sa vie semblait accourir tout entière à la place touchée, et abandonner le reste de sa personne.--Des idées singulières me passaient par la tête; j'aurais, si je n'avais craint de trahir mon incognito, laissé un champ libre aux élans passionnés de Rosette, et peut-être aurais-je fait quelque vaine et folle tentative pour donner un semblant de réalité à cette ombre de plaisir que ma belle amoureuse embrassait avec tant d'ardeur; je n'avais pas encore eu d'amant; et ces vives attaques, ces caresses réitérées, le contact de ce beau corps, ces doux noms perdus dans des baisers me troublaient au dernier point,--quoiqu'ils fussent d'une femme. (p.332)

Gautier exploits the voyeuristic position into which he has placed the reader, and Madeleine's discomfort, confusion and titillation become our own. The intensity of the situation, as well as the humor, suggest a strength of

identity particular to Madeleine and not to the other characters. She has mastered the ironies of the situations which surround her. She has only to announce her true sex, as many more easily intimidated might, to defuse the situation. She, however, having already learned to deflect tricky situations, does not even entertain the option of giving herself away.

A voyeuristic point of view almost completely dominates the novel on every level. The epistolary form overtly makes the reader a "voyeur" of the narratives since the reader intercepts (or mediates) the exchange. The epistolary also makes the author of the letters a "voyeur" since he/she observes and recounts intimate episodes of life. In this way, both reader (correspondents) and writer (narrator, d'Albert/Madeleine) are observed (readers outside the text) performing and recounting intense acts of scrutiny.

D'Albert scrutinizes women (CH.I, pp.69-72; CH.II, pp.94-99) and Rosette in particular (CH.III, pp.103-109). He also observes Madeleine carefully when still convinced she is a man (CH.III, p.159). Madeleine also scrutinized the men she meets (CH.X, pp.218-219, 226-236) as well as scrutinizing Rosette (CH.XV, p.357). She also describes moments when she is observing d'Albert in the act of observing her (CH.XV, pp.358-359). Everyone is covertly observing everyone else in the text and keeping a running account of these observations.

Since omniscient narration does not orchestrate all of the narratives, voyeurism is not a subtle construction in the novel. The moments of intervention by the omniscient narrator overtly invite the reader to be conscious of the voyeurism in which everyone is participating. The narrator's act of breaking in on the "flow" of d'Albert's letters in Chapter VI draws attention to voyeurism as constituting the act of reading.³

One of the results of a voyeuristic point of view is an aggressive visual acuity, one that is identified as the direct apprehension of some unifying spiritual sense from the material sense. A representable and meaningful sense of self identify is the product of this voyeurism. The sensual, material cue generates meaning (an immaterial, spiritual importance) which is deemed unique in the construction of identity, and hence prophetic.

All intrigues, in the novel, are visual into material into spiritual transformations (through the mediation of representation) which trace the measure of control and/or stability a character apprehends concerning his/her identity. Figurative control and/or unity of these transformations is consistently lost when visually apprehendable distance is closed (intellectual/analytic distance as well). Consequently, self-identity, and its representation, is at its most discontinuous, hesitant and undefinitive during these moments of visual/intellectual obscurity. A mixed rhetorical figuration (metonymy,

metaphor, hyperbole, periphrasis), with no striking thematic unity (except for themes of dispersion, fragmentation and immense size and alienation) often gives way to a more literal discourse at such moments of identity loss or fragmentation. The representation of "breakdowns" in the unified sense of self is also perceived as such by the characters.

The narratives of both d'Albert and Madeleine bear witness to "breakdowns" of this kind where each recognizes and articulates a loss or intense fragmentation of identity. D'Albert describes such a moment in chapter XI while preparing to present Shakespeare's As You Like It, (pp.248-252). The allegorical, pastoral unity of the play is in sharp contrast to his own perceived reality and his narrative explodes into a long digression which begins by refusing the allegorical unity represented in the play:

Mais, hélas! le monde de l'âme n'a pas d'Ardennes verdoyantes, et ce n'est que dans le parterre de poésie que s'épanouissent ces petites fleurs capricieuses et sauvages dont le parfum fait tout oublier. Nous avons beau verser des larmes, elles ne forment pas de ces belles cascades argentines; nous avons beau soupirer, aucun écho complaisant ne se donne la peine de nous renvoyer nos plaintes ornées d'assonances et de concetti.--C'est en vain que nous accrochons des sonnets aux piquants de toutes les ronces, jamais Rosalinde ne les ramasse, et c'est gratuitement que nous entaillons l'écorce des arbres de chiffres amoureux. (p.248)

This refusal is extended outward in all directions (temporal, spatial, spiritual) and he describes, in various ways, how he is incompatible with the world and the world with him and itself:

Redoutez tout: l'herbe, le fruit, leau, l'air,
l'ombre, le soleil, tout est mortel. (p.251)

The spiritual link with the material is broken, as his rhetorical unity, his identity and his hope. Madeleine describes a similar moment, in similar terms, in chapter X, when she first encounters some young men at the Inn she stops at for the night. This encounter proves destructive to her own illusions of unity of self and world, in much the same way as it did in d'Albert:

Plante de l'idéal, plus venimeuse que le
mancenillier ou l'arbre upas, qu'il m'en coûte,
malgré les fleurs trompeuses et le poison que l'on
respire avec ton parfum, pour te déraciner de mon
âme: ni le cèdre du Liban, ni le baobab
gigantesque, ni le palmier haut de cent coudées
n'y pourraient remplir ensemble la place que tu y
occupais toute seule, petite fleur bleue au coeur
d'or. (p.234)

A certain understanding of men, and her relationship to men (socially, sexually) is what made her previous sense of self cohere. Her disappointing encounter with men at the Inn ruptured her own sense of self. As long as men are a mystery to her, she is a mystery to herself and the world:

Je n'aimais certainement pas l'homme qui me
causait des agitations si étranges.--Il n'avait
d'autre charme que de ne pas être une femme, et,
dans l'état où je me trouvais, c'était assez! Un
homme! cette chose si mystérieuse qu'on nous
dérobe avec tant de soin, cet animal étrange dont
nous savons si peu l'histoire, ce démon ou ce dieu
qui peut seul réaliser tous les rêves de volupté
indécise dont le printemps berce notre sommeil, la
seule pensée que l'on ait depuis l'âge de quinze
ans! (p.238)

Such moments in both narratives suggest that extended proximity has an intensely destabilizing, destructive effect

on identity. Proximity to men in all settings (denied to women in polite society) destroyed Madeleine's "illusions" of men, and consequently, her conception of her own femininity, since she assumed that men and women were stable predictable identities. Likewise, d'Albert's hopes of love (and self-knowledge) are shattered by his extended, failed relationship with Rosette. His sense of self suffers in proportion to his "failed" notions of love.

Conversely, self-identity reconstitutes or reasserts itself, in the narratives of d'Albert and Madeleine, when physical and spiritual distance is re-established and when a more allegorical link between real and ideal (material and spiritual) is retrieved from the chaotic (symbolic) realism of actual experiences and events. D'Albert, with his more sophisticated command of language, is more skilled at re-establishing this link representationally. One example of this is in the third chapter, when he realized that he does not love Rosette:

Mon âme ne s'est jamais unie avec cette âme.
Cupidon, le dieu aux ailes d'épervier, n'a pas
embrassé Psyché sur son beau front d'ivoire. Non!-
-cette femme n'est pas ma maîtresse. (p.113)

This assertion does not suggest a fragmented sense of self. His project is deferred, suspended, but still intact. Madeleine has only to re-establish physical distance to re-enter her more allegorical identity. No one tendency, either for allegorical closure and coherence or for a more metaphoric dissipation, dominates. It is, rather, the

tendency to swing from one to the other which highlights the flux of identity and its transformations in the novel.

Madeleine, as we shall see in the next chapter, already has a strong sense of her own identity's "becoming". Intuitively, she understands the politics of distance as they are everywhere inscribed in the novel. She, not gladly, but willingly surrenders the ideal when it seems obvious to her that it is not possible, but it must be remembered that her ideals are in contrast to d'Albert's Ideal. Her level of and commitment to self-cultivation is quite different from d'Albert's. He seeks the epiphanic, while she rides along the crest of the ephemeral. Having abandoned the Ideal, which was never fully developed in her, she has embraced play.

The sacrifices of play are already well known to her. When Rosette's brother walks in on Rosette and Madeleine, there is the strong sense that Madeleine has been set up, but she more than rises to the challenge:

Elle [Rosette] croyait, la pauvre enfant, que l'heure du berger, si laborieusement amenée, allait enfin sonner pour elle; mais il ne sonna que deux heures du matin.--Ma situation était on ne peut plus critique, lorsque la porte tourna sur ses gonds et donna passage au même chevalier Alcibiade en personne; il tenait un bougeoir d'une main et son épée de l'autre. (p.333)

Rosette's brother offers Théodore marriage or a duel and reminds Théodore of his relative youth as well as inexperience with the sword. His intimidation of her is parallel to Rosette's although he intimidates physically,

and Rosette intimidated sensually. In each case Madeleine must re-establish physical distance in order to regain control. Her principal concern is her disguise which is key to her current conception of self:

--....je ne puis que persister dans mon refus, et, puisque j'ai la liberté du choix entre le duel et le mariage, je préfère le duel. (p.335)

Alcibiade, enraged, wants to duel on the spot, while Madeleine would prefer something more conventional, such as dueling at first light. Her immediate concern is the fact that she is not in "costume". Alcibiade's less gallant mood forces her to defend herself immediately, which she does with a vengeance. His violent intimidation (intrusion of space) is a factor inciting her own anger. Her inability to "disarm" him verbally forces her to disarm him physically. Just as she attempted to re-establish distance between herself and Rosette verbally, she now must continue the same project physically:

Je ne pensais pas à la mort, je n'avais pas la moindre peur; cette point aiguë et mortelle qui me venait devant les yeux à chaque seconde ne me faisait pas plus d'effet que si je me fusse battue avec des fleurets boutonnés; seulement j'étais indignée de la brutalité d'Alcibiade, et le sentiment de mon innocence parfaite augmentait encore cette indignation. Je voulais seulement lui piquer le bras ou l'épaule pour lui faire tomber son épée des mains, car j'avais essayé vainement de la lui faire sauter. (p.336)

Since all is play for Madeleine, she is not herself intimidated by the potential repercussions. She would approach fencing with equal vigor which, implicitly, reveals and problematizes the question of innocence. Madeleine

invokes her "wounded" innocence which is problematic because of the ruse she is perpetrating before the world. This passage suggests that distance cannot be maintained without the violence of separation. In order to secure her escape, Madeleine must wound Alcibiade. Similar intimations occur throughout the novel. D'Albert does not want to end his relationship with Rosette (re-establish distance) because he fears wounding her; Madeleine wants to leave Rosette because she knows she will have to, at one time or another, to maintain her guise; thus she decides to leave quickly in order to reduce the pain she knows Rosette will endure, and the epistolary exchange is based on the latent pain of separation. Madeleine clearly understands that there is no innocence and that all closings of distance immediately entail the painful loss of self as well as the painful need to re-establish self.

Throughout the novel, perhaps most notably in d'Albert's narrative, is the suggestion that the loss of material (sensory) identity represents an ideal state. However, the irony of this assertion is manifest at those moments when this loss of materiality is almost achieved and then abruptly recoiled from as in fear or loathing. Both d'Albert and Madeleine have such moments in spite of their individual "quests" to find their ideal other. Resistance to the ideal is both exterior and interior to the subject; sometimes it is a personal sensation (d'Albert's inability to love Rosette) and, at other moments, the recognized

"other" is not experiencing the same "mystical" correspondence (as in the case between d'Albert and Madeleine).

This "failure" of the ideal does not itself become an ideal state in the novel. Alienation and melancholy are intermittent gestures in the novel, rather than being representative of an isolation that embraces itself in consolation and consolidation of that alienated state. Subjectivity, in Gautier, is never entirely closed upon itself, as in René by Chateaubriand.

After having wounded her aggressor, Madeleine steals away from Rosette's castle and rides back to the town, arriving shortly after dawn. Although tired, her exhilaration is total and is communicated to Graciosa, her correspondent, through her last line of this epistle:

Ceci est l'histoire très circonstanciée de ma première bonne fortune et de mon premier duel.
(p.338)

With almost Rablasian bravado she communicates the Renaissance flair with which she identifies herself. This experience, as the next chapter shall reveal, provokes both her pensive reassessment of her quest and the deepening sense of freedom which makes her a law unto herself. Her deepening anxiety begins to manifest itself more fully and yet the distance she so jealously guards between herself and the world is a function of the distance she is able to establish between reality and the idea of self.

This epistle is Madeleine's last installment to her friend Graciosa, and it is in this chapter that any remaining gaps in our knowledge of d'Albert, Rosette and especially her page Isnabel, is provided. In this letter she brings her "story" to closure, and announces her own intention to "act" out the fulfillment of her "destiny". Madeleine has the last word, as far as destinies go in this novel, because she completes all the others. Ultimately, her own "destiny" is not fulfilled because she never fully articulated or perhaps even believed in it. This suggests that, as her narrative approaches closure, "destiny" ceases to be an operative term in her narrative.

This letter articulates Madeleine's sense of empowerment, as she conceives it, through the liberating embrace of play (narrative) and performance (discourse). She addresses the heady power she taps into in male dress. Simultaneously, the deepening sense of anxiety she feels as a result of her transvestitism is also explored as she discusses her own destiny.

The imbedded narrative of her association with Isnabel is itself an allegory of her liberation as well as one of her own sexual anxiety, each of which represents an ongoing parallel reality. Madeleine began a search for the ideal other, one worthy of her love, and decided that such an ideal did not exist. This intensifies her desire and defers it. Her appropriation of Isnabel as an object of love is a

metaphor for her deferred desire and its proliferation through this deferrment:

réellement, il y avait entre elle et moi la même différence qu'il y a entre moi et les hommes. Elle était si diaphane, si svelte, si légère, d'une nature si délicate et si choisie qu'elle est une femme même pour moi qui suis femme, et qui ai l'air d'un Hercule à côté d'elle. (p.354)

This episode conceptualizes the stunning and irrevocable loss of innocence pervading the novel thematically. The loss of childhood is represented as, materially, the corrupting moment of sexual initiation itself and, spiritually, the corruption that this knowledge represents. Isnabel reminds Madeleine of herself as a child, and makes her see herself as the woman she is now, stripped of her innocence spiritually but not yet materially:

Un homme qui l'aurait la briserait en morceaux, et j'ai toujours peur que le vent ne l'emporte quelque beau matin.--Je la voudrais enfermer dans une boîte de coton et la porter suspendue à mon cou. (p.354)

This narrative is a smaller version of the concerns of the novel at large: desire covets and corrupts and Beauty can only remain beautiful if untouched and unapproached. Her uncertainty about Isnabel mirrors the uncertainty of desiring beauty without corrupting or being corrupted. Beauty, in the novel, is consistently and exclusively visual and the act of observing is linked to voyeurism and the corrupted and corrupting power of the eye to penetrate and possess.

The supremacy of vision in the novel parallels conceptualized and conceptualizing desires and yet breaks down at the moment visual distance is closed. Sensual experiences have no coherence or integrity in the novel once sexual initiation is complete, because visual parameters are exploded during moments of intimacy or close physical proximity. Focus or the ability to "see" clearly is lost during such moments and the narrative reflects this. Madeleine, herself, knows this and discusses the extreme tension which exists between two tyrants, the intellectual (aesthetic) and the physical (corporeal).

Madeleine, continuing her narrative from the previous epistle (CH.XIV), describes arriving in town after her pre-dawn duel with Rosette's brother. She finds an inn and immediately goes to sleep but her discourse is laced with vital self-satisfaction:

Je me jetai sur un lit et je m'endormis profondément. Quand je me réveillai, il était trois heures après midi: ce qui suffit à peine pour me reposer complètement. En effet, ce n'était pas trop pour une nuit blanche, une bonne fortune, un duel, et une fuite très rapide, quoique très victorieuse. (p.339)

Her success in extracting herself, unscathed, from a very dicey situation has a liberating, revitalizing effect on her. She, rather than wringing her hands or agonizing over what could have been, throws herself with renewed vigor into her persona of the young gad-about-town:

Je retrouvai à C*** plusieurs des jeunes gens avec qui nous avons fait route: --cela me fit plaisir; je me liai avec eux plus intimement, et ils me

donnèrent accès dans plusieurs maisons agréables.-
 -J'étais parfaitement habituée à mes habits, et la
 vie plus rude et plus active que j'avais menée,
 les exercices violents auxquels je m'étais livrée
 m'avaient rendue deux fois plus robuste que je
 n'étais. Je suivais partout ces jeunes écervelés:
 Je montais à cheval, je chassais, je faisais des
 orgies avec eux, car, petit à petit, je m'étais
 formée à boire. (p.340)

In essence, she re-embraces the dissipated life of her male persona. She does this by re-establishing the visual distance which protects her male identity. No emotional or physical involvement which might obscure her view of herself and her aims is allowed. The emotional and physical proximity of Rosette obscured her vision and made concrete the very real fragility on which her persona is based.

The loss of physical and emotional control implicit in sexual liaisons must be avoided at all costs, or the aesthetic persona which liberates her will be lost. She uses this time apart to re-inforce her "maleness" and reflect on these dangers as they relate to her past intentions and future aims. Madeleine clearly articulates the impossibility of her past ideal using the visual metaphor which characterizes the integrity of her construct:

Il en est de certaines idées comme de l'horizon qui existe bien certainement, puisqu'on le voit en face de soi de quelque côté que l'on se tourne, mais qui fuit obstinément devant vous et qui, soit que vous alliez au pas, soit que vous couriez au galop, se tient toujours à la même distance; car il ne peut se manifester qu'avec une condition d'éloignement déterminée; il se détruit à mesure que l'on avance, pour se former plus loin avec son azur fuyard et insaisissable, et c'est en vain que l'on essaye de l'arrêter par le bord de son manteau flottant. (p.341)

It must not be forgotten that she has rejected outright the social female persona from which her ideal emanated. Her blindness consists in not realizing that multiple personae contribute to the stability of social institutions and in not realizing that the original promises of marriage and romantic love are themselves artificial constructs created and disseminated to re-inforce the social fabric. People are by nature in conflict with social personae. These personae jostle with the more palpable reality of an evolving psyche which must role-play in order to function consistently and effectively in society. This is a reality she accepts only for herself. Like d'Albert, Madeleine also struggles with a sense of insular multiplicity which she does not directly address. Nor are her problems solved by her own evaluation. She, however, does not mire herself in melancholic states of self absorption as does d'Albert. All that can be said, perhaps, is that her realizations create a sense of self which is more efficient and more dynamic and responds more consistently to her own multiplicity.

The price of her own tactics and the realizations which inform them is twofold: a deepening sense of sexual anxiety that her transvestitism radicalizes, and a self-imposed exile from society which makes her a nomad. Each of these consequences carries with it subtle complexities and tensions. Renunciation of society is not implicit in her agenda because her disguise relies entirely on social conventions. All she is doing is deferring her re-entry

into society until such time that she may do so on her own terms. As stated before, she has not given up entirely her dream of the ideal. She simply does not know how she can effect a suitable re-integration into society on society's and her own terms. Her most recent plan was to, as a man, meet a young man who pleased her, learn if he was likable and suitable, become his friend, leave, and after a suitable time-lapse, return as a woman, and offer to become his mistress. However, she states:

Mais assurément ce plan-là ne sera pas mis à exécution, car c'est le propre des plans que l'on a de n'être point exécutés, et c'est là que paraissent principalement la fragilité de la volonté et le pur néant de l'homme. Le proverbe-- ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut--n'est pas plus vrai que tout autre proverbe, ce qui veut dire qu'il ne l'est guère. (p.342)

This impasse propels her into a re-evaluation of men, and her desire's first conceptualization of them. Like d'Albert, love is conceptualized in visual terms. She shares his conclusion that only women embody ideal physical beauty, and feminine behavior, characterized as passive, gentle, refined and delicate, best embodies the ideal state of being. Ideal love, conceived in these terms, is hard to reconcile with the palpable realities of her experience of male behavior:

Tant que je ne les avais vus que de loin et à travers mon désir, les hommes m'avaient paru beaux, et l'optique m'avait fait illusion.-- Maintenant je les trouve du dernier effroyable, et je ne comprends pas comment une femme peut admettre cela dans son lit. Quant à moi, le coeur me lèverait, et je ne pourrais m'y résoudre. (p.342)

In re-evaluating the process that has taken her through various perspectives relative to men and desire, Madeleine isolates more precisely that to which her desire is responding:

L'odeur des roses et des lilas du printemps me portait à la tête comme un parfum trop fort. Je ne rêvais que héros accomplis, amants fidèles et respectueux, flammes dignes de l'autel, dévouements et sacrifices merveilleux et j'aurais cru trouver tout cela dans le premier gredin qui m'aurait dit bonjour. Cependant ce premier et grossier enivrement ne dura guère; d'étranges soupçons me prirent et je n'eus pas de repos que je ne les eusse éclaircis. (p.343)

The fairy-tale character of her desire's first, and most rarefied, conceptualization is responding to intellectual and aesthetic desires. Her initial disappointment, caused by her close association with men, gives way to respect for men as they are and as she has come to know them:

Ce ne sont pas des monstres, si l'on veut, mais bien pis que cela, ma foi! ce sont d'excellents garçons de très joviale humeur, qui boivent et mangent bien, qui vous rendront toutes sortes de services, spirituels et braves, bons peintres et bons musiciens, qui sont propres à milles choses, excepté cependant à une seule pour laquelle ils ont été créés, qui est de servir de mâle à l'animal appelé femme, avec qui ils n'ont pas le plus léger rapport, ni physique ni moral. (p.343)

The latter part of this statement is deeply ambiguous. Madeleine herself inadvertently reveals that she is not sure how male best "serves" female. She feels certain that men are ill-suited and unwilling to play knight in shining armour in her Renaissance dreams of romance. The irony is ambiguous accentuated by the fact that Gautier, Madeleine's male author, is ultimately responsible for her words.

Her own participation in "modern manhood" seems to confirm her assumption and she becomes complicit with the irreverent behavior she once deplored:

J'avais peine d'abord à déguiser le mépris qu'ils m'inspiraient, mais peu à peu je m'accoutumai à leur manière de vivre. Je ne me sentais pas plus piquée des railleries qu'ils décochaient sur les femmes que si j'eusse moi-même été de leur sexe.-- J'en faisais au contraire de fort bonnes et dont le succès flattait étrangement mon orgueil; assurément aucun de mes camarades n'allait aussi loin que moi en fait de sarcasmes et de plaisanteries sur cet objet. La parfaite connaissance du terrain me donnait un grand avantage, et, outre le tour piquant qu'elles pouvaient avoir, mes épigrammes brillaient par un mérite d'exactitude qui manquait souvent aux leurs. (p.343)

Having become proficient with rhetorical practices that she previously assumed to be uniquely male, Madeleine demystifies a distinction she did not previously see; that a purely "rhetorical" or manipulative use of language is not essentially gendered. This knowledge provokes a re-evaluation of the obstacles between self and the ideal "other" or the ideal man.

She reasons that the ideal other, rather than being obscured by an essentially gendered use of language, is instead obscured in a much larger, spiritual sense. She begins to assess the possibility of a material obscurity that might render the ideal perpetually out of reach. She had assumed that this spirituality was formal in some way, and materially possible to articulate in word or action, but she is no longer certain:

Ce que je demandais avant tout, ce n'était pas la beauté physique, c'était la beauté de l'âme, c'était de l'amour; mais l'amour comme je le sens n'est peut-être pas dans les possibilités humaines.--Et pourtant il me semble que j'aimerais ainsi et que je donnerais plus que je n'exige.
(p.344)

Spiritual love, or the soul's beauty, is something akin to respect, an extreme and delicate sensitivity such as is found in perfect trust. It is not sex-specific. She goes on to figure the ideal male/female partnership as d'Albert did, (CH.III, pp. 113 and 115 for example) which is to say, as a fusion (physical/spiritual) so complete as to make one forget oneself (p.344, CH.XV). Such fusion privileges the spiritually transcendent and yet it is latently and powerfully sexual. Love, so conceived, cannot maintain itself indefinitely, because of the sexual undercurrent, which always throws one rudely back into the self. Also, her description of her association with her page Isnabel reveals the very real problem of desire and sexual gratification. Sexual desire does not (cannot?) participate in the discourse of spiritual (idealistic) love.

She meets Isnabel (Ninon in this chapter) in one of the homes to which she was invited. Isnabel is quite young, sixteen years old, and Madeleine is drawn to her youth and beauty (p.348, CH.XV). They become fast friends and Madeleine assumes an older sibling role with her. The young girl confides that she is in love with a man, and tells Madeleine his name. Madeleine knows this man to be an unscrupulous lout who would only ruin the girl. Likewise,

the girl's mother is largely uninterested in her because her maturation serves only as a reminder of her parent's advancing years. Madeleine decides to dispatch the man from Isnabel's life by duel and proceeds to take charge of Isnabel.

She talks Isnabel into running away with her. Highly suggestable, Isnabel agrees, assuming the guise of a young man, the costume Madeleine chose for her. Their travels together provoke a sexual crisis in Madeleine. The protective role she assumes relative to her young charge awakens feelings she had previously deferred in her initial disappointment with men:

Je m'attachai singulièrement à la petite belle.--
Je ne t'avais plus avec moi, ma chère Graciosa, et
j'éprouvais un besoin immense d'aimer quelqu'un ou
quelque chose, d'avoir avec moi soit un chien,
soit un enfant à caresser familièrement.--Ninon
était cela pour moi;--elle couchait dans mon lit,
et passait pour dormir ses petits bras autour de
mon corps;--elle se croyait très sérieusement ma
maîtresse, et ne doutait pas que je ne fusse un
homme; sa grande jeunesse et son extrême innocence
l'entretenaient dans cette erreur que j'avais
garde de dissiper.--Les baisers que je lui donnais
complétaient parfaitement son illusion, car son
idée n'allait pas encore au-delà, et ses désirs ne
parlaient pas assez haut pour lui faire soupçonner
autre chose. Au reste, elle ne se trompait qu'à
demi. (p.354)

The aesthetic is in violent conflict with the sexual. She is not sure which type of love she is seeking to satisfy in her current circumstances, and until she is sure, she amuses herself with Isnabel, playing protector, parent and pseudo-lover. In return she receives love of a quality and in a quantity she can control. Ironically, she exercises the

kind of control over Isnabel that was exercised over her when she was the same age, and which she bitterly resented because of the ignorance it perpetuated in her:

J'étais le griffon qui empêchait d'en approcher, et, si je n'en jouissais pas moi-même, au moins personne n'en jouissait: idée toujours consolante, quoi qu'en puissent dire tous les sots détracteurs de l'égoïsme.

Je me proposais de la conserver aussi longtemps que possible dans l'ignorance où elle était, et de la garder auprès de moi jusqu'à ce qu'elle ne voulût plus y rester ou que j'eusse trouvé à lui assurer un sort. (p.355)

As she covets Isnabel, controlling her and cultivating her emotions as a substitute for her own mounting frustration and confusion she suddenly realizes the source of her problem:

J'avais enlevé la petite dans l'idée de donner le change à mes penchants et de détourner sur quelqu'un toute cette vague tendresse qui flotte dans mon âme et l'inonde; je l'avais prise comme une espèce d'échappement à mes facultés aimantes; mais je reconnus bientôt, malgré toute l'affection que je lui portais, quel vide immense, quel abîme sans fond elle laissait dans mon coeur, combien ses plus tendres caresses me satisfaisaient peu!-- Je résolus d'essayer d'un amant, mais il se passa longtemps sans que je rencontrasse quelqu'un qui ne me déplût pas. (p.357)

In spite of the deferrals, the self-education and self-cultivation in all things pertaining to aesthetic role play and the ways of men, she cannot control her own sexual nature as she thought she might. Desires too strictly controlled and directed have shown a tendency in this novel towards decadence (i.e. d'Albert's kinky love scenes with Rosette). Questions of control are central to matters of desire relative to identity of self and desire. Throughout,

the conception and articulation of desire seeks to form the self, establishing its parameters and assessing its worth; likewise, the "self" is distinguished or qualified by the articulation of its desire (representation). The "other" against which the self is measured is, loosely, beauty. The appropriative link between self and other is desire. This artificial, and material, construct can be controlled as Madeleine controls her disguise and d'Albert his level of participation in his relationship with Rosette. However, this control of the material becomes mechanistic (by just "going through the motions") and by extension in danger of becoming course and banal.

In order for Madeleine, d'Albert and Rosette to make their ideals real (to make the visual and spiritual material and palpable) this control must be relinquished. This control is abandoned when they close the distances to embrace the other. Inevitably, the dream dissipates, and flees from each of them. Since a measure of self was maintained through this construction, it is also destroyed (or at least seriously undermined).

Something of the consequences and responsibilities inherent in this loss of control is revealed through our re-acquaintance with Rosette's activities since the duel in her bedroom. Madeleine describes finding out how Rosette fared and laments her obvious loss of control. This is a crucial narrative moment for its gesture, which directly and retroactively links Madeleine's diachronic narrative with

the synchronic strategies that have dominated Rosette's representations. Her reference to her most recent conversation with Rosette is a direct link to their conversation (theatrically presented) in chapter VI, page 164:

J'ai oublié te dire que Rosette, ayant découvert où j'étais allée, m'avait écrit la lettre la plus suppliante pour que je l'allasse voir; je ne pus le lui refuser, et j'allai la rejoindre à la campagne où elle était.--J'y suis retournée plusieurs fois depuis et même tout dernièrement.--Rosette, désespérée de ne pas m'avoir eue pour amant, s'était jetée dans le tourbillon du monde et dans la dissipation, comme toutes les âmes tendres qui ne sont pas religieuses et qui ont été froissées dans leur premier amour;--elle avait eu beaucoup d'aventures en peu de temps, et la liste de ses conquêtes était déjà fort nombreuse, car tout le monde n'avait pas pour lui résister les mêmes raisons que moi. (p.357)

Rosette's loss of control leads her to withdraw and exert another type of control elsewhere. Madeleine intimates that, far from therapeutic, her gesture is self-abusive and self-deceptive. While discussing Rosette's desperation, she intimates her own. In the very next paragraph (p.357) following this quotation, she introduces d'Albert to Graciosa, describing him as Rosette's latest diversion. Like Rosette, she sums up the struggles that have fueled d'Albert's entire discourse with a clarity d'Albert himself would envy or despise.

She knows of d'Albert's passion for her. She knew of it from the start. She understands his frustrations and admires and appreciates his sensitive treatment of Rosette (p.358, CH.XV). Despite his lack of love for Rosette, his

"self-sacrifice" in staying with her is, to Madeleine, admirable.

She is looking for a suitable partner with whom she may share her sexual initiation. She wants someone whom she understands and can control, and d'Albert fulfills all of these requirements. He also has the distinction of being the only person to have guessed her true sex. She discusses the letter he sent her, which was no surprise to her. Her mockery of him totally undermines d'Albert's own discourse, which sought to intimidate through revelation. She suggests that it was she who manipulated him from the start, capitalizing on his initial interest in her:

Une comédie que nous jouâmes et dans laquelle je parus en femme le décida complètement. Je lui fis quelques oeillades équivoques, et je me servis de quelques passages de mon rôle, analogues à notre situation pour l'enhardir et le pousser à se déclarer. (p.359)

However, with some fairness to d'Albert's predicament:

Il vint plusieurs fois dans ma chambre avec sa déclaration sur les lèvres, mais il n'osa pas la débiter;--car, effectivement, il est difficile de parler d'amour à quelqu'un qui a les mêmes habits que vous et qui essaye des bottes à l'écuyère. Enfin, ne pouvant prendre cela sur lui, il m'écrivit une longue lettre, très pindarique, où il m'expliquait fort au long ce que je savais mieux que lui. (p.359)

She is cavalier, but she does need d'Albert, both aesthetically and sexually. At this point all of her elaborate strategies and musings are reduced to a more basic need, a tyrant that tortures her in spite of her resolve:

...je suis possédée des plus violents désirs,--je languis et je meurs de volupté;--car l'habit que

je porte, en m'engageant dans toute sorte
d'aventures avec les femmes, me protège trop
parfaitement contre les entreprises des hommes;
(.....)

Cette ignorance du corps que n'accompagne pas
l'ignorance de l'esprit est la plus misérable
chose qui soit. Pour que ma chair n'ait pas à
faire la fière devant mon âme, je veux la souiller
également, si toutefois c'est une souillure plus
que de boire et de manger,--ce dont je doute.--En
un mot, je veux savoir ce que c'est qu'un homme,
et le plaisir qu'il donne. Puisque d'Albert m'a
reconnue sous mon travestissement, il est bien
juste qu'il soit récompensé de sa pénétration;
(p.360)

In spite of her strong sense of self and her clever
manipulation of disguise (discourse) she is unable to
control and/or contain sexual desire intellectually
(aesthetically) or physically (emotionally). It is both too
dispersed and too concentrated. Intellectual dispersement
of desire is typified in the keen eye possessed both by
d'Albert and Madeleine. Her curiosity, piqued by a string
of suggestive experiences, frustrate, confuse and suggest
too much to be assimilated. The physical and emotional
content is highly concentrated, and no character is capable
of language adequate to represent this. Only "fusion" is
used both by Madeleine and d'Albert, but this word, latently
sexual, seeks to aestheticize and enact a loss of self that
is unrealizable.

Again the almost masochistic texture of Madeleine's
frustration utterly undermines her own sense of control. In
order to satisfy sexual desire, she suggests (as did
d'Albert) that the violation of the sanctified space of
self, represented everywhere as visual and discursive

distance, instead of an epiphany, is a shocking and brutal reduction to a self-reality without any possibility of transcendence.

She is not sure; she wants to "know", not see or think about, or visualize, but know the pleasure a man gives. She cannot know alone. This cannot be "performed" at great distances and it is precisely the physical proximity and penetration she abhors and desires. She describes it as "soiling" herself, as her aesthetic, intellectual knowledge has "soiled" her.

For d'Albert, conceptualizations of penetration are obviously reversed. His obsessions, fears and frustrations are concentrated in the vessel. As Madeleine fears being "used," d'Albert fears "using up", a subtle conceptual difference seemingly informed by the biological mechanics of sex. The question that both d'Albert and Madeleine are attempting to answer is whether sex is an instance of the ideal made real. D'Albert's sexual experiences with Rosette lead him to believe that this is not necessarily so, especially if one has not first experienced a spiritual connection. Madeleine, being a virgin, cannot say, but as she has not experienced a spiritual link with a man, she also suspects that sex has no access to the spiritual: the spiritual being a fusion with beauty. The reason for this inability for sex to transcend its material parameters seems to be the loss of self, or the temporary abandonment of identity that sexual union implies.

This is not entirely clear in the text. D'Albert assumes that a physical union so intimate in nature should enjoy a spiritual union of the same intensity. This has, thus far, never been his experience, and yet it is his conceptualization of an ideal, a union with beauty. This is his same approach to conceptualizing poetry, as the material (form, language) capturing beauty (that which exceeds/transcends materiality). Madeleine is as immersed in the material as d'Albert and just as anxious to find a way to surpass it without necessarily circumventing it, but the physical intimacy is perceived as a violation of her identity. She is far less willing to experiment physically/sexually than d'Albert. Her material experiments have so far been confined to her own material reality (disguise). She is, however, committed to at least one sexual union with a man.

Madeleine is determined to fulfill all that remains of her original quest, which is sexual initiation. She will attempt to retain as much control as she can in order to hang on to as much intellectual/aesthetic distance as possible:

C'est donc d'Albert qui résoudra mes doutes et me donnera ma première leçon d'amour: il ne s'agit plus maintenant que d'amener la chose d'une façon toute poétique. J'ai envie de ne pas répondre à sa lettre et de lui faire froide mine pendant quelques jours. Quand je le verrai bien triste et bien désespéré, invectivant les dieux, montrant le poing à la création, et regardant les puits pour voir s'ils ne sont pas trop profonds pour s'y jeter, -- (p.361)

She wants to play "sado" to his "masochist" fully intimating that the moment itself will entail the reversal of those terms:

D'Albert fera le reste, et j'espère que, le lendemain matin, je saurai à quoi m'en tenir sur toutes ces belles choses qui me troublent la cervelle deuis si longtemps.--En contentant ma curiosité, j'aurai de plus le plaisir d'avoir fait un heureux. (p.361)

She also intends to visit Rosette "et de lui faire voir que, si je n'ai pas répondu à son amour, ce n'était ni par froideur ni par dégoût" (p.361,CH.XV). She must reveal her "true" sex, her incognito, in order to satisfy her curiosity and that of d'Albert and Rosette. This momentary loss of control is intimidating to her and she suspects disappointment, and so in saying goodbye to Graciosa, Madeleine seals her "fate", as her discourse has framed it:

Adieu, toute belle et toute bonne; prie le bon Dieu que le plaisir ne me paraisse pas aussi peu de chose que ceux qui le dispensent. J'ai plaisanté tout le long de cette lettre, et cependant ce que je vais essayer est une chose grave et dont le reste de ma vie se peut ressentir. (p.362)

Since each character has formed, articulated and triggered his/her respective destiny, the following chapter reflects a need for narrative distance which each self-generating discourse has collapsed. Chapter XVI, like chapters VI and VII, is taken over by omniscient narration and responds to this need for distance. The shared physical proximity, suggested by the discursive, physical union soon to be effected by d'Albert and Madeleine, cannot be

articulated by either without privileging one voice over another. It must be done for them and for the reader. This gesture represents the novel's own allegory (of performance), and makes questions of control even more explicit.

Omniscient narration takes over in chapter XVI, but not with ostentation, as it did in chapter VI. This is because, in chapter VI, the narrator reserved for himself the right to intervene at any appropriate time. It is appropriate, at this moment, and in many ways necessary to the novel's rhythm and contractual conditions.

For all intents and purposes, all self-generating discourses have reached their own closures. They have done so by suspending their own epistolary contracts in anticipation of a particular event. D'Albert awaits a response from Madeleine and Madeleine is playing a coy waiting-game with d'Albert, so each is momentarily suspended in the same hiatus.

The narratives of d'Albert and Madeleine have each arrived at the same moment but by pursuing different paths. This also highlights the allegory of performance orchestrated by the text demonstrating its versatility. The narrator takes over to connect these two paths. Since neither of the two narratives (d'Albert's and Madeleine's) can continue separately, and have instead written towards a convergence which neither can affect, the narrator must pick up the thread in order to achieve the goal that the two

separate narratives have sketched. This gesture constitutes the text's epiphany, one parallel to that of both characters. The text's voice was previously fragmented, subjectively and temporally, but is now reconstituted. The narration no longer speaks with several voices; it performs its function to describe events. Any allegory must be directed from without in order to generate meaning and while the narrator has not intervened often, his presence provides the gesture that attempts to secure meaning.

Another important reason for the intervention of omniscient narration is to elevate the event to the status of art, to make it beautiful. Beauty, in this novel is not necessarily static, but always visual. The narratives of both d'Albert and Madeleine have led to and stopped just short of the event narrated in this chapter. Each has mentally prepared for the performance revealed in this chapter. For this event to correspond to the aesthetic spectacle sought by each character, the reader needs more distance from each in order to experience the performance aesthetically.

Although dialogue is included in this chapter, dialogue alone would be entirely incapable of making the event, their sexual encounter, visual as well as temporally present-centered. Each's enjoyment of the event, as well as their perceptions of the event, are not primary here. The primary goal of this chapter is to fulfill the aesthetic performance set up by the preceding self-generating discourses. Our

narrator gives us the distance we need to "see". Throughout the novel, the reader has been a mental voyeur, sometimes looking in on either d'Albert's or Madeleine's "narration" of an erotic event, but now the reader is a voyeur of the event itself prior to its mental, perceptual consumption by d'Albert or Madeleine. What is interesting is that our (the reader's) visual consumption of the event is entirely aligned with d'Albert's. The privilege accorded the eye (aestheticism) in this chapter almost totally excludes Madeleine's reactions.

Madeleine is the object, the visual feast, which makes this scene a work of art. D'Albert and Madeleine each participate but Madeleine is the visual locus of the event and d'Albert is the visual consumer along with the reader. The novel remains complicit with its own premise, supported both by d'Albert's and Madeleine's discourses: women are possessors of beauty, and men seekers of it. This does not relegate Madeleine to an inferior position to d'Albert, but simply maintains the polarity in the text between art and artist, beauty and poet. Beauty cannot describe itself, it must be described. The narrator is a seeker of beauty insofar as it is his narration which guides the eye and embellishes the performance. The seeker is a connoisseur, like d'Albert, the artist, which accounts for his narrative's more intellectually refined descriptions of beauty.

The narrator orchestrates the long awaited performance. He sets up the scene by showing us d'Albert's room late in the afternoon. He also situates us temporally (starts the clock) in a present-tense posterior to the end of both narratives:

Il y avait déjà plus de quinze jours que d'Albert avait déposé son épître amoureuse sur la table de Théodore. (p.363)

The reader is propelled approximately two weeks after the suspension of the epistolary exchanges (d'Albert's and Madeleine's). The narrator opens the chapter by confirming the last known states of d'Albert and Madeleine: he is waiting and she is prolonging the wait. Madeleine hoped to intensify d'Albert's discomfort, drawing out the sexual tension, and the narrator confirms that she has been successful:

Il songeait aussi tristement que peut songer à cinq heures du soir en automne, par un temps de brume, un homme désappointé ayant pour musique une bise assez aigre et pour perspective le squelette d'une forêt sans perruque. (p.364)

The reader participates in d'Albert's passivity, like an audience waiting for the curtain to rise. The performative nature of this event is reinforced by Madeleine's orchestrated arrival at the moment of d'Albert's quiet despair:

Il en était là de sa méditation, lorsqu'il sentit se poser sur son épaule--une main--pareille à une petite colombe qui descend sur un palmier.
(.....) C'était bien Rosalinde, si belle et si radieuse qu'elle éclairait toute la chambre,-- (p.364)

Only her stage names are used: Rosalinde and Théodore. She never reveals her real name. This is an aesthetic moment, after all, and Beauty assumes names rather than possessing one alone. Her arrival lights the scene, again like a theatre spotlight directing the eye's attention. D'Albert's person, his dress and bodily attitude, is not described, while every aspect of Madeleine's person, her posture and movements are minutely explored:

--avec ses cordons de perles dans les cheveux, sa robe prismatique, ses grands jabots de dentelle, ses souliers à talons rouges, son bel éventail de plumes de paon, telle enfin qu'elle était le jour de la représentation. Seulement, différence importante et décisive, elle n'avait ni gorgerette, ni guimpe, ni fraise, ni quoi que ce soit qui dérobat aux yeux ces deux charmants frères ennemis,--qui, hélas! ne tendent trop souvent qu'à se réconcilier. (p.365)

Madeleine's strategically erotic state of half-dress provides the reader with the visual locus of this performance. We see as d'Albert sees, and Rosalinde (Madeleine) assumes her role as seducer, the first to speak, inaugurating the verbal and visual foreplay which extends, suspends and aestheticizes the moment:

--Eh bien! Orlando est-ce que vous ne reconnaissez pas votre Rosalinde? dit la belle avec le plus charmant sourire; ou bien avez-vous laissé votre amour accroché avec vos sonnets à quelques buissons de la forêt des Ardennes? Seriez-vous réellement guéri du mal pour lequel vous me demandiez un remède avec tant d'instance? J'en ai bien peur. (p.365)

She toys with him verbally for the next few pages, dressed as she is, draped over his form, enfolding him in her eroticism. As seducer, she controls, at this point, the

pace of developments. Strangely enough, the narration's production (product) is entirely aligned with d'Albert and the reader, but his pace and rhythm are aligned with Madeleine's actions (temporally). Both together conspire to attenuate the moment, drawing it out to heighten the eroticism.

As an example of Madeleine's control of pacing, it is obvious that, as she directs their verbal foreplay, she does so to set the conditions of what it is they are to share. She deflects any intent or assumption on d'Albert's part that his possession/penetration of her person can be prolonged past the moment. In a sense she is telling him, in advance, that it does not "mean" anything. It is not a start, or a basis or foundation to anything beyond the present moment:

--J'ai quitté pour vous cette nuit mes habits d'homme;--je les reprendrai demain matin pour tous.--Songez que je ne suis Rosalinde que la nuit, et que tout le jour je ne suis et ne peux être que Théodore de Sérannes... (p.366-367)

She announces her intention to give herself to him, but not to be kept. These moments of dialogue are punctuated by caresses, kisses and other indications of escalating sensuality. Just before disrobing completely, she says the last thing she feels must be said in order that d'Albert (and herself, for that matter) understand what is happening:

Vous devez me trouver bien gauche et bien froide, mon pauvre d'Albert; mais je ne sais guère comment l'on s'y prend;--vous aurez beaucoup à faire pour m'instruire, et réellement je vous charge là d'une occupation très pénible. (p.368)

Her virginity sanctifies the moment and its purity, elevating her to the status of an artwork. She punctuates her statement by standing away from d'Albert, and letting her clothing drop away from her. Narratively, her clothes drop off much more slowly, striptease-like, and when complete she is the work of art being contemplated by d'Albert:

Elle resta donc sans aucun voile, ses vêtements tombés lui faisant une espèce de socle, dans tout l'éclat diaphane de sa belle nudité, aux douces lueurs d'une lampe d'albâtre que d'Albert avait allumée. (p.369)

D'Albert turns on the light to see her better. She says "J'ai froid", like a statue made of marble, cold to the touch and clear to the eye. She stands immobile and d'Albert realizes his dream of epiphany, for him, the ideal made visible and palpable:

Tout était réuni dans le beau corps qui posait devant lui:-- délicatesse et force, forme et couleur, les lignes d'une statue grecque du meilleur temps et le ton d'un Titien.--il voyait là, palpable et cristallisée, la nuageuse chimère qu'il avait tant de fois vainement essayé d'arrêter dans son vol. (p.370)

The veil has been lifted from his eyes in this moment, and all his aspirations coalesce in Madeleine. He extends this moment as long as he can before he approaches her:

Le peintre satisfait, l'amant reprit le dessus; car, quelque amour de l'art qu'on ait, il est des choses qu'on ne peut pas longtemps se contenter de regarder. (p.370)

After roughly seven pages of discursive and visual foreplay, they make love within three paragraphs. It is stated that

they make love many more times that evening, too many to count (p.371) in fact, but that sacred visual moment already cannot be re-captured. It is also implied, through the narrations staging, that the epiphany was unique to d'Albert. There is scant indication of Madeleine's participation, or whether or not it was the disappointment she expected. We know she expected pleasure, but it is the total aesthetic/spiritual experience at issue here. Since she is aligned with the narrator, she established a tempo, but her own perceptions are effaced.

Early that morning, Théodore leaves a sleeping d'Albert and goes into Rosette's bedchamber. The narration does not follow her, and professes total ignorance of what happened there. It is strongly suggested that they also made love, but, consistent with the novel's hesitant approach to homosexuality, the event goes unnarrated:

Quant à moi, j'ai fait là-dessus mille conjectures, toutes plus déraisonnables les unes que les autres, et si saugrenues que je n'ose véritablement les écrire, même dans le style le plus honnêtement périphrasé. (p.372)

As a parting gesture, the narrator announces that Rosette and d'Albert were shocked and surprised by Théodore's departure, but that d'Albert (not Rosette) received a letter from her, which the narrator shall provide for us (chapter XVII). In the same moment, the narrator exercises his power to close the novel as he wishes.

The narrator's assertion of control is mirrored by Madeleine's assertion of control. The contract she recited

to d'Albert prior to their love-making mirrors the silent contract made by the narrator, mentioned only once at the beginning of chapter VI, in which he reserves the right to intervene whenever he felt it appropriate. In orchestrating their love scene, the narrator accomodates both characters. The narrator caters to d'Albert (and the reader) as did Madeleine, while retaining overall control, as did Madeleine. Temporally, as well, the narrator manages to render the event diachronically as well as synchronically. We know that it is fifteen days since last we were in self-generating discourse, however, we have no real date to serve as a context that would secure a traditional diachrony. Appropriately, the narrator insists that the novel will have only Madeleine's letter as a finish. Since closely related to a narrative function assigned to Madeleine's letters (providing an episodic narrative, chronology), Madeleine has the last word, just as the narrator does.

Temporally, this note which is chapter XVII, sent to d'Albert one week after Madeleine's departure from the castle and the environs, disrupts the diachrony provided throughout the novel by Madeleine's narrative. Her discourse had always been analeptic and her parting note remains so. The withdrawal of the stabilizing chronology her narrative had provided to complement d'Albert's more uncertain narrative goals, signals the completion of an allegorical cycle. It could not be otherwise since allegory cannot exceed its own parameters, which, in this case, have

been exhausted. She tells d'Albert as much when pointing out that pure mechanistic repetition cannot regenerate the ideal he already enjoyed. She reminds him of the uniqueness of the experience which would most probably degrade into a cruel parody if they were to remain together.

Vous m'avez eue entièrement et sans réserve toute une nuit;--que voulez-vous de plus? Une autre nuit, et puis encore une autre; vous vous accommoderiez même des jours au besoin.--Vous continueriez ainsi jusqu'à ce que vous fussiez dégoûté de moi.--Je vous entends d'ici vous écrier très galamment que je ne suis pas de celles dont on se dégoûte. Mon Dieu! de moi comme des autres. (p.373)

She acknowledges that she was the person (thing) he most wanted and needed her to be, but that she cannot remain that person and will not consent to try. The moment exhausted itself the minute it was performed, and no amount of repetition could ever re-capture, extend or generate another of its kind.

In a novel highly sensitive to the dangers of banality, Madeleine is the only character equally sensitive to "purity" and its price if the ideal is to be kept a viable, albeit tenuous, reality in a psyche hungry for nostalgia:

Vous m'adorez et je vous le rends. Vous n'avez pas le plus léger reproche à me faire, et je n'ai pas le moins du monde à me plaindre de vous. Je vous ai été parfaitement fidèle tout le temps de nos amours. Je ne vous ai trompé en rien.--Je n'avais ni fausse gorge ni fausse vertu; vous avez eu cette extrême bonté de dire que j'étais encore plus belle que vous ne l'imaginiez.--Pour la beauté que je vous donnais, vous m'avez rendu beaucoup de plaisir; nous sommes quittes:--je vais de mon côté et vous du vôtre, et peut-être nous nous retrouverons aux antipodes.--Vivez dans cet espoir. (p.374)

Time is a tyrant and familiarity breeds contempt. She wants to rescue this moment, for herself and for d'Albert, from obscurity and the ravages of time. Her note, her gesture, also contributes to aesthetisizing the moment, elevating it to art-status, by freezing it in time. Making of it a singular event draped in mystery (d'Albert never learns her real name/identity), Madeleine suspends it, temporally immobilizing it (rendering it synchronic):

J'ai au moins cette satisfaction de penser que vous vous souviendrez de moi plutôt que d'une autre.--Votre désir inassouvi ouvrira encore ses ailes pour voler à moi; je serai toujours pour vous quelque chose de désirable où votre fantaisie aimera à revenir, et j'espère que, dans le lit des maîtresses que vous pourrez avoir, vous songerez quelque fois à cette nuit unique que vous avez passée avec moi. (p.375)

She knows she is leaving him wanting more; she thus secures her status in his mind. She also knows that she was not a "person" or an "identity" for him, but rather "quelque chose de désirable", ultimately nameless, soulless and entirely without depth--all surface and gloss. She also intimates that he was not her ideal, perhaps she has none. She departs on a wave of the most extreme independence, exiling herself.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1.Kari Weil, "Romantic Androgyny and its Discontents: The Case of Mademoiselle de Maupin," Romantic Review, 1987, 78, 348-358, p.357

2.Gay Clifford, The Transformations of Allegory, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974, pp.43-44 "...to write allegorically is not merely to create a particular kind of literature, but also to make assumptions about its function and about a particular way of reading. In considering the mode we need to attend to the audience as well as to individual works. Many writers of allegory have commented in prefaces or in the body of their works on the response they expect from their readers, and these expectations control both the detailed local texture of allegory and the values and images which form a central and schematized core of meaning."

Gautier fully exploits traditional conceptions of allegory but does so in a modern way. Traditional author-reader understandings have been subverted as is obvious by his inflammatory preface which establishes a more negative relationship with the reader. Also, his use of the epistolary provides a more modern context for the sort of running commentary provided in traditional allegory by a narrator. Gautier's modern allegory is more radical in that the diverse narrative strategies form their own allegory reflected by and in the novel itself.

3.Gay Clifford, Transformations of Allegory, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974, p.8 "Though allegory is the most abstract and intellectual of all forms of fiction, its authors need a strong sense of the concrete and a visual imagination. The writer is concerned with recurrent patterns of human experience and the immaterial or metaphysical patterns of which these are supposedly a reflection, but he necessarily relies on particulars to express these abstractions. (....) To write good allegory and to derive pleasure from reading it requires a taste for speculation, and only continual raids on the public world of the senses provide the terms in which speculation can be expressed."

CONCLUSION: MADemoiselle de MAUPIN AND
SUBJECTIVITY

As we have seen, Mademoiselle de Maupin is a novel characterized by multiple genres working with and against each other to articulate and activate a performance. This performance (earlier I dubbed it an allegory of literary performance) consistently privileges self-generating, self-representing discourses. Not only do the principal characters "write" themselves, but the novel arises out of a generic multiplicity that "self-generates," "self-represents" or speaks as genres, thereby enacting a allegory of literary performance. Each genre within the novel enacts itself and tests its limits (both narratively and thematically) against the next while simultaneously taking a place within the whole.

In this chapter, I shall discuss, or introduce, subjectivity in Mademoiselle de Maupin. I shall do so by discussing in more depth the novel's organizational strategies relative to its "developing" self-representations. I shall begin with the Subject as the enduring gesture of totalization implicit in every discourse in the text. Discourse here becomes apparent as desire and as a force "authorizing" the Subject as a discrete entity, creating and sustaining the illusion of subjectivity.

I shall next discuss subjects, plural; the multiplicity results from resistances to a totalized subjectivity. This manifests itself through performance,

or, the appropriation of masks (multiple representations). The movement toward a totalized subject always leads, in this novel, to the generation of subjects (or masks).

I shall finally discuss subjectivity and how the text exhibits this un-totalizable process. Its reliance on multiple genres, voices and representations of discourse itself, exhibits its subjectivity through the tensions of its multiplicity. Limits, weaknesses, inconsistency and the potential/inevitable breakdowns which announce the shifts in the narrative are signs of subjectivity.

The Subject

At its most severely reduced, Mademoiselle de Maupin is a novel about a man (d'Albert) and a woman (Madeleine) who write letters. Each of these characters are highly isolated narratively. They are engrossed in private correspondence with childhood friends. The only avenues of exposition provided are the parallel avenues opened up and maintained between d'Albert and Silvio, and between Madeleine and Graciosa. Even these are highly limited since the letters are never answered; it is only periodically suggested that they are being received. D'Albert and Madeleine engage in only one exchange that cannot truly be called epistolary since d'Albert's letter to Madeleine does not invite an exchange but rather seeks to incite action; Madeleine's letter to d'Albert likewise does not seek an answer but precludes any further contact. So, the bulk of the

discursive gestures appropriate the epistolary to contain and provide momentum for the development of self-representation. The epistolary is not a device used to negotiate a complex "plot". These letters attempt to secure an authentic "self" through developing self-representations. They also attempt to justify that authentic "self" to the correspondent (Silvio, Graciosa and the reader).

It is implied that Silvio and Graciosa are models of social (and gender) stability and propriety. In directing their letters to such paragons of social normalcy, d'Albert and Madeleine are unknowingly engaging in a dialogue with Society. As such, their self-representations always work against an institutional discourse inhabiting their own. Insofar as each correspondent is a close personal friend from childhood, the epistolary frame represents an institutional discourse, a social duty bound by certain conventions. This functions as a form of internal repression, forcing their representations toward totalization. Both d'Albert and Madeleine refer to the letter as a debt to friendship and so recognize their gesture both as a duty and as an opportunity to self-represent. In this way they maintain social identities within a social context (the letter).

These are basic, relatively stable and superficial conditions determining the rhythm of the text, pivots around which discourse consistently revolves. Under these circumstances, man writes to man and woman writes to woman,

or perhaps man confides in Man and woman confides in Woman. Self-representations "secrete" themselves around this most basic of social differences. Since both are relatively young, they have, in becoming adults, reached the moment when "being man" and "being woman" are crucial social performatives.¹

These "natural" (social) differences represent and, in so doing, enact a social allegory. Pierre Bourdieu discusses such institutional rituals which are highly performative and self-reflexive:

L'essence sociale est l'ensemble de ces attributs et de ces attributions sociales que produit l'acte d'institution comme acte solennel de catégorisation qui tend à produire ce qu'il désigne.

Ainsi, l'acte d'institution est un acte de communication mais d'une espèce particulière: il signifie à quelqu'un son identité, mais au sens à la fois où il la lui exprime et la lui impose en l'exprimant à la face de tous (...) et en lui codifiant ainsi avec autorité ce qu'il est et ce qu'il a à être. Cela se voit bien dans l'injure, sorte de malédiction (...) qui tente d'enfermer sa victime dans une accusation fonctionnant comme un destin.²

It is clear in each character's first epistle that they immediately define themselves against an institutionalized gender construct they implicitly understand and recognize as being a social imperative. Each implies that gender identification is the core of Subjectivity as society, and they themselves, understand it. This assumption is implicit precisely because each character is in conflict with it. The allegory of the gendered social subject confines them,

giving them a "destiny" each character is unwilling or unable to accept.

D'Albert's discourse is largely circular. His narrative seeks to explore identity and beauty through the appropriation of a mistress. At first he has no mistress and simply describes his desire for one. Then he has Rosette but is quickly back where he started, because she disappoints him. Then he meets Theodore and is frustrated because "he" is perfect, but the wrong gender. When he realizes Theodore is a woman, he eventually sleeps with her, but she leaves, so at the end of the novel, he still has no mistress. He is returned to where his narrative began.

Madeleine's discourse is mainly linear and analeptic. Her narrative recounts the "story" of her disguise from its inception, upon the death of her Uncle, to the conclusion of the novel. She is also exploring her own identity, but her exploration is arranged, narratively, in a line that follows her adventures as a man. When her narrative concludes, she is gone but it is understood that her adventures as a man continue. At the end of the novel, she is very distant from where her narrative began and moving still farther away from it.

As each character defines his/her enduring dissatisfaction with restrictive social parameters, each, in his/her own way, has opened up a space to construct him/herself anew. This tension between a subjectivity in which one feels trapped and one which might conform to a

more personal vision relies on a discrepancy between a self defined from without (social) and one defined from within (personal). The social self is hero of a particular allegory, the social allegory, and, as such, enacts its own destiny. This destiny is highly codified:

Tous les destins sociaux, positifs ou négatifs, consécration ou stigmat, sont également fatals-- je veux dire mortels--, parce qu'ils enferment ceux qu'ils distinguent dans les limites qui leur sont assignées et qu'ils leur font reconnaître. L'héritier qui se respecte se comportera en héritier et il sera hérité par l'héritage, selon la formule de Marx; c'est-à-dire investi dans les choses, approprié par les choses qu'il s'est appropriées.³

Discourse, insofar as it serves an institution (literary, political, cultural, etc.) exerts this compartmentalizing force on the utterance. Guattari and Deleuze, in Anti-Oedipus, begin from this premise:

The prime function incumbent upon the socius has always been to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly dammed up, channeled, regulated.⁴

This intense channeling and codification exerts pressure on the individual to appropriate a place, an identity, and to hold it. Bourdieu states, in concurrence with this effort of the socius, that "C'est aussi une des fonctions de l'acte d'institution: décourager durablement la tentation du passage, de la transgression, de la désertion, de la démission."⁵ It is notable that, as Bourdieu states, the socius seeks to discourage transgression, as it is ultimately impossible to prevent transgression. Thus the

socius assumes slippage, transgression as part of any system or paradigm, and seeks to appropriate even it.

Both d'Albert and Madeleine have crossed barriers designed to keep them within designated gender roles, or in social subject positions. D'Albert is, or seeks to be, an artist. His intense longing for beauty distances him from his social role, alienating him from conventional "masculinity" because the latter conflicts with his artistic aspirations. His, and his society's, association of beauty with the feminine makes him see the male, and male principle, as intensely unaesthetic. D'Albert associates this vision of beauty with the influence of Christianity and specifically the Virgin Mary. He contrasts this type of feminine beauty (veiled, spiritual and immaterial) to "pagan" conceptions of beauty which privilege the physical, sensual and material but not necessarily the feminine. Due to cultural influence, he leans somewhat toward the immaterial and spiritual conception of beauty and so assumes that true love and beauty must be the transcendent figured as woman.

Feeling as he does, d'Albert turns away from his social destiny, since he seeks fusion with, rather than possession of, beauty. Madeleine, also, and ironically, is at odds with her social destiny insofar as she is, as woman, reduced to an object of beauty. Beauty relegates her to a position of passive immobility against which she rebels. This is ironic because the novel valorizes beauty as feminine and so

Madeleine occupies a privileged position within the text, which she nonetheless resists.

Both d'Albert and Madeleine perceive beauty in the same way. In rebelling against their pre-programmed social destinies, d'Albert becomes passive and inactive, and Madeleine becomes intensely active and mobile. Their narrative strategies also conform to these principles. D'Albert's narrative evolves languidly in a directionless self-reflection, while Madeleine's purposefully follows an active diachronic continuum, pausing only now and again to reflect.

Each has appropriated the qualities "traditionally" reserved to the other gender roles. D'Albert reluctantly and/or unconsciously "feminizes" himself, or is feminized as he seeks fusion with (the discourse of) beauty. Madeleine, likewise, "masculinizes" herself, or is masculinized, as she appropriates the male guise/discourse. Each becomes almost a caricature of the other's appropriated gender "qualities". D'Albert, as would-be-artist, is sensitive, gentle and articulate, while Madeleine, the would-be-man, is bold, fearless and unreflective. D'Albert, locked in his introspectiveness, is easy to manipulate and even easier to "read," while Madeleine, after having appropriated the male guise, is impossible to "penetrate" because so highly mobile and self-sufficient.

As a man, Madeleine "performs" much better than d'Albert. She has more adventures, more friends and enjoys

a more daring, rakish reputation. D'Albert, as an artist, has a more intuitive understanding of the ironies of "transcendence," perhaps attributable to his intuitions of the "pure" beauty he seeks. Virtuality haunts d'Albert causing him to over-analyze, and this slows him to an unproductive, circular crawl narratively. There are few lofty virtual heights in Madeleine's narrative, because she does not analyze as minutely as d'Albert.

In essence, each character, fundamentally at odds with the social parameters in which they are compelled to express themselves, begin his/her quest by transgression and appropriation of the space of the other. It must be said that Madeleine does this more blatantly than d'Albert. Her transgression of the social Subject is explicit in her disguise while d'Albert's is only implicit in his language. Once having "crossed over" however, they both overtly support and perpetuate conventional gender differences. They are not attempting a subversion of the social order, but rather questioning the "promises" of that order, as well as exploiting its structural fragility.

Rosette best represents an unambiguous questioning of the social order vis-à-vis gender roles. Married young to an old man and quickly widowed, Rosette is left dissatisfied with a social order she followed to the letter. Her "transgression" is in sliding from "respectable" to "unrespectable" behavior. She prostitutes herself in "polite society" in her search for the fulfillment she never

found in marriage and also to provoke a jealous reaction from Théodore (Madeleine), with whom she has fallen in love.

Rosette fell in love with Théodore/Madeleine precisely because "he" performed more convincingly as the gallant young man. Madeleine's understanding of what "being a man" means is uncomplicated; she "performs" the male social role more convincingly because she has chosen it and knows she is "performing." D'Albert, less effective, socially, as a man, is so because he "resents" having to "perform" a social role which he feels is so removed from the "reality" he lives. D'Albert's social "performance" is less convincing, because he has not chosen the role and has no enthusiasm for it.⁶

Rosette, more like Madeleine as far as performance is concerned, also convincingly performs a stereotyped role as woman and mistress, since d'Albert believes her to be in love with him. He rejects the possibility that she might only be performing, since he thinks he could not be fooled by such "duplicity." Because of the stability he attributes to female identity, he cannot imagine her capable of, or in need of practicing such duplicity. Rosette's position, relative to the necessity or inevitability of performance, is less easy to confirm or isolate in the text since she has no voice of her own. She is represented by d'Albert and Madeleine rather than herself.

In spite of the slippage and ambiguity inherent in discourse, it is possible, although difficult, to see that the position of an integrated Subject is posited by the

text. This is implicitly understood as the social stereotype. The presence of the social (gender) stereotype highlights the extent to which d'Albert and Madeleine diverge from them and play with them. The two paragons of social "normalcy", the correspondents Silvio and Graciosa, are stable by virtue of their silence. Their static rigidity reminds us that the artificial construct of the Subject is firmly in place.

Also, a simplistic interpretation of d'Albert's and Madeleine's itinerary in crossing implicit gender barriers yields tentative conclusion that they do so in an effort to construct a "new" Subjectivity to occupy or, indeed, to control the "other" they seek to understand. Each's narrative is marked by the assumption that a detailed account of their experiences will yield a homogenous construct; that these multiple experiences (metonymies) might coalesce into a whole (metaphor). Each brings his/her discourse to a performative level, hoping to "magically" confer subject-status on themselves, through the accumulation of representations. This is perhaps more evident and more convincing in d'Albert since his narrative is an internal debate seeking to resolve opposites and move toward the transcendent.

That each character begins his/her discourse at a definitive moment, where they diverge from a Subject construct, in an attempt to create another Subject construct, reveals a certain tyranny at work in their

projects. Both seem to abandon an oppressive stereotype and risk creating an equally oppressive one to replace it. The Subject is implied everywhere in the text and yet the most stable subjects are the silent ones (Silvio/Graciosa, Man/Woman):

Significance clings to the soul just as the organism clings to the body, and it is not easy to get rid of either. And how can we unhook ourselves from the points of subjectification that secure us, nail us down to a dominant reality? Tearing the conscious away from the subject in order to make it a means of exploration, tearing the unconscious away from significance and interpretation in order to make it a veritable production: Caution is the art common to all three; if in dismantling the organism there are times one courts death, in slipping away from significance and subjection one courts falsehood, illusion and hallucination and psychic death.⁷

D'Albert and Madeleine are attempting just such a departure from the trappings of a Subject, so empty of meaning and so unrelated to their own realities. Each embarks upon a "program" and the importance of this program lies primarily in the "how" rather than in the "what". Not to disparage the importance of topoi in exploring the uniqueness of a more properly "romantic" subjectivity, I am more interested in exploring how subjectivity manifests itself in any text, whether "classical," "romantic," "surreal" or any other. Guattari and Deleuze explain the importance of the word "program" in these terms:

There is an essential difference between the psychoanalytic interpretation of the phantasy and the anti-psychiatric experimentation of the program. Between the phantasy, an interpretation that must itself be interpreted, and the motor program of experimentation. The BwO (Body without

Organs) is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and signifiances and subjectifications as a whole. Psychoanalysis does the opposite: it translates everything into phantasies, it converts everything into phantasy, it retains the phantasy. It royally botches the real because it botches the BwO.⁸

Indeed, Mademoiselle de Maupin is a novel filled with fantasies and might lend itself easily to a Freudian analysis. D'Albert's fantasies are more diverse, but Madeleine, too, plays out her fantasies and it is not only the interpretive possibilities that have import in their departure from the Subject. It is, rather, the experimental quality of these fantasies that are more interesting in the personal quests of/for self and so a Freudian analysis would not reveal anything that could be called unique to the novel. To gather each character's "representations" and impose (deduce) a generalizing metaphor to account for their meanings, or collective meanings, would be to do what each character has already done narratively. All that could be accomplished is an anticipation of conclusions not drawn even in the novel and that would not shed much light on the novel's literary value or uniqueness.

Many selves, or subjects, are the result both of their experimental "programs" as well as real manifestations of the Subject in diverse contexts. I shall now turn my attention toward these subjects which crowd the text as both major protagonists experiment. Although both implicitly are attempting to "find themselves," they do so also implicitly

by dismantling themselves, and to a large degree are already "dismantled" or fragmented, since the social Subject is an ideal that does not ultimately exist.

Subjects

The idea that masks hide or repress the true self is embraced by both main characters of Mademoiselle de Maupin. However, masks are cultivated and explored by both d'Albert and Madeleine and each comes to the realization that masks reveal, rather than conceal. Consequently, this role-play, rather than being a way of life, is, in fact, revealed as the way of life. This being the case, both embark on elaborate programs of exploration/experimentation to understand desire. Any effort to understand desire, and one's place in desire, necessitates a radical divergence from Self in the novel.

My reading builds on the work of Guattari and Deleuze in the two volumes, Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus. Desire, for Deleuze and Guattari, is intensely positive. It produces the real and answers to no structurally rigid hierarchy. Consequently, they oppose Freudian (psychoanalytic) understandings of desire:

Everywhere we encounter the analytic process that consists in extrapolating a transcendent and common something, but that is a common universal for the sole purpose of introducing lack into desire, in situating and specifying persons and an ego under one aspect or another of its absence, and imposing an exclusive direction on the disfunction of the sexes.'

This analytic process is also to be encountered in the novel itself.¹⁰ Both d'Albert and Madeleine attempt to define that common universal "something" placing them under one aspect of desire, or in relation to that "something" they lack. D'Albert is more persistent than Madeleine insofar as this analytic process is concerned, but that is mainly because Gautier has attempted to place d'Albert and Madeleine in a position of subject and object relative to one another. Consequently, d'Albert "lacks" a mistress, pleasure, fulfillment, the ideal, beauty and a whole host of potentially transcendent elements, while Madeleine, as object, appears sufficient unto herself. If we were to say that she "lacked" something, it would have to be a subject or a belief that she contains a "true", utterly unique and deeply imbedded "self", since she voices no one defining "need" or goal as key to self discovery. According to the novel, subjects identify, pursue and articulate goals in their efforts to attain the transcendent. Since, at least in d'Albert's articulation, she is the transcendent object, Madeleine "lacks" a subject.

Guattari and Deleuze express another restricting tendency of psychoanalysis: to understand desire as having purpose and structure in and of itself:

...castration and oedipalization beget a basic illusion that makes us believe that real desiring-production is answerable to higher formations that integrate it, subject it to transcendent laws, and make it serve a higher social and cultural production.¹¹

That desire, as a process, might consistently represent something definite or transcendent, is impossible and misses the point. Since desire is a process, and not a product, it cannot isolate or represent a thing, but rather, only produce effects and events. In the novel, I have shown how attempts, by either d'Albert or Madeleine, to define their desire have been everywhere thwarted and ultimately not the "point" of their discourse. Each executes a program or plan of action to attain his/her goal.

The interpretive construct of Freudian psychoanalysis, while effective, does not really accomplish anything except to enclose the Subject in a rigid paradigm relative to desire.¹² Guattari and Deleuze have isolated the negative law of lack, the extrinsic rule, and the transcendent ideal as the three-tiered construct which aggressively and oppressively channels and contains the entire dynamic of desire. This reduces desire to a single, stable representation, rather than an unstable, dynamic process.

¹³ If desire is lack, only to be assuaged by pleasure, but constantly cut off from "jouissance" (transcendent ideal) as a conceptual reference designed to represent the dynamic of desire is apt to produce frustrated individuals rather than relieve them. Or, more to the point, we are more apt to see frustrated individuals, rather than individuals caught up in a complex process.

As an alternative account, Guattari and Deleuze posit an "uneasy partnership" between what they term the "Body

without Organs" and desiring-production as best representing the process of desire:

The Body without Organs is the field of immanence of desire, the plane of consistency specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows or a pleasure that fills it).¹⁴

To clarify this partnership, Guattari and Deleuze further state that "a Body without Organs" is made in such a way that it can be occupied, populated only by intensities."¹⁵ The Body without Organs is the setting on which intensities are produced. This "setting" is referred to, conceptually, as a "plateau":

Gregory Bateson uses the term plateau for continuous regions of intensity constituted in such a way that they do not allow themselves to be interrupted by any external termination, any more than they allow themselves to build toward climax.¹⁶

I have characterized this, loosely, as allegory. I have appropriated the term "plateau" for the same reasons as Guattari and Deleuze, but I put it to a use that is not specifically indicated in their work. I associate it with allegory so as to withdraw somewhat from a uniquely literary vocabulary. It is a more neutral term which attempts to "represent" a stage in a process, and in fact all the various stages that indicate that a process is at work.

Just as I say "subject" rather than protagonist, "subjects" rather than masks or personae, I use "plateau" rather than allegory. In this way, I make a parallel between a specifically literary process (the novel) and

process in general. The term as explained in A Thousand Plateaus is suggestive of allegory. "Continuous regions of intensity" which are "constituted" specifically to be attenuated and/or explored is reminiscent of an allegorical process which constructs, narratively, scenarios which provide a stability for exploration. These scenarios are re-worked, re-cast, refined and attenuated while not necessarily building toward climax. Protagonists have an identity, but the allegory serves to explore this identity in an explicit manner while suggesting multiple avenues of systematic interpretation.

In the novel, d'Albert and Madeleine experiment. D'Albert experiments through fantasies and his fantasies follow a pattern. Visual intensities coalesce (on a frame, in a bedroom, in nature, on a tapestry, etc.) and while these visual intensities coalesce eventually into (onto) the person of Madeleine, d'Albert effectively and aggressively blocks out all other sensory (physical and intellectual) stimuli, carefully delimiting a "magical" space (a field of immanence, a plane of consistency, an allegory). He thus carefully draws to himself a stability, a purpose and a suspended temporality where he can explore the dynamics of "pleasure" relative to desire. He is unable, along the way, to sustain any one effect for very long. He does, however, progress in stages, perfecting the plateaus (allegories) through a discontinuous evolution. The form of the allegory repeats itself, blindly, while the content is altered until

he eventually perfects it to maximum effect, when he describes his final encounter with Madeleine. This is the moment, in Chapter XVI of the novel, where the narrator describes d'Albert making love to Madeleine.

Madeleine's "plateaus" are more difficult to identify, but seem to be populated by men on a diachronic continuum. She understands the "male principle" as one of movement, activity and "pack mentality". Her original "wish" was to know men as a man knows them. She disguised herself as a man and sought out male company, each time perfecting the encounters by surrounding herself with more men, in more complex and demanding situations. She abandoned her female identity, abandoned the/a Self, to merge with a male multiplicity (unlike d'Albert's project of "fusion") where she could be included and ignored (go unscrutinized--men are not overtly perceived as objects in this text). The female identity is, in this text, understood as having only one significant facet, that of being a material object to be loved and contemplated.

Madeleine becomes, it is implied, complex and fragmented, when she assumes the male identity. In this way, she discovers and exploits role-play. Men or the male principle is understood, in the novel, as multiple, complex, fragmented and hence (inadvertently and/or necessarily) duplicitous. Their active, mobile function in society compels them to role-play. This is what d'Albert resents and he envies women their "unified," passive and

unapproachable "wholeness" accorded to them by their beauty (mystique).¹⁷

In appropriating the active male persona, Madeleine appropriates the opportunity to scrutinize men while not being scrutinized herself. As she seeks out male milieus, she is attempting to situate herself in relation to them and to herself at a comfortable distance. Two disruptive threats, intruding repeatedly on the continuing perfection of her "fantasy," are, of course, d'Albert and Rosette. D'Albert scrutinizes Théodore in an "unmanly" fashion, disrupting Madeleine's momentum. Rosette does the same by falling in love with "him".

Ironically, the crowning achievement of her disguise (to be, under close scrutiny, recognized and loved as a man by a woman) constantly tampers with the mental integrity of the role she is attempting to successfully maintain. Being a man allows Madeleine to establish and control the distance she maintains between herself and others because, traditionally, men are aggressive and women passive. So, Rosette's "aggressiveness" (her divergence from her role as a passive woman) disrupts Madeleine's male integrity, provoking her to break her momentum, change directions and abandon "plateaus". D'Albert's persistent scrutiny of her also disrupts her momentum, forcing her away from her identification with her male role and back toward her abandoned female role.

The text stubbornly asserts "norms" that it cannot maintain and this results in a proliferation of "subjects", or roles in each character. Rosette's aggressiveness, d'Albert's passiveness and Madeleine's increasing "confusion," vis-à-vis the complexities her disguise reveals to her (and to us), undermine the basic understandings of gender (and subject) the novel seeks to assert. Madeleine's process of male socialization carries with it (or in spite of it) her "heterosexual" orientation (a social and cultural logic of disguise). She becomes, because of this, more and more attracted to Rosette sexually. This further intrudes on her project's momentum by reminding her of her "true" sex and all of the complex implications of that still existing reality. This "other" or co-existent "reality" shifts her back into an anteriority she had attempted to abandon.

It becomes increasingly problematic for Madeleine to play a role (man) within a role (woman) within other roles (adventurer, friend, lover). She (perhaps inadvertently) chose one role (man) among many possibilities (cavalier, duelist, carrouser, écolier) all the while contemplating, through this role-play (as a man), the assumption of yet another role (mistress). Having decided that the social destiny of woman was oppressively over-determined, she abandoned it to assume what she perceived to be a more multiple or many faceted identity (man). Her assumptions are confirmed, yet her experiences reveal even more complexities within both male and female roles. So striking

and troubling is this revelation, that she ends up positing the possibility of a third sex that might account for the nexus of complex sexual "realities" that she is experiencing.

She is a woman posing as a man to explore man, not as an object of love, but rather, as a subject capable of loving. It is interesting how resistant the text is to this scenario of the male love object. That men are physically unaesthetic is a firm constant of the novel, so her scrutiny of men as objects is never really established. In its place is an entrenched and rigid heterosexuality forcing Madeleine to turn her sexual attention onto women, in spite of still maintaining or nurturing the importance of a sexual encounter with a man, because she is, after all, a woman. It is evident how stubborn the text is in seeking to maintain "core" understandings of men and women. This is further evidenced by key omissions in Madeleine's narrative.

What is missing from her narrative is a sustained articulation of one personal (and uniquely gendered) pursuit of "pleasure" such as is found in d'Albert's discourse. At the outset, Madeleine's "quest" is purely intellectual; she wants to know how men behave among men and she wants to observe them without being observed herself. She wants to remove the sexual/psychic "disruption" (her presence, as catalyst, among men) that so alters (masks) male behavior. An explicit, persistent articulation and exploration of her

own representative or representing desire is very hard to isolate. That she "acquires," along the way, a complex awareness of her own responses to sensual stimuli is obvious, but it is not structured into a defining quest *per se*.

She spends much more time exploring the desire of others (of other men, of Rosette, of d'Albert). The exploration of desire on her part would have to be deemed more highly abstract and unattached. Her discourse suggests that she does not "want" or "need" anything, or that she does not know what she wants or needs and this "not knowing" is not problematic. In this case, perhaps a textual "weakness" becomes a strength. In associating her so strongly with an object-function, and in seeking to deny her discourse a subject-function, so well represented in d'Albert, Gautier seems to have made Madeleine drop away (or detach herself) from the subject-object dialectic, even from a rigid subject-subject (self-reflexive) dialectic.

Gautier organized the major narratives of the text in a complementary fashion. D'Albert articulates as a subject and Madeleine articulates as an object by often complementing and responding with agreement to d'Albert's numerous observations, rather than initiating observations herself. D'Albert establishes a quest and develops it allegorically. He imagines and enacts a series of scenes where he can achieve transcendence through the fusion with beauty. His descriptions, attitudes and convictions are

often complemented and confirmed by Madeleine. D'Albert's narrative is marked by an intensely "subjective" scrutiny of himself and the world. Madeleine's narrative is marked by an intensely "objective" scrutiny of herself and the world. D'Albert appears "lacking" while Madeleine appears "whole" and oddly sufficient to herself (oddly, because she does not occupy a firm, stable subject position).

This is consistently supported, in the novel, by d'Albert's worries about his inability to love, which is linked to his inability to find a worthy love-object. Madeleine worries about being loved and the inability, not hers, but of men to love. Their concerns complement, complete each other. Since it does not occur to Madeleine to think of men as objects to be possessed, per se, she is more concerned about a man's ability, depth of feeling and capacity to love. Her ability to love is unaddressed and so assumedly unproblematic. While d'Albert seeks fusion with his "object" to achieve something transcendental, Madeleine does not, as I said, because she is the object.

With this particular man-woman, subject-object dialectic, it is not surprising that Madeleine (the implied object, sufficient to herself) decides that Rosette's ability to love is superior to d'Albert's or to any man's for that matter. Rosette, as woman, must (?) also be an object, sufficient to herself and so capable of love and worthy of loving. However, Madeleine's concerns about being able to love Rosette fall into more "intellectually

conventional" terms, rather than into emotional terms; she does not want to abandon her disguise, the male persona, and so revealing her identity as a woman to Rosette would threaten that resolve and open up vistas this novel is not prepared to explore in any depth. Madeleine is attracted to Rosette as a man is attracted to a woman, since heterosexuality is the "norm" of the novel. She does not entertain, intellectually or materially, a sustained lesbian relationship with Rosette. She wants to love Rosette as a man (biologically) not a woman, and this is clearly impossible.

So, while it seems evident that each's "fantasies" or "experiments" are explorations of pleasure (pleasure being the subject's object), pleasure is only a side issue in the question of desire:

Pleasure is an affection of a person or a subject; it is the only way for persons to "find themselves" in the process of desire that exceeds them; pleasures, even the most artificial, are reterritorializations.¹⁸

Indeed, we have many "subjects" in the novel. D'Albert is artist, lover, adventurer, man, hero and a host of other identities each searching for its own identity/pleasure in "the process of desire", and the pleasures sought are attempts at re-orientation along an obscured continuum because the pleasure cannot be sustained indefinitely. The same can be said of Madeleine, but with a key difference. Madeleine does seem able to detach pleasure from the

associations with a subject and signifying ascendancy.

Guattari and Deleuze explain such a process in these terms:

But the question is precisely whether it is necessary to find oneself. Courtly love [for example] does not love the self, any more than it loves the whole universe in a celestial or religious way. It is a question of making a body without organs upon which intensities pass, self and other--not in the name of a higher level of generality or a broader extension, but by virtue of singularities that can no longer be said to be personal, and intensities that can no longer be said to be extensive. The field of immanence is not internal to the self, but neither does it come from an external self or a nonself. Rather, it is like the absolute outside that knows no Selves because interior and exterior are equally a part of the immanence in which they have fused.¹⁹

It seems that Madeleine, in her distinctively non-reflexive, or perhaps, less representationally rigid discursive practices, has achieved something approaching an understanding of pleasure as "an affection of the subject" and desire as the domain of the non-self. She appropriates a role but the role or subject does not entirely contain her, neither do any of the "selves" that proliferate once she does appropriate the male role. She assumes it in order to function in society while moving along desire's continuum:

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of signifiante and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominate reality. Mimic the strata. You don't reach the Body without Organs, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying.²⁰

Pleasure, in quantity or quality, is not the measure that determines her "quest" or authenticates her sense of self. Her "pleasure" cannot be adequately identified; there is a tone of souless efficiency in her final farewell to d'Albert. She goes away, we do not know where, to do, we do not know what, and her parting words of advice to d'Albert suggest that, while she has freed herself, to a certain extent, from a determined and determining structuration, she suggests that he (and Rosette) have not.²¹ Who fares better from this arrangement, I cannot say, and neither does the novel.

She advises him to burn the letter she has written him--"Si cela vous désole trop de me perdre, brulez cette lettre, qui est la seule preuve que vous m'avez eue, et vous croirez avoir fait un beau rêve." [Ch. XVII, p.375]. Destroy the letter, the proof or representation, to set yourself free (perhaps)--"Qui vous en empêche?" [p.375]--a double question really; a query as well as a reproach (and a challenge) for needing the representation that symbolizes and perpetuates the had-and-lost, presence-absence dialectic:

"State Philosophy" is another word for the representational thinking that has characterized Western metaphysics since Plato, but has suffered an at least momentary setback during the last quarter century at the hands of Derrida, Michel Foucault and post-structuralist theory generally. As described by Deleuze, it reposes on a double identity: of a thinking subject, and of the concepts it creates to which it lends its own presumed attributes of sameness and constancy. The subject, its concepts, and also the objects in

the world to which the concepts are applied have a shared internal essence: the self-resemblance at the basis of identity. Representational thought is analogical; its concern is to establish a correspondence between these symmetrically structured domains.²²

The narrative, rhetorical and thematic arrangements of the novel do attempt such a strategy. D'Albert's discourse sets the tone for this search for resemblances and shared essences. Any reading of the novel can yield the conclusion that Madeleine "responds" to d'Albert's needs; they share an essence. It is everywhere suggested that their union will, in spite of its temporary duration, complete or fill corresponding voids in the other. It could be argued that their love-making scene accomplishes just that, while simultaneously proving, or establishing the (Freudian) "impossibility of transcendence", since the moment cannot be maintained. Madeleine's departure suggests that she symbolizes the mystique (feminine) of beauty or transcendence itself and that it is impossible and elusive.

It is, however, not quite that simple since Madeleine and her discourse, if read carefully and taken into account for the effects it produces, show that she is not transcendence itself, beauty itself or the mystique made real. Those effects are entirely the product of d'Albert and his narrative. The love scene between d'Albert and Madeleine (Ch. XVI) is described by the omniscient narrator and entirely from d'Albert's point of view. The scenario of transcendence is his own doing and is only the culmination

of his own allegory (reality?) as it moves to perfection. Madeleine does not describe the encounter in terms even remotely similar to d'Albert's. The complementary aspects of Madeleine's discourse are there if one wishes to focus on them, but other equally numerous aspects/effects of her discourse resist the complementary effect enough to deflect the "essential resemblances" so stubbornly pursued in the novel.

Whether inadvertently or intentionally, by setting up Madeleine/her narrative as object/objective, Gautier has freed her to circulate along desire's continuum rather than within pleasure's tyranny. The proliferation of "subjects" or roles manifesting themselves through her disguise (material) rather than provoking a radical existential dread, frees her from the tyranny of the Subject. At the end of the novel she is still free, still mobile and still undefined. D'Albert and Rosette have truly encountered an impasse after experiencing a transcendental high. It is implied that Madeleine's departure will leave them at the beginning of some crisis--trapped in subject-relations left only with lost pleasures. It is not enough to say that Madeleine represents (symbolizes) the transcendent itself, impossible because elusive and distant, the very essence of lack, an object, that fills the existential void in us all. To do that is to disparage Gautier's dexterity and to ignore most of Madeleine's discourse; a discourse that articulates an exploration of great depth and refined "self-awareness"

not destroyed by the ironies it confronts and not enslaved by the "pleasures" it encounters.

What remains to be explored are the novel's rhetorical arrangements at large and how they contribute to "subjectivity". It will be necessary to look more closely at the differences between pleasure and desire so as to clarify the difference between subject and subjectivity. I will now look more closely at the gulf separating Freud from Deleuze and Guattari. Eventually, a critical retreat will be necessary to put these differences into more "literarily conventional" terms to better assess what this novel reveals about the process of subjectivity as far as literature is concerned. I am referring specifically to how allegory and metaphor contribute to an understanding of subjectivity as a discontinuous yet mobile process of the novel.

In his most recent critical offering, Ross Chambers provides an explanation of what Deleuze and Guattari have contributed to critical understandings of desire. He explains that they proceed:

by defining desire not, in traditionally Freudian terms, as that which is repressed by reality, but as that which produces the real. Desire, for Deleuze and Guattari, is repressed, not by reality, but by the structures of power, which themselves correspond to a certain restricted and restricting form of desire (emphasis mine): the desire to control desire, that is, the desire for power. L'Anti-Oedipe is an extended lyrical and delicious affirmation of the power of desire to elude the structures of power so as to release, instead, a "schizophrenic" desire. For the schizophrenic can free us of the restraints of a power-constructed identity, the ego--.²³

Already, we see where distinctions are being drawn between psychoanalytic understandings (and concerns) and "schizoanalytic" understandings (and concerns).

Psychoanalysis concerns itself (legitimately, since it defines its own parameters) with a conceptually exclusive understanding of the relationship of desire to reality and the individual subject's place ("site") in relation to both. In this instance, I would replace "desire" with "pleasure" since psychoanalysis, being interested in discrete and enclosed parameters, is more concerned with pleasure than desire. This difference is key since any understanding of desire and pleasure as being basically the same thing will, inappropriately, place Freud and Guattari/Deleuze into adversarial opposition (as indeed Guattari and Deleuze often do themselves); this need not be so.

Psychoanalysis studies the origins and "mechanics" of a "subject" (an id-ego-superego construct) in "reality" (an important term wholly unexplored in Freud) and defines the subject's relationship to reality (and to itself) as basically adversarial/conflicted. It is, in nature, adversarial precisely because of "reality's" bizarrely privileged status in psychoanalytic thought. Reality is split, in psychoanalysis into the "real" and the "unreal" or, reality (small r) and fantasy with "fantasy" being the distorted and distorting term that passes rather freely in and out of Reality. Interpretation (analysis/psychoanalysis) is the mediating force that seeks

to stabilize this relationship between fantasy and reality, so as, by extension, to stabilize the subject in Reality.

Jean Laplanche's elucidation and exploration of psychoanalysis reveals the restricted and restricting parameters of such understandings:

The ego is, then, the individual as differentiated from the other, particularly the biological individual, but also the psychological individual as the site of conflict: what is at stake in the conflict, but not a participant in it.²⁴

In this description, the ego is the other's other, the non-biological individual (is this possible?) or the psychological individual who is, then, no longer an individual, but a place, and, what is more, an empty place, the nexus of conflict, the battlefield without the army. Laplanche is well aware of these paradoxes and, in fact, aggressively explores the paradoxes of psychoanalysis but, perhaps, by exacerbating the already existing problems:

...no sooner have we presented the thesis that the ego is not a subject than we have to withdraw it: the ego is indeed an object, but a kind of relay object, capable of passing itself off in a more or less deceptive and usurpatory manner, as a desiring and wishing subject.²⁵

The subject is not really a subject but an object pretending to be a subject and the pretense is enacted by the appropriation of "desire". In any event, either the subject is zero or one, a binary mechanism that forms combinations (objects or wishes). Both Freud and Laplanche reveal (and confront) the daunting tasks involved in keeping the "ego" in focus (contained) under these analytic conditions. The

problem, I believe, resides, partially, in the "non-distinctions" that persist in psychoanalysis in their descriptive and prescriptive uses of "reality" and "desire". An example of this is Laplanche's casual explanation of an ego-reality "dynamic":

A testing of reality means nothing more than correcting the distortion imposed on reality by our desires.[emphasis mine]²⁶

Reality as an artificially stable and sublimely unproblematic constant (continually unaddressed in psychoanalysis) represents (usually) society and repression in constant turmoil with "our desires" which "distort" that reality. The word "reality" is of course problematic in its unproblematically privileged status as stable, coherent, and continuous. "Desires", although understood as discrete are also problematic because of their essential "non-relationship" to desire as a process. "Pleasures" would be a better word, especially since it is used more often in Freud and has more relevance to psychoanalytic goals. Also, in psychoanalysis, whenever pleasure (as a hierarchically, structurally, morally and quantitatively charged term whose opposite must always be non-pleasure) confronts "desire", paradoxes proliferate and radicalize and, ultimately led Freud to an understanding of desire similar to that of Deleuze and Guattari. I refer to the Death Drive.

Deleuze and Guattari begin immediately by not isolating as their "goal" that which so interested Freud, namely, the subject (big or little "s") and/or an elucidation of the

subject. They, I believe, are in total agreement with Freud on certain "mechanisms" that make a subject a subject. They diverge by refusing to privilege this construct as either a norm, a goal or even anything remotely approaching a "natural" construct with structural integrity in and of itself. This is precisely because they view "reality" as problematic, and desire as (a) force or (a) flow not originating in the subject and in fact as non-originating, not-totalizing and non-totalizable. In fact, their scope is so vast that questions of the subject are the merest details in a much larger vision.

They recognize (as did Freud) that subjects can indeed appropriate desire (tap in to it, channel it) but, that "controlling" desire is always problematic, and often dangerous. They problematize reality by recognizing, perhaps, its own potential for producing effects of its own accord. In Freud, subjects produce effects against the brick wall of Reality; in Guattari and Deleuze, reality is an effect of desire, produced by desire. Repression, rather than being the frustrating reality encountered by a fantasy-bound (wish-seeking) ego, becomes an effect of desire. The "subject" and "reality" simultaneously produce. The subject produces reality and reality produces subjects--there is no fantasy, only reality.

To better understand where psychoanalysis differs from schizoanalysis, I shall briefly explore an arena of shared analysis. Guattari and Deleuze often appropriate Freudian

"motifs" and interpretations to elucidate their own differences. One such arena is "masochism" and its relationship to desire (in Guattari/Deleuze) and pleasure (in Freud). Deleuze and Guattari sum up the masochistic itinerary and its import relative to desire in these terms:

...the interpretation of masochism: when the ridiculous death instinct is not invoked, it is claimed that the masochist, like everybody else, is after pleasure but can only get it through pain and phantasized humiliations whose function is to allay or ward off deep anxiety. This is inaccurate; the masochists suffering is the price he must pay, not to achieve pleasure, but to untie the pseudobond between desire and pleasure as an extrinsic measure. Pleasure is in no way something that can be attained only by a detour through suffering; it is something that must be delayed as long as possible because it interrupts the continuous process of positive desire. There is, in fact, a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility and is not measured by pleasure since it is what distributes intensities of pleasure and prevents them from being suffused by anxiety, shame and guilt.²⁷

The contempt for Freud, while understandable, is perhaps unfortunate since their "reinterpretation" of the masochistic scene does not destroy the Freudian interpretation at all. Laplanche points out an understanding of desire in Freud, that, if pursued/explored more closely would, in fact, have led Freud to less restricting and restricted understandings of the subject:

As early as in the "Project for a Scientific Psychology" in 1895, pain is accorded a special place, in particular in the context of an "experience of pain" that is considered for a while as if it were symmetrical to the "experience of satisfaction". By virtue of its quality, pain is presented as "undoubtedly" different from

unpleasure. From the point of view of the processes at work, it is characterized above all by the phenomenon of a breaking of barriers. (.....) Thus pain is a breaking in or effraction and presupposes the existence of a limit, and its function in the constitution of the ego is inconceivable unless the ego in turn, is defined as a limited entity.²⁸

In the middle of a complex, interconnected multiplicity joining interior to exterior (bringing together, not fusing), Freud only sees the ego, the limit, the barrier. The "breaking of barriers" is seen as a breach in the legitimate, static system rather than a liberation. But, as said earlier, Freud interested himself most with structure, mechanism and the authentic or "normal" self. Laplanche well describes Freud's interest in such things insofar as the Death Drive is concerned:

We should think here of the central role in Freud's theory not of death anxiety but precisely of castration anxiety as a threat to bodily unity: which is to say that what is threatened, much more than life, is a certain representation of life, a certain ideational representative of the vital order, which leads us at this point to the question of the ego.²⁹

Freud's interpretation, while rife with reductions and omissions of a great deal of what actually happens³⁰, is still valid in its own way and conforms to Guattari and Deleuze's understandings of reality. Reality as a power center that imposes or over-codes its own desire, while unaddressed as such in Freud, can be admitted as implicit since he understood reality as repression; and in Deleuze and Guattari, repression is itself desire. The difference

lies in the privileging of one reality rather than observing multiple realities.

Psychoanalysis is static and mechanistic and is thus interested in stasis and discrete mechanisms such as anxiety, shame and guilt. Freud was reluctant to accept that society and repression might themselves be effects of desire being channeled and imposed from without. Or indeed, was reluctant to see this as a "problem" in and of itself. Guattari and Deleuze, being more sensitive to political realities, are more interested in desire's non-representational status and thus are more attentive to the "individual's" capacity (or desire's capacity) to escape all barriers.

Pleasure is a mechanistic term described by Freud as mechanistic, while desire is "machinic" and thus described as a flow producing effects that have little to do with pleasure as a measure of desire's effectiveness or potential:

Everything is allowed: all that counts is for pleasure to be the flow of desire itself (or immanence) instead of a measure that interrupts it or delivers it to the three phantoms, namely, internal lack, higher transcendence, and apparent exteriority. If pleasure is not the norm of desire, it is not by virtue of a lack that is impossible to fill but, on the contrary, by virtue of its positivity, in other words, the plane of consistency it draws in the course of its process.³¹

If one is Oedipalized, which is to say highly (over) determined by the (over) codings of childhood, then perhaps the phantoms are not really phantoms, but rather a real and

persistent blockage of the "flow." This would mean, in this event, that "someone" else's desire (society's) is ascendent, making you an effect of its desire. Certainly this is, in part, Deleuze and Guattari's position on the relationship between the subject and the State.

In any event, the differences between pleasure(s) and desire are qualitative and not exclusively quantitative and, as such, not mutually exclusive, but in two conceptually different domains. An analysis of pleasure often yields the perverse and subversive since it is in the domain of the subject-object, presence-absence dialectic. An analysis of desire can be revolutionary since it can escape and/or destroy or even just ignore dialectics and the understandings that support it.

Mademoiselle de Maupin can be read, and has been read³², with an emphasis on character study/itinerary that conforms beautifully to Freudian conceptions of the subject. However, another approach that aims at exploring desire as a continuum (not a constant) can reveal different realities at work simultaneously. Each is valid, but approaches subjectivity with different notions of the subject and its importance.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity (and art) in Mademoiselle de Maupin is an allegorical process questioning (pursuing) a metaphorical desire. It is a process that begins but has no origin and

ends but has no resolution. It does, however, produce form and content. It proceeds necessarily through repetition and difference but does so in a self conscious way; one that highlights the inevitable structuration of discontinuity and the imminent failure of transcendence. It is often a messy process, in this text, that builds from "erroneous" assumptions and proceeds by searching out and confirming these assumptions when in fact all is constructed along the way.

The search for identity (of self, art, beauty) is not really a search at all, but a temporal and spatial construction that establishes (and controls) distances and parameters in an effort to, ironically, transcend or escape, these same parameters. "True" art, beauty and self is, it is assumed, the negation of same, the epiphany having no temporality, geography or identity. It is as if the "authentic" (ideal) self is the non-self, beauty, transcendence--a metaphor. The "non-authentic" (real) self is allegorical and lived allegorically (performed/produced). This conceptual arrangement is manifest on all levels of the text.

The novel activates a network of generic, thematic and rhetorical (representational) evolutions that in some cases inform one another and in others completely pass one another by, sharing space but creating resistances:

Incapable de s'assujettir à une forme romanesque, Gautier les utilise toutes, décidé à n'écrire qu'un caprice ou une chimère, une histoire

"perplexe" comme il l'avait dit des Jeunes-France qui, comme le théâtre pur sur lequel il médite au coeur du roman, serait mobilité perpétuelle et absence de formes. Roman de nulle part, et d'aucun temps (à certains moments il semble contemporain), il va pourtant et chemine selon un certain axe.³³

The allegorical inevitability (the "caprice" that "va pourtant selon un certain axe") seeks the epiphanic non-identity of the metaphor (the formless "chimère") which is an escape of its own barriers. In spite of the effort not to conform to one form, the novel is very concerned with forms in an incidental, extemporaneous way. It proceeds by a series of sketches (letters, genre forms) but is reluctant to (or unable to) impose, create or maintain continuity and/or transcendence, inspite of the tentative assumption that this is what is most desired. This is what d'Albert seeks, but Madeleine's parallel voice insures that it will not happen and indeed suggests that it should not happen, inspite of the fervent hopes of d'Albert. Gautier was not very comfortable with or sure of the transcendent or the transcendental gesture.

One of the novel's major preoccupations is the necessity of form, as a representational logic, and the inevitable inability of "mere" form to contain and proclaim meaning. Form, as suggestive of and representative of beauty and identity is juxtaposed by an equally persuasive belief that "true" beauty, and identity, necessarily escapes any formal logic. It is in these two parallel assumptions that we can see the "function" of allegory and metaphor in

the text as two competing, often contradictory, and equally compelling tendencies in the novel: to recognize and assert the palpable nature of beauty/identity, and, likewise, to recognize that the achievement of "true" beauty/identity resides in the almost impossible task of escaping these formal barriers altogether. Gautier's discomfort with the transcendent is the second of these two assumptions.

Gautier produces and imposes formal attributes onto his novel, but not formal unity. He understands implicitly that "meaning" (full meaning) is not intrinsically formal, and yet meaning assumes form(s); if meaning there be, we must perceive it (approach it) through form. He explores the "mysterious" association between beauty and form:

L'Ambiguïté c'est que d'Albert ne sait pas s'il doit créer le beau ou le devenir, si son salut viendra par l'oeuvre, ou dans sa chair transfigurée; en même temps qu'il sent son âme "une soeur ennemie" de son corps, si bien qu'il se fait pur épiderme érotique, et pure âme absente, il réclame d'être beau, d'être lui-même la Forme améliorable qui le ferait une oeuvre, par-delà sa contingence charnelle, et déplore que pour "posséder" la beauté, "être nous-même toi" et se donner le corps que l'on mérite, il faille être ange ou femme.³⁴

D'Albert's confusion and discomfort are also Gautier's and, in this confusion, Madeleine represents the impossibility, or perhaps imprudence, of the transcendent. Her narrative complements d'Albert's, but ultimately resists his forced resemblances, spurning his effort to "fuse" with the ideal:

Le souhait d'être plus que soi, d'être tout, Hercule et Antinous, ange, tigre et aigle, d'avoir un corps perfectible, objet d'un avatar permanent, de "s'augmenter," de sortir de soi en dérégulant la

finitude du corps, bref de circuler dans l'être, et de réincarner par une mutation, ou une mue toujours permise qui autoriserait à se rendre indéfini, par la quête capricieuse d'une chair mobile (...) ce souhait fondamental conduit au désir d'être femme. Et c'est bien au texte d'Ovide que se réfère Gautier comme à une source et à un modèle: "Comme l'antique Salmacis...je tâchais de fondre son corps avec le mien..., dit d'Albert de ses amours avec Rosette...J'ai plongé ma bouche dans sa bouche, trempé mes bras dans ses cheveux..." L'épisode du baiser est né directement d'Ovide: c'est l'effort pour fondre deux corps parfaits, et former un être suprême, qu'"Théodore" vient présenter tout réalisé au poète. Ce que, le baiser mythique n'a pas fait, l'androgynie l'incarne: l'assimilation fusionnelle de l'homme et de la femme, qui les métamorphose.³⁵

Mr. Crouzet's observations are entirely accurate but his use of the "androgynie" to express the "hermaphrodite" is misleading, and does not recognize Gautier's express use of the hermaphrodite to figure a very real fear of the transcendent, a recurring motif in several of his works. The androgynie expresses a lost natural harmony, while the hermaphrodite expresses a forced, unnatural fusion, wanted by one (Salmacis) and unwanted by the other (Hermaphrodite). It was Salmacis, the woman, who was empowered to complete her fusion with the vehemently unwilling Hermaphrodite, a narcissistic, egotistical young man.

It is Rosette and Madeleine who both thwart d'Albert's attempts at transcendence. Men are consistently, and ironically, figured as somehow "unworthy" of transcendence (they are unaesthetic, lacking and existentially confused) as well as unempowered to effect a fusion. It is ironic because d'Albert wants and seeks transcendence the most as

did the female, Salmacis. A woman's beauty is ambiguous; it is both near and distant, whole yet elusive, enveloping yet destructive and ultimately dangerous for the loss of self it represents. This powerful ambiguity is explored on many levels and is what drives the shifts between the allegorical and the metaphoric.

Allegory is the imposition of a formal and representational logic that has little to do with the mimetic. It is the creation of space, a network of identifiable parameters and distances with temporal rhythm and spatial grounding, but not necessarily an overt, external context.

Subjects and objects are differentiated in allegory because they have form, function and meaning, albeit artificially. It is constructed and nourished on its own insulated interiority. It is constructed, as a model or form, precisely to generate meaning and to attract meaning to itself. Allegory is also unstable because its form, or formal unity, does not itself contain the meaning it seeks to construct. It provides a space, creates the possibility of meaning but ultimately defers meaning.

In this novel, the allegorical expresses the real insofar as that reality is understood (or understandable) as a system of differences, distances in time and space. In it is pleasure, form, sensuality, vision and all the attributes of the thinking subject (alienated and alienating) seeking to bridge the distances it has itself constructed and maintained. The self lives in allegory and is created through

allegory. The allegory is often messy, discontinuous and awkwardly constructed and requires thousands of internal adjustments to maintain its integrity:

Allegory, one might say, is the mode which recognizes the impossibility of fusing the empirical and the eternal and thus demystifies the symbolic relation by stressing the separateness of the two levels, the impossibility of bringing them together except momentarily and against a background of disassociation, and the importance of protecting each level and the potential link between them by making it arbitrary. Only allegory can make the connection in a self-conscious and demystified way.³⁶

The allegorical is, for one example, Madeleine's disguise, instantly transforming the reality in which she circulates, drawing to herself meanings that were previously closed to her as a woman. She is aware of the change; she enacted it. She controls the reality she created since she herself redistributes the distances and spaces she traverses. She uses the social allegory, the allegory not enacted for her and which, consequently, she could not control, and appropriates another in its place. It is an alternate allegory because it is private; no one is allowed to know who she "really" is, not d'Albert, not Isnabel, not even Rosette, until the very end, but then Madeleine goes away making it clear that her departure is definitive. Madeleine is most aware of her own project and its limits while d'Albert is also, but dimly.

D'Albert's allegory is filled with little allegorical gestures.³⁷ All that he understands (as understandable and/or relevant), he expresses allegorically, ultimately

nourishing his artistic aspirations but he structures a true allegorical quest whose goal is to break free of all barriers to achieve the transcendent. He creates for himself a space, but is not aware (or is unsure) whether he himself created it or whether he was arbitrarily placed in it. In any event, he has a strong sense of the arbitrary, but he does not trust it; he is not sure whether he can control his "destiny".

D'Albert wants transcendence but fears it at the same time. True transcendence for d'Albert is akin to death and the loss of self and ultimately the loss of art; the loss of the distance between himself and art would be disastrous for a man as visually oriented as d'Albert. Yet, fusion with beauty itself must be, he muses, something akin to the passion of Christ. But, here again, is the fear of death and the loss of material sensuality. The artist can no longer be an artist if transcendence is achieved.

The metaphoric/metonymic, in the novel, is consistently figured as fusion, or breakdown, each referring to a "non-representative" desire or inevitability. It is the "too-muchness" that form alone cannot contain and that the "creator" of form seeks to achieve. It is the suggested "wholeness" that seduces and frightens. Movements towards the metaphoric/metonymic always imply a loss of self that is frightening because it requires a loss of structure (representation) a subject needs precisely to be a subject.

Metaphors (symbols), in the novel, seek to represent the transcendent, but are thwarted because there exists a parallel fear that transcendence might mean "meaninglessness" rather than "wholeness" or full meaning. The "subjects" in the novel are hampered by their own parameters but do not know how to escape those parameters without losing the self, which is to say all that they are sure they "know" they are.

D'Albert's "quest" is a metaphoric transcendence of the allegorical which ultimately fails since, as evidenced by his description in chapter XVI, he firmly retains his "self" through an aggressively visual distancing between himself and Madeleine. It cannot be said that he "loses himself" in the moment, in spite of the fact that this moment professes to be transcendent in nature. If it is to be asserted that d'Albert does indeed lose his "self", it can only be narratively, since it is the narrator who describes what is happening. D'Albert is firmly in "pleasure", albeit more aesthetic than erotic, and this aestheticism is as close as d'Albert is capable of coming to desire:

Tous les amants se trompent, car tous il se
trompent dans l'adresse de leur désir. C'est
qu'au fond il ne s'agit pas d'amour au sens
terrestre du mot.³⁸

The aesthetic is the artist's metaphor, the compromise achieved between allegorical form and metaphoric/metonymic formlessness. The aesthetic is not beauty; it is beauty's effects, desire's "pleasure". It is representable but not

representative, and does not require a renunciation of self. D'Albert cannot write "beauty" but he can write beauty's effect on him, though purely through an act of re-creation. He has given beauty a form (Madeleine) and produced its effects (pleasure, art) through representation, but he has not done so, nor could not have done so without a firm concept of self:

Even as he projects upon their love a vision of holistic and androgynous fusion of self and other, he also admits to a frightening loss of self and to the discovery of his own "otherness".³⁹

But metaphor need not be exclusively transcendent, as evidenced by Madeleine, and therefore, need not be feared. Madeleine's narrative expresses the metaphoric as the space of non-meaning which represents pure production/performance. She "mimes" fusion, through her disguise and so circumvents the structuration of accumulated representation as defining and attracting transcendent meaning. Allegory needs subjects and subject relations, as well as narrative/temporal grounding, but metaphor does not. She does not experience or confront the terror of the non-self, but rather embraces the liberation of performance producing her own meanings:

Determined as woman/object/art, Théodore/Rosalinde is also freed by the habits of subjecthood which s/he adopts as writer of his/her own letters, author of his/her own appearance, lover of his/her own object(s) of desire; calling attention to the fact that art not only represents, it also produces meaning.⁴⁰

The hesitant, emerging symbolism of the novel is thwarted by Madeleine's ability to escape the parameters which "require" transcendence in order to achieve meaning. The open-ended allegory of her journey, the episodic narrative that "carries" the novel, escapes symbolism and in fact blocks the symbolic in preference to the "becomings" of allegory.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. Marlon Ross, The Contours of Masculine Desire, Oxford University Press, 1989, This is an excellent study which traces, in English poetry, the romantic's search for self-identity as it attempts to re-assert, poetically, conventional notions of gender. Such notions are threatened by the "feminization" of poetry and its audience.

"The search for maturity in or through poetry is allied to the search for sexual identity--how to become man or woman--and because proper routes to maturity are defined by gender, writing poetry can become a means for enforcing the boundaries of gender." p.157

2. Pierre Bourdieu, Ce que parler veut dire, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1982, p.128

3. Ibid., p.128

4. Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p.33

5. Bourdieu, p.128

6. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," pp. 215-215
 "Irony is unrelieved vertige, dizziness to the point of madness. Sanity can exist only because we are willing to function within the conventions of duplicity and dissimulation, just as social language dissimulates the inherent violence of the actual relationships between human beings. Once this mask is shown to be a mask, the authentic being underneath appears necessarily as on the verge of madness." Things never go this far in the text by Gautier, precisely because d'Albert believes that deep down there exists in him a maskless, true self. Madeleine is protected by the guise or mask she has appropriated so tenaciously. She sees the value or indeed necessity of masks in projecting identity.

7. Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.160

8. Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.151

9. Deleuze and Guattari, The Anti-Oedipus, p.72

10. Gay Clifford, p.28, "All allegory attempts to escape the pressures and the tormenting relativity of the material and contingent by giving form to the ideal and the abstract."

11.Ibid., p.74

12.See in particular pages 25-26 in Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus.

13.See Guattari and Deleuze, A Thousand Plateaus, p. 154

14.Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.154

15.Ibid., p.153

16.Ibid., p.158

17.Compare pages 88-94 and pages 346-347 in the novel. D'Albert (88-94) has women described to him by M. C***. They have mannerisms, quirks, habits, physicality and variable degrees of passion. They please, displease, inspire, provoke--and are generally described as objects to be openly and frankly scrutinized.

Madeleine (346-347) describes men, defining them first by profession, their active role in society. They are all, to varying degrees, ugly (unaesthetic), so one must base preference on the quality of their mind as defined by their profession. The overriding consideration is that they seek to possess: *Quelle cage choisirai-je dans cette ménagerie?* Madeleine would be the beautiful object, the prize; the man, the possessor.

18.Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.156

19.Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.156

20.Ibid., p.160

21.Kari Weil, "Romantic Androgyny and its Discontents: The Case of Mademoiselle de Maupin," in Romantic Review, 78(3), 1987 (May), 348-358. p.358

Ms. Weil comes to a similar conclusion: "In that private space of non-representation, Maupin/Théodore thus inscribes both self and sex, not in terms of the either/or which d'Albert and the reader have expected, but outside the binary logic of polarities, as a both/and, "un sexe à part qui n'a pas encore de nom (356)." Protesting the repressive nature of desire, whether aesthetic or erotic, whether classical or romantic, which satisfies only "une seule face de (son) caractère," (356) s/he envisions love as a process of endless self-fragmentation and creation."

I would, however, add that desire is not intrinsically repressive, rather the clash of flows of desires, as each attempts to code (or overcode) the other is what creates

repression. I would also replace self-fragmentation by self-proliferation.

22. A Thousand Plateaus, p. xi., Brian Massumi.

23. Ross Chambers, Room for Maneuver: Reading (the) Oppositional (in) Narrative, University of Chicago press, 1991, p.xv

24. Jean Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, Translation Jeffrey Mehlman, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London. 1976, p.50

25. Laplanche, p.66

26. Ibid., p.53

27. Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.155

28. Laplanche, p.82

29. Laplanche, p.49

30. I refer the reader to Deleuze's study of masochism, Sacher-Masoch: an interpretation, Translation Jean McNeil, London, Faber, 1971. It is a particularly minute study which shows that a reduction of masochism to the "passive subject seeking pleasure through pain" ignores the complex negotiations and understandings actually taking place on the masochistic scene.

31. Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, p.156-57

32. I refer the reader to M.C. Schapira's study entitled, Le regard de narcissisme, Paris, 1984.

33. Michel Crouzet, "Mademoiselle de Maupin ou L'Eros Romantique," in Romantisme: Revue de la Société des Etudes Romantiques, no.8, 1974, 2-21. p.9

34. Crouzet, p.15

35. Ibid., p.17

36. Jonathan Culler, Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1975,

37. Gay Clifford, p.26, "In the debate poem it is possible to see a highly simplistic form of allegory in which the antagonisms and oppositions of allegorical warfare [for example] combine with the movement of the masque or progress. (...) They [internal arguments] do not provide in

themselves any solution, since the opposing parties are eternally separate for linguistic reasons, if no other. Ultimately, stichomythia becomes very boring; the thread of argument in debate, as the act of procession or dance, provides only the illusion of progress. Self-contained masque or debate is only a thinly allegorized form of exposition, but when the rituals of debate and progress are subordinated to the larger narrative patterns of complex allegories, they become valuable contributory elements. The questions and answers in a debate occurring within a fully elaborated allegory are significant not only in respect of the particular argument but also because they can be cross-referenced to the more comprehensive meaning of the whole.

38.Crouzet, p.6

39.Kari Weil, p.356

40.Kari Weil, p.357

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VITA

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DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

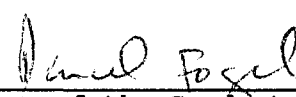
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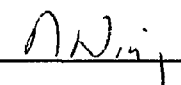
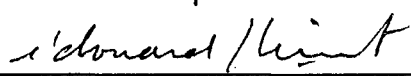
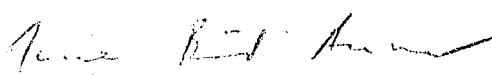
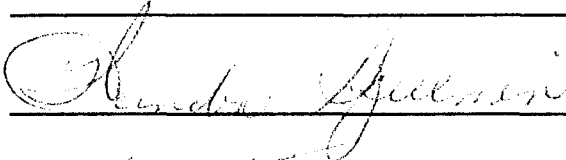
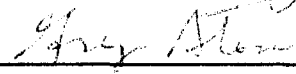
Title of Dissertation: MADEMOISELLE DE MAUPIN: A Close Reading and Study of the Process of Subjectivity in Theophile Gautier's Early Nineteenth Century Novel.

Approved:


Major Professor and Chairman


Dean of the Graduate School

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