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The Novologue: The Genre of Choice for French Women Writers of the Nineteenth Century Germaine De Staël, Flora Tristan, and Isabelle Eberhardt

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THE NOVELOGUE: THE GENRE OF CHOICE FOR FRENCH WOMEN WRITERS
OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
GERMAINE DE STAËL, FLORA TRISTAN, AND ISABELLE EBERHARDT

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the development of a new hybridized genre by women writers in nineteenth-century France that I have named the novelogue. The term novelogue was chosen because it illustrates the creative combination of the novel and the travelogue. The novelogue exists in-between previously established and male-dominated genres of the nineteenth century, allowing its female users to discuss issues of nation and gender in an arena that is freer and more open to possibilities and the questioning disallowed in the established, canonical genres of the day. The novel aspect of the genre allows its writers to frame their work within the traditional story-telling mode; moreover, the novel is also somewhat a genre of (non-) choice for women writers. The travelogue element of the genre is also groundbreaking in that it showcases women travelers who, unlike most of their contemporaries, journeyed to distant places alone, without husband or chaperone. The uniqueness and liberating nature of this genre is found, therefore, in its hybridity.

The three women I chose to study for this work span the nineteenth century and wrote texts that illustrated a powerful combination of their political and personal viewpoints. Germaine de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807), Flora Tristan's *Pérégrinations d'une paria* (1838), and Isabelle Eberhardt's *Trimardeur* (1922) are all examples of the novelogue. Each of these three writers portrays her own personal vision of utopian society through her novelogue. The goal, then, of this study is to analyze, through terms postcolonial theory, the way in which each of these writers used the novelogue to effect social change.

Introduction: Birth of a genre

Travel writing, in its essence, involves some sort of contact with borders. The mere act of traveling from one place to another requires the crossing of, if nothing else, physical boundaries. The travel narrative, therefore, becomes the perfect forum for a discussion of any boundary crossing, be it physical, theoretical, personal or emotional. It is for this very reason that writers like Germaine de Staël, Flora Tristan, and Isabelle Eberhardt make travel integral to the formal and thematic structure of their works, especially *Corinne ou l'Italie*, *Pérégrinations d'une paria*, and *Trimardeur*. The difference, however, is that these three women writers, after having crossed many different types of borders, chose to reside in the boundary, rather than cross it. This study, therefore, will examine how these three nineteenth-century authors used a travel theme to frame their stories of boundary dwellings and to dissect the relationship between colonial power and oppression. Key concepts of postcolonial studies such as ambiguity, ambivalence, contact zone, ethnography and autoethnography will give structure to the theoretical framework of this study. The end result will show that for each of these writers it is the journey – and not the destination – that proves to be of the greatest importance and interest because it is during the traveling that these women discover the freedom of in-between¹ spaces.

Crossing national and gendered identity boundaries was, for all three women authors, an issue that had personal roots. Born in Paris on April 22, 1766 to a wealthy Swiss banker/politician and an influential *salonnière*, Anne Louise Germaine Necker became Baronne de Staël-Holstein after her 1786 marriage to the Swedish Baron de Staël. Her father's successful political career and her mother's renowned literary salon both led to the development of a precocious, intellectually curious, and adventurous personality in Staël. As she became a *salonnière* in her own right, Staël began to publish her own letters and essays, readily entering into political criticism. Her *Lettres sur J.-J. Rousseau*, published in 1788,

¹ The term “in-between” was first used by Homi Bhabha. In his essay “Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences” he writes “that it is the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between*, the space of the *entre* that Derrida has opened up in writing itself – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist, histories of the ‘people’. It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this ‘Third Space’, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (209).

would be the first of many actions that would render her a pariah in the eyes of society. As a woman, who was she to critique the great “Father of Romanticism”? Simone Balayé states that it was a “réponse audacieuse à [Rousseau]” but that it was the first step in launching her career as a writer (ELV 16). Her criticism of political events, especially of Napoleon’s policies, eventually culminated in her exile from Paris in 1803. In her personal life, Staël and her husband amicably separated, and she went on to lead a rather adventurous and much commented-upon love life. Her next successful work was *De la littérature*, published in 1800, and was followed by her first novel, *Delphine*, in 1802. The work studied here, *Corinne ou l’Italie*, appeared in 1807 following a trip to Italy. In April of 1810 she published *De l’Allemagne* and in May of 1811 she began *Dix années d’exil*, both of which emphasize the importance of themes of border crossing, travel, and exile. She died July 14, 1817. Posthumously, her work *Considérations sur la Révolution française* was published in 1818, another example of Staël’s non-conformism due to the work’s overt condemnation of Napoleon. A prolific writer who explored a plethora of genres, a notorious troublemaker, and mistress of many, Staël was nothing if not a controversial non-conformist, which is why she fits so perfectly into this study.

Flore-Célestine-Thérèse-Henriette Tristan Moscoso was born in Paris on April 7, 1803. Her Spanish-Peruvian father, don Mariano de Tristan, and her French mother, Thérèse Laisney, married in Spain. Their marriage, while recognized by the church, had not been approved by the Spanish government, a necessary step due to don Mariano’s military position. Therefore, when Tristan was born, both Spanish and French society saw her as illegitimate. Her father’s death in 1807 and the Spanish government’s confiscation of his material wealth and possessions left her and her mother on the verge of destitution. Upon her return to France in 1818, Tristan was forced by poverty into the artisan’s workplace, where she met André Chazal, her future husband. Chazal first hired Tristan as a colorist at his lithograph studio and then married her in 1821. Their marriage, though, was fraught with disillusionment, anger, and betrayal. Chazal gambled away what little money he earned and eventually asked her to prostitute herself in order for him to pay his debts. Pregnant and penniless, Tristan fled her marriage in 1825. She traveled twice to England as a lady’s maid and spent time in France in the company of the Saint-Simonians who helped her develop the socialist world-views for which she is known today. In 1833, she embarked on a voyage to

Peru, in search of financial assistance and familial ties. It was this trip that would become the subject of her fictional autobiography *Pérégrinations d'une paria*. Upon her return to Paris in 1834, she began her work as a writer. She published *De la nécessité de faire bon accueil aux femmes étrangères* in 1835, which represents firstly the importance of travel to Tristan, but more specifically the reception she believes women travelers should be granted. *Pérégrinations* and her only novel, *Méphis ou le prolétaire*, both appeared in 1838. After reading his description in *Pérégrinations*, Chazal shot Tristan in the streets of Paris. She survived the attack and went on to write *Promenades dans Londres* (1840) and *L'Union ouvrière* (1843). Her entire œuvre centers on crossing borders, be they borders of nation, gender, or class. She died in Bordeaux on April 14, 1844. A pariah of her own naming, Tristan rightfully belongs in this study of unusual and extraordinary women.

Isabelle Eberhardt was born February 17, 1877 in Geneva to the Russian Nathalie Moerder, née Eberhardt. Her birth certificate names only her mother, but it is believed that the family tutor, Alexandre Trophimowski, was her father. Trophimowski was a defrocked Armenian priest who left Saint Petersburg with Nathalie Moerder and her children to live in Geneva. Questions of her paternity aside, Eberhardt's only true father figure was Trophimowski. Not only did he instruct her in the literature of both Russian and French writers, he also encouraged her to lead a rather non-traditional existence: children mocked her for dressing as a boy. Under his tutelage, she also learned about Islam and became fluent in Arabic. In 1897, Eberhardt, with her mother, embarked on her first trip to Algeria. It was during this trip that both women converted to Islam and when Eberhardt's mother died later that year, she had her buried in a Muslim cemetery. After her mother's death, Eberhardt returned to Geneva where Trophimowski died two years later. She returned to North Africa where she met her future husband, Slimène Ehni, a Muslim of French nationality and an officer in the military. She went on to lead her life as a Muslim Algerian, disguising herself as a man and going by the name Si Mahmud. While none believed her actually to be a man, she was nonetheless granted the freedom to travel with male Muslims and explore her spirituality and nomadic inclinations. For Eberhardt, too, crossing borders was central to both her life and work. She was shot by a rival sect of Muslims, but recovered her full health. Her activity in North Africa as an opponent to French colonization and her near-death experience caught the attention of the French government, who deported her to

Marseille in June of 1901. In October she married Slimène, was accorded French nationality, and therein the right to return to Algeria. Her writings were primarily published as short stories in the Algerian press, and she did not truly become known as a writer until after her death. Instead, much like Staël and Tristan, she was known as a troublemaker and an eccentric. After her death, her close friend Victor Barrucand was the first to assemble her writings into published books. He took her work *Sud oranais* – a collection of short stories and travel notes – and divided it into two books: *Dans l'ombre chaude de l'Islam* (1906) and *Notes de route* (1908). Along with these two works, he also published *Pages d'Islam* in 1920 and *Trimardeur*, her only novel, in 1922. Eberhardt's notorious reputation and her fight for Algerian freedom make her a fitting subject of this analysis.

This study will closely examine the genre that these three controversial women writers chose for their works: the novelogue. This is a term that I have created and developed to describe a new hybridized genre, one that blurs the boundaries between the novel and the travelogue. The novelogue exists in-between previously established and male-dominated genres of the nineteenth century, allowing its female users to discuss issues of nation and gender in an arena that is freer and more open to possibilities and the questioning disallowed in the established, canonical genres of the day. The novel aspect of the genre allows its writers to frame their work within the traditional story-telling mode; moreover, the novel is also somewhat a genre of (non-) choice for women writers. As the novel was first developing in the seventeenth century, men of letters disregarded it as a non-artistic, non-intellectual form of writing that only women should deign to use.² Madame de La Fayette was among the first to institute the novelistic genre with *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), preceded by her first novel *Zaïde*. In *Romanticism and Gender*, Anne Mellor writes that “between 1780 and 1830, women dominated [. . .] the production of the novel” (7). As the novel grew in popularity, however, male writers such as Honoré de Balzac, Stendhal, and Flaubert appropriated the genre for themselves, leaving women with no place of writing that was uniquely theirs. While there were indeed women novelists in France in the nineteenth century, George Sand for example, they no longer dominated the genre. By choosing to use elements of the novel in their writing, the women writers studied here illustrate an active

² See Katharine Ann Jensen's work *Writing Love: Letters, Women, and the Novel in France 1605-1776*.

defiance of the status quo, taking back what once was a mode of communication all their own.

The travelogue element of the genre is also groundbreaking in that it showcases women travelers who, unlike most of their contemporaries, journeyed to distant places alone, without husband or chaperone. It is important to note too that the mere act of a woman traveling constituted a cultural transgression because travel and discovery were considered masculine. A woman's traveling in this manner was inherently subversive of accepted nineteenth-century gender roles and suggested the possibility of violating other stereotypes.

The travelogue portion of the novelogue incorporates some of the typical characteristics of ethnography. Paul Atkinson describes ethnography in this way:

It displays not merely the sequential order of social life, but also its consequentiality. Through narrative the ethnographer – like the historian, the biographer, or the novelist – shapes individual and collective action, character, and motive. The ethnography embeds and comments on the stories told by informants, investing them with a significance often beyond their mundane production. It includes the ethnographer's own accounts of incidents, "cases," and the like. They too are transformed and enhanced by their recontextualization in the ethnography itself. These narrative instances are collected and juxtaposed in the text so that their meaning (sociological or anthropological significance) is implied by the ethnographer and reconstructed by the reader. (13)

James Clifford, in a similar fashion, explains ethnography by combining the anthropological and literary definitions. He explains that there are numerous ways to determine ethnographic writing and that the end result is what he calls "ethnographic fictions" (6). He justifies this term thusly:

To call ethnographies fictions may raise empiricist hackles. But the word as commonly used in recent textual theory has lost its connotation of falsehood, of something merely opposed to truth. It suggests the partiality of cultural and historical truths, the ways they are systematic and exclusive. Ethnographic writings can properly be called fictions in the sense of "something made or fashioned," the principal burden of the word's Latin root, *ingere*. But it is

important to preserve the meaning not merely of making, but also of making up, of inventing things not actually real. (*Fingere*, in some of its uses, implied a degree of falsehood.) Interpretive social scientists have recently come to view good ethnographies as “true fictions,” but usually at the cost of weakening the oxymoron, reducing it to the banal claim that all truths are constructed. (6)

We will see in the works studied here that each writer uses ethnography in her own way and with her own unique voice to illustrate a central thesis. As Atkinson explains, this presence of a central thesis is typical of ethnography and explains to us as readers why particular events are highlighted in the works. Atkinson goes on to discuss the literary aspect of ethnography, linking the genre to classical story telling, that is, a novelistic mode:

It [the ethnography] may take the form of a story of thwarted intentions and unintended consequences, of the display of order in apparent chaos, or of disorder at the heart of rational organization. It can set up a reader’s expectations only to deny them. It can transform the reported events of everyday life into the heroic, or endow them with weighty significance. The ethnography can become a morality tale, a high drama, a picaresque tale of low-life characters, a comedy of manners, a rural idyll. (13)

Clearly, then, ethnography in its essence has novelistic and narrative aspects and we, therefore, can logically understand how the novelogue came into being. Clifford also justifies this combination created by women writers when he connects ethnography to feminist theory. He writes: “Feminist theorizing is obviously of great potential significance for rethinking ethnographic writing. It debates the historical, political construction of identities and self/other relations, and it probes the gendered positions that make all accounts of, or by, other people inescapably partial” (Clifford 19). In other words, thanks to feminist theory that deconstructs the binarisms of self/other and masculine/feminine, we can also do the same sort of deconstruction in a reading of the portrayal of an ethnographic subject. Clifford therefore encourages us to read an ethnographic text through a postcolonial lens, with a focus on the nuances of colonial discourse on the text.

Additionally, the female writers of the novelogue often appear to be *exploratrices sociales*, or women travelers who voyaged in search of solutions to global social problems.³ Their traveling to, commenting on, and dwelling in in-between spaces also encourage us to examine the roles of ambivalence and ambiguity in these texts because of the colonial power structure present in the *exploratrice sociale*'s work. Homi Bhabha defines these terms in his discussion of mimicry. He explains that "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (86). These writers, therefore, are continually examining in-between places and what Pratt calls "contact zones." She defines contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). The novelogue, then, as used by Germaine de Staël, Flora Tristan, and Isabelle Eberhardt, became the literary site where women writers could confront political issues in a creative setting.

When Staël, Tristan, and Eberhardt took up the novelogue, they entered into a political and theoretical dialogue with their fellow citizens, other writers, social and literary critics, and the world at large. Their works addressed social issues of gender (in)equality, national freedom, and human rights and therein helped to effect social change in the world around them by introducing alternative societal possibilities and even utopias. While these women writers sometimes limited themselves to the rules of both the literary and social status quo, they nevertheless took on pioneering roles by daring to address such topics and making public their female voices of dissent.

Most contemporary cultural critics read the works of Staël, Tristan, and Eberhardt through the lens of postcolonial theory. While there has been a great deal of literary criticism that focuses on the importance of the colonial(ist) perspective in travel literature, contemporary critics have not fully concentrated on the role that women travel writers, in particular, occupied in the colonial period. Edward Said's *Orientalism* first introduced the concept that the East is a construct of the West and that Orientalism is a discourse used to distinguish between "us" and "them." In his introduction he explains:

³ Mary Louise Pratt discusses this term, coined by Marie-Claire Hooock-Demarle, in her work *Imperial Eyes*, 160.

Orientalism is ... a collective notion identifying “us” Europeans as against all “those” non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness... (7)

It is due to Said’s pioneering efforts that today we may complicate this issue by examining it from a feminist angle, seeing how the “us” and “them” binary relates to the “masculine” and “feminine” binary.

Alan Richardson helps readers connect the “masculine” and “feminine” binary to postcolonial theory in an article entitled “Romanticism and the Colonization of the Feminine.” In this study, he borrows the term “colonization” to illustrate how the male Romantic poet appropriated, or “colonized,” traditionally feminine traits to become a better, more “feeling” poet. His work, however, does not take into account the question of nation that will be addressed in this study. Although Mary Louise Pratt looks primarily at non-fictional works, her contributions can also be used in examining the novelogue. Pratt uses the term “autoethnography” to examine the colonized Other’s response to the colonizer. She defines an auto-ethnographic text as one:

... in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them... autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defined others construct *in response to* or in dialogue with those texts. (“Transculturation” 28, emphasis is Pratt’s)

She also addresses German critic Marie-Claire Hock-Demarle’s notion of the *exploratrice sociale*, which deals with the concept of women travelers who voyage in search of solutions to global social problems. The connection, though, between the *exploratrice sociale* and autoethnography complicates the issue. If we accept Richardson’s theory of women as colonized others, then we can also look at their writing as a form of autoethnography if it discusses the “woman question.” If, however, the autoethnographer takes up her own ethnography of another Other, we must carefully examine where her text contradicts, questions, and enters into dialogue with the colonizer, and where it upholds the status quo.

While Pratt introduces the question of gender in relation to nation, it is Ann McClintock who really opens up the field in her work *Imperial Leather*, illustrating that gender (in addition to race and class) helped shape Britain's imperial project. Both Bénédicte Monicat and McClintock look more closely at the relationship between women and the colonized, or exotic, and discuss how gender roles play an integral part in the defining of national identity. Monicat explains the historical importance of women in nation-building thusly:

Si la civilisation est donc définie en grande partie par les progrès techniques et scientifiques dont les hommes ont la charge, ses valeurs sont partagées par les voyageuses. Qui plus est, les femmes elles-mêmes s'arrogent un rôle majeur dans leur propagation. En effet, la civilisation est également, et peut-être surtout définie par le rôle moral qui est censé être le fait de la femme. (54)

Monicat, then, recognizes the important effect that women of the nineteenth century had on the development of their civilization's identity and brings us full circle in our historical critical analysis. For this study, therefore, we will rely on this understanding of women's place in societal development as the well from which the writers of the novelogue felt that they could draw the ability to enter into dialogue with the very civilization they helped create.

The difficulty that women writers of this period encountered, as already mentioned, was to find a genre through which they could acceptably communicate their visions for a better society. The genre that they found/created was the novelogue. Germaine de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807) portrays an idealized version of a nation that is organic in nature in that it conscientiously reflects the needs of its people. She attempts to illustrate that culture, art, and literature have no need of state interference and that these cultural creations, when left to the determination of a free and uninhibited people, will indeed be more powerful and beautiful than if created under an oppressive state figurehead like Napoleon. Her nineteenth-century readers, however, found it impossible to imagine a multinational cultural identity, and therefore her work was and still is often criticized for its lack of traditional form. For example, Simone Balayé discusses a lack of continuity in the form of *Corinne*:

De temps en temps, Mme de Staël prend la parole elle-même et non comme l'auteur du roman ; elle semble alors oublier qu'elle écrit un roman en prenant à son compte des descriptions, des espèces de monologues à l'intérieur même

des conversations, ou encore de véritables dissertations critiques qui ne paraissent pas toujours conformes à ce que serait leur fonction dans ce cadre ; nombreux discours-monologues de l'héroïne à Oswald par exemple, qui dépassent un peu l'initiation orale sans être toujours justifiés par les élans poétiques, oratoires de Corinne ; discours plus écrits que parlés. On relève souvent de ces ruptures de ton, qui retirent de son unité interne au roman. Toutes les fois que le discours cesse de tenir son rôle dans l'économie romanesque, il cesse de concourir à l'effet d'ensemble ; il produit comme une fausse note. C'est un défaut qui apparaît dans *Corinne* : Mme de Staël s'est trop intéressée à la découverte qu'elle faisait de l'Italie ; elle a constaté l'ignorance du public français et s'est laissée emporter quelquefois dans des analyses approfondies qui coupent un peu l'intérêt du roman proprement dit, pris pour véhicule d'une foule d'idées. Mme de Staël n'a pas la partie facile dans la mesure où elle ne parvient ni à sacrifier la réflexion politique ou esthétique, ni à l'intégrer entièrement. (L&L 139)

Balayé's critique illustrates a typical single-genre reading – she cannot see that the work should not be read only as a novel, but also as a travelogue. In an article that appeared in the *Magasin Encyclopédique, ou Journal des sciences, des lettres et des arts* in 1807, an anonymous critic expresses a similar distaste for generic heterogeneity:

Le voyage en Italie est la partie la moins intéressante de l'ouvrage, quoique l'auteur l'ait toujours lié le plus possible à l'action : mais elle l'interrompt trop. Il y a pourtant des détails charmans, qui tiennent au site et à la localité, et qu'on ne sauroit supprimer, sans ôter un grand charme répandu dans l'ouvrage. (465)

Again, this reader finds it hard to accept the multiple genres at work in Staël's text and therefore sees the travelogue interludes in the text as uninteresting. Even though this critic finds the travel details charming, s/he cannot fully appreciate them since the text is being read only as a novel. Critics have also labeled the work as neither novel nor travelogue, but as autobiography. Balayé, for example, writes the following about both of Staël's novels in *Madame de Staël: Écrire, Lutter, Vivre*:

Ainsi peut-on considérer sous l'angle autobiographique les héroïnes de ses pièces et des romans de sa jeunesse et de sa maturité, les femmes de *Delphine* et de *Corinne*, ce qu'elle dit d'elles dans *De l'Allemagne* et *De la littérature*, où s'exprime la souffrance des femmes écrivains, c'est-à-dire la sienne propre. (27)

The danger, though, of reading a novel as autobiography remains a critical pitfall that we must try to avoid. To read the text in such a fashion categorically undermines any creative genius on Staël's part.

If we read this text as a novelogue, however, it is enriched by the journalistic descriptions of the Italian countryside and thus the author not only clearly illustrates the type of place in which this story takes place, but also enlightens the reader as to the formation of Corinne's character, personality, and values. Madelyn Gutwirth explains:

So it is that places are to some extent integrated with the plot, but no outline could pretend to contain the travelogue, because it is everywhere in the work. If we think of the great cities alone, Mme de Staël has been truly skillful in depicting something of their spirit. Rome is the place of triumph; Naples, flower of the south – 'that happy countryside' – is the place of love's fulfillment, but Vesuvius is there at hand to threaten it; Venice is the frayed grandeur of a noble but fragile past, a fittingly melancholy setting for the parting of the lovers; and Florence, barely breathing in its quiet contemplation of its violent history, is an appropriate frame for Corinne's death. (*Madame de Staël, Novelist* 184-5)

Gutwirth here calls to mind Atkinson's definition of ethnography as "a morality tale, a high drama [. . .] a rural idyll" and highlights for us the interrelation between ethnography and fictional narrative. Clearly, this work requires more than one genre to accomplish its story, and it is the contention of this study that the novelogue was the most appropriate generic form available to Staël.

While the generic choice that Staël made is of significant importance in this study, the aftermath of such a choice is what enables her to tell her cosmopolitan tale. The dual generic nature of the novelogue allows her to instigate a discussion of the limitations that categorizations necessarily impinge on creative works. If readers cannot accept Staël's

generic choices because they do not fall into a singular category, how can they accept the complex and multifaceted depictions of nation and gender that Staël introduces? Another way, then, to understand this tactic is to see that it is her generic choice that creates an arena in which she can question not only literary categorizations, but social ones as well. Staël unapologetically writes a character, Corinne, who, like the novelogue itself, is composed of dual genres, so to speak. Corinne is feminine and masculine, Italian and English. The rules of one category are not sufficient for this character, and therefore Staël makes her more than one to illustrate the fallibility of categorical generalizations and to give the world an example of what can happen if society embraces complete freedom and individuality.

The ultimate result of *Corinne ou l'Italie* is, like its genre, complex and difficult to pin down into one particular reading. For the purposes of this study, however, it is this very multifaceted aspect that makes the work such a compelling subject. Corinne, by being both Italian and English, embodies characteristics of those nationalities that were considered typical and, of even more importance, contradictory in the nineteenth century. Other Europeans thought of the Italians in very exotic terms – untamed, free-spirited, artistic, lawless, and even lazy. The English, on the other hand, were regarded as the opposite of the Italians, being staid, formal, demure, law-abiding, and productive. Because of these obviously contradictory nationalities at work in Corinne, the reader encounters a character who exemplifies Staël's image of perfect cosmopolitanism. Corinne is not limited by national identity and is therefore a more complex character with limitless opportunities.

Corinne's gender, like her nationality (and somewhat because of it), also incorporates both sides of a binary opposition. She is both masculine and feminine. Issues of gender and nation are imbricated such that Italy, as the representation of the exotic, is feminine, and England, as Italy's opposite, is masculine. While this reading is a bit simplistic and does not always hold true, it is a good place to begin our analysis in that it draws a connection between the nation and gender issues. The point that Staël ultimately makes in this work in regard to gender, though, is a sobering one. For while Corinne's dual nationality allows her to become an exceptional person of great renown, her gendered duality in the end leads to her downfall and death. The connection, however, that Staël has drawn between nation and gender also forces the reader to see Corinne's death as a result of her national "impurity." By

being both British and Italian, Corinne cannot live up to the notion of ideal femininity that is present in the purely English woman and in the end is punished for this duality.

Flora Tristan takes up the novelogue in her work *Pérégrinations d'une paria*, published in 1838. While almost always read as either autobiography or ethnography, that is, non-fiction, Tristan's work nonetheless fits the generic requirements of the novelogue. The traditional line drawn between fiction and non-fiction does not have the same importance for the novelogue as works in other, defined genres of the nineteenth century. The necessary ambiguity that exists in the novelogue requires a contact zone between fiction and non-fiction and allows us as readers to see yet another in-between space in this genre. The tone of Tristan's work, for example, is often considered to be fictitious, and therefore to be taken with the proverbial grain of salt when it comes to her descriptions of the encounters she has with others. Jules Puech, for example, in one of the first works to appear about Tristan's life and writings, makes the following observation:

Inédit, le journal intime que Flora Tristan semble avoir rédigé toute sa vie ne nous est pas parvenu dans son ensemble; elle en a utilisé une partie dans certains de ses livres, mais c'est ici qu'il convient de se montrer circonspect et quelque peu sceptique; la véracité de Flora Tristan y apparaît parfois douteuse; sa mentalité, son sexe, son tempérament, les circonstances la portent trop souvent à voir la réalité sous un angle qui peut-être la déforme. (II)

What Puech reads as Tristan's embellishments of her life and travels, therefore, will be read in this study as the novelistic elements of her novelogue. Far from being a critique of her work, then, these very embellishments support the argument that Tristan conscientiously chose this genre so as to posit her theories of society's problems. The novelistic element of the work allows her to tell her inspiring and fascinating story, and the travelogue element lends a feeling of validity and veracity to the text. Again, rather than being something that detracts from the work's creative success, this multiplicity allows for a more open discussion of politics, gender issues, and Tristan's own personal dilemmas.

Consider, for example, the emotional tone of her work, not considered a common theme in travelogues of the time. Pratt has argued that Tristan sentimentalizes her role as the voice for the downtrodden in her explorations (162-63). Sandra Dijkstra also holds this viewpoint: "Her self-image underwent change in the decade for which she left a written

record, 1835-44, but true to romantic fashion, it can be characterized as ‘exalted’ throughout” (14). Once more, then, sentimentalism, emotionalism, and romanticism can all be read as novelistic elements of the work that further the telling of Tristan’s story of social justice.

Stéphane Michaud, on the other hand, interprets the multiplicity of her style as detrimental to her works. He writes:

Flora n’eut jamais une chambre à soi ni cette liberté qui fait le jugement serein et, selon l’expression de Virginia Woolf, les génies androgynes. Elle ne polit pas ses phrases. Corrige-t-elle même ce qu’elle écrit dans la solitude de sa mansarde londonienne et des modestes chambres d’hôtel du *Tour de France* ? On peut en douter. (*Muse et Madone* 171)

What Michaud does not comment on, however, is that for Tristan the most important and perhaps the only reason for her work is didactic. Her work, much like Staël’s, uses the heroine’s story to argue for women’s rights and freedom. As Pratt explains, “the exploratrices emplot quests for self-realization and fantasies of social harmony” (168). In keeping with the mission of the *exploratrice sociale*, Tristan combines the personal with the political, and uses a genre that reflects this duality, the novelogue, to do so.

The implications of *Pérégrinations*’ non-fictional status are substantial in that the narrator’s voice in this work appears to echo the author’s voice, but to conflate these two voices presents its own set of limitations on the fictional dimension of the novelogue. Christine Planté addresses this question in her article “Flora Tristan, écrivain méconnu?” when she writes: “En effet, parce que ce récit est référentiel, partant du réel, il pourra agir sur lui, contribuant à une œuvre [. . .] de dénonciation des injustices et de moralisation des rapports sociaux” (189). In other words, by distancing herself from her subject matter both physically and through writing, Tristan’s text is separated from the “real” and becomes “referential,” much like any work of fiction that is to be read in an historical context. The telling of the story, then, acts on the story and even becomes part of the story. We can and should, therefore, examine how Tristan the narrator – through the telling of this particular story – deals with the issues of nation and gender. The theme of conflation, then, present in the author/narrator issue continues throughout the text as the personal and the political, and fiction and non-fiction meld together in a study of nation and gender.

Like the approach to Staël's text, the approach to Tristan's text focuses on her message. As an *exploratrice sociale*, her goal is to call attention to universal social problems by depicting her own personal difficulties. Tristan addresses the question of nation through her search for her own national identity. Her entire work has the character of a Bildungsroman, and the tone of self-discovery, maturity, and growth cannot be overlooked. As the daughter of a French mother and a Spaniard father whose family participated in the colonization of Peru, Tristan's national identity is difficult to label. After her father's untimely death left Tristan and her mother destitute, Tristan began to realize that her national identity problems were more complex than she had realized. Her parents had married in Spain, but the priest never filed the proper paper work for their marriage to be recognized by the state. When Tristan finally decided therefore to ask her father's family in Peru for financial help, they refused her, citing her illegitimacy as the reason. In spite of this refusal, Tristan nevertheless profited from her contact with her Peruvian relations in that, to make the request, she traveled to Peru, met her father's family, and finally came into her own very unique identity. Whereas Corinne embraced her multi-nationality from the beginning of the work, Tristan spends much of her work wavering between aligning herself with one nationality or another. At times she claims to be uniquely French, Spanish, and even Peruvian. The end result, though, like that in *Corinne*, is that Tristan finds a freedom in embracing all aspects of her national identities that allows her to comment on European society at large. Upon her return to France, after she has accepted this identity, she goes on to become the person that we now know as "l'ancêtre du mouvement féministe et du socialisme ouvrier" (Puech I). The personal development she undergoes, however, seems more of an afterthought to Tristan than her purpose for writing. As a true *exploratrice sociale* she simply uses her personal story as the reason behind her travels and as the framework for her analysis of the people and events she observes.

The gender question in Tristan's work, as in Staël's, is closely linked to nation issues. For example, she discusses problems of slavery and divorce by relating them to her own personal battle to free herself from an abusive husband. Her presentation of women in her text, while always done from a defender's point of view, usually reverts back to a national hierarchy. In other words, Tristan often tends to place African, Spanish, and indigenous Peruvian women on a lower rung than French "civilized" and "developed" women. For

Tristan, therefore, national ranking supercedes the elevated intelligence and moral fiber that she believes all women to have over men. Tristan's Western national indoctrination makes it difficult for her to see as equal all women, much less all people. Inconsistencies in point of view, then, mirror her personal indeterminacy with regard to both nation and gender.

As the nineteenth century nears its conclusion, Isabelle Eberhardt also takes up the novelogue as her genre of choice in her work *Trimardeur*. Eberhardt tells the tale of a young Russian, Dmitri, who, like Tristan, tries to come to terms with his identity as he sets off on a journey that will eventually lead him to the Sahara. The text, usually read as a novel, fits the novelogue genre in much the same way as Staël's text. There are long, picaresque portraits of the Russian steppe and the Saharan desert that lend the work the feel of a traveler's notes, all the while furthering the storyline by using these landscapes to explain Dmitri's personality. If we borrow from Gutwirth's description of places being directly linked to events in *Corinne*, we see that the same holds true in *Trimardeur*. For example, l'île Goutouyew, the seedy side of Petersburg and the place of lost souls, so to speak, is where Dmitri begins his own search for a place of belonging. Upon his father's death, he returns home to the Russian steppe – a place of cold, dry openness that is a fitting setting for the opening of his mind toward a life of travel and vagabondage. The neutral Geneva represents an attachment to two contrasting ways of life – his life as a revolutionary student and his life as a vagabond – and a refusal to accept one or the other, to make a decision about which life he wants to lead. The border town of Marseille perfectly symbolizes the final border that Dmitri must cross, to enter into his ultimate place of belonging: Algeria. And finally, Algeria and the Sahara, the place of wandering nomads, are there as the ideal home for this vagabond. Clearly, then, for Eberhardt, the role of travel and places in her work are integrated into the novel itself.

Also, like her predecessors, Eberhardt tells a story that can only be recounted through the novelogue genre. She tells the story of her own utopia where national identity no longer carries importance and ultimate freedom is found when those national categorizations fade away. The majority of critical work written on Eberhardt has to do with her travel journals

and short stories.⁴ Very little critical writing has been generated on *Trimardeur*. Regardless, the fact remains that *Trimardeur* is indeed a no velogue and was the logical choice for Eberhardt when tackling the message she wanted to convey.

Her portrayal of vagabondage as an answer to the growing importance of nationalism in the western world illustrates Eberhardt's personal views on national identity. Her text appears on the scene in direct defiance of France's colonial project in North Africa. As a Swiss national with Russian parents, she obviously drew on her own experiences to create the character Dmitri. Unlike Staël and Tristan, however, Eberhardt denies any sort of national identity – even a multi-national one – and instead proposes a nihilistic refutation of national identity, in line with the literary movement of nihilism that undoubtedly influenced her. This choice also reflects the changing role of nationalism at the end of the nineteenth century and the important effect that colonialist policies had on her social view of the world. For whereas Staël and Tristan still believed in the inherent value of the nation state, Eberhardt saw firsthand what she viewed to be the negative result of France's presence in North Africa. She witnessed the French denigration of Islam and its practitioners, the compromising position that Algerians of French nationality were forced to occupy, and the French expropriation of Algerian resources. Even so, as an *exploratrice sociale*, she, like her predecessors, hopes to enlighten her readers about the inequity and inhumanity at work in the world.

The gender question in Eberhardt's text also illustrates the changing literary scene in which she participated. The dawn of modernism and nihilism and their corresponding representations of women can be seen quite plainly in her works. It is as if she conscientiously undertook to undo the work of Staël and Eberhardt, portraying women not as capable of possessing both masculinity and femininity (and thereby possessing great freedom), but rather as great hindrances to men's efforts to advance themselves. Eberhardt's text instead accords her vision of ultimate freedom only to men. While it may be tempting to read the text in light of the life she led, we must as critical readers avoid this pitfall and acknowledge the possible gap between her life and her life-writing. For even though she lived as an Algerian man and refused to be seen as a Muslim woman, we cannot read Dmitri

⁴ See, for example, Paul Bowles's introduction to his translation *The Oblivion Seekers*, Denise Brahim's, *L'Oued et la Zaouïa*, Françoise D'Eaubonne's, *La Couronne de Sable*, and Annette Kobak's, *Isabelle, the life of Isabelle Eberhardt*.

as Eberhardt. Just as critics have wrongly read Corinne as an idealized portrait of Staël, we would also be wrong to do the same with Eberhardt. The fact is that we only have her writings to speak to her views on gender, and the works tell us of a role for women that Eberhardt found unacceptable for herself. The end result, then, of *Trimardeur* is twofold. It illustrates the enduring and evolving state of the novelogue on the one hand, and it represents the world's changing views of nation and gender on the other. Eberhardt's message, though, remains a criticism of colonialism and a call for complete personal freedom.

In conclusion, this study will show how Staël, Tristan, and Eberhardt took on issues of grave social importance through a genre of their own invention. Through efforts to create spaces of indeterminacy in between previously accepted binary oppositions – and in Eberhardt's case, to do away completely with those binarisms – these writers show us their own very personal views of utopia. The examples cited here, however, only scratch the surface of the stimulating themes that lie in the in-between spaces of Staël's, Tristan's, and Eberhardt's works. Only by delving deeper into these spaces can we begin to understand the opportunities that this genre afforded women writers. We will see that their works, while sometimes contradictory and often complicated, strive to change the world.

Et ce qu'il vous plaît d'appeler en moi de la magie, c'est un naturel sans contrainte qui laisse voir quelquefois des sentiments divers et des pensées opposées, sans travailler à les mettre d'accord; car cet accord, quand il existe, est presque toujours factice, et la plupart des caractères vrais sont inconséquents.
(*Corinne writing to Oswald, 159*)

Chapter 1: Germaine de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie*

Germaine de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* portrays a utopian vision of feminine empowerment and creativity. The work embodies the possibility of drastic social change for women by depicting ambiguity at the levels of genre, nation, and gender. As Corinne remarks above, a lack of "accord" in one's thoughts and feelings does not ensue from magic, as Oswald would hold, but rather from a natural ambiguity present in all people of "consequence." This ambiguity, therefore, accounts for Corinne's freedom and yet also explains her eventual destruction by a rigid society that cannot accept her undefined status.

To explore the ambiguity that exists in the novelogue, I will one by one discuss the terms nation and gender as they appear in the work. While separating these issues seemingly simplifies the interrelatedness of the terms, we will see that this separation is not always possible. Therefore, by examining each term individually, I will also show that nation and gender are inextricably connected. Moreover, by deconstructing the universal binarism of self/other, this study will equally deconstruct the oppositions that exist between colonizer and colonized, masculine and feminine, and fiction and non-fiction. I will discuss the relationship between Corinne and Oswald using the terms "colonization" and "ambivalence," two terms of postcolonial theory, to illustrate how Mme de Staël conscientiously blurs the barriers that separate what have traditionally been considered binary oppositions and opens up an "in-between" space. In the same vein, I will also show that her efforts to break down these oppositions are often irregular and sporadic, thus leading to contradictions that allow her characters to cross previously taboo boundary lines. These contradictions have traditionally frustrated those critics who search to neatly categorize *Corinne* in terms of its gendered and national identity and its generic categorization.

The importance then of this study is that it allows for more freedom in the reading of *Corinne* by embracing the in-between space that the work inhabits, and justifies the lack of a fixed categorization of the work. The very duality of the work's genre – both novel and travelogue – is reflected in the characters in the work who also occupy a space of duality by taking on dual nationalities and genders. Therefore, instead of condemning the multifaceted nature of *Corinne* as hesitant and indecisive, this reading embraces its different sides while still taking into consideration the possible pitfalls of ambiguity.

Nation

Due in part to the hybridity of genre in *Corinne ou l'Italie*, it is not easy to label Corinne's national identity. By simply introducing a hybrid genre, the possibility for national hybridity becomes more plausible and logical. In other words, it is the very dual style of the work that allows Corinne to belong to and embody more than one nation in that the travelogue itself is multifaceted, thus laying the groundwork for multiple ideologies and viewpoints. With the reader's mind already receptive to different possibilities because of having to negotiate the text's hybridic genre, the complexity of Corinne's national identity is less shocking. While critics have regularly concluded that Corinne *is* Italy,¹ the question that I would like to introduce here is not simply one of representation (What/Who is Italy? England? France?), but rather, what does the portrayal of these nations show and teach us about the budding notions of nation that were directly related to the role of colonialism and colonization. For as France and other Western-European countries began their colonial expansions, their national identities came to be self-defined in opposition to the colonies that were seen as "Other" and "exotic." While we cannot truly look at this text as a "post-colonial" text, we can and should still use a post-colonial lexicon in this study since nation building is a key category within post-colonial studies. Moreover, Italy in the early nineteenth century was a grouping of city-states on the cusp of nationhood. Throughout this study, then, I will take into account terms borrowed from post-colonial studies such as "exploratrice sociale," "autoethnography," and "ambivalence" to demonstrate that *Corinne*, in addition to and perhaps in spite of its political and social agendas, clearly illustrates the

¹ Marie-Claire Vallois states: "Italy is the metaphorical double of the heroine" ("Old Idols" 89).

conflicting questions of nation that faced Germaine de Staël at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Staël's National Identity

On a very personal level, the question of nation plays an important role in Staël's own life. There are several reasons for this interest, the first of which is Staël's own national identity. As someone who was born in Geneva, banned from Paris, lived in Germany, and traveled extensively throughout Europe, Staël, understandably, suffers from somewhat of her own "nationality crisis." To which nationality does she belong? France claims her (now) as she is seen today to be one of Europe's most influential Romantic writers and political thinkers and is included in the academic canon of French literature. The exile that Napoleon imposed on her leads to another reason that nation was an important issue to her, for exile in its essence brings to mind the issues of belonging and exclusion that go along with nation. While Napoleon banned Staël only from Paris, enforcing an internal exile, or *relégation*, it is still somewhat of a national exile in that Paris is the capital – he forced her to leave her "country" of Paris, the place she considered home. Therefore, as a result of this forced exile, she found herself trapped in a nomadic life that had the potential of stifling her and leading to her death because for her "il n'est pire torture que de vivre hors de sa patrie, loin des siens" (Balayé, ELV 48). Clearly then, Staël understands the importance of national identity and its loss – her very being is connected to Paris, and without the place that represents so much of who she is, she feels lost and deprived of that identity. Exile for Staël, then, represents a loss, a displacement, of nation and consequentially of self.

Both during and before her exile, Staël also took part in numerous voyages to England, Germany, and Italy. During these voyages she began comparing France to other European countries, examining the way other countries dealt with their political and social problems. Upon making these observations, she often took to writing them down, and it is from these journeys that such works as *De l'Allemagne* and *Corinne ou l'Italie* were born. Balayé, in her collection *Les carnets de voyage de Madame de Staël* discusses Staël's desire to travel: "Mme de Staël a une curiosité insatiable des autres peuples, des hommes et des

idées. Elle pense aussi qu'on ne peut parler d'un pays sans le connaître dans sa vie physique [. . .]" (15).

Finally, Staël's very international salon exemplifies the importance of the nation question to her. In Balayé's introduction to *Corinne ou l'Italie*, the reader learns that Staël's salon brought together men and women of letters and politicians alike from England, Germany, Italy, and France (8). Obviously, this international circle of hers would have caused an active interest in her friends' cultures, languages, traditions, etc., and, as Balayé mentions, a great disdain for the inherently exclusive nature of nation. For, as with any group, that which unites its members also excludes others. Understandably, then, Staël calls into question the necessity of a singular national identity in *Corinne*. Her two main characters, Corinne and Oswald, both have dual nationalities: Corinne is English and Italian while Oswald is Scottish and English. This purposely constructed dual nationality expands the identity of these two characters and we will see that it illustrates the resulting richness and complexity of their personalities, thereby counseling the reader to be conscious of the limitations of nationality. Staël further illustrates the importance of an unrestricted national identity by juxtaposing the free, open-minded Italy to the inhibiting, narrow-minded France.

Representation of France

The role of France in *Corinne ou l'Italie* cannot be overlooked due to the fact that the work is indeed one of French literature and appeared during Napoleon's time as Emperor. Moreover, the part that France and French people play in the work further proves the point that national boundaries can greatly limit the free expression and exchange of ideas. The Comte d'Erfeuil is one of the most important secondary characters in the work and is Staël's portrayal of the typical Frenchman. He is frivolous, egotistical, and *chauvin*. Upon first meeting him, he announces to Oswald: "...je n'aime, en fait de nation, que les Anglais et les Français; il faut être fiers comme eux, ou brillants comme nous; tout le reste n'est que de l'imitation" (9). Regularly throughout the work he boasts of his or of his country's greatness at the expense of others. He is proud, vain, and overblown. Still, his innate goodness does come out sporadically. The narrator explains that "le comte d'Erfeuil en conversation aimait beaucoup mieux montrer de l'esprit que de la bonté. Sa bienveillance naturelle influait sur

ses actions, mais son amour-propre sur ses paroles” (180). At several times in the work, though, the reader witnesses his kindness. He comes across as someone with the kindest of hearts who, in spite of his goodness, blunders through social events, offending all without meaning to do so. At the beginning, we learn of his devoted service to his elderly uncle. Upon the death of this uncle, Erfeuil decides to go to Rome “pour y retrouver un de ses parents dont il devait hériter [. . .]” (34), which allows him to meet Oswald.

Erfeuil’s main purpose in the work is to present the ideas of the average Frenchman about nation and gender. By playing a rather buffoon-like character, he stands in for the absurd idea that the French way is the only way. In other words, this character whom the narrator makes fun of epitomizes the simplistic ideas about nation and gender attributed to the French. He stands in complete opposition to what Corinne represents – a multilingual, culturally diverse, and open-minded woman. For instance, before traveling from Germany to Italy, Erfeuil thanks Oswald for taking him out of “cette Allemagne où je m’ennuyais à périr” (34-5). Then, on the way to Italy, Oswald asks him if he is looking forward to this trip to Rome. He responds by saying:

Mon Dieu [. . .] je sais ce qu’il faut croire de ce pays-là, je ne m’attends pas du tout à m’y amuser. Un de mes amis, qui y a passé six mois, m’a dit qu’il n’y avait pas de province de France où il n’y eût un meilleur théâtre et une société plus agréable qu’à Rome; mais dans cette ancienne capitale du monde, je trouverai sûrement quelques Français avec qui causer, et c’est tout ce que je désire. (36)

Clearly Erfeuil, unlike his friend before him, expects nothing good from Italy and believes that while there may be worthwhile aspects to Italy’s culture, he would be much happier to simply “causer” with a fellow Frenchman.

Additionally, Erfeuil refuses to learn any other languages. It is unclear whether or not he speaks English, but he certainly does not speak German or Italian, the languages of the two countries through which he is traveling. Prince Castel-Forte, an Italian, calls him and his country to task for this monolingualism during a discussion in which Erfeuil insists on the perfection of French literature and claims that French art should not be “contaminated” by foreign influences. Castel-Forte responds to him saying:

Il me semble que nous avons tous besoin les uns des autres; la littérature de chaque pays découvre, à qui sait la connaître, une nouvelle sphère d'idées. C'est Charles-Quint lui même qui a dit qu'*un homme qui sait quatre langues vaut quatre hommes*. Si ce grand génie politique en jugeait ainsi pour les affaires, combien cela n'est-il pas plus vrai pour les lettres? Les étrangers savent tous le français, ainsi leur point de vue est plus étendu que celui des Français qui ne savent pas les langues étrangères. Pourquoi ne se donnent-ils pas plus souvent la peine de les apprendre ? ils conserveraient ce qui les distingue, et découvriraient ainsi quelquefois ce qui peut leur manquer. (177)

Clearly Castel-Forte critiques the singularity that he sees in France; he believes that all people should strive to learn other languages and study others' literature and ideas. As Giulia Pacini points out in her article "Hidden Politics in Germaine de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie*," "the chapter is brought to an end at this point, and his [Castel-Forte's] comments are thereby granted a particular weight" (168). In other words, this very clever criticism of France by Castel-Forte allows the text to have the last word on the subject of France's isolationist practices. Here, the reader witnesses a sort of reverse civilizing project. Castel-Forte criticizes France – an established nation and empire – for its "uncivilized" attitudes towards other countries. Staël deflects the virulence and risks of this anti-French critique by using her character as spokesperson. The text, therefore, indirectly shields itself from the censorship of Napoleon.² Through this strategy the text not only permits Staël her critique of France, but it also gives a voice to Italy, allowing it to speak out to its powerful and menacing French neighbor. This issue, then, leads us to the question of colonization.

Where does France fit into the question of colonizer/colonized? Based on what we have just seen, it seems obvious that Italy is the colonized and France the colonizer. The novel's action takes place from 1794-95, before Napoleon declared himself emperor of Italy. Regardless, the text makes a very persuasive argument that Italy has no need for Napoleon or for France. Corinne spends many pages discussing the Italian character, extolling the virtues of Italian arts and literature, and explaining what Italy must do to return to her former glory –

² Staël's volatile history with Napoleon and the fact that he had her exiled from Paris caused him to pay close attention to the works she published. More information on this subject can be found in Doris Kadish's article "Narrating the French Revolution: The Example of *Corinne*" in Gutwirth, Goldberger and Szmurlo, 113-21.

not once mentioning a need for international interference, nor that Italy should give up her sovereignty and become a French colony. Corinne's discourse here qualifies as autoethnography – a response to the colonizer – in that she responds to France's desire to occupy Italy, to colonize Italy and make it French. She enters into a responsive dialogue with France, answering the claim that Italy needs France's intervention. In *Corinne ou l'Italie*, therefore, Corinne's numerous and lengthy discourses on Italy's greatness are an autoethnographic response to the French colonizer, cached in her introduction of the country to Oswald. France, then, represents the threat of imposed order and rigidity in Italy and the absurdity of such a change in a country that prides itself on its freedom.

Contrasts between England and Italy

The more dominant presentation of nation in the work comes to the forefront of course in the presentation of England/Scotland and Italy. Staël intentionally juxtaposes these nations so as to illustrate the two sides of the binary opposition – England is rigid and Italy is free. The mixed nationalities of the two main characters, however, complicate this polarization. Corinne is both English and Italian, and Oswald, while Scottish, is depicted as being of English character. The combination of opposing nationalities in Corinne and the quasi-dual national status attributed to Oswald promote the overall theme of the work that such categorizations are limiting and ineffective.

Due to the political conflicts of the time between England and France, it was much safer for Staël to have her hero hail from Scotland rather than England. In so doing, she allowed him to have an “English” character without causing offense to French readers. As April Alliston points out in her article “Of Haunted Highlands: Mapping a Geography of Gender in the Margins of Europe”: “Scotland is here [. . .] politically indistinguishable from England, and is sometimes referred to as *Angleterre*” (72). Therefore, the text has a “typically English” character but in the guise of a Scotsman. This displacement presents even more problems for what are we witnessing here if not another colonization? It is at this juncture that the project starts to undermine itself. While touting the evils of French Imperialism, it glosses over the same evils present in British Imperialism. Why is it

permissible for England to colonize Scotland and yet not for France to colonize Italy?³ It seems that the text sacrifices one colonized state for the good of another. Even so, Oswald embodies the Empire rather than the colony. His role in this work is one of Imperial mastery rather than of colonial victimization. In other words, Oswald is not presented as the underrepresented voice of Scotland, but rather as the traveler from the United Kingdom who is touring through Italy and observing the country with the eyes of a British explorer. It could be that, because the English and the Scots both speak the same language, this equating of English for Scottish is permissible. Perhaps this contradiction exists merely because Oswald's dual nationality allows the plot to develop as planned. Regardless, the fact remains that the text establishes early on a direct opposition between England/Scotland and Italy, thereby illustrating the common thinking of the time.

To further signify the opposition between England/Scotland and Italy, the text relies on the dynamic of civilized versus uncivilized, even though the uncivilized is only hinted at or symbolically present. We see this dynamic in references to the exotic, the untamed, or the inferiority of anyone who is not British or French. Take, for example, the Comte d'Erfeuil's comment mentioned above. As he so plainly put it, Italy is not even worth mentioning except as an imitation of the greatness of France and England. Not only is it not worth mentioning, it is seen by both Erfeuil and Oswald as uncivilized, uncontrolled, and trapped in its past. Oswald's encounter with the people of Ancone introduces us for the first time to the opposition that exists between the English and the Italians. With the city ablaze, only Oswald remains calm. The Italians, however, "couchés par terre dans les rues, couvraient leurs têtes de leurs manteaux, comme s'il ne leur restait plus rien à faire qu'à ne pas voir leur désastre, d'autres se jetaient dans les flammes sans la moindre espérance d'y échapper: on voyait tour à tour une fureur et une résignation aveugle, mais nulle part le sang-froid qui double les moyens et les forces" (41). The only thing missing here is to say outright: "le sang-froid que l'on trouve chez Oswald, l'Écossais." For indeed only Oswald keeps his head and saves the city with the pumps found on the *English* boats. The superstitious Italians, however, see Oswald as an angel rather than a quick thinker and begin to ask him to work

³ While the union between England and Scotland was a "peaceful" one, the history of conflict between the two calls to mind similar issues of colonial power much like those we witness between France and Italy.

miracles. Oswald's first impression of Italians, therefore, underscores an image of them as childlike, superstitious, and cowardly.

Oswald only alters his opinion of the Italians (specifically the women) when he meets Corinne: "Oswald avait beaucoup de préventions contre les Italiennes; il les croyait passionnées, mais mobiles, mais [sic] incapables d'éprouver des affections profondes et durables. Déjà ce que Corinne avait dit au Capitole lui avait inspiré toute une autre idée [. . .]" (69). The Comte d'Erfeuil, however, simply uses Corinne's exceptionality to further illustrate his point that Italians, on the whole, are uncivilized. Take, for example, his explanation about how Corinne could still be single: "il se peut qu'elle n'ait pas rencontré dans ce pays un homme digne d'elle, cela ne m'étonnera pas" (72). Again, only an Englishman or a Frenchman could truly satisfy this awe-inspiring woman. The uncivilized Italians are not worthy of her. Even the narrator tends to give a negative view of the Italians when she writes: "L'indolence des Italiens les porte à ne point montrer en société, ni souvent d'aucune manière, tout l'esprit qu'ils ont. La plupart entre eux ne cultivent pas même dans la retraite les facultés intellectuelles que la nature leur a données; mais ils jouissent avec transport de ce qui leur vient sans peine" (75). The language used here by the narrator indicates a disdain for this lazy people who, even "dans la retraite," have no interest in their natural "facultés intellectuelles," but prefer "l'indolence" and "ce qui leur vient sans peine."

The intrigue comes when we meet Corinne. For here is a woman who is beauty, elegance, grace, and intelligence personified. And she is Italian. At least we are led to think she is Italian. Even at our first meeting of Corinne, a shroud of mystery concerning her identity envelops her. We do not know her origins or her patronym. All we know is that the Italians love her, her speech is pure, and every Italian wants to claim her as coming from his/her region:

On se disputait pour savoir quelle ville d'Italie lui avait donné naissance, mais les Romains soutenaient vivement qu'il fallait être né à Rome pour parler l'italien avec cette pureté. Son nom de famille était ignoré. Son premier ouvrage avait paru cinq ans auparavant, et portait seulement le nom de Corinne. Personne ne savait où elle avait vécu, ni ce qu'elle avait été avant cette époque [. . .] (50)

This introduction does little to clarify Corinne's (national) identity to Oswald or to the reader and thus renders her mysterious. From the beginning, then, the theme of ambiguity appears in the work.

To address the unfolding of Corinne's national identity, it is useful to examine how the metaphor of colonialism can elucidate the relationship between Corinne and Oswald, Italy and England. While we cannot say that Italy is colonized by England, we can say that a type of colonization exists between Corinne and Oswald. Oswald comes into Corinne's home, asserts his English values, and desperately wants for Corinne to behave in a "proper" way, a way that is "English." Oswald laments the fact that Corinne is neither English nor protestant, and wants her to become those things out of devotion to him: "Que n'êtes-vous, s'écria-t-il, de la même religion, du même pays que moi!" (250). Later, while in Naples together, Corinne and Oswald receive an invitation from English travelers to board their ship and take part in their Sunday worship. While on the ship, Corinne feels saddened by the solemnity of the English in her happy Italy. Oswald, seeing her with her eyes lowered, however, thinks that she can indeed be the "perfect English wife": "[. . .] en la voyant assise au milieu des femmes anglaises, ses paupières noires baissées comme leurs paupières blondes, et se conformant en tout à leurs manières, il éprouva un grand sentiment de joie" (296). Here, Oswald seems to believe that he has in fact colonized Corinne – made her English – and has convinced himself that she could indeed be an acceptable wife for an Englishman. Even more interesting is that at certain points we see that Corinne actually *wants* to be colonized, to be exactly what Oswald wants her to be. For example, during their trip to Tivoli, Oswald drives their carriage with the utmost attention to safety for Corinne's sake:

Il avait ces soins protecteurs qui sont le plus doux lien de l'homme avec la femme. Corinne n'était point, comme la plupart des femmes, facilement effrayée par les dangers possibles d'une route; *mais* il lui était si doux de remarquer la sollicitude d'Oswald, *qu'elle souhaitait presque d'avoir peur*, afin d'être rassurée par lui. (228, my italics)

Corinne's reaction to Oswald's chivalry shows that she is *almost* willing to compromise her independence to enjoy the attentions that come with accepting Oswald as her protector. In

other words, she could *almost* give up her very Italian self-sufficiency and thus be colonized. The use, though, of “presque” indicates that she still carries some uncertainty in her mind, still some quiet rebellion to this possible colonization. Corinne, then, feels both attraction and repulsion toward Oswald, further extending the ambivalence seen in her national identity.

The issue of ambivalence, therefore, involves a complex attraction and repulsion between the colonizer and the colonized.⁴ With Corinne and Oswald, this ambivalence becomes particularly obvious as they fight their feelings for each other. Take, for example, their first encounter, when Oswald is taken aback by Corinne’s position in society:

Ce mystère et cette publicité tout à la fois, cette femme dont tout le monde parlait, et dont on ne connaissait pas le véritable nom, parurent à lord Nelvil l’une des merveilles du singulier pays qu’il venait voir. Il aurait jugé très sévèrement une telle femme en Angleterre, mais il n’appliquait à l’Italie aucune des convenances sociales; et le couronnement de Corinne lui inspirait d’avance l’intérêt que ferait naître une aventure de l’Arioste. (51-1)

The combination of attraction and repulsion that we witness here perfectly exemplifies ambivalence. Oswald does not hold Corinne to the same standards as he would an Englishwoman. Therefore, he allows himself his attraction to this “marvel.” However, if she had been English (and we later find out that she is indeed half English), he would have judged her severely. In other words, his attraction simply derives from the exotic, the unknown that exists in Corinne – an attraction that is of course completely acceptable. Just a few pages later, though, he quickly renounces his attraction to – and thereby admits his repulsion from – Corinne: “C’est la plus séduisante des femmes, mais c’est une Italienne; et ce n’est pas ce cœur timide, innocent, à lui-même inconnu, que possède sans doute la jeune Anglaise à laquelle mon père me destinait” (94).

Corinne, however, never seems to express a similar ambivalence towards Oswald. On the contrary, she is always attracted to their differences, never repulsed by them. Only when Oswald directly insults Italy or, at the end of the work, when he abandons her, does she

⁴ For more on the question of ambiguity, see Homi Bhabha’s chapter “The Other Question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism” in *The Location of Culture*, 66-84.

feel any disdain for him. For example, after Oswald has insulted Italian women, saying that they are incapable of a deep, sincere love, she refuses to see him because: “elle était douloureusement affligée de l’opinion qu’il avait témoignée sur les Italiennes, et cette opinion même lui faisait une loi de cacher à l’avenir, si elle le pouvait, le sentiment qui l’entraînait” (154). Her role, then, is rather that of the “go-between” or the “contact zone” between England and Italy. She reacts to Oswald’s opinions on women as a defender of Italian women, rather than *as* an Italian woman. As Balayé points out: “Corinne jouera donc le rôle de médiatrice entre Oswald et Italie” (L&L 141) – and this role then leads us to the issue of ethnography/autoethnography.

Ethnography and Autoethnography

Oswald’s role in Italy is more often than not that of an ethnographer. Following the definition that Paul Atkinson gives (13), Oswald’s ethnographic narration documents both individual and collective character. Throughout his tour through Italy, Oswald unhesitatingly draws conclusions and proffers his beliefs on the character of the Italian people.⁵ This commentary comes through most obviously in a letter he writes to Corinne after having insulted Italian women. His letter, supposedly an apology, continues to plead his case that Italian men and women are unworthy of Corinne. He buttresses his argument by listing the problems with each sex in Italy: “Les hommes, en Italie, valent beaucoup moins que les femmes; car ils ont les défauts des femmes, et leurs propres en sus” (156). He further critiques Italian men by attacking Italy’s politics and military: “dans un pays où il n’y a ni carrière militaire, ni institution libre, comment un homme pourrait-il se former à la dignité et à la force?” (157). Finally, he attacks Italy’s history and pride in that history:

Ce qui leur reste de souvenirs de l’antiquité, c’est quelque chose de *gigantesque* dans les expressions et dans la magnificence extérieure; mais à côté de cette grandeur *sans base*, vous voyez souvent tout ce qu’il y a de plus vulgaire dans les goûts et de plus misérablement négligé dans la vie domestique. Est-ce là, Corinne, la nation que vous devez préférer à toute autre? (157, my italics)

⁵ He also offers an ethnography on gender which I will discuss in the gender section of this chapter.

These critiques that Oswald posits are two-fold. On the one hand, they serve as his ethnographic response to Italy. These are his reports of what he has witnessed in Italy. On the other hand, they are desperate attempts to turn Corinne against Italy so that she will be willing to leave this country and return to the civilized, domestic bliss of England. Oswald fails to see, however, that these observations specifically belong to him. He cannot fathom the possibility of another viewpoint that could differ from his own English ideology rife with national bigotry.

Corinne's letter in response to Oswald's represents her autoethnography – one of many times that she plays the role of autoethnographer. She responds, on behalf of the colonized and as the colonized, to the critique that the colonizer has made. She begins her letter by telling Oswald that she is only answering his letter because he has attacked Italian women in general, not only her: "ce n'est pas de moi dont je veux vous parler, c'est de la nation infortunée que vous attaquez si cruellement" (159). She goes on to tell him that he is superficial in his analysis of Italians and that he must "pénétrer plus avant pour juger ce pays qui a été si grand à diverses époques" (160). She then explains that Europe has ravaged and colonized Italy and therefore has no right to critique the Italian people today:

Les étrangers de tout temps ont conquis, déchiré ce beau pays, l'objet de leur ambition perpétuelle; et les étrangers reprochent avec amertume à cette nation les torts des nations vaincues et déchirées! L'Europe a reçu des Italiens les arts et les sciences, et maintenant qu'elle a tourné contre eux leurs propres présents, elle leur conteste souvent encore la dernière gloire qui soit permise aux nations sans force militaire et sans liberté politique, la gloire des sciences et des arts. (160)

Then, city by city, she illustrates the greatness and individuality at work in Italy. She clearly and methodically enlightens Oswald and works to dispel his ignorance about the place that she loves. This letter, therefore, clearly exemplifies autoethnography in that Corinne engages in a dialogue with the representation that Oswald has made of Italy, refuting his arguments. In addition, the literary strategy of placing Corinne's letter at the end of the chapter lends the argument particular weight in that she has the last word and the final say on this issue.

Corinne's half-English identity complicates her position as the defender of Italy. Balayé states that this characterization gives more credence to Corinne's defense of Italy:

Corinne voit d'autant plus clairement ce qu'elle souhaite pour l'Italie qu'elle connaît mieux les ressorts moraux de la puissance anglaise. En elle, les deux nations se fondent harmonieusement, le nord et le midi, l'éclat et la mélancolie, le sens moral et le sens du beau ; elle réalise dans sa sensibilité et son intelligence, l'unité des tendances diverses, tant qu'elle trouve le bonheur dans l'exercice de 'ses puissantes facultés.' (L&L 139)

We witness here that exact "in-between" area to which Corinne is privileged. *Corinne* refutes the commonly accepted notion that one must be either self or other, colonizer or colonized. Corinne is both, and it is this characteristic that renders her such an innovative character. The text, through Corinne, has opened up a brand new possibility concerning nation. One does not have to be either/or – one can be both.

Civilizing the Exotic

In spite of Corinne's dual nationality, Oswald still cannot accept the part of her that is Italian and embarks on a "civilizing mission," a post-colonial term that elucidates the colonizer's desire to render the colonized more "civilized" according to the rules of his/her society. In this text, though, both the colonizer and the colonized undertake a civilizing mission. Not only does Oswald eagerly try to civilize and transform Corinne into the perfect Englishwoman, but Corinne too hopes to civilize Oswald and make him aware of the wonders that Italy has to offer. They differ, though, in that Corinne does not want to change Oswald – only to enlighten him. Consider, for example, the aforementioned letters that discuss Italian men and women and marriage in Italy. Oswald implores Corinne to see that the English way is better, while Corinne simply asks Oswald to look again, more deeply, at the Italian ways.

The discussion on Italian literature also offers an example of the civilizing efforts in the text. M. Edgermond argues that Italian literature lacks tragedies and therefore proves Italy's "childishness":

il me semble qu'il y a moins loin des enfants aux hommes, que de vos tragédies aux nôtres; car les enfants, dans leur mobilité, ont des sentiments légers, mais vrais, tandis que le sérieux de vos tragédies a quelque chose d'affecté et de gigantesque qui détruit pour moi toute émotion. N'est-il pas vrai, lord Nelvil? (184)

Lord Nelvil, of course, adamantly agrees with his countryman and goes on to say that Italian tragedy needs the influence of Shakespeare. He complains that Octavia's representation of Nero lacks "vraisemblance" and that Shakespeare would have done a much better job: "Mais si Shakespeare avait représenté Néron [. . .] la terreur n'eût-elle pas été mille fois plus grande? et pour une réflexion énoncée par l'auteur, mille ne seraient-elles pas nées dans l'ame [sic] des spectateurs par le silence même de la rhétorique et la vérité des tableaux?" (185-6). Oswald's argument, then, focuses on the lack of complexity and depth in Octavia's work. He complains that the presentation of Nero is too simple, too black and white. He believes that had Shakespeare written a play about Nero he would have looked more profoundly into the intricacies of the relationship between Nero and Seneca. In other words, Shakespeare would improve, even "civilize," Italian tragedy by making it less childlike and more "vraisemblable."

Corinne's response to this critique simply explains the lack of tragedy in the Italian canon. She does not place Italian literature above any other, but only encourages another way of seeing what Italy has produced: "En général notre littérature exprime peu notre caractère et nos mœurs. Nous sommes une nation beaucoup trop modeste, je dirais presque trop humble, pour oser avoir des tragédies à nous, composées avec notre histoire, ou du moins caractérisées d'après nos propres sentiments" (186-7). In order to prove her acceptance and appreciation of foreign literatures, Corinne is very eager to perform her translation of *Romeo and Juliet*. This action serves as an example for her British friends of her acceptance of foreign influences. However, this gesture seems to be lost on them and her civilizing mission therefore fails. Everyone finds her ability very impressive – including the English – but they do not understand the significance of her performance for national

literatures. Oswald, of course, sees only the similarities that exist between the story of Romeo and Juliet and his and Corinne's story.⁶

The Exoticism of Italy

The question of the civilizing mission takes on even more importance if we consider the possibility the text offers that Corinne, and therefore Italy, truly *needs* to be civilized. The work introduces this concept in order to show the complicated relationship between the "Western" ethnographer and the "Other" object being examined. While Oswald comes into Italy with a preconceived notion of what Italy is and represents, Corinne shows him that his ideas are too simplistic and unfounded. The use of the exotic in the work illustrates this point. The exotic, while attractive and exciting, discloses the presence of an Other – one who should be colonized or civilized. The argument of this analysis, then, is that the text presents Corinne/Italy as an Orient that is physically located within the Occident. In other words, by discussing her as an exotic Other through the use of Oriental symbols, the reader views Corinne/Italy as Oriental. This argument only works, though, because the text itself has equated Corinne with Italy, thereby allowing us as readers to see the exoticism that exists in Corinne as a reflection and imitation of an exotic Italy. Whether or not Italy can truly be seen as an Oriental Other, therefore, is directly tied to Corinne's Orientalness. Corinne and Italy, then, become synonymous with the Orient and the marginal. As Alliston explains: "[Italy is] inscribed within the *margins* of a Europe that is beginning to define itself on a map drawn of shared but mutually exclusive boundaries. Inscribed within the margins of that map, Italy, like [. . .] Scotland, is denied the clear borderlines of property that would make it recognizable as a cohesive and independent state" (70, my italics). With Italy relegated to the margins of Europe, it is understandable that Corinne, too, occupies this marginality. What is questionable here is that *Corinne*, while theoretically representing a free (both socially and politically), independent Italy with no need of France, nevertheless presents an exotic, untamed, and uncivilized place. In other words, at times the text implies that Italy does indeed need a civilizing influence. Or, it could also be argued that the exotic

⁶ This reference to Shakespeare bespeaks French Romanticism's interest in one of England's most beloved playwrights. See Stendhal's "Racine et Shakespeare." It also reminds the reader of Staël's praise of Shakespeare in *De la littérature*.

Italy/Corinne requires this very exoticism in order to enjoy the social freedoms that cannot be found in England or in France.

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind here that Italy is not only a “savage” place, but also a place that corresponds to a poetic idealism as seen in Corinne’s talent and the text’s numerous references to Italian art and architecture. Moreover, Corinne regularly reminds Oswald of Italy’s influence and impact on Western European civilization. The question, then, of exoticism in this text falls in line with the work’s established pattern: the events in the work can sometimes be exotic and sometimes not, and the final judgment of both Italy and Corinne resides somewhere in-between the binarisms of exotic and civilized.

Consider, for instance, Corinne’s dancing of the Tarantella. On the one hand, she agrees to perform the dance “sans se faire prier, ce qui étonna assez le comte d’Erfeuil, accoutumé qu’il était aux refus par lesquels il est d’usage de faire précéder le consentement” (147), which illustrates the freedom that one has in Italy to admit one’s desires without shame. On the other hand, though, the dance itself blatantly exemplifies Orientalism and exoticism:

Elle se mit à danser, en frappant l’air de ce tambour de basque, et tous ses mouvements avaient une souplesse, une grace [sic], un mélange de pudeur et de volupté qui pouvait donner l’idée de la puissance que les Bayadères exercent sur l’imagination des Indiens, quand elles sont pour ainsi dire poètes [sic] avec leur danse, quand elles expriment tant de sentiments divers par les pas caractérisés et le tableaux enchanteurs qu’elles offrent aux regards. (147-8)

This dance equates Corinne, and therefore Italy, with the Oriental and exotic Indian danseuses and thus fetishes them while relegating them both to the margins where the exotic Other lies. However, there is an ambiguity and even a sense of power in this scene. The narrator states:

Il y a un moment dans cette danse napolitaine où la femme se met à genoux, tandis que l’homme tourne autour d’elle, non en maître, mais en vainqueur. Quel était dans ce moment le charme et la dignité de Corinne ! comme à genoux elle était souveraine ! Et quand elle se releva, en faisant retentir le son

de son instrument, de sa cymbale aérienne, elle semblait animée par un enthousiasme de vie, de jeunesse et de beauté, qui devait persuader qu'elle n'avait besoin de personne pour être heureuse. (148-9)

While the question of Orientalism here cannot be ignored, the question of ambiguity must also be examined since Corinne does not feel exploited or abused, but rather invigorated and joyous. Even during the most humbling moment of the dance she was still “souveraine.” In other words, the text has once again opened up an in-between space for Corinne. She does not have to belong only to the debased category of the exotic Other, but can profit from it and still remain in control. This very duality, though, problematizes the possibility that anyone could enjoy such freedom and power by implying that Corinne is the only person who can achieve this freedom because of her dual nationality.

While Corinne is depicted as the epitome of culture, grace, intelligence, and beauty, the average Italian person is not nearly as fortunate. In Naples, the narrator describes the Lazzaroni people as: “couchés sur les pavés, ou retirés dans un panier d’osier, qui leur sert d’habitation jour et nuit. Cet état *sauvage* qui se voit là, mêlé avec la civilisation, a quelque chose de très-original” (290, my italics). She does go on to tell us that the Lazzaroni are not mean but still insists on their laziness and avarice:

Il est vrai que c’est le peuple du monde qui aime le mieux l’argent ; si vous demandez à un homme du peuple votre chemin dans la rue, il tend la main après avoir fait un signe : car ils sont plus *paresseux* pour les paroles que pour les gestes ; mais leur goût pour l’argent n’est point méthodique ni réfléchi ; ils le dépensent aussitôt qu’ils le reçoivent. *Si l’argent s’introduisait chez les sauvages, les sauvages le demanderaient comme cela.* Ce qui manque le plus à cette nation, en général, c’est le sentiment de la *dignité* . (291, my italics)

Here we have the very typical nineteenth-century representation of the Other: the exotic savage, the lazy natives, the uncivilized, and the ignorant. The narrator, in contrast to Corinne’s efforts to show the grandeur of Italy, portrays the general Italian public not as grand, but rather as grandly inferior to their European neighbors. This image of the “commoner” simply reinforces Corinne’s uniqueness that comes from her being half-English.

The result, like Corinne's nationality, is two-fold. While there is indeed a newly opened space for a person to occupy both sides of a binarism at once, this space is only available if one has a dual nationality. The role of gender in the text, however, will further complicate the question of self versus other by introducing even more ambiguity. By examining the complex gender(s) of Corinne, we will see that she, and consequentially Italy, have both been colonized and feminized. Corinne and everything she represents, therefore, ultimately symbolize the quest for the freedom to occupy a richly intricate and multifaceted identity.

Gender

Undeniably, the most analyzed question in studies on *Corinne ou l'Italie* has been that of gender constructions. For the purposes of this study, though, we will not look at the question of gender by itself, but rather at how it relates to the terms used in the discussion on nation. The two issues have already been related in Staël's chapter "Des Femmes qui cultivent les Lettres" of *De la littérature*: "Éclairer, instruire, perfectionner les femmes comme les hommes, les nations comme les individus, c'est encore le meilleur secret pour tous les buts raisonnables, pour toutes les relations sociales et politiques auxquelles on veut assurer un fondement durable" (331). We see here that Staël places the role of the nation on the same plane as that of gender. She calls for a refutation of the accepted idea that Man, the individual, is the most important element of society and encourages instead a broadening of those categories to include both women and nations. This call emerges in *Corinne's* themes.

Staël's Personal Views on Gender

Staël's refusal to accept traditional gender roles for herself and others in her personal life clearly explains why that same refutation would exist in her fiction. Balayé notes that Staël questioned these gender roles from the moment she began writing: "Germaine Necker avait commencé à écrire de bonne heure, toute son éducation l'y portait. Cependant son père n'approuvait pas que les femmes se fissent auteurs et ses moqueries la paralysèrent, semble-t-il, un certain temps. Mais 'M. de Saint-Ecritoire', comme il l'appelait, finit par l'emporter" (L&L 24). Having convinced her father of her talents, Staël goes on to persuade others not only of her own literary and intellectual value, but of that of other women as well,

encouraging society to extend the same educational rights of enlightenment to women as to men. Christine Planté explains that Staël creates *Corinne* out of the ideas (non-fiction) that she presented in the same chapter of *De la littérature* cited earlier: “Le chapitre de ce livre consacré aux femmes écrivains constitue bien l’horizon théorique nécessaire à la lecture de *Corinne*, comme l’évolution de la société française doit être présente à l’esprit pour en éclairer les enjeux” (“De Corinne à Sapho”, 157).

Indeed, Staël’s very history as an advocate for women’s (and specifically women writers’) rights to participate in the intellectual and elite community convinces us of the importance of gender in her work. Her writings, both fictional and non-fictional, grant her readers a very clear understanding as to the significance of gender issues in her work. As Marie-Claire Vallois points out:

Les questions de la femme et de l’amour, toujours inextricablement liées dans les romans de Mme de Staël, sont en effet loin d’être absentes des autres écrits. Des *Lettres sur le caractère et les écrits de J.-J. Rousseau* aux *Dix années d’exil*, Mme de Staël ne cesse de parler de la femme, que ce soit par le biais de l’analyse philosophique, du commentaire sociologique ou de la confidence autobiographique. C’est même cet intérêt et cette préoccupation constante qui la fait apparaître comme une des premières féministes de l’époque. (“Les voi(es) de la Sibylle” 181)

In other words, we cannot simply read *Corinne ou l’Italie* as a novel, but also as a political manifesto claiming the rights of women. In so doing, we must again take into consideration the generic hybridity of the work and further realize that the text’s duality shows through on multiple levels.

Corinne’s Gender Switching

Mirroring the generic hybridity of the work, Corinne takes on a gendered hybridity, regularly morphing from “masculine” to “feminine.” Her change from masculine to feminine is directly related to Oswald’s colonizing and civilizing presence. Given that we have already established that Italy is the colonized and that Corinne is synonymous with Italy, it therefore makes sense that Corinne, like Italy, is the colonized. The inverse is also

true: Italy, as the colonized, is feminine, and if Corinne is indeed Italy, she too is feminine. Staël herself gives us permission to equate Corinne with Italy as witnessed in the title of the work: *Corinne ou l'Italie*.⁷

Notwithstanding, Corinne very often embodies the exact opposite of what has been traditionally called feminine. At least at the beginning of the work, Corinne falls more into a “masculine” categorization than a “feminine” one. The argument of this study holds that this gender switching is due partly to the very displacement of women because of the colonization of the feminine. In other words, because Corinne was left no place in the realm of the feminine, she appropriated masculine traits. The conflict, though, lies in the fact that Corinne does not limit herself to one gender. Margaret Waller discusses this issue in her book *The Male Malady* and defines Corinne as “at best a bizarre hybrid, at worst a monstrous hermaphrodite” (60).⁸ This reading, however, takes Corinne’s gender hybridity to be a positive narrative device; embracing Corinne’s dual gender roles illustrates the freedom that comes from less rigidly defined categorizations. There are times when she is masculine and times when she is feminine – an androgyny claimed by the *male* romantic, from which the female romantic was excluded. The narrator highlights this gender switching so as to call attention to the extraordinary and unclassifiable nature of Corinne and to remind the reader of the possibilities opened up to her because of this ability to be “more than one.” Of course, as the story concludes, we will see that the text punishes her dearly for her ambiguity.

As already mentioned, it is at the beginning of the work that Corinne is more “masculine.” By taking on this more “masculine” role, Corinne rejects the patriarchal order and thereby refuses colonization. For example, our first introduction to Corinne comes at her coronation as Italy’s premier poet, an honor previously bestowed on the likes of Virgil and Petrarch. She, a woman, receives copious amounts of attention for a role traditionally reserved for men. In other words, she has a voice, an authoritative and heeded voice that marks yet another contradiction with traditional femininity. Alliston, in defining woman’s

⁷ The use of the French *ou* in the title acts as a renaming of Corinne, much like if we were to say Mary or the Virgin Mother. Regardless of which name is used, the meaning is the same. In reading *Corinne ou l'Italie*, then, when we see “Corinne” we can also read “Italie.”

⁸ Waller’s reading also equates gender and sex, implying that Corinne’s gender switching is the same as the sexual condition of hermaphrodites. This equation, however, undoes the work of feminist theorists like Judith Butler who championed a distinct separation between sex and gender.

place in the Romantic era, proves that Corinne's place in Italy is indeed unique: "Femininity, in the post-Enlightenment era, is domesticated by its exile to that private realm on the separation from which the idea of the nation state is founded" (55). In other words, with woman confined to the domestic sphere, which has no influence on the public sphere or on the nation state, there is no way for her to influence society and this exclusion in turn constitutes "femininity." The influential role that Corinne plays in the Italian public sphere implies that her dual gender roles open up a privileged in-between space that showcases the possibilities open to women once gender restrictions imposed by the nation state are removed. Vincent Whitman gives his explanation of how Corinne is able to perform this role:

This capacity is of course grounded in the particulars of Corinne's history. Her voice is more-than-one not only because she speaks for/as a whole society, but also because her identity is culturally dual in the first place. Corinne is Italy, but she is also England, as we learn when her secret is revealed. She is both: South-and-North. This duality helps account for a public and self-sufficient lifestyle exceptional even for Italian society. Corinne is free because she is different, not only from others but also within herself. No one person, institution, or even culture can claim her exclusively because she slips out of the categories that must provide the basis for such a claim. Her allegiances can therefore be virtually universal. (59)

I would emphasize that her duality is also one of gender. She does not correspond completely to the rules of gender at that time, and therefore no one gender can claim her either. She is not relegated to the domestic sphere but rather is lauded in the public sphere. Thus, as Whitman pointed out, her uniqueness – in every realm – grants her this position. She exerts this uniqueness throughout the first half of the book. As Oswald's teacher, she introduces him to Italy, describing Italy's richness and worth. He is her pupil, her follower.

Regrettably, this idealized portrait of a free and independent woman of the nineteenth century is not without its pitfalls. Even in the beginning of the work, when Corinne is still at the height of her grandeur, we see that Oswald's presence has a weakening, and at times

debilitating, effect on her. From the first moment that they are together at Corinne's "salon,"⁹ she begins to doubt herself:

Oswald la regardait en silence; sa présence animait Corinne et lui inspirait d'être aimable. Cependant elle s'arrêtait quelquefois dans les moments où sa conversation était la plus brillante, étonnée du calme extérieur d'Oswald, ne sachant pas s'il l'approuvait ou s'il la blâmait secrètement, et si ses idées anglaises lui permettaient d'applaudir à de tels succès dans une femme. (76)

Although wanting to impress Oswald, Corinne falters. She hesitates, wondering whether or not her life can be understood or approved of by an upholder of traditional (English) patriarchal values. The reader even receives a false glimmer of hope that Oswald will accept Corinne for who she is when he says: "...les règles ordinaires pour juger les femmes ne peuvent s'appliquer à elle [Corinne]" (86). However, due to their conflicting ideas about woman's place in society, which are directly related to their nationalities, Oswald finally cannot accept Corinne. His English attachment to discipline and tradition corresponds to, as we know, an attachment to traditional, masculine ideas. Corinne, therefore, stands in direct opposition to Oswald's masculine, English ideology. It is this very opposition that will eventually tear Corinne and Oswald apart. Corinne cannot be what Oswald wants her to be, and he therefore abandons her. Herein lies one of many conflicts in the work. The text presents Corinne as the epitome of strength and independence in a woman and then destroys her for those very qualities that are not acceptable in English society. This contradiction, instead of granting our heroine a free in-between place, ultimately undermines what the majority of the work has posited. The freedom of movement and ideas is gone and replaced with the cold, hard reality of the day.

Sibyl versus Madonna Imagery

We see a similar contradiction in the narrator's use of the sibyl as an image of Corinne. Marie-Claire Vallois explains that the "choice of the sibyl [. . .] as a literary model is an act of provocation" ("Old Idols" 83). Not only is it a provocation of the patriarchal

⁹ Here we have an example of the way readers have often compared Corinne with Staël. This salon-like gathering in the work apparently parallels Staël's own literary salon, both in Coppet and in Paris. Such a reading introduces an autobiographical element of the work, but also dangerously rehearses that old adage that women can only write what they have personally experienced.

order, it is also a dangerous act because of the sibyl's "association with a dragon who is half serpent, half woman, with the troubling gift of an enigmatic voice" (Old Idols 88). This use of the sibyl as an image of Corinne calls to mind the siren luring men away from shore with their "enigmatic voices" only to have them drown. Is this our "positive" representation of woman? Granted, at the beginning of the work, Corinne is only "vêtue comme la Sybille du Dominiquin" (52). However, by the end of the work, Oswald makes a disturbing comparison between the sibyl and the Virgin Mary, one that logically leads us to think of the virgin/whore dichotomy. Upon seeing his wife Lucile with their child, in front of a painting of the Madonna, Oswald remarks:

dans cet instant l'attitude de la mère et de l'enfant se trouva par hasard presque la même que celle de la Vierge et de son fils. La figure de Lucile avait tant de ressemblance avec l'idéal de modestie et de grace [sic] que Le Corrège a peint, qu'Oswald portait alternativement ses regards du tableau vers Lucile, et de Lucile vers le tableau; elle le remarqua, baissa les yeux, et la ressemblance devint plus frappante encore [. . .] (558)

The imagery becomes even more striking when we remember that Lucile and Oswald's child physically resembles Corinne and not Lucile. The fact that Juliette does not look like her mother, gives the mother an even purer – more virginal – aspect. If the child does not really look like her, maybe it is not her child, and maybe she is still a virgin.

Later, Oswald stops in front of a painting of a sibyl and contemplates it a little too long for Lucile's comfort. She dares to ask him if the sibyl speaks to him more than the Madonna. Oswald disturbingly responds: "La Sibylle ne rend plus d'oracles; son génie, son talent, tout est fini: mais l'angélique figure du Corrège n'a rien perdu de ses charmes; et l'homme malheureux qui fit tant de mal à l'une ne trahira jamais l'autre" (562). In other words, the sibyl (Corinne), now having grown old and lost her talent, can never compare with the timeless purity of the Madonna (Lucile). Discard the sibyl (whore?); keep the virgin. While Corinne is certainly not a whore and Lucile is obviously not a virgin (having had Oswald's child), that seems to be the correlation the narrator asks us to make. Most upsetting, though, in Oswald's comment is that he is right. Corinne has indeed lost her genius, her talent, and this loss undermines the work's feminist project. Corinne literally dies

of heartache – Oswald has abandoned her, she has consequently lost all of her talent, and therefore she must either join a convent or die. Staël chooses the more popular ending of the time, one where the heroine dies. While dying of heartache does not necessarily connote an anti-feminist message, the loss of talent and genius is disturbing. For it is this very talent that gives Corinne her individuality and that allows her to step out of previously conceived ideas of masculine and feminine – it is this talent that allows her to refuse colonization. However, when her talent dies, so die her individuality and her freedom. She is broken, colonized, and feminized. Some of her final thoughts include this very point:

j'étais née avec quelque talent; je mourrai sans que l'on ait aucune idée de moi, bien que je sois célèbre. Si j'avais été heureuse, si la fièvre du cœur ne m'avait pas dévorée, j'aurais contemplé de très haut la destinée humaine, j'y aurais découvert des rapports inconnus avec la nature et le ciel; mais la serre du malheur me tient; comment penser librement quand elle se fait sentir chaque fois qu'on essaie de respirer? (521)

This section of the work is the truly heartbreaking moment of *Corinne ou l'Italie*, but it is even more so because, as already mentioned, it is the moment that undermines Staël's feminist project. By ending the work thus, Staël implies that Corinne's talent was not enough to sustain her, that what she really needed was a man, specifically Oswald, to complete her. As Madelyn Gutwirth has pointed out: "Like *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and nearly all of the literature of love, *Corinne or Italy* reaffirms the absolute primacy of couplehood, even as it breaks out to assert the right to female singularity" ("Media trix" 21). The woman needs the man, and therefore the colonized needs the colonizer. In the words of Whitman: "What has become of Corinne's literary discourse is the result not of some intrinsic conflict or infirmity, but of the enforcement of patriarchal authority at the site of her public voice" (68). Patriarchal and colonial rule have won here and thereby negated the perceived freedom of gender seen earlier in the work.

Oswald and Lady Edgermond

While we have seen that Corinne's dual national and gendered identities at times open up an in-between space for her, the work denies such a privilege to the secondary

characters. The gender roles, therefore, that characters like Oswald and Lady Edgermond play are much simpler and yet more rigid. Oswald, of course, symbolizes the perfect Romantic man. He is noble, honest, sensitive, caring, and brave. He has all the characteristics – masculine *and* feminine – that a man of the nineteenth century was supposed to have. The most important addition to his masculinity is his role in the military. This role exemplifies his position as an upholder of both patriarchal and colonial rule. It exemplifies patriarchal rule in the sense that by defending his *patrie*, his fatherland, he carries out the wishes of his now dead father. Furthermore, it exemplifies colonial rule in that the military rules the colonies.

Lady Edgermond, like Oswald, also plays the role of upholder of the status quo vis-à-vis gender. She accepts the patriarchal order and propagates it by taking part in her own civilizing mission: that of Corinne. Lady Edgermond is the first to attempt to “civilize” Corinne who, after having lived all of her fifteen years in Italy, is now forced to live in England. Lady Edgermond reproaches Corinne upon her arrival saying: “vous devez tâcher d’oublier tout ce qui tient à l’Italie; c’est un pays qu’il serait à désirer que vous n’eussiez jamais connu” (363). Even her father takes part in this civilizing mission, encouraging Corinne to hide her talents because “vous ne trouveriez pas du tout à vous marier, si l’on croyait que vous avez des goûts étrangers à nos mœurs [. . .]” (363-4). This civilizing mission also takes on the elements of class hierarchy, indicating that Italy is on a lower social rung, part of a lower social class, than England. Once her father dies, Corinne must rely on the mercy of her stepmother and yet nevertheless resists her stepmother’s efforts to render her a “proper” lady. She refuses to marry Lady Edgermond’s relative and finally decides to leave England and live “une vie indépendante, tout entière consacrée aux arts” (379). However, her stepmother gets the last word: “si vous prenez un parti qui vous déshonore dans l’opinion, vous devez à votre famille de changer de nom et de vous faire passer pour morte” (382). By shedding her father’s English name, though, Corinne frees herself from that patriarchal hold. She resists its civilizing agenda, its feminization. She is free to live as she wishes in Italy.

The “Civilization” of Corinne

The gender civilization of Corinne becomes a high priority for Oswald. He is quick to condemn the freedom that women enjoy in Italy and reproaches it with vehemence and anger. In the letter mentioned in the nation discussion, Oswald's ethnography of Italy becomes an ethnography of gender roles as well. Within the letter he includes an acerbic derision of Italy's unraveling of traditional gender roles that he believes are not only important but also absolutely necessary to a "civilized" society:

Enfin, et c'est là sur-tout ce qui détruit l'amour, les hommes n'inspirent aucun genre de respect aux femmes; elles ne leur savent aucun gré de leur soumission, parcequ'ils [sic] n'ont aucune fermeté de caractère, aucune occupation sérieuse dans la vie. Il faut, pour que la nature et l'ordre social se montrent dans toute leur beauté, que l'homme soit protecteur et la femme protégée, mais que ce protecteur adore la faiblesse qu'il défend, et respecte la divinité sans pouvoir, qui, comme ses dieux Pénates, porte bonheur à sa maison. Ici, l'on dirait, presque, que les femmes sont le sultan et les hommes le sérail. (157)

Finally, he implies that the "feminine essence" of Italy has "corrupted" Italian men and rendered them "feminine" as well: "Les hommes ont la douceur et la souplesse du caractère des femmes. Un proverbe italien dit: *Qui ne sait pas feindre ne sait pas vivre*. N'est-ce pas là un proverbe de femme" (157)? Oswald obviously takes great offense at the absence of clearly demarcated gender roles in Italian society and the lack of a firm patriarchal rule causes him to lash out at Italy as a nation.

Corinne's response to this letter, as already discussed, is autoethnography both concerning nation and gender. She rebuts Oswald's argument saying:

Souvent [. . .] l'honneur chevaleresque a peu d'empire au milieu d'une nation où l'opinion et la société qui la forme n'existe pas; il est assez simple que, dans une telle désorganisation de tous les pouvoirs publics, les femmes prennent beaucoup d'ascendant sur les hommes, et peut-être en ont-elles trop pour les respecter et les admirer. Néanmoins, leur conduite envers elles est pleine de délicatesse et de dévouement. Les vertus domestiques font en Angleterre la gloire et le bonheur des femmes; mais s'il y a des pays où

l'amour subsiste hors des liens sacrés du mariage, parmi ces pays, celui de tous où le bonheur des femmes est le plus ménagé, c'est l'Italie. (162-3)

Clearly, she negates Oswald's idea of femininity. By insisting on happiness for women outside of marriage, Corinne effectively defends Italy's treatment of women and likewise rebuffs England's constraints on women. She defends her world where women are free to express themselves and live outside of the gender rules that the rest of the world – England in particular – would like to place on them.

The ambivalent and conflict-ridden relationship between Corinne and Oswald results directly from Oswald's efforts to "civilize" her and view her as nothing more than a feminine creature that complements his masculinity. Oswald's attraction to Corinne results from her physical beauty. When he first meets her, his reaction bespeaks masculine domination:

il lui semblait que Corinne avait imploré, par ses regards, la protection d'un ami, protection dont jamais une femme, quelque supérieure qu'elle soit, ne peut se passer; et il pensait en lui-même qu'il serait doux d'être l'appui de celle à qui sa sensibilité seule rendrait cet appui nécessaire. (54)

Oswald does not see Corinne as a poet, as a genius, or as a talented woman. Rather, he sees her as feminine and thus needing masculine protection. On the other hand, he is repulsed by her blatant rejection of English rules of femininity. Oswald's reaction to Corinne's independence directly results from his fixed and stagnant adherence to the old order of patriarchy. He stands in unequivocal contrast to Corinne's representation of the new order of freer, open spaces of identity, and this opposition causes the constant attraction/repulsion between the couple. This tension, according to Bhabha, is precisely related to ambivalence. The colonized subject, Italy/Corinne, is never completely opposed to the colonizer, England/Oswald. Moreover, the colonizer does not wholly want the colonized to perfectly mimic the colonizer, for that would create an independent-minded subject instead of an obedient inferior. In other words, acceptance and rejection of colonial rule work hand in hand, creating an ambivalent situation in which there is no clear authority.

The same theory holds true within the question of feminine and masculine. A constant battle for control is defined within the context of ambivalence. While Oswald's attraction results from Corinne's physical beauty, he cannot justify her exceptionality to his

English mores. Likewise, while Corinne's attraction to Oswald results from his sensitivity and honor, her repulsion comes from his idea of woman's place in society. In other words, this battle over the feminine, and Corinne not being so, centers on both an attraction to and a repulsion from the English idea of what femininity is. Oswald's attraction to Corinne partly derives from her role as a performer because in that capacity he is allowed to observe her and take pleasure in her performance. However, Italy's very rejection of English femininity allows Corinne this place of performance, whereas in England she would never have been crowned poetess laureate. Corinne, for her part, shows a similar attraction to and repulsion from those English ideas. Although for most of the work she rejects the limited role of women in England, by the end she stands ready to renounce her life in Italy to be with Oswald. Eventually we see that Oswald cannot handle the freedom permitted Corinne and he returns to the society where he feels more at ease – that of England. Oswald, then, like Lady Edgermond, also fails in his mission to “civilize” Corinne and render her wholly and only feminine according to English norms.

Lucile, Corinne, and Juliette

When Oswald leaves Corinne because of these differences, he returns of course to the familiar – Lucile. Unlike Corinne, Lucile epitomizes the “proper English lady.” The text leads the reader to believe that she has been raised to be Oswald's wife. She is and represents everything that Corinne does not. We must also mention that as a young mother (barely twenty years old), Lucile stands in direct contrast to Corinne on her deathbed. Castel-Forte, upon meeting Lucile says: “Elle est charmante lady Nelvil [. . .] quelle jeunesse, quelle fraîcheur! Ma pauvre amie n'a plus rien de cet éclat; mais il ne faut pas oublier, mylord, qu'elle était bien brillante aussi quand vous l'avez vue pour la première fois” (564). Not only is Lucile a more “proper” fit for Oswald, she is also younger, fresher. Throw out the old woman; bring in the young replacement.

The relationship that Corinne and Lucile develop in the final pages of the work, however, complicates both the gender and nation questions. We witness here the proof of Corinne's colonization, rendered by none other than her sister, and even suggested by Corinne. Lucile, the perfect English lady, finds herself in a unsatisfying marriage because

her husband still loves her sister. Lucile therefore decides to confront Corinne but loses her resolve upon seeing Corinne's weakened state. Corinne, of course, having already guessed the problems in their marriage, decides to help the poor couple and instructs Lucile saying: "Il faut que vous soyez vous et moi tout à la fois [. . .]" (578). This double identity that Lucile is asked to take on understandably complicates the story. For in becoming both herself and Corinne, Lucile displaces Corinne. Oswald will no longer need Corinne, as Lucile will have appropriated her. The exotic and exciting appeal that he found in Corinne, he will now find in his perfect English wife. He no longer needs the savage native because she has been colonized – all her qualities that were deemed of value by English society, Lucile will take on. All that was found to be displeasing by English society will be discarded with Corinne's lifeless body. In other words, although Corinne rejected colonization from her stepmother, she seeks it out from her sister. Herein lies the danger in the work as well in that it tells the reader that a woman must be all things all the time. The text implies, then, that woman must be charming, but not too charming; interesting, but not too interesting; talented, but not too talented – for this "ideal" is exactly what we will have when Lucile becomes both herself and Corinne. This forced hybridity differs drastically from the freely chosen hybridity that we witnessed earlier in the work. Only when hybridity comes from choice can it be a place where the freedom of ambiguity is illustrated. When hybridity becomes an obligation, freedom is lost. Lucile, therefore, ultimately suffers from this imposed hybridity. She is everything that English society has told her to be, and still Oswald finds himself dissatisfied with her because she has no "savagery" like Corinne – she never steps outside of the rules. He has tasted the exotic fruit of Corinne and can never again be satisfied with homegrown Lucile unless she can indeed become both herself and Corinne. In so doing, Lucile negates any place Corinne ever had, but also finds herself trapped inside this definitive conundrum.

Finally, Juliette's role in the displacement of Corinne ultimately undoes the feminist message of the novel. The text gives Corinne the last word in this work, which is why Juliette's presence is so important. From the moment of her birth, the text portrays her as a reincarnation of Corinne, even though she has not yet died. At first, she only looks like Corinne:

Cette petite ressemblait à Corinne: l'imagination de Lucile avait été fort occupée du souvenir de sa sœur pendant sa grossesse; et Juliette, c'était ainsi qu'elle se nommait, avait les cheveux et les yeux de Corinne. Lord Nelvil le remarqua et en fut troublé; il la prit dans ses bras, et la serra contre son cœur avec tendresse. Lucile ne vit dans ce mouvement qu'un souvenir de Corinne, et dès cet instant elle ne jouit pas, sans mélange, de l'affection que lord Nelvil témoignait à Juliette. (542)

Seemingly, the sisters have conspired, albeit unknowingly, to remind Oswald of his cruelty lest he ever forget Corinne. Additionally, the name that Lucile chose for their daughter, Juliette, cannot help but cause us to remember Corinne's interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* at the height of her romance with Oswald. Moreover, by invoking Shakespeare's Juliet, the text further combines Italy and England in that Juliet Capulet is an Italian from Verona. Juliette's role becomes even more controversial once the Nelvil family travels in Italy. Oswald's eagerness to have his daughter spend time with Corinne and learn from her borders on the perverse and incestuous. With this act, he himself facilitates Corinne's reincarnation as Juliette. By encouraging his daughter to resemble Corinne, Oswald clearly hopes to find in his own child the qualities he loved in Corinne. The question, again, is one of colonization. Once more, Corinne willingly allows herself to be colonized and in fact instigates this colonization. She complains to Oswald that she has not seen her niece, and she tells the young Juliette that her desire is to make Juliette into Corinne. The child relays this wish to her father, saying: "Elle m'a promis de m'apprendre tout ce qu'elle sait. Elle dit qu'elle veut que je ressemble à Corinne. Qu'est-ce que c'est que Corinne, mon père? cette dame n'a pas voulu me le dire" (575). By not telling Juliette who Corinne is, both Corinne and Oswald allow Juliette to resemble the young Corinne who still has her talent, genius, and charm. Corinne would certainly not want Juliette to resemble her as she appears at the end of the work but rather as she was at the height of her glory, when Oswald loved her.

What then does this colonization do to Corinne? Is there such a thing as a "good" colonization? The answer, as with everything in this text, is two-fold. Although Corinne feels that through Juliette she will live on, the fact of the matter is that Corinne herself has been displaced. She has displaced herself, allowing both Lucile and Juliette to take the

“best” of her and throw the rest away. However, Corinne still has her revenge in that she instills her freedom – the very freedom Oswald could not tolerate – in his daughter. In other words, instead of a clear example of Corinne being colonized, it is rather that Juliette has been colonized. The child was never given an opportunity to carve out her own voice and must take on the voice of Corinne. Granted, Corinne must die to accomplish this, but the result is astounding.

In conclusion, we see that while Corinne’s dual national identity gives her room to create an uninhibited identity, the same does not hold true for her dual gendered identity. We can draw from the work, therefore, that there is freedom in ambiguity, but also potential danger. For Corinne to exist and thrive in society, she must live in a world where rigid social categorizations are unimaginable. She must be free to be both feminine and masculine, Italian and English. Because of the enforcement of a rigid and unforgiving society upon her, she eventually loses Oswald and dies. While a tragic ending indeed, the message comes through clearly – as long as society is rigid in its categorizations of people, no one will be free to live the idyllic reverie presented in *Corinne ou l’Italie*. Staël aptly illustrates this point through her use of generic hybridity – the novelogue – literally demonstrating through example the freedom of ambiguity.

*Tout écrivain doit être vrai: s'il ne se sent pas le courage de l'être,
il doit renoncer au sacerdoce qu'il assume d'instruire ses semblables.
L'utilité de ses écrits résultera des vérités qu'ils contiendront [. . .].
(from Tristan's preface, 15)*

Chapter 2: Flora Tristan's *Pérégrinations d'une paria*

Flora Tristan's *Pérégrinations d'une paria* recounts the events of her voyage from France to Peru and the personal identity crisis she underwent during these travels. The quest for truth on which she embarks – as cited above – highlights her complete belief in her reason for writing: to instruct. Her ambiguous status on several different levels acts as the center of her identity crisis: she is a working-class woman striving for upper-class status; she is French but searching for her family in Peru; she is physically and emotionally separated from her husband but legally prohibited from divorcing him. Unlike Staël's *Corinne*, Tristan at first rejects her ambiguous national status and searches for a rigid place of identity. The other players in her story, however, do not cooperate with her aims, refusing her the social and familial status she desires, and she therefore must learn to accept and embrace her ambiguity – her Otherness – as a place of freedom. Similar to *Corinne ou l'Italie*, *Pérégrinations d'une paria* illustrates this ambiguity at the levels of genre, nation, and gender as well. Also like *Corinne*, critics have labeled *Pérégrinations* a travelogue, a fictional invention, or an autobiography. Additionally, in a style comparable to *Corinne*'s, Tristan's work opens up an in-between space for a new type of writer and heroine.

We will see, therefore, that Tristan's novelogue follows the tradition established by Staël and that Tristan, too, uses this genre to argue for women's rights and human rights in general. *Pérégrinations d'une paria*, as a novelogue, centers of course on travel. In contrast to Staël and Eberhardt, though, Tristan intended the book as non-fiction. She takes several

pages at the beginning of the work to remind her readers that these are indeed her “mémoires” and that the events and people she will discuss are true and alive¹:

Des haines pourront se soulever contre moi; mais, être de foi avant tout, aucune considération ne pourra m’empêcher de dire *la vérité* sur les personnes et les choses. Je vais raconter deux années de *ma vie*: j’aurai le courage de dire *tout ce que j’ai* souffert. Je nommerai les individus appartenant à diverses classes de la société, avec lesquels les circonstances m’ont mise en rapport: *tous existent encore*; je les ferai connaître par leurs actions et leurs paroles. (1: 16, my italics)

Tristan’s determination to be honest or true, coupled with her forthrightness, show her readers that this work not only tells the events from one part of her life but also plays an important role in the ensuing social changes she hopes to effect. Tristan explains that *Pérégrinations*, while a story about her experiences, is indeed much more than that: “Ce n’est donc pas sur moi personnellement que j’ai voulu attirer l’attention, mais bien sur toutes les femmes qui se trouvent dans la même position, et dont le nombre augmente journellement” (1: 14). Tristan therefore, from the beginning of the text, introduces the concept of equality between *je* and *nous*. She uses her personal trials and experiences to relate universal problems like inequality, oppression, and slavery.

Keeping in mind, then, that Tristan’s stated goal in this work is to call attention to the injustices she has witnessed, this study will examine how she accomplishes this goal of articulating political and universal problems, and where she falls short. The end result, much like what we found in *Corinne ou l’Italie*, will show that because of Tristan’s unique identity – woman, traveler, writer, pariah – she is able to create a new space for herself and those for whom she writes that is in-between genres, genders, and nationalities.

Nation

Flora Tristan’s familial diversity leads to identity confusion for both Tristan and for her readers who aspire to neatly categorize her. Is she French? Peruvian? Spanish? The answer to all of these questions is yes. She is French, Peruvian, or even Spanish at different

¹ This introductory explanation falls in line with the examples that Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Benjamin Constant, and Musset put forth in their autobiographies. The difference, however, is that Tristan’s work is also a call to other women to follow her lead and speak out about their lives as well.

times in her work, depending on which nationality best suits her agenda. Throughout *Pérégrinations* she readily embraces all of her nationalities and in the end accepts and welcomes her plurality. Tristan, however, does not set out to discover her own multiculturalism *avant la lettre*. Rather, her much more personal goal is that of a home. Having lost her father, having never had the status of a legitimate child, and having broken free from her husband (if not her marriage), she is desperately looking for her own identity, preferably an aristocratic and wealthy one.

Tristan's search for her own identity through her writing, though, addresses more universal questions such as nation and colonization. We will see in our discussion of images of France, Praia, and Peru that Tristan regularly posits herself somewhere on the continuum of colonizer/colonized – at times identifying herself as a member of the French colonial power, at times as a colonized Peruvian – thus complicating her national identity and her stance on issues pertaining to nation. In other words, her representations of France, Peru, or even Africa grant her reader an insight as to her worldview. Does Tristan picture herself as being a member of the metropolitan center or the colonial periphery? In other words, does she see herself as belonging to the “civilized center” of the world (i.e., Western Europe) or to the margins (i.e., the European colonies)? We will observe that she envisages herself as belonging to both and therefore, like Staël, finds herself located in a new, in-between space that is neither self nor other, but somewhere in between the two terms of the binary opposition. This association with both sides of the opposition further allows her to speak as both *je* and *nous*, addressing to both colonizer and colonized her plan for a better world. She therefore feels permitted to make scathing criticisms of France while at the same time applauding her maternal home for its positive aspects.

Images of France

Tristan's illustration of her maternal home varies throughout the work. She denounces France while at the same time embracing much of the country's values and customs. She chooses her national allegiance based on the issue at hand and hence leaves her reader slightly confused as to where her allegiance truly lies. This ambiguity is an example of her changing identity and of her “in-between” status vis-à-vis the nation. For Tristan, though, the discord that she experiences takes place at a very personal and emotional level,

furthering her readers' uncertainty as to her national allegiance. Take, for example, her inner dialogue before her departure from France. She writes, "De quelle foule de réflexions ne fus-je pas agitée pendant le court trajet de chez moi au port?" (1: 27), and thereby clearly illustrates her mixed and conflicting feelings regarding her departure. She continues in a very Romantic fashion – reminiscing on an idyllic moment in the past that reflects the natural surroundings – by recalling the sweetness of an earlier time in her life: "Nous passâmes devant le jardin public; je dis adieu à ses beaux arbres. Avec quel sentiment de regret ne me rappelais-je pas mes promenades sous leur ombrage" (27). She then goes on to debate whether or not to beg her escort to take her away from this pending voyage:

Dieu seul peut apprécier la force qu'il me fallut appeler à mon aide, afin de résister à l'impétueux désir qui me poussait à dire à M. Bertera : « Au nom du ciel, sauvez-moi ! Oh ! Par pitié, emmenez-moi d'ici ! » Dix fois, pendant ce moment d'attente, je fis un mouvement pour prendre M. Bertera par la main, en lui adressant cette prière. (1: 28)

Unmistakably, Tristan doubts her reasons for leaving France, the place she considers to be her home, and suffers from a sort of projected homesickness as these are her feelings before her ship has even set sail. The internal division she battles reminds her readers of the terrible decision circumstances forced her to make – she had to leave her son with her estranged and abusive husband and her daughter with a stranger as she went off in search of financial stability.

In spite of her doubts about leaving her country and her family, though, her disillusionment with her homeland finally wins the inner debate: "mais la présence de tout ce monde me rappelait comme un spectre horrible la société qui m'avait rejetée de son sein. A ce souvenir, ma langue resta glacée, une sueur froide me couvrit le corps [. . .]" (1: 28). Her word choice in these two quotes clearly illustrates the almost violent indecision she experienced: *la force*, *résister*, *poussait*, *emmenez*, *mouvement*, and *rejetée* all demonstrate the push and pull she felt at this moment in her life. Nevertheless, she goes on to claim her righteous indignation with the country that has forced her to make this decision to travel to Peru, crying out to her French compatriots from her window:

Insensés ! Je vous plains et ne vous hais pas ; vos dédains me font mal, mais ne troublent pas ma conscience. Les mêmes lois et les mêmes préjugés dont

je suis victime remplissent également votre vie d'amertume ; n'ayant pas le courage de vous soustraire à leur joug, vous vous en rendez les serviles instruments. Ah ! si vous traitez de la sorte ceux que l'élévation de leur âme, la générosité de leur cœur porteraient à se dévouer à votre cause, je vous le prédis, vous resterez encore longtemps dans votre phase de malheur. (1: 28)

Within this decree, Tristan momentarily replaces the *je / nous* context of the work with a more accusatory *je / vous* rhetoric, perhaps needing to separate herself rhetorically as she begins the physical separation from the place she has always considered home. As readers, therefore, we are privy to Tristan's conflicting feelings concerning her mother country and can practically see the scales counter-balancing between an attraction to and repulsion from France. The opposite of Corinne, Tristan is rejected by her maternal home and is forced to search for acceptance in her paternal home, Peru.

Once her voyage has begun, though, Tristan's reflections take on a more analytical and intellectual tone. For example, she discusses her thoughts concerning other nations and warns her reader that at the beginning of her voyage to Peru she was a different person:

En 1833, j'étais encore bien loin d'avoir les idées qui, depuis, se sont développées dans mon esprit. A cette époque, j'étais très exclusive, mon pays occupait plus de place dans ma pensée que toute [sic] le reste du monde : c'était avec les opinions et les usages de ma patrie que je jugeais des opinions et des usages des autres contrées. Le nom de la France et tout ce qui s'y rattachait produisaient sur moi des effets presque magiques. Alors je considérais un Anglais, un Allemand, un Italien comme autant d'étrangers : je ne voyais pas que tous les hommes sont frères et que le monde est leur commune patrie. J'étais donc bien loin encore de reconnaître la solidarité des nations entre elles, d'où résulte que le corps humanitaire en entier ressent le bien et le mal de chacune d'elles. Mais je retrace mes impressions telles que je les ai éprouvées à la vue de notre supériorité sur les individus des autres nations qui se trouvaient à la Praya. (1: 40-41)

While this disclaimer does explain in part some of Tristan's reactions to the people she will meet during her sojourn, it also offers a very complex look into the development of her mind through the passage of time. Tristan tries to explain away her initial reactions to the foreign

and exotic by claiming ignorance. She candidly asks her readers to take this text with the proverbial grain of salt, reminding us that these were her opinions in 1833, and not 1838 when she published the work. She thereby attempts to negate anything in the text that might render her in a less than positive light and performs an act of self-distancing. From the beginning of her work, then, we learn that contradiction and incongruity between her thoughts before and after her trip impinge on the text. These contradictions, however, are often unclear in that it can be debated whether or not she still holds any or all of the opinions in the work. Regardless, the fact remains that Tristan still sees France and those holding French citizenship as having a “supériorité sur les individus des autres nations” and she thus refutes her claim of dispersed ignorance. The language she uses here, however, invokes a transnational and socialist republicanism when she comments that “tous les hommes sont frères et que le monde est leur commune patrie” (1:41). In other words, the republican value of *fraternité* is one that Tristan sees as being transnational and of importance to all nations, not just France. The fact, though, that the only other nations she mentions are European, – England, Germany, and Italy – begs the question as to where non-Europeans fit into her discussion. Tristan’s ideas concerning France, however, are more plainly evident as she comments on her experiences in other parts of the world.

Images of Praia

Tristan’s representation of the Africans and the other foreigners she meets in Praia posits a disheartening juxtaposition with her belief that “tous les hommes sont frères.” She takes on a proud and condescending tone when she compares the French boat she is traveling in with those of others docked at Praia:

...j’avouerai le mouvement d’orgueil que je ressentis en comparant notre canot et les hommes qui le montaient aux trois autres misérables petits canots montés par des nègres et de pauvres matelots-américains [sic]! Quelle immense différence ! Comme il était joli et coquet, notre canot ! comme ils avaient bonne mine nos marins ! (1: 40)

While just after this moment of pride Tristan reminds her readers that she was “très exclusive” at this time, it is hard to overlook her national arrogance. It is this same haughty disdain that lends her work the tone of ethnography. Her piecing together of the events and

people she has encountered can only be done from her very subjective point of view. The result, therefore, is a text that is laden with pro-Western (and specifically pro-French) ideology. We witness, for example, her blatantly racist reaction toward the people of Cape Verde, reflecting an ingrained perception of the world that she is hard-pressed to shed. Her first description of them discusses “l’odeur de nègre, on ne saurait la comparer à rien, elle soulève le cœur, elle vous poursuit partout. Entre-t-on dans une maison, on est à l’instant saisi par cette émanation fétide. Si l’on s’approche de quelques enfants [. . .], vite on s’éloigne, tant l’odeur qui s’en exhale est repous sante” (1: 46). While the Tristan of 1838 may very well see all Europeans as equals, the same does not hold true for the indigenous peoples she met in Praia. Her degrading description of them illustrates one of several aspects of her identity, and this particular one represents the popular French thought of the day concerning Africans.

In spite of her abrupt and racist reaction to the black people she meets, Tristan nevertheless decries slavery and is appalled by its effect on the people around her. She has a heated argument with a former seminary student turned slave trader² and vehemently condemns slavery and wonders if humankind truly is evil in its essence. Even so, she nevertheless goes on to describe these same people that she has just vigorously defended in less than flattering terms:

...j’examinai avec beaucoup d’attention toutes les figures noires et basanées qui se présentaient à moi ; tous ces êtres, à peine vêtus, offraient un aspect *repoussant* : les hommes avaient une expression de *dureté*, souvent même de *féroçité*, et les femmes d’*effronterie* et de *bêtise*. Quant aux enfants, ils étaient horribles de laideur, entièrement nus, maigres, chétifs ; on les eût pris pour des petits *singes*. (1: 30 my emphasis)

Tristan’s language here invokes strikingly contrasting binaries. While the people of Praia are “horribles de laideur,” “maigres” and “chétifs,” the French have “bonne mine” and their ship is “joli et coquet.” Moreover, the language used consistently reverts to animal metaphors to depict the African people: the men have an expression of “férocité” and the women of “bêtise,” while the children are “singes.” This language, then, forces her readers to recognize her dehumanizing portrayal of the people she purports to defend. The contrasting

² Slavery was still legal in the French colonies at the time as it was not abolished until 1848.

descriptions mirror Tristan's personal and internal contradictions concerning slavery. Although she both emotionally and intelligently decries the practice of slavery, she nonetheless still holds the beliefs of and prejudices of the French when she comes face to face with African people. Her ethnography, then, according to Atkinson's definition, shapes for her readers a clear and disturbing presentation of the images she witnessed in Africa.

In *Promenades dans Londres*, as well, Tristan depicts the people she observes in the Irish district with animalistic imagery: "Qu'on se représente des hommes, des femmes, des enfants, pieds nus, piétant la fange infecte de cloaque ; les uns accotés au mur faute de siège pour s'asseoir, d'autres accroupis à terre ; des enfants gisant dans la boue comme des pourceaux" (PL 133). Translator Jean Hawkes, in her introduction to *Peregrinations* uses this description as a justification for Tristan's racially loaded description of Africans, saying: "Tristan recognizes that the most pernicious effect of slavery and oppression is their tendency to reduce humans to the level of animals" (xi). This justification, however, fails to take into account the fact that Tristan's worst imaginable description of people is that of "negroes" – she can find no more non-human descriptor than this word:

Tous sont d'une maigreur effrayante ; étiolés, souffrants, et remplis de maux au visage, au cou et aux mains ils ont la peau si sale, les cheveux tellement encrassés et ébouriffés qu'ils paraissent des *nègres crépus* ; leurs yeux caves expriment *la stupidité féroce* ; mais, si vous regardez ces malheureux avec assurance, alors ils prennent un air vil et mendiant. (PL 134, Tristan's emphasis)

Clearly, then, two contrasting aspects of Tristan's multi-faceted identity come through as she tries to describe the downtrodden and yet also deplore their treatment by colonizing Westerners. We will see, too, that this condescending tone of superiority tends to reappear in her writings on Peru, reinforcing her colonial, Western point of view and making her reader question whether she has truly invented an "in-between" place for herself as a champion of the oppressed or has rather placed herself squarely on the side of the colonizing power.

Images of Peru

As Tristan recounts the events of her sojourn in Peru, the reader is often asked to consider her as Peruvian, as an active and involved member of her uncle's community. Just

before her departure from Arequipa she refers to Peru as a country “que je m’étais habituée à considérer comme le mien” (2: 111). However, does this mean that we are indeed supposed to see her in that light and forget her French heritage and upbringing? Denys Cuche explains that Tristan’s association with Peru is an attempt on her behalf to start over: “En quittant la France, elle semble renoncer à son identité de Française et se veut Péruvienne. Elle veut construire une identité neuve pour échapper à son identité de paria” (21). While Tristan certainly does have a familial tie to Peru, the year that she spent there hardly renders her Peruvian, and we as readers therefore cannot regard her as such. Her blood connection to Peru is made more tenuous, though, because her family in Peru descends from Spain. Moreover, those members of the family living in Peru had not yet made any familial connection to the indigenous Peruvian people. Furthermore, her portrayal of the Peruvians she meets is not always positive. She often takes on the role of a biased European ethnographer – shaping her text for European expectations – and depicts Peruvians as mindless and backward. For example, as soon as she arrives at the coast of Peru, in Islay, she comments on the lack of artesian wells in the area saying that the country is “trop arriéré pour qu’on y songe” (1: 124). Whereas we may attribute this to a case of bad first impressions, she continues this type of observation throughout the text. When she and her cousin Carmen visit a flour mill in Arequipa, she remarks: “Je me plaisais à examiner cette fabrique rustique qui, dans son ensemble, est bien loin d’égaliser les nôtres” (2: 51). When they go to the chocolate mill, however, she is pleasantly surprised by “les progrès de la civilisation: on y voit moudre le cacao, écraser le sucre et mélanger le tout pour en former le chocolat. La machine a été importée d’Angleterre [. . .]” (2: 51). In other words, the flour mill that is still using the “rustic” methods of yesteryear is inefficient, but the imported chocolate machine from England stands for “civilization” and “progress.” Tristan’s definitions of civilization and progress, therefore, directly correlate with her definition of the West – they go hand in hand and are synonymous. The Western world *is* civilization, and it *is* progress. Of interest here, however, is that when she mentions the brutality of the West as witnessed in the slave trade, she fails to see a connection between civilization and progress – and the lack thereof – and the practice of slavery or the oppression of women. She appears, therefore, to be wearing social blinders and so freely criticizes and condemns that which is not Western or French.

She makes a similar sort of judgment near the end of her stay when discussing the politicians in Lima: “L’ambition privée est le mobile de tous ces personnages [. . .]; malheureusement le peuple est trop *abruti* pour qu’il sorte de son sein de véritables tribuns, et pour juger les hommes qui conduisent ses affaires” (2: 143 my emphasis). These judgments not only make her reader see her as a Western critic of Peru, but also once more as a distanced ethnographer who is neither attached to the society she is observing nor defending it in any way. Rather, she compares Peruvian ways and mores to her Western ideals and finds Peru to be lacking. By describing the people as “*abruti*” (idiotic), she denigrates the entire society.

Moreover, Tristan’s use of the word “*tribuns*” to describe the way Peruvians should govern themselves restates Tristan’s vested interest in France’s First Republic (1792-1848) and her desire to see Peru follow the French example of government. Her reference then to Western – “forward thinking” – further proves Tristan’s inability to step outside of her “Frenchness” or her “Westernness” and objectively describe or analyze non-Westerners. Her support of the growing republicanism in France and the French citizens who have seen the need to move toward such a system of government translates into a biased judgment and criticism of Peruvian government. While it is true that Tristan’s greatest political influences were socialists like Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Enfantin,³ republican and socialist values in the nineteenth century were nevertheless intertwined. Pamela M. Pilbeam describes the connection in her book *Republicanism in Nineteenth-Century France, 1814-1871*:

The two main innovations of the 1830s and 40s, the development of socialist ideas and the growth of artisan interest in the press and in cooperative worker associations, served to alarm the more timid middle-class reformers. In many respects the early socialists rendered the search for unity among republicans more remote, but in the long term the interest they aroused among the less well-off stimulated a new and lasting interest in a republican alternative (184).

Tristan’s political views, then, while mostly centered on social issues of women’s and workers’ rights, all the same represent her republican ideology and further her ethnographic

³ For more on Tristan’s political beliefs, see Dominique Desanti’s biography, *Flora Tristan: La Femme révoltée*, p.38-49.

project. For in criticizing the Peruvian style of governing, she illustrates the distanced and uninvolved viewpoint of an ethnographer judging another society.

Tristan further encourages our perception of her as an ethnographer by playing the part of a voyeur – someone who seeks satisfaction and pleasure from simply looking at others from a distance – of Peruvian society while at the same time acting as an *exploratrice sociale* in search of solutions to global social problems. The roles of ethnographer, voyeur, and *exploratrice sociale* all play a similar part in a transnational text in that they all deal with observing an/Other from a privileged and distanced viewpoint. An ethnographer is uninvolved in the events recounted and therefore maintains an analytical distance. Likewise, the voyeur is not seen by the object of observation and therefore keeps his/her distance, and the *exploratrice sociale* is in search of cultural comparisons to bring home with her after her travels and, while more vested in the outcome of these observations, still maintains a critical distance. In this case, each role works together in Tristan as she examines from a distant, uninvolved point of view and tries to explain the preponderance of corrupt leaders in the colonies. For example, during the civil war Tristan goes to the soldiers' camp with her cousin Althaus and witnesses a gambling scene. However, she and her cousin do not actually take part in the scene but rather peer in the window "sans être aperçus" (2: 58). Afterwards, she and Althaus discuss "le malheur d'un pays livré à de pareils chefs" (2: 58), thereby illustrating Tristan's goal – finding solutions to global social problems like corrupt governments, slavery, and the oppression of women. Later in the war, Tristan is found seated on a window-sill at her uncle's house where she observes the events both in and outside the house as an uninvolved spectator: "Je jouissais du double spectacle qu'offraient la rue et le cabinet. Cette nuit fut pour moi pleine d'enseignements; le caractère de ce peuple a un cachet qui lui est propre: son goût pour le merveilleux et l'exagération est extraordinaire" (2: 91). Her physical location on the windowsill is another example of an in-between space in that she is not involved in either the exterior or interior action, but rather is passively located in-between the two actions. And, just before she leaves her uncle's house for Lima, she spends most of her time on the roof, watching the events of the war through a telescope. Thus, while in each of these instances Tristan plays the part of the voyeur, she also incessantly provides the moral commentary of an *exploratrice sociale* to accompany the events, thereby rendering the work an ethnography written by a voyeuristic *exploratrice*

sociale. For in never completely ‘integrating’ herself into the world in which she is living, Tristan remains the colonizer who has come to observe the characteristics and activities of the “natives.”

Tristan’s ethnography becomes even more complicated as we examine her representations of slaves, which are fraught with contradiction and ambiguity. Although she persistently claims to be the voice of the downtrodden, her attitude often belies a true desire for revolution. Take, for instance, her much-loved walks with her cousin Carmen. Tristan casually mentions that when the two women would cross the river, they would do so “en nous faisant porter par nos négresses” (2: 51). Through this one careless comment, she undermines her claim of supporting the oppressed, preferring to be carried (*porter*) by them. It would appear, then, that Tristan chooses the moments that suit her to take up her condemnation of slavery. Desanti quite rightly reminds us that: “En France, en Angleterre elle a vécu en paria pauvre, en domestique, en humiliée. Au Pérou, pour la seule fois de sa vie, elle participa du luxe fondé sur l’esclavage. Souhaitant le bouleversement, elle a pourtant connu la condition du Blanc aux colonies” (113). As seen in her discussion with the slave owner and her actual encounters with slaves (limited as they may be), Tristan’s attitude toward the slaves is terribly contradictory and precariously balances somewhere between attraction and repulsion. From her first encounter with black slaves in Africa, where she is literally repulsed by “l’odeur de nègre,” to her profound feeling of sympathy toward a slave woman she meets at the sugar refinery, Tristan does not seem to be able to completely resolve her own inner debate over the issue and finds herself in an in-between space that rather than freeing her – as it did for Corinne – traps her in a constant contradiction.

Nonetheless, Tristan always returns to her conviction that slavery is immoral and unjust. Mary Louise Pratt has referred to Tristan’s commentaries on this institution as “social reformism” which is “another branch of the civilizing mission [. . .] a form of female imperial intervention in the contact zone” (*Imperial Eyes* 160). It is in this sense as well that we must accept this work as a piece of ethnography in which she analyzes and criticizes the society she scrutinizes. Tristan is clearly a member of the metropolis who finds herself in a privileged situation where she benefits from the luxury of passive observation and active judgment. As she discusses slavery with the owner of the sugar refinery, M. Lavalle, she argues that slavery is simply an unsound policy, both politically and economically. She even

faults slavery with the downfall of the Roman Empire: “[. . .] il n’eût pas succombé sous l’invasion des peuples du nord, si les terres y eussent été cultivées par des mains libres, si les villes n’eussent contenu plus d’esclaves que de citoyens” (2:167). Tristan’s language here again reminds the reader of her republican ideology as she invokes the term “citoyens” and compares Peru’s system with that of the fallen Roman Empire. She goes on to defend France’s decision to abolish slavery and encourages others to follow the example France has set and yet also to learn from her country’s mistakes. Tristan says to M. Laval: “La Convention décréta l’affranchissement des nègres, par enthousiasme, sans paraître soupçonner qu’ils eussent besoin d’être préparés à user de la liberté” (2: 169).⁴ This remark is an interesting foreshadowing of a comment made some thirty years later by Emile Zola in regard to women: “Émanciper la femme, c’est excellent; mais il faudrait avant tout lui enseigner l’usage de la liberté.”⁵ In other words, freedom is acceptable, but the ruling colonizer is the one who is permitted to decide the extent and the manner of this “freedom.”

When Tristan encounters two female slaves, her tone changes from that of a debater to a tenderhearted humanitarian. In describing these two women she writes:

Elles avaient fait mourir leurs enfants en les privant de l’allaitement : toutes deux, entièrement nues, se tenaient blotties dans un coin. L’une mangeait du maïs cru ; l’autre, jeune et très belle, dirigea sur moi ses grands yeux ; son regard semblait me dire : «J’ai laissé mourir mon enfant, parce que je savais qu’il ne serait pas libre comme toi ; je l’ai préféré mort qu’esclave. » (1: 272)

Because this incident takes place in the final pages of the book, there is an indication that Tristan herself is evolving and becoming less ignorant and more aware of the plights of others as her journey continues. Commenting on her interaction with this slave woman, she writes: “Sous cette peau noire, il se rencontre des âmes grandes et fières; les nègres passant brusquement de l’indépendance de nature à l’esclavage, il s’en trouve d’indomptables qui souffrent les tourments et meurent sans s’être pliés au joug” (2: 172). Although Tristan is obviously very moved by the plight of the slaves, her use of the adjectives “grandes” and “fières” to describe the slaves’ souls resonates strongly of the binary opposition of “noble

⁴ This comment by Tristan also demonstrates a certain ignorance about France’s position on slavery. While in 1791 France began a slow process of emancipating slaves, first in France where there were none, and then in the colonies, the emancipation did not fully take hold. In 1801, well before Tristan traveled to Peru, Napoleon reinstated slavery. Not until 1848 was slavery abolished permanently, both in France and in its colonies.

⁵ This quote from Zola was found in an issue of *La Tribune* in 1868.

savage” or “rebellious cannibal” – with the slaves who refuse to be broken as the “noble savages” and those who kill their own children to save them from slavery as the “rebellious cannibals” – and the colonizing power.⁶ We as readers cannot forget, therefore, that in spite of Tristan’s inherent compassion and pity for the oppressed, she is still a member of the Western, colonizing center. She is thus socially conditioned with these prejudices and stereotypes that taint and often hinder her objectives. Nevertheless, Tristan visibly undergoes a change in attitude toward slaves and the text begins here to take on elements of a *bildungsroman* rather than a travelogue. We as readers witness a growing maturity and sympathy on Tristan’s part for those less fortunate than herself. Her role in the text also changes at this point, as she becomes the observed instead of the observer. When she describes the two previously mentioned slave women, she writes about one woman’s eyes and how “son regard” seemed to speak to her. This visual contact between the two women forces Tristan to move beyond her mere observations and enter into a sympathetic – empathetic even, since Tristan compares marriage with slavery – relationship with the slave. The gaze, therefore, no longer acts as a threatening invasion, but rather as a plea for understanding and compassion.

The infanticide on which she comments, then, is not portrayed as a savage or brutal act of someone less than human. Instead of taking the “moral” and distant “high-road” to which she was inclined earlier in the work, Tristan sees in this slave woman the desperate actions of a woman who believed she had no other choices – a feeling to which Tristan easily relates.⁷ Her ethnography at this point takes on lesser importance, ceding to the agenda of the *exploratrice sociale*. Tristan’s presentation of nation, therefore, takes on a more humanistic and sympathetic tone when the person observed is a woman. Her portrayal of gender in the work causes her discussion of issues of nation to be less self-righteous and condemning and allows the reader to focus on the question that is of the most importance to Tristan – universal women’s rights.

⁶For more information on this concept, see Roberto Fernández Retamar’s *Caliban and Other Essays* in which he discusses the power structure between native inhabitants and colonial occupiers. The “noble savage” is the “good” native who willingly helps the colonizer adjust to his new life. The “rebellious cannibal” is the “bad” native who resists “civilization” and colonial power.

⁷ When Tristan left France to come Peru, she first had to find people to care for her son and daughter. She left them knowing there was a chance she would not return and her children would be orphaned (Desanti 66).

Gender

Much like Staël's character Corinne, it is the question of gender that Flora Tristan (the narrator) truly takes by storm, and it is a question that has often been addressed in studies on her work. In this study we will examine first how Tristan (the narrator) addresses the gender question for herself and then how she addresses it for others, specifically keeping in mind that she regularly looks for and finds a sort of in-between gender for herself and sometimes for the women she depicts. In other words, like Corinne, we will see that the narrator refuses to limit herself to either a "feminine" or "masculine" identity, but rather selects what suits her from both stereotypes, thus creating a new possibility for gender that had not been recognized or accepted by society as a whole.

Reversal of Gender Roles

One of the similarities that Tristan shares with Corinne is her affection for "gender-switching" – freely choosing between a "masculine" and a "feminine" identity – based on what best suits her immediate needs and thereby allowing herself a new freedom and in-between space. Her reversal of traditional gender roles can be seen as her participation in autoethnography. Tristan's journey to Peru takes place in 1833-34, nearing the end of the Romantic movement. If we accept Alan Richardson's concept that male poets colonized "feminine" characteristics to render themselves "men of feeling,"⁸ then we can analyze Tristan as a colonized figure. Having been placed in the category of "woman," Tristan, before taking up the pen herself, is an exploited victim who has no voice of her own. When she does indeed begin to "speak," therefore, she responds to and contradicts stereotypes about gender roles, thus engaging in a dialogical response to masculine power, or autoethnography. Her simple act of "talking back" shows a disobedience to societal laws that forbade such behavior in women, and thereby forcibly creates a new gendered situation where she freely moves between that which is considered "masculine" and that which is considered "feminine."

We first see this gender switching in the simple act of her voyage, a voyage traditionally reserved for men. Not only has she left her husband and children and therefore

⁸The 'man of feeling' was the man who had successfully appropriated the positive traits of his mother and had therefore been able to attain a higher level of emotional perception and sensitivity (Richardson 15).

become a pariah in the eyes of society, but she also travels halfway around the world, alone, without any familial chaperone. Aboard the ship, first to Praia and then to Peru, Tristan is the only woman, a position that sometimes works to her advantage. The captain, Monsieur Chabrié, and his crew take care of her, doing whatever they can – as “proper gentlemen” should – to make her, the damsel in distress, as comfortable as possible. In other words, she takes advantage of the fact that society sees her as the “weaker sex” and allows these men to dote on her. At the same time, it is Tristan’s relationship with Chabrié that first shows us some of the “masculine” traits of her personality. Chabrié, having fallen in love with Tristan, is so overcome with emotion that upon her departure from him he cannot bear to see her go: “il me quitta, ne se sentant pas la force de m’accompagner [. . .]” (1: 116). Tristan, for her part, remains calm and matter-of-fact while saying goodbye to him, telling him that “Dieu seul sait l’avenir qui nous est réservé” (1: 115). Tristan has taken on the role of the rational, thinking, non-emotional, “masculine” character while Chabrié demonstrates more typically “feminine” characteristics. Of course, a few lines later as she realizes that she is about to be separated from Chabrié, “il me prit un tremblement subit auquel je fus incapable de résister; mes dents claquaient” (1: 116). We see, then, that she readily switches between “masculine” and “feminine” roles. This is a characteristic that is in itself typical of the Romantic male poet who is “naturally” endowed with the ability to reason and yet also has acquired an emotional sensitivity through his appropriation of the feminine. Regardless, Tristan is quick to help herself to this archetype, even though she is a woman.

Much later in the book, we see an even more striking example of role reversals when Tristan finds herself in the midst of the Peruvian civil war of 1834 and both her uncle and cousin come to her for advice as they both “avaient également beaucoup de confiance en moi” (2: 24). Her uncle says to her: “Ma chère Florita, je suis bien inquiet; conseillez-moi; vous avez des aperçus justes en tout, et vous êtes réellement la seule personne ici avec laquelle je puisse parler de choses aussi graves” (2: 24). Here Don Pio rejects the advice of Peruvian men and only trusts his foreign niece. An almost unbelievable event, the gender role reversal here is shocking. Tristan has surpassed her position as a “woman” and has cast herself as the credible advisor to one of Peru’s most powerful men. By recording this event in *Pérégrinations*, perhaps she is responding to the French establishment that has failed to take her seriously: the people who refused to recognize her as the aristocratic daughter of a

legally married couple, those who denied her the right to divorce her abusive husband, and those who refused to grant her custody of her children after she left that same abusive husband.⁹ This significant event permits Tristan to continue her discussion with her colonizers by way of an autoethnographic response.

Divorce

The question of divorce in *Pérégrinations* is relative to this study in that it furthers the autoethnography at work in the text. Tristan's social commentary on this issue places her narrator in the role of *exploratrice sociale* and her text in the category of autoethnography. For while the French courts, or colonizer, have declared that divorce is illegal, Tristan refutes this legal standard, thereby entering into a dialogue with the colonizing authority. Moreover, divorce is directly tied to the question of gender, a fact that Tristan will illustrate for her readers. Her very personal investment in this question is also a guiding factor in this analysis in that her own desire to legally divorce her husband and its utter impossibility are in part what lead her to undertake her voyage to Peru and ask for financial help from her uncle.

For Tristan, there is no doubt that divorce should be legal and that women should have some recourse so as to leave an unhappy or abusive marriage. She finds the opportunity to address the question at numerous times in the text. While on board the *Mexicain*, she admits that she has fallen in love with Chabrié and even considers the possibility of bigamy, justifying it by pointing out the injustice of an indissoluble marriage:

J'ai dit comment j'avais accepté son amour, autant pour ne pas le désespérer que *pour m'assurer sa puissante protection*. Depuis ce moment il faisait sans cesse des projets brillants d'espérance, persuadé qu'il était de trouver le bonheur dans notre union. J'écoutais d'abord ces plans de félicité sans songer à entrer dans leur réalisation ; puis, graduellement, son amour me pénétra d'une telle admiration, que je ne [sic] fis à l'idée de l'épouser, en restant avec lui en Californie. J'entends des gens confortablement établis dans leur ménage, où ils vivent heureux et honorés, se récrier sur les conséquences de la

⁹ Divorce was first legalized in France in 1792, modified under the Napoleonic code, and then abolished again in 1815 with the return to monarchy under Louis XVII. The Saint-Simonians, with whom Tristan was associated, promoted a radical sexual freedom that offended the conservative values of the monarchy-supporting aristocrats. For further discussion on this topic, see Felicia Gordon and Mère Cross, *Early French Feminisms, 1830-1940: A Passion for Liberty* (Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar, 1996).

bigamie, et appeler le mépris et la honte sur l'individu qui s'en rend coupable. Mais qui fait le crime, si ce n'est *l'absurde loi qui établit l'indissolubilité du mariage* ? Sommes-nous donc tous semblables dans nos affections [. . .] pour que les promesses du cœur, volontaires *ou forcées*, soient assimilées aux *contrats qui ont la propriété pour objet* ? Dieu, qui a mis dans le sein de ses créatures des sympathies et des antipathies, en a-t-il condamné aucune à l'esclavage ou à la stérilité ? L'esclave fugitif est-il criminel à ses yeux ? le devient-il lorsqu'il suit les impressions de son cœur, la loi de la création ?...
(1: 100 my emphasis)

Clearly, we see here that Tristan herself battles between upholding the laws of her society and her own ideals of right and wrong. While the ultimate issue for her is that of freedom, specifically a woman's freedom to create a life of independence, a life that does not have to be led as a fugitive, she also refers to a very practical motive – that of a “puissante” masculine protection. While the impracticality of keeping divorce illegal is an important issue for Tristan, most important is the moral issue. The French law that renders marriage indissoluble is, to her mind, absurd and the equivalent of enslavement. By viewing an unhappy marriage as a form of slavery, Tristan therefore justifies the possibility of bigamy. Moreover, when she calls on the higher law of God, she effectively negates the state's power to hold her to a “sterile” commitment.

Tristan's petition for the legality of divorce is not limited to her own situation but rather instills in her a sense of the commonality that exists between all women. She is therefore quick to take up the cause of any woman who has suffered the misfortune of an unhappy or abusive marriage. Soon after her arrival at her uncle's house in Peru, she gives the following commentary on her cousin Carmen, who was forced to endure a loveless marriage:

Elle aimait son mari ; et cet homme, qui ne vivait que par les sens, repoussait son amour avec brutalité [. . .] A plusieurs reprises, il la quitta pour vivre publiquement avec des maîtresses : ces femmes venaient passer sous les fenêtres de dona [sic] Carmen, la regardaient avec l'effronterie en lui ricanant l'insulte. Lorsque, dans les premiers jours de son mariage, la jeune femme essaya de faire entendre quelques plaintes [. . .] on lui répondit qu'elle devait

s'estimer heureuse d'avoir un bel homme pour mari [. . .] *Telle est la morale qui résulte de l'indissolubilité du mariage.* (1: 166 my emphasis)

We see here the repetition of the phrase “l'indissolubilité du mariage,” marking Tristan's disdain for such a law and the ultimate importance of this issue to her. Her reasons for including this piece on her cousin, though, are questionable. It could be that as an autobiography, she is including a story that somewhat parallels her own. As ethnography, the text could simply be a record of what Tristan has witnessed, told from the viewpoint of an uninvolved observer relating a social problem. Here, however, it would seem that Tristan takes up the more personal form of an essay. As Eileen Boyd Sivert explains, Tristan's commenting on Peruvian customs allows her to “sharpen her view of the rules of her own society” (65). This commentary, then, is an example of an essay. From the French word *essayer* comes Montaigne's original definition of an essay: a test of an idea. Working through a concept in search of answers gives Tristan's entire work the feeling of autoethnography. In *trying* to work through her own ideas about the society men have created for her, she is taking part in a dialogical response, or an autoethnography. She is globalizing gender issues so as to promote her own battle that she is fighting at ‘home’ in France to call attention to the necessity of the right to divorce. In addition, by using the essay form, she mimics the masculine tradition, claims it and reworks it to suit her own purposes.

The Ravanas

The essay-like aspect of the work continues as Tristan tackles an analysis of the ravanas. Her portrayal of the ravanas is both complex and contradictory due to the fact that nation and gender seem to be at battle here and that she is attempting to illustrate the feats that women can accomplish when granted freedom from societal constraints. In spite of this valiant effort, though, she nevertheless falls prey to notions of Western and colonial superiority. Her discussion centers around the “vivandières de l'Amérique du Sud” (2:56), or the women who are permitted to follow the soldiers wherever they go and sell them food, drink, and clothing. They receive no pay, and their only income is “la faculté de voler impunément” (2: 56). They are “de race indienne, en parlant la langue et ne savent pas un mot d'espagnol. Les *ravanas* ne sont pas mariées, elles n'appartiennent à personne et sont à qui veut d'elles” (2: 56). The fact that Tristan highlights the language the ravanas speak

illustrates to the reader that perhaps a portion of their freedom comes from their refusal/inability to speak the language of their colonizers. This subtle rebellion on the level of nation allows for a more obvious rebellion on the level of gender in that these women do not marry.

Tristan's discussion of these women is brief (only two pages), but heavy with significance due to a profound support and admiration that she has for them. Desanti explains that these women affect Tristan much more intensely than any of the men she has met: "Soldats misérables, officiers incapables, éminence grise diabolique : seules les *ravañas* ravagées d'alcool et de soleil, femmes hors la loi des femmes, amazones de la misère, ont la sympathie de Flora" (95). Although the general tone of these pages is one of surprised respect, Tristan still tends to use a wording that dangerously resonates with that of the Western center. For example, hearkening her readers back to her description of the slaves in Praia, she describes the ravanas using animal imagery, comparing them to "des bêtes affamées" who, if resisted, "se battent comme des lionnes, et par leur féroce courage, triomphent toujours de la résistance; elles pillent alors, saccagent le village, emportent le butin au camp et le partagent entre elles" (2: 56). Not only does Tristan use animal metaphors to describe the ravanas, but she also calls to mind the image of ancient, brutish (male) conquerors of medieval times and the mythical Amazons, looting and pillaging. Is she implying that the ravanas are the South American equivalent of medieval brigands? Or perhaps Tristan believes that these "backwards" people are forced to such measures because of their lack of European "civilization." Regardless, the metaphor is dubious and while there is indeed a tone of admiration in her description, the overall effect is twofold. While we as readers are indeed impressed with the strength and courage of these women, a certain degree of revulsion to their more base attributes accompanies the description that Tristan offers.

Tristan finishes her discussion of the ravanas by comparing them to the indigenous men of Peru:

Il est digne de remarquer que, tandis que l'Indien préfère se tuer que d'être *soldat*, les femmes indiennes embrassent cette vie *volontairement* et en supportent les fatigues, en affrontent les dangers avec un courage dont sont incapables les hommes de leur race. Je ne crois pas qu'on puisse citer une preuve plus frappante de la supériorité de la femme, dans l'enfance des

peuples ; n'en serait-il pas de même aussi chez ceux plus avancés en civilisation, si une éducation semblable était donnée aux deux sexes ? Il faut espérer que le temps viendra où l'expérience en sera tentée. (2 : 57)

While this passage certainly speaks to Tristan's intense feelings about women's capabilities, it also plunges into the dangerous realm of binarisms – the 'primitive' as opposed to the 'civilized.' The Peruvians – still in their "enfance" of nationhood – are juxtaposed with France's more "avancés" people. Nevertheless, this portion of the text demonstrates Tristan's deep-seated belief that women are, in fact, superior to men, but society has impeded them from ever realizing their full potential by imposing rules and taboos on them concerning issues like education and divorce. What Tristan does here, then, is use this "primitive" society that does not have the same rules as her own to illustrate her inherent belief in women's capabilities, given the right tools. Her argument, then, supports a constructivist view of gender instead of the widely accepted essentialist view being taught in Europe.

The language of Tristan's description, however, reverts to the societal hierarchy on which gendered supremacy is based. Tristan's praise of the ravnas stems from their "courage" and the fact that they accept "volontairement" a military life – traits traditionally used to describe someone who is "typically masculine." The problem, therefore, that continuously arises in Tristan's work is the following: how can she make an argument about women's power, intelligence, and even superiority in her own language when that language is so thoroughly infested with the gendered hierarchy she wants to overturn? Tristan's effort, though is a valiant one, and she takes advantage of her ethnographic project to demonstrate to her Western readers what women are capable of achieving when freed from the constraints of a patriarchal authority. Again, though, we see that she has created a very interesting in-between space for herself. She is not the brutish, animalistic ravana, but neither is she the proper lady of Western society. Rather, she is somewhere in between, having left her husband and children and taken off in search of a place of her own, a freedom of her own. Moreover, we see that she is engaging here in both ethnography and autoethnography. She communicates to the Western reader that women are, contrary to popular belief, superior to men and thus engages in an autoethnographic dialogue with those men who have upheld the gendered hierarchy. At the same time, though, she does this by ethnographically presenting

the ravanas as an Other to be analyzed and studied by the more civilized Westerner. In other words, Tristan creates another in-between place for herself – in between ethnographer and autoethnographer.

The Women of Lima

The women Tristan presents in this section of her work belong to a different socio-economic class than that of the ravanas in that they occupy a more elite, bourgeois rung on the social ladder. Regardless, the difference in class does not seem to change the fact that in general she is impressed with Peruvian women. Her tone here, though, is still one of esteem tainted with the prejudices of a Western ethnographer. Her discussion of the women of Lima practically gushes with admiration and envy for these women who are granted a type of freedom about which Tristan has only dreamed – the freedom of unrestricted movement through society thanks to the anonymity granted by their traditional dress. In addition to the great freedom the women of Lima have, they also appear to be perfect physical specimens: they are beautiful, fertile, have easy pregnancies and births, and quickly recover. Tristan unabashedly tells her readers that these are remarkable women: “Il n’est point de lieu sur la terre où les femmes soient plus *libres*, exercent plus d’empire qu’à Lima” (2: 151).

She grants the majority of their freedom to the “*saya*,” the uniform that Lima women wear whenever they leave the home (see fig.1). According to Tristan, it is a piece of clothing that is only worn in Lima, was invented in Lima, and is impossible to replicate. In describing it, she writes: “Ce costume, appelé *saya*, se compose d’une jupe et d’une espèce de sac qui enveloppe les épaules, les bras et la tête, et qu’on nomme *manto*” (2: 152). She tells us that the “*manto*” is always black and leaves one eye uncovered, while the skirt, although usually black, can be any color other than a pastel, for these are the colors the prostitutes prefer. She goes on to explain that the skirt “est tellement collante que, dans le bas, elle a tout juste la largeur nécessaire pour qu’on puisse mettre un pied devant l’autre, et marcher à très petits pas. On se trouve ainsi serrée dans cette jupe comme dans une gaine” (2: 152). In spite of this skin-tight form, Tristan reassures us that the skirt has enough elasticity “pour dessiner toutes les formes et se prêter à tous les mouvements” (2: 152). What is most significant here, though, is that Tristan sees the Liméniennes as having a freedom of movement and

anonymity that allows them to move about their society – even seduce men – without ever being recognized.

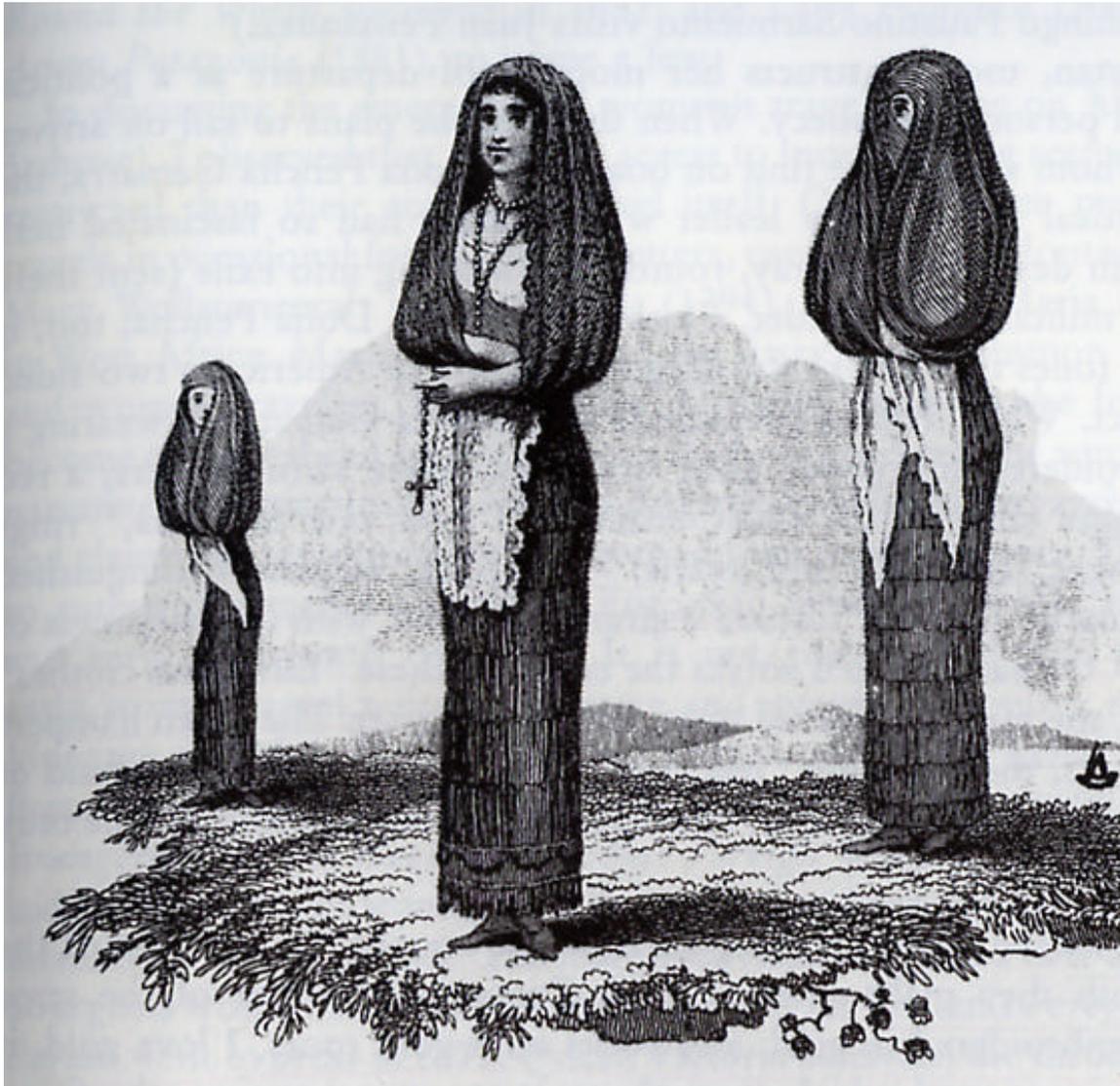


Fig. 1. “Females of Lima,” by W. B. Stevenson in *Narrative of Twenty Years Residence in South America* (1825). Found in Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes*, 169.

Tristan recounts this freedom of movement in the following vignette:

Une Liménienne déjeune le matin, avec son mari, en petit peignoir à la française, ses cheveux retroussés absolument comme nos dames de Paris ; a-t-elle envie de sortir, elle passe sa saya sans corset (la ceinture de dessous

serrant la taille suffisamment), laisse tomber ses cheveux, se tape, c'est-à-dire cache la figure avec le *manto*, et sort pour aller où elle veut... ; elle rencontre son mari dans la rue, qui ne la reconnaît pas, l'agace de l'œil, lui fait des mines, le provoque de propos, entre en grande conversation, se fait offrir des glaces, des fruits, des gâteaux, lui donne un rendez-vous, le quitte et entame aussitôt un autre entretien avec un officier qui passe [. . .] (2: 155-6)

What Tristan does here is to present the veil as a sort of autoethnography. In other words, while this veiled outfit is one that has been designed by men to hide women, to de-sex them, and establish men's patriarchal control, the women of Lima have turned the veil around and used it as a means of responding to the patriarchal order by appropriating the control and power of the veil. The veil here, according to Tristan, is thus not a means of oppression, but rather of freedom and liberation. In it the women are alluring and sexy and far from de-sexed; and while their identity is hidden, they have found sexual freedom in anonymity.

Tristan even goes on to say that this clothing in Lima is "respecté et fait partie des mœurs du pays, comme, en Orient, le voile de la musulmane" (2: 155), thus constructing a significant correlation to Orientalist themes. Pratt points out an interesting parallel between Tristan and her literary ancestor Lady Mary Montagu: "Tristan had surely read them [Montagu's letters], for her analysis of the *saya y manto* directly echoes Lady Montagu's discussion of Turkish women's dress" (167). Pratt continues by explaining that Tristan's representation of the Liméniennes is, much like Montagu's representation of Turkish women, both Orientalist and feminist.¹⁰ What does it mean that Tristan is advocating this type of costume for women? This complicated question forces us to examine more closely the question of the veil in both a feminist and Orientalist light. Madeleine Dobie, in her book *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism*, describes the veil as "the primary signifier by means of which Islamic women are represented" (28). She goes on to point out that the veil has a double purpose in Orientalism: showing the superiority of the West and demonstrating the exoticism of the "Oriental" woman. She writes:

The fact that Islamic women are veiled has often been seized on as an indication of Islamic misogyny – the outward sign of an oppressive cultural

¹⁰ This Orientalist theme would later be repeated both Flaubert and Nerval. Flaubert's *Le Voyage en Orient* appeared in 1848 and Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* in 1851.

system of which women are little more than passive victims, a paradigm whose secondary effect has been to affirm the moral superiority of western liberalism.

Dobie then goes on to remind us of Alain Buisine's claim that the veil, in its essence, invites unveiling,¹¹ thus rendering the woman wearing the veil desirable and unattainable at once. In discussing Islamic countries where some women willingly choose to wear a veil, Anne-Emmanuelle Berger remarks that Luce Irigaray describes the veil "less as a means of covering up woman's threatening sexual 'difference' (that is, lack) from man than as a means of masking differences between women, rendering them invisible in order to make them look identical, hence ready for both infinite substitutability and commercial circulation" (100-1). Berger goes on to explain that the veil takes on a mirror-like quality, allowing women to see themselves in their observers' eyes:

They see themselves as seen by men; and they are authorized by a "masculine" power. To put it differently, it is as if they had to endorse their castration in order to have access to the phallus, if this is what they want. That the *hijab* [the Muslim veil] enforces and signifies both these possibilities at the same time is no accident. This in turn may caution us against too naive an endorsement of the discourse of "empowerment" so understandably typical of feminist rhetoric. It may alert us as to the nature and extent of the "autonomy" achieved within these parameters, especially when it is implicated in a discourse and politics of identitarian consolidation. (112)

For Berger, then, the veil cannot simply be reduced to a positive or negative custom. Rather, it is its very complicated nature and history that, like the works studied here, permits it to function in an in-between space astride empowerment and acknowledgment of lack of power. What each individual takes from the wearing of the veil is then open to personal interpretation.

While the "saya" is not tied to the Islamic faith or any other religious belief for that matter, we nevertheless can acknowledge that Orientalist discourse represents the veil to the Western observer as a stereotype with an ambiguous meaning that ultimately cannot be either oppressive or freeing. The veil, much like the broader questions of gender and nation at

¹¹ See Alain Buisine's article "Voiles" in *L'Exotisme: Actes du Colloque de Saint Denis*.

work in the text, is situated somewhere in-between positive and negative imagery. When Tristan advocates the “saya” as being liberating to the Liméniennes, the refore, she is at the same time taking part in the Orientalist ideology of her time.¹² For while she applauds the freedom women are granted in such an ensemble, she does not hesitate to point out the mystique and allure – the exoticism – that such an outfit lends its wearer:

Une Liménienne en *saya*, ou vêtue d’une jolie robe de Paris, ce n’est plus la même femme, on cherche vainement, sous le costume parisien, la femme *séduisante* qu’on a rencontrée le matin dans l’église de Sainte-Marie. Aussi, à Lima, tous les étrangers vont-ils à l’église, non pour entendre chanter aux moines l’office divin, mais pour admirer, sous leur costume national, *ces femmes d’une nature à part*. Tout en elles est, en effet, plein de séduction : leurs poses sont aussi ravissantes que leur démarche, et, lorsqu’elles sont à genoux, elles penchent la tête *avec malice*, laissent voir leurs jolis bras couverts de bracelets, leurs petites mains, dont les doigts, resplendissant de bagues, courent sur un gros rosaire avec *une agilité voluptueuse*, tandis que leurs regards furtifs portent *l’ivresse jusqu’à l’extase*. (2: 153, my emphasis)

Tristan’s choice of words here aptly illustrates the exotic theme so popular in Romanticism. The fact that a woman dressed in European clothes is not as “séduisante” as a Peruvian woman in a *saya* validates the ideology that the Other’s mysteriousness is “d’une nature à part.” Therefore, while Tristan has surely lauded the benefits such an ensemble has for women by allowing them to move freely about in society without the constant supervision of a man, she nonetheless, like her male contemporaries, places non-European women into the position of objectified, non-individualized Others and falls prey to the pitfalls of Orientalism.

Finally, it is Tristan’s ever present need to establish her ultimate superiority over the women she observes that wins the final word. She explains that when the Liméniennes, “enchanteresses” that they are, begin to show their true nature, we are met with a woman who has “le cœur blasé, l’esprit sans culture, l’âme sans noblesse” (2: 154). For in spite of their freedom, the women of Lima still have not attained the level of “civilization” of European women. Tristan, while not the first woman to see the veil as more than a symbol of

¹² For a more visual representation of the exoticism and Orientalism of the time, we need only to look at the works of Romantic painters. Take, for example, Delacroix’s “Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement” and Ingres’s “Le Bain turc.”

the exotic, has thus positioned herself once again in an in-between place. Her celebration of the freedom, and yet her tendency to Orientalize the means, illustrate the continual conflict we have seen at work in her text.

The complexity, then, present in *Pérégrinations d'une paria* stems from Tristan's desire to articulate the personal through the universal. In other words, by universalizing the personal tribulations she has suffered, Tristan systematically works through her identity crisis and casts light onto larger, worldwide issues such as slavery, divorce, and national identity. In so doing, she introduces a hybridity and an indeterminacy that permit her to create in-between spaces that in turn allow for freer and more openly defined terms of opposition such as masculine/feminine, Occident/Orient, and colonizer/colonized and the gray area that exists between those terms. Tristan's roles as an *exploratrice sociale* and an ethnographer more often than not render her work an exotic tale written by the colonizing power. Once she takes up the role of autoethnographer, however, the text becomes the impassioned plea of an oppressed Other in search of social justice. Tristan's dual purpose in writing this work, therefore, creates a narrator who is sometimes the villain and sometimes the heroine, who sometimes appears to be the mouthpiece of the colonizing West and who sometimes is the voice of the downtrodden everywhere. Most often, however, Tristan's narrator, like the text, falls somewhere in-between what today's readers would term negative and positive. While she is deeply entrenched in her Western ideology, Tristan is also very critical of it and forces her readers to see the complexity and intricacy of her very unique and personal situation. Her text illustrates both the pitfalls and the advantages of a viewpoint that is situated in the contact zone between self and Other.

Tristan's generic choice of the novelogue as the vehicle through which she tells her story combines, therefore, elements of ethnography, the novel, the essay, and autobiography. The novelogue, then, was an efficacious choice for Tristan in that it permitted her to embrace the ambiguity of her national and gendered identity and encouraged her to dwell in the contact zone between nation and gender. Her navigation of this minefield would help show the way to Isabelle Eberhardt at the end of the century.

*N'était-il pas libre de s'en aller comme il
était venu, de rentrer dans l'ombre et le silence?
(Dmitri's thoughts on freedom, 392)*

Chapter 3: Isabelle Eberhardt

Studying the works of Isabelle Eberhardt, we observe a different style and mode of writing. Of less importance are the Romantic inclinations of *Staël* and *Tristan*, as they are replaced with the modernist musings of a writer influenced by the nihilists, the decadents, and the aesthetes. Because of these different influences on her writings, Eberhardt accordingly has differing representations of nation and gender in her works. Even so, the questions of nation and gender remain unclear and unanswered as Eberhardt, much like *Staël* and *Tristan*, develops spaces of freedom in between masculine and feminine, and different national identities. In regards to nation, Eberhardt, through the topos of the nomad or wanderer, introduces a sort of anti-nationalism where importance is no longer placed on whether one is French, Russian, Algerian, or Swiss. As for gender, we will observe that Eberhardt's modernist style is accompanied by the modernist reaction to gender – one that effectively effaces the woman from its text and moves her back to the domestic sphere from whence *Staël* and *Tristan* tried to liberate her.

Much like her predecessors, though, Eberhardt's works address many binary oppositions. Sossie Andezian, in an article entitled "Images de l'Islam dans l'Algérie coloniale à travers l'œuvre d'Isabelle Eberhardt," notes some of them: "civilisation occidentale/islam, colonisateurs/colonisés, hommes/femmes, prostituées/souteneurs, croyants/Dieu, chefs de confréries/adeptes de confréries, patrons/ouvriers..." (110). Andezian goes on to explain that Eberhardt's choice of protagonists allows the reader a view of the world from the margins, which permits Eberhardt "de mettre en évidence les failles d'un système, les ruptures, les dysfonctionnements. La réalité sociale globale est appréhendée à travers l'analyse des rapports entre marge et centre" (110). What Andezian leaves out, however, is that these oppositions are rarely clearly drawn and that an ambiguous in-between space often appears instead of a clear opposition.

The principal text to be analyzed in this chapter is the novel *Trimardeur*, but the short story “Yasmina” will also be taken into consideration. While these works are both undeniably fictional texts, the importance of travel and the narrative centered on travel allow us to include these work in the study. The theme, then, of travel writing maintained through the novelogue genre will again allow the writer to delve into the issues of nation and gender and, like her predecessors, create in-between spaces.

Nation

Isabelle Eberhardt’s approach to the nation question is complex and multifaceted. In her novel *Trimardeur*, the reader comes into contact with Russia, Switzerland, France, and finally Algeria through the wanderings of its protagonist, Dmitri Orshanow. Much like our heroines in *Pérégrinations d’une paria* and *Corinne ou l’Italie*, the hero in this text, Dmitri, is on a quest for a home, a place where he belongs and also on a quest for freedom. Dmitri’s quest, however, differs from that of both Corinne and Flora since his search is not focused on tightly structured definitions of politics and family, but is more centered around a freedom from – even a rejection of – society and its constraints on the “free spirit.” For while both Corinne and Flora go to great pains to be accepted in their respective societies, Dmitri prefers to quit the society into which he was born and move into one that has no relation to his family, but one in which he feels he can be truly free – Algerian society. For Dmitri, then, the in-between – inter-national – space where he is located is found in the act of traveling. Being a nomad, he is somewhat without nation and constantly in-between nations. Dmitri’s goal is never to “civilize” or “colonize” those whom he meets during his travels, but simply to travel literally aimlessly. Instead of being the traveler out to civilize and colonize others, Dmitri is the one who avoids being civilized by those who do not approve of his nomadic inclinations. Let us begin this examination of nation in *Trimardeur* by seeing how our author presents her ancestral land, Russia.

Images of Russia

Russia and its entire geographic array is the setting for our introduction to the culturally, ethnically, and socially diverse Russian people. It is interesting to note that

Eberhardt calls our attention to an East/West divide within Russia, thus allowing for an Orientalism to take place between Russians from different locations. Take for instance the contrast between Petersburg (the West) and the steppe (the East) where Dmitri's fatherland is. In the first pages of the novel, the narrator shows us that Petersburg is a place of education, enlightenment, Christianity – read civilization – where idealists gather for conversation in a café that is decorated in the style of Byzantine art with pictures of the “visages émaciés du Christ, de Marie et des Apôtres” (391). The owner of the establishment, while he is a *moujik*, or Russian peasant, is nonetheless a “philosophe néo-chrétien” (391). Dmitri, on the other hand, belongs to “la forte race de la Russie orientale” (392), his mother having been a “pauvre institutrice d'origine tartare” (394). Dmitri from his first introduction, then, has a rather mixed identity: Oriental, Tartar, bourgeois, and poor. This may at first appear to be an innocent reference to Dmitri's heritage. If we look into the overall presentation of his character, though, we will see the important influence the exotic “Oriental” has on Dmitri's character. For in many ways, he is presented as an Other that his contacts try to “civilize.” This point is most clearly seen in regards to his relationship with Véra, a Russian revolutionary nursing student with whom he falls in love.

Véra arrives on the scene after having spent two years “au dépôt [sic] des émigrants russes” (393) in Siberia, where she has become impassioned by the plight of the people there and has worked trying “de faire un peu de bien, de mettre un peu d'ordre” (393). We see here that Véra, much like Tristan, is moved by the quandaries of her fellow citizens and feels a need to help them. When Dmitri first encounters Véra, he is stirred and impressed by her: “Une admiration montait en lui, presque de l'envie, devant cette belle créature si saine et si forte” (394). What is important here is that his admiration of Véra is not so much due to what it is she believes in and works toward, but rather the simple sense of purpose that she possesses and that he lacks. The narrator explains that his attraction to her is “parce que lui se sentait si lamentablement faible, si irrésolu, si plein d'un amer mépris pour lui-même” (394). Throughout the text, however, it becomes clear that it is Véra's very sense of purpose that continuously causes problems for the would-be couple because Dmitri, while attracted to that quality in her, is coming to terms with his own calling in life – nomadism. It is this nascent traveling bug in Dmitri that colors his entire perception of his Russian homeland. Even as a child, he had the desire to “courir à travers la steppe, très loin, vers les pays de rêve

qu'il pressentait derrière la muraille bleu de l'horizon" (395). He was quite specific, too, in his plans to travel: "Partir, partir, s'en aller au plus lointain des lointains terrestres, pas en *touriste*, en *barine* riche et désœuvré, mais en rude et pauvre matelot" (395). As we move into an analysis of Dmitri's time in Russia, we will see that Véra attempts to tame his desire to be a vagabond and thus tries to "civilize" him.

Disappointed with the constraints placed upon him by the "Comité sibérien qui avait préparé et mené à bien plusieurs évasions restées célèbres" (396), Dmitri distances himself from his comrades and seeks excitement and adventure elsewhere – in l'île Goutouyew, the poorest and seediest section of Petersburg. His feelings for Véra cause him to worry how he would explain to her "que depuis six mois, il vivait dans les plus sordides cabarets, qu'il s'enivrait avec des prostituées et des repris de justice, qu'il roulait sciemment dans l'immondice, et *que cela lui plaisait*" (404, Eberhardt's emphasis). His immediate reaction, however, to the Comité is that they should leave him be: "De quel droit prétendez-vous contrôler ma vie privée ? Vous vous dites libertaires, et vous voulez exercer la pire des tyrannies, espionner et juger la vie privée des hommes ! Je vous récus ce droit, entendez-vous ?" (420). In other words, we see here that Dmitri truly feels a pull to the freedom that he envisions and the only thing stopping him from pursuing that freedom is his love for Véra.

Dmitri sees the Comité, then, as a restraining force that, far from freeing him, subjects him to their whims and desires and contradicts his notion of freedom. While there may be eventual political ramifications to Dmitri's decision, his ultimate concern is his own personal freedom. He therefore situates himself in between the "civilized" world of the Comité and the "savage" world of the dark side of town. While it is true that most of Eberhardt's works are steeped in the modernist tradition, Romantic themes tend to appear in her juxtaposition of city and country. In this text we see that within the city of Petersburg there is corruption, dirt, and illness, while the countryside of the steppe is portrayed in a manner reminiscent of the idyllic pastorals earlier in the century. The stylistic categorization of this work indicates yet another in-between place – in between romanticism and modernism.

Before Dmitri fully realizes his love for Véra, he is wrapped up in his affair with Polia, an alcoholic prostitute. Polia, in this text, represents two main negative (for Véra) influences in Dmitri's life: sex (with the wrong woman) and alcohol, both of which are found in the city. The question of Dmitri's sexual involvement with Polia will be discussed in the

gender section of the chapter. The role of alcohol discussed here serves to represent Dmitri's insatiable desire for escapism and also an entrapment in the city which both Polia and, as will be examined later, Yasmina suffer. In the slums of Petersburg he is able to escape the humdrum existence that he leads and "explore" another culture – one that is laced with alcohol, thieves, and prostitutes. While the Comité is a place of rules and regulations, l'île Goutouyew is a place for rule-breakers. Of interest here is that Dmitri is actually accepted by the people he encounters and they recognize a "like mind" in him. Again, then, we see that Dmitri has navigated another in-between space – in between observer and observed, civilized and savage. In fact, Dmitri is somewhat of a flâneur, who by definition is located in an in-between space. As Walter Benjamin explains: "the flâneur is still on the threshold, of the city as of the bourgeois class. Neither has yet engulfed him; in neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd" (174). The crowd, according to Ann McClintock, is "the place where social boundaries [are] permanently on the edge of breakdown" (81). We can therefore say that Dmitri has chosen to be a flâneur among the crowds of the city precisely because this activity in this location is the essence of being in between a multitude of spaces.

The flâneur also makes an appearance in Eberhardt's short story, "Yasmina." In this story, Yasmina, the bédouine, falls in love with a French soldier, Jacques. They consummate their love after he pronounces the necessary words to become a Muslim – "Il n'est point d'autre divinité que Dieu, et Mohammed est l'envoyé de Dieu" – even though he does this only "pour lui faire plaisir" (101). Denise Brahimi explains that Jacques' very Western carelessness with Yasmina's faith is a concept that Yasmina cannot even fathom: "Yasmina, elle, n'a aucun moyen de distinguer entre ce qui, chez Jacques, est rêve ou fantasme, et cette réalité qui va bientôt s'imposer à eux, comme une dure loi du monde qu'elle ne connaît pas" (75). He then leaves her to perform his military duties. Once Yasmina realizes that Jacques will never return to her, she marries an abusive Muslim man who leaves her a widow once he is found guilty of assault. At this point, Yasmina feels she has no other recourse but to prostitute herself in the "Village-Noir," located outside of the Algerian town Batna, which represents the same lawlessness and underworld present in l'île Goutouyew. Five years after he left Yasmina, Jacques returns to Batna – sent by the military – with his young Parisian wife. Jacques takes on the role of the flâneur when he decides to introduce his wife to the seedy side of his previous life. He decides to take her on this tour because she "trouvait les

quatre ou cinq rues rectilignes de la ville absolument dépourvues de charme” (115). He tells her that he will show her “l’Éden des troupiers... Et surtout, beaucoup d’indulgence, car le spectacle te semblera parfois d’un naturalisme plutôt cru” (115). His use of the word “spectacle” plainly illustrates what role the couple will play in this part of town. They are not there to meet people or experience that part of the culture. Their only purpose is to watch, stroll, and observe – to be voyeuristic flâneurs. Jacques believes that this experience will interest his wife and peak her curiosity, but for the reader this excursion speaks of exoticism and Orientalism. The two Europeans are afforded this luxury because, once the stroll is over, they are free to return to their safe, clean and spectacle-free world. While on this stroll, however, Jacques encounters Yasmina and must face his past dalliances.

Similarly, in *Trimardeur*, the narrator tells us that on one particular night, Dmitri “erra, sans but, à travers la ville” (406) until the rain led him into a cabaret where the boss, like Dmitri’s mother, was a Muslim Tartar. We see from this passage that Dmitri truly is a flâneur:

Orschanow, installé dans un coin, *observa avec curiosité* la clientèle du cabaret. A première vue ces gens eussent pu passer pour des ouvriers, mais l’œil expérimenté d’Orschanow ne s’y trompait pas, et il se félicitait d’être entré dans ce lieu. Les études qu’il pourrait y faire, les amitiés qu’il pourrait y lier rompraient la monotonie de sa vie et de ses *errances* dans les milieux ouvriers. (406, my emphasis)

Dmitri, much like Tristan, acts as a voyeur, peering unobserved into another world. We see here, too, that not only is he playing the part of the flâneur and the voyeur, but he is also exoticizing the *milieu populaire*, traveling into it almost as one would travel into a foreign country. McClintock explains that this was a common practice of the urban explorer, particularly in London’s East End which was “the conduit to empire – a threshold space, lying exotic, yet within easy reach on the cusp of industry and empire” (120). For in the case of Dmitri, that is exactly what his experience in the slums of Petersburg is – a space in between traveling and staying at home, where he first tastes the excitement of wandering into the unknown. His wanderings in the depths of Petersburg allow him to see and experience, to travel to, a side of life that before that particular time were unfamiliar to him.

While on this journey Dmitri encounters one particular miscreant, Pétrow, who befriends Dmitri. He acts as Dmitri's tour guide to the seedy side of town and therein provides passage to the contact zone. It is through Pétrow that Dmitri is able to move freely throughout this "uncivilized" land without being harassed:

Pétrow s'était pris d'affection pour Dmitri et, comme il était connu à la Siennaya, Orshanow, accompagné de lui, ne provoqua plus aucune méfiance. [. . .] Tout ce qu'on lui demandait, c'était de ne pas être policier, et la recommandation de Pétrow suffisait pour écarter tout soupçon de ce genre (407).

Before forming this alliance with Pétrow, Dmitri's attention had been called to another patron of the bar, Orlow. The narrator describes Orlow as such: "De haute taille, svelte, avec un profil régulier et aquilin, de longs yeux fauves et des cheveux très bruns, il avait une grâce sauvage qui attirait" (406-7). While Orlow may have "regular" features, the use of the words "fauve" and "sauvage" reminds the reader that Orlow is nonetheless an exotic, animalistic Other, worthy of being studied. In spite of Dmitri's interest in the "savage" Orlow, he is not able to approach him until after he has received the approval of Pétrow. Once Dmitri has attained that approval, Orlow approaches him to play cards, drink, and chat with him. Pétrow remarks on the unusualness of this turn of events saying: "Tu as su gagner les bonnes grâces de l'*Aigle* [Orlow], tu as de la chance! Bien peu peuvent se vanter d'avoir bu et joué avec lui" (408). What is significant here is that Dmitri's acceptance into Orlow's circle is due directly to Dmitri's in-between position. While not one of the "natives" in this exotic land, he nevertheless appears to be harmless and even interesting to Orlow. Our narrator, though, chalks this response up to the generous spirit of the Russian people: "A l'inverse de ce qui se passe en Occident, le peuple russe a de la pitié et de la sympathie pour les déclassés qui viennent à lui" (407). This is one of the rare times in the work that the narrator makes a generalization about the Russian people as a whole, contrasting them to Westerners. A significant statement, this declaration reminds us that while there may be divisions within the country, Russia is still a unit, able to be contrasted with others.

In spite of Dmitri's acceptance into Siennaya (the popular square in l'île Goutouyew), Dmitri begins to feel a sense of frustration with his in-between status because, as the narrator explains, even though he has been living with "les voyous et les repris de justice, [. . .] il ne

se sentait pas leur semblable. Ce qu'il lui fallait, ce à quoi, dans la brume grise de son existence présente, il aspirait de toute son âme, de toute la tension douloureuse de ses nerfs exaspérés, c'était *une solution définitive*" (412, Eberhardt's emphasis). These wanderings, therefore, while initially stimulating, are starting to wear on Dmitri. He does, however, still have an escape in that he can always return to the life he had before; he can always return to the world of Véra.

When Dmitri finally thinks that perhaps he should return to the world of the "civilized," he goes directly to Véra's. The contrast between Véra's home and the cabaret Dmitri has been frequenting is remarkable. The cabaret is described thusly: "une longue salle aux parois enfumées et luisantes, qui semblaient en bronze poli. Devant le comptoir en planches mal clouées, le patron trônait, un grand jeune homme robuste, au visage sec et bronzé, aux yeux noirs et obliques : un Tartare" (406). The smoky room, the shoddy carpentry, and the Tartar boss all indicate to the reader that we are in a dark, foreign, and exotic place. Véra's room, on the other hand, is the exact opposite:

La chambre de l'étudiante, très grande, peinte en bleu pâle avec d'humbles rideaux d'indienne blanche à petites fleurs roses, ne contenait qu'un étroit petit lit, une table en sapin, un bureau, des casiers et des rayons chargés de livre, sur le mur. Deux fenêtres ouvertes donnaient sur la joie du jardin en fleurs, où se jouait le soleil, à travers les branches, entrant à flots dans la pièce. (413)

The imagery in this excerpt symbolizes the type of life and world in which Véra lives – a "civilized" one of discipline, humility, and intellectual pursuit, and yet also of breezy contentment and bright sunshine. Ultimately, however, Dmitri must reject this neat and orderly world so as to pursue his call to travel.

As the beckoning to travel becomes more pronounced, Véra starts to notice a wildness surfacing in Dmitri: "Orschanow avait eu quelques crises violentes, de brusques éveils de désir, des poussées de tout ce qui dormait au fond de lui d'*atavique*, de *sauvage* presque. Mais Véra, très calme et très ferme, très douce pourtant, *le dominait*, et ne cédait pas" (424, my emphasis). The language here evokes the colonizer/colonized dynamic, reminding the reader of Dmitri's Tartar – and thus "Oriental" – heritage through the use of

the word “atavique.” Moreover, this language reminds us that the sleeping “Oriental” in Dmitri is savage, brutal, and uncivilized.

Dmitri’s call to travel comes to fruition upon the death of his father, bidding him home, to the East, to the steppe. The simple act of traversing the countryside, putting distance between himself and those who have tried to constrain him, causes him to feel “un soulagement immense, presque une joie” (425). Even so, he is not convinced that the vagabond life is for him: “Il avait peur de se laisser aller à ces sensations qu’il connaissait bien : la hantise de l’*ailleurs*, la joie de partir” (425, Eberhardt’s emphasis). Clearly Dmitri is trying to choose between two possible lives: one where he lives a “civilized,” “colonized” even, existence with Véra, or one where he gives in to what appears to be an innate need to travel, explore, and become a tramp. While at his father’s home in Pétchal, he feels alternately that he wants to be with Véra, and that he wants to leave her and travel:

Et pourtant, les souvenirs de Pétersbourg, l’image de Véra le hantaient souvent.

Il savait qu’il retournerait là-bas, qu’il reprendrait ses études, que plus tard il épouserait Véra et que, pour elle, il redeviendrait un homme *normal* et *utile*.

Tout cela, c’étaient des choses raisonnables, bonnes, mais qui, en dehors de l’amour de Véra, laissaient Dmitri froid et indifférent. Certes, il en serait ainsi, c’était bien la formule du lendemain.

Mais derrière cet horizon artificiel, une autre aube se levait, une autre lueur montait... l’amour de la vie errante et libre, l’amour de l’*ailleurs* ensorcelant.
(429)

This vacillation between being a “normal” man and becoming a wanderer illustrates yet another in-between space for Dmitri. His indecision forces him to polarize the opposed choices ahead of him: should he choose Véra or travel, lead a “normal” life or a nomadic one, follow the societal formula and be “normal” or create his own destiny? Moreover, this wavering only takes place for him while in Russia, while in the confines of the fatherland, the place where he believes he cannot fully cultivate his Tartar side. Russia is for Dmitri the physical realization of society’s condemnation of the act of vagabondage and the lack of “usefulness.”

Upon his return to Petersburg, Dmitri quickly falls back into his former depression, suffocating from the constraints that his efforts to become a “normal” man have placed on him. He soon attempts to leave that life and return to the debauchery of Siennaya. When he tries to do this, Véra runs after him, almost as though she had lost her slave: “En elle, une seule pensée, un seul vouloir demeurerait, ne pas perdre Orschanow, le revoir, le reprendre” (433). Again, we see here that the language used forces us to see Dmitri as the colonized, the hunted, the slave and Véra as the colonizer, the civilized. What is of interest, though, is that Véra does not succeed in her efforts to civilize Dmitri:

Véra, en une lassitude immense, devant sa défaite attendait. C’était fini, maintenant, aucune illusion n’était plus possible. Orschanow, après tout ce qu’elle avait cru voir germer en lui, était là, ivre, inconscient... Il en serait toujours ainsi.

Et elle, Véra, n’avait pas la force de se lever et de s’en aller reprendre sa tâche, laissant Orschanow continuer seule son douloureux chemin.

Elle se méprisait d’être si faible : elle n’avait pas su le dompter et le faire sien, et elle s’assujettissait à lui maintenant. (435)

The use of the verb “s’assujettir” in this passage is a significant choice in that it demonstrates to the reader that there has been a role reversal here. The colonizer has become the colonized. While the gender issue at work here will be discussed in more detail in the latter half of this chapter, we must recognize in this passage one of the rare moments in the work where Véra is feminized. For in becoming the colonized and submitting herself to Dmitri, Véra’s entire gendered status changes. It is at this very moment of Véra’s feminization through her self-subjectification, and Dmitri’s assertion of his masculinity and power, that Dmitri conscientiously decides to quit school, to leave Russia, and to become a vagabond. In spite of this decision, however, Dmitri still returns home with Véra to bide his time until the moment for a definitive departure presents itself.

His opportunity arises when Véra and company are forced to flee Petersburg because of possible political persecution. After some time in the countryside, the group eventually decides to leave Russia and head to Geneva, a plan that causes Dmitri to remark that “ce départ, c’était la délivrance, la fin des hésitations et des tortures...” (441). Of course, the title has already given away the ending – we know that Dmitri will eventually become a

vagabond. It is the arrival at that decision that helps us to see that Dmitri's ultimate verdict is a nihilistic rejection of the limitations that "civilized" society imposes upon him. The key issue to here, though, is the importance placed on the nationhood – or lack thereof – of vagabondage. In other words, by vagabonding, one gives up one's nationality and therein creates a reality free of national bonds. What Eberhardt seems to be doing in this text is deconstructing the East/West binarism in which Dmitri is subjected and instead, in true nihilist fashion, dismisses the status quo vis-à-vis nation. There is, then, no self nor other, no Occident nor Orient. There is only the road.

Images of Switzerland and France

When the group arrives in Geneva, there is an initial moment of mutual happiness for all. Véra and the other revolutionaries are happy to find people of like minds in Geneva:

Là, nichait toute une Russie jeune et pleine de vie, quoique meurtrie déjà.
Là, loin des ténèbres et de l'épouvante, au grand soleil, les audaces et les espoirs révolutionnaires s'épanouissaient, libres, ardents.

Des assemblées orageuses, des clubs retentissants, une ardeur débordante, surtout, beaucoup de sincérité jeune.

Dès le premier jour, en cette atmosphère propice, Makarow et Véra avaient respiré, soulagés, presque radieux, malgré leur rude défaite, là-bas. (443)

The language used here seems to further the notion that the boundaries of nation are no longer of much importance and the values that Véra and her friends cherished in Russia can be found in other places. The repetition of "là" here underscores the importance of *here* in Geneva as opposed to *there* in Russia and highlights the notion of a commonality of values and ideas between societies. The physical distance from Russia is also emphasized through the fact that they are "loin des ténèbres et de l'épouvante" and have found a haven in the "grand soleil" of Geneva. Dmitri, for his part, "charmé par les aspects souriants des choses nouvelles," finds happiness in exploring a new land: "Dès l'aube [. . .] il sortait sur la route et errait, au hasard [. . .] (446). His approach to nation is therefore much different from Véra's approach. While they are both learning that the boundaries that make up a nation are not as confining as they originally thought, Dmitri's problem has never been about nation, but about societal constraints and expectations. In other words, his fear of being "civilized"

is not directly related to nation. His purpose is only to enjoy life as much as possible by experiencing everything he can. Eventually, though, Véra becomes frustrated with Dmitri's purpose – one that she cannot understand – and begins to insist that he do something “worthwhile” with his life: “Il faut travailler, lutter, être homme. [. . .] Va, demain, te faire inscrire à la Faculté, travaille” (447). She plainly believes that his desire to be a vagabond is both juvenile and non-masculine. It is this final illustration of their different paths in life that causes Dmitri to refuse to submit to Véra's civilizing mission and finally leave: “Enfin, c'était donc fini, il avait eu le courage de tout abandonner, même Véra, de partir, de se faire libre...” (449).

Dmitri's departure marks the point in the work where he finally abandons himself to vagabondage and breaks free from those who wish to civilize him. The freedom he finds in travel can be witnessed as he makes his way through France and, eventually, to Algeria. Along with this freedom, however, comes a certain disdain for the peasants he encounters on his way and echoes the reactions that both Tristan and *Corinne*'s narrator had in similar settings. While Dmitri feigns admiration, his language implies a sense of superiority that parallels the ideology of the décadent:

Depuis son départ de Genève, Orschanow observait curieusement ce peuple d'une autre race, sans la mélancolie résignée et le vague mysticisme du paysan russe, moins travailleur et plus contemplatif.

« C'est le travail, l'inique, l'éternel travail qui les a rendus ainsi, pensait Orschanow. Ils sont comme leurs bêtes de labour, et ils n'ont pas le loisir de lever la tête et de regarder autour d'eux l'horizon libre, de respirer en paix l'air qui est à tous... Oui, ce sont la vie sédentaire, la propriété, la famille, le travail, tout ce qui fait la société qui les abrutit et les tue, les maintenant courbés vers le sol, dans l'âpre lutte de toute heure, qui les durcit et les enlaidit. » (452)

His comparison of the people with beasts of burden is hardly flattering, and yet, in a way, he seems to be of a similar mindset as Tristan. His implication is that the working class in France is rendered “hard” and “ugly” because of their enslavement by society. Dmitri is again in the role of the voyeur, observing and passing judgment. Moreover, he is in a sense

an unobserved watcher in that he hides his ‘passé d’intellectuel, se disant ouvrier russe émigré’ (452), thus allowing him to “go native” and blend in better with those around him.

While traveling through France, Dmitri comes upon another guide – much like Pétrow in Siennaya – to help him navigate his way through unfamiliar territory. This guide, Antoine Perrin, is another vagabond and they agree to travel together, since according to Perrin: “On s’embêtera toujours moins, quand on sera deux, puis, ça va mieux pour toi, vu que t’as pas l’habitude de chez nous. Tu pourrais tomber avec des mauvais bougres qui te foutraient dedans” (452). It quickly becomes evident, though, that Dmitri does not require Perrin’s assistance to get along with those he meets. As he has a propensity to make friends with the lowest of the low in Siennaya, he follows suit in Marseille. Perrin dislikes the people of the south of France because, according to our narrator, he “ne pouvait les regarder en artiste, comme Orschanow, les admirer comme de belles choses dans une belle lumière. Il ne savait pas faire abstraction de leurs laideurs et de leurs déchéances morales” (454). Perrin’s other role in this work is to highlight the uniqueness and originality of Dmitri’s views and his personal style of *flânerie*. While Dmitri willingly accepts, appreciates even, the different ways of life he encounters on the road, Perrin prefers the familiarity of his own customs. Additionally, like we saw in Siennaya, Dmitri takes on the role of the scientific observer, the flâneur who is enchanted with the lower rungs of society.

Even more significant in Dmitri’s stay in Marseille is the fact that he first realizes his desire to go to Africa which “le hantait, l’Afrique musulmane surtout” (457). It is at this point that the reader begins to understand that for Dmitri, vagabonding is about a more profound search for his “home,” the place where he feels he belongs: “Il songeait à ses propres atavismes d’Islam, à travers toute la lignée maternelle, tartare et nomade” (457). While the constraints of Russian society prohibited him from exploring this aspect of his lineage, his arrival in the Muslim land of Algeria causes him to reassess his full heritage. In other words, Dmitri has come to the realization that it is his mother’s blood in him – the blood of a Muslim Tartar – that has been working in him, encouraging him to travel and to arrive at his ultimate destination, Africa. Moreover, his quest for freedom changes and he is no longer focused on freedom as defined by the Comité, but more on his own very personal, familial, definition of freedom.

The role of Marseille in this text also represents another in-between place in that it is not really looked upon as “French” per se. Being a port city, it is the contact zone between France and its neighbors to the south such as Italy, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. This fact is evidenced when Perrin remarks at the food market that he prefers “un bon litre de vin blanc, avec un pain et un morceau de fromage, des choses *comme chez eux*” (460) in lieu of the more “exotic” food “aux couleurs et aux parfums violents” (459) found at the market. The fact that Eberhardt calls our attention to the “comme chez eux” (the emphasis is hers) signifies a separation between French and Marseillais. The multicultural nature of the port city also calls our attention to its location as an in-between area. Take for instance the role the Italians play in Marseille. They come, hungry and poor, to work on the docks for less pay than the French will accept. Salaries are consequentially lowered, and the French begin to lose their jobs. The men turn to Dmitri for advice because “c’était à lui, le plus instruit, de les guider” (464). At first he resists becoming their leader mainly because it undoes his status as disinterested outsider who quietly observes:

Il se sentait en dehors, à côté de ces gens et il ne voulait pas devenir leur tête, car cela ne serait bon pour personne. Il savait bien qu’il lui suffirait d’un effort minime pour les dompter tous, pour faire de leur masse houleuse sa chose ; mais il voulait rester seul et rêveur, seulement. (464)

Clearly Dmitri sees himself to be not only separate from his co-workers, but also better than they: there is no doubt whatsoever that he could make quick work of their labor strife, if only he wanted to do so. However, once the situation worsens, Dmitri finds himself caught up in the conflict and acting as their leader in spite of his original plan to keep a low profile.

The conflict between the French workers and the Italians causes the reader to see another side to the nation issue in the text:

Ils se grisèrent des mots ronflants, parlaient de vengeance, mêlaient aux couplets de *l’Internationale* des boutades d’un chauvinisme enfantinement féroce. Il fallait massacrer les *Macaroni*, les *Babi*, qui volaient aux *Français* leur pain.

Eux-mêmes étaient des épaves de toutes les races, latines et autres, jetées à la côte par le reflux fécond de la Méditerranée. Et tous, même Slimane l’Arabe, même Juaneto le Mahonnais, se réclamaient de la France. (464)

This thought provoking passage further demystifies the notion of nationhood in this text. For an Arab and a Mahonnais (a member of an Algerian tribe) to unite with the French against the Italians bespeaks a new emphasis placed on common interest instead of common nationality. While the jibes and racial slurs against the Italians are indeed because they are Italian, the real issue is one of jobs, not racism. Moreover, the reference to the Communist anthem – “l’Internationale” – also indicates to the reader that in Marseille the question of nation is not as important as the common goals of workers’ rights and social protection. This peppering of the language with “l’Internationale,” then, also illustrates Marseille’s in-between status – in between different nations with common, far-reaching, global social concerns.

For Dmitri, the excitement of the workers’ situation is reminiscent of the same pleasures he enjoyed in Siennaya: “Mais Orschanow se laissa entraîner par la beauté sauvage de la foule, par tous ces hommes sains et robustes sous leur défroque de travail [. . .]” (470). The crowd for Dmitri represents not only a way to lose oneself, but also a way to find freedom in that very loss. After a street fight where he accidentally kills a police inspector, his decision to leave/flee France and go to Africa is made. His departure is urgent as the police know that the inspector was “tué par un débardeur connu sous le sobriquet du ‘Russe’”. Mais cela suffisait pour permettre de le retrouver” (472). He therefore decides to do like his friend Lombard and enlist in the army in order to go to Africa. He tells the recruiter that his name is “Kasimirsky, il était Polonais et revenait du Brésil où il avait essayé de coloniser” (475). In taking on this new identity and profession, Dmitri escapes France and yet also loses his cherished status as vagabond. He is no longer free to come and go as he pleases and must spend the next five years of his life under someone else’s yoke. It would seem, then, that even more important than being a vagabond is arriving in Africa.

Images of Africa

As the ship makes its way to Algeria, there is a great sense of expectation and anticipation. The narrator remarks: “Sur l’avant, les sans-patrie et les miséreux en quête d’une terre de clémence, sans faim et sans hiver dormaient, la face au ciel, dans l’oubli de tout” (478). Dmitri, for his part, is anxious to see “cette côte barbaresque tant souhaitée,” and yet is also content and happy because he feels “cette sensation infiniment douce de calme

mélancolique et de liberté d'esprit qu'il appelait le bonheur, le seul accessible à sa nature" (479). Algeria, therefore, is also an in-between place in that it is the home of the homeless. On this ship bound for Algeria's shore there are French, Swiss, Russians, Arabs, and probably many others who are all seeking refuge, seeking a home in this "foreign" and "exotic" land. Even the air is filled with "un parfum étranger et pénétrant" and there is the impression "de langueur voluptueuse, d'abandon et de rêverie sensuelle" (479). Again, like we saw in *Tristan*, smells and odors are used to distinguish the foreign and exotic from those found "at home." The similarities in their sensual reactions to Africa stop here, however, as Dmitri does not experience the same revulsion that *Tristan* does. Moreover, Dmitri is quick to notice the similarities between Algeria and the Russian steppe where he grew up, calling our attention to the notion that he has "returned" home: "Comme cette steppe âpre et brûlée ressemblait à celle aux confins de laquelle s'élevait la triste Pétchal où Orschanow avait appris à rêver et à aimer la vie errante" (481)! Critic Hedi Abdel-Jaouad comments on the similarities between Russia and the Maghreb in Eberhardt's works: "By reterritorializing [. . .] her Russian characters in the Maghreb, Isabelle sought to link, both in her life and fiction, the two poles of her Orient: Russia and the Maghreb" (98). What Abdel-Jaouad fails to mention, however, is that the connection in *Trimardeur* is not between all Russians and Maghrébins, but rather only between Dmitri the vagabond (not Dmitri the Russian) and the Maghrébins.

Their first evening on the town, the legionnaires take in their surroundings, noticing the amalgamation of things associated with the colonizer and those associated with the colonized:

Les rues, droites, étaient bordées de maisons européennes, de boutiques, les promenades plantées de platanes et de faux-poivriers.

-- Ça ressemble encore assez aux petites villes du Midi, disait Perrin.

Mais ce qui retenait surtout les regards des recrues, c'était la foule bigarrée, la tenue de la Légion, les chasseurs d'Afrique, les Espagnols promenant la teinte neutre et morne de l'Europe, et partout, les Arabes en *burnous* terreux ou blancs, en turbans à cordelettes fauves.

Quelques femmes, drapées dans leur *haïk* de laine, déambulaient, hâtives, comme fuyantes. (489)

For our legionnaires, then, Algeria is another in-between space, a heterogeneous space made up of people and traditions from differing heritages and backgrounds. This first impression of peacefully coexisting multiculturalism, though, is soon replaced with the stereotypical Orientalist observations of the narrator, who regularly feminizes Africa and its people. This feminization is in keeping with the tenets of exoticism in that the exotic *is* feminine and the feminine *is* exotic. Moreover, the narrator often compares the African people to animals: “Devant les cafés maures, sur les bancs et sur les nattes, d’autres indigènes jouaient, penchant des profils secs et fins, tandis que d’autres goûtaient la joie de l’immobilité féline” (489). The narrator implies here that the locals are lazy gamblers who lounge around like cats, and follows the example that both Staël and Tristan proffered in their works.

The women are presented as nothing more than a market of flesh where the men may choose whatever they fancy among “Tous les types indigènes, tous les costumes, toutes les parures!” (489). The descriptive listing of the different African women present in this multicultural society of Algeria resembles a mail-order bride catalogue:

Il y avait les Mauresques en *chéchiya* [headdress] pointues, vêtues de soies éclatantes, les négresses dont la peau obscure tachait les couleurs violentes de leurs toilettes, et les bédouines, visages impassibles, tatoués, idoles de bronze, au lourd regard. Et les filles du Sud [. . .] avec de hauts hennins d’or sur leurs têtes, ou des tresses de cheveux noirs et de laines rouges, des diadèmes d’argent avec des ornements de corail et des bouquets de plumes d’autruche.
(489-90)

From feathers and silks to jewels and tattoos, these women are the epitome of exotic Others that the Western men are eager to explore: “Lâchée à travers cet étal de chair féminine, la troupe hurlait son rut ardent, son désir de joie, de détente et d’oubli...” (490). Again, the use of carnal metaphors takes the reader to a place of exotic animalism. The image here is that the legionnaires have been “released” among the natives to spread their seed at will, an act in which Dmitri is eager to participate as he avidly “absorbs” Algerian culture.

Dmitri quickly feels at home in Algeria, and, according to the narrator, this sentiment is due to his Muslim heritage. He immediately takes to the way of life among the men in Algeria and feels at ease: “Il se sentait bien là, dans cette pose nonchalante qu’il avait si souvent prise sur le bord des routes” (491). He also wants to learn Arabic because of his

need to “vivre de la vie populaire, partout où il était” (491), again illustrating his desire to fully belong to the culture in which he is living, to “go native.” For Dmitri, this is a relatively simple task that he more or less falls into quite naturally as illustrated in Perrin’s reaction to Dmitri’s immediate feeling of comfort: “Ce nom de Dieu de Russe était tout de suite à son aise partout” (492). A Spahi named Mohammed takes on the role of Dmitri’s guide to Algeria and Arabic, illustrating that, much like in Siennaya, he needs a “native” to introduce him into society and act as his passage into the contact zone. After inviting him to dinner, Mohammed gives Dmitri the following advice: “Si tu veux pas qu’on se foute de toi, tais-toi et sois malin. Tu as besoin de personne, je te ferai voir tout ce que tu voudras... avec moi tu es tranquille” (493).

Dmitri succeeds in his efforts to belong to Algerian society so much so that our narrator remarks: “L’étudiant russe était donc devenu pareil aux hommes du peuple avec lesquels il avait voulu vivre, il les avait même dépassés, ceux d’Europe du moins, en se rapprochant plus qu’eux de la sauvagerie ancestrale” (496). This comment is rather two-sided in that it seems to be complimenting Dmitri for his adaptability, but at the same time it also credits this adaptability to his “ancestral savagery,” thus rendering him Other. References to his ancestry continue throughout the close of the novel and are punctuated with more comments implying that the Algerians accept Dmitri due to his Muslim heritage. Commenting on this fact, the narrator states: “On l’estimait pour sa sympathie, venant à eux le cœur ouvert, en frère, et on n’oubliait pas que du sang musulman coulait dans ses veines” (502). Dmitri, for his part, believes whole-heartedly that Algeria is his home, the place where he belongs. When Mohammed says that it is a shame that Dmitri is a “roumi” – a term used to designate anyone who is French, Christian, or European –, Dmitri is quick to deny this. The narrator explains that Dmitri is more like the Arabs than the Europeans:

D’ailleurs, ne leur était-il semblable ? N’avait-il pas renoncé volontairement à la lutte, l’objectif de toute vie européenne, pour se laisser aller comme eux, voluptueusement au fil de l’eau ?

Et puis ils étaient des nomades, des vagabonds invétérés. Et tant d’autres traits les faisaient ressembler à ce peuple russe [. . .].

Comme le peuple russe, le peuple arabe se maintenait par sa force d’inertie, presque immuable. Comme lui aussi, il souffrait en silence,

apportant dans ses rapports avec l'administration tyrannique et omnipotente la même résignation, la même soumission, la même réprobation pour l'injustice. Le Russe disait : « C'était sur ma naissance. » L'Arabe, plus laconique, se contentait d'esquisser un geste vague de soumission : *Mektoub*, c'était écrit ! (502-3)

This equating of Russian with Arab complicates the issue of nation. While there may be similarities between Dmitri and Mohammed, the narrator seems to be implying that all Russians are like all Arabs – a dangerous generalization. Are we to believe, then, that Véra or Makarow – or any of Dmitri's other Russian acquaintances – would feel the same camaraderie with the people of Algeria? Not only is this generalization incorrect, but it also contradicts what our narrator has regularly held to be true: it is Dmitri's Muslim heritage through his mother's lineage that makes him accepted in Algeria, not his Russian nationality. It would seem, therefore, that in this text the role of nation is ambiguous and relatively undefined.

Dmitri's own identity, that of a vagabond, also changes at the end of the text as he comes to the realization that the purpose of his vagabonding was to arrive in Africa: "Son amour pour la terre d'Afrique devenait plus conscient et plus profond. Il ne se sentait plus exilé et ne souhaitait que de rester là, dans cet âpre décor, pour toujours, même sous l'humble capote bleue du légionnaire" (507). Dmitri, then, abandons the physical act of vagabondage for the land of vagabonds, Africa.¹

Gender

The definition of vagabondage in *Trimardeur* appears only to apply to men. Dmitri's participation in both the masculine cultures of the legionnaires and of a gender-polarized Algeria highlights the importance of masculinity in vagabondage. This exclusion of women contradicts with what we see in Staël's and Tristan's works, where the inclusion and

¹ Eberhardt's short story "Le Vagabond," (1904), however, asserts that not even Algeria can hold a vagabond. The story recounts the rebirth of a desire to wander on the part of an un-named vagabond. At the beginning of the story, when he is comfortably settled in domesticity with his lover, he "renonça à son rêve de fière solitude. Il renia la joie des logis de hasard et la route amie" (375-6). Nevertheless, his "désir ancien de la vieille maîtresse tyrannique, ivre de soleil, le reprenait" and he "comprit qu'il allait partir à l'aube" (377). Eberhardt's publication of *Trimardeur* in an Algerian feuilleton began in 1903, and we as readers are therefore left to wonder if "Le Vagabond" better represents her definition of vagabondage – as it appeared after the first installments of *Trimardeur*. Even so, we must also remember that *Trimardeur* was left unfinished upon her death, and we cannot truly know what destiny would have eventually awaited Dmitri.

advancement of women are central themes. For Eberhardt, the question of gender is loaded with complications and conflicting messages. As already discussed at the beginning of the chapter, Eberhardt's works fall within the discourses of modernism, nihilism, and *décadence*. Ergo, the role of women in the works of her time inevitably influenced her own portrayal of women. In her book *The Gender of Modernity*, Rita Felski explains that for the *décadent* – as opposed to the romantic – women represent “the most despised aspects of both culture *and* nature, exemplifying the crass vulgarity and emptiness of modern bourgeois society as well as an uncontrolled passion and excessive emotionality that is deeply repugnant to the disengaged state of the male aesthete” (107). Felski expounds on this comment, writing about the dandy who, “in a pursuit of uniqueness through the narcissistic cult of self, sees women as exemplifying the uniformity and standardization of modern life which he most abhors” (107). The questions, then, for this study are necessarily about the potential paradox of Eberhardt, a woman, painting women with the modernist's brush. In *Trimardeur* the representation of women, for the majority of the work, falls into a category that is alternately feminist, misogynist, or in between feminism and misogyny. These varied representations of masculinity and femininity can best be understood by an analysis of how they emerge in Dmitri and the women in his life. The gender roles that Dmitri acts out are directly related to two factors: the women he encounters and his phase of vagabondage.

Polia

When we first meet Polia, the prostitute, Dmitri is actively avoiding the rules of the Comité specifically, and of society in general. He is unsure of his calling in life and unhappy with the life he has been leading. Polia, which means sex in Russian, is an important element in Dmitri's journey into the seedy side of town, Siennaya. As her name indicates, she represents sex. As a prostitute, she represents corruption, debauchery, and decadence. Polia is the antithesis of Véra – truth, *vérité*. In Dmitri's relationship with Polia, we see an emergence of traditional gender roles. Dmitri exercises his male right to take a prostitute and satisfy his primal needs. As has already been illustrated, when Dmitri is in Siennaya, he loses his own exoticism and becomes instead – to some extent – the outsider.² In his

² As noted earlier in the chapter, Dmitri occupies an in-between space in Siennaya where he is not quite accepted and not quite rejected. His status as “Other” therefore is also ambiguous while in Siennaya.

encounters, then, with Polia, he adopts a traditional masculine role and Polia is his feminine counterpart. Polia also represents for Dmitri the society from which he is trying to escape. As a prostitute, she is the physical incarnation of the European economics of commodity. As Felski explains:

Her [the prostitute's] body yielded to a number of conflicting interpretations; seen by some contemporary writers to exemplify the tyranny of commerce and the universal domination of the cash nexus, it was read by others as representing the dark abyss of a dangerous female sexuality linked to contamination, disease, and the breakdown of social hierarchies in the modern city. (19)

In Eberhardt's work, the prostitute – like the other characters – falls into an unclearly defined place. Polia does indeed represent the commerce and cash of the city, but in this work she also represents “dangerous” female sexuality. What is noteworthy, though, is that she is a rather sympathetic character, and the reader takes pity on her misfortune, much like we do on Yasmina as well. Polia's most important role in the text, though, is to illustrate and define Dmitri's gender.

From the moment we first meet Polia, we learn that she is the very essence of traditional femininity. In other words, she is weak, fragile, and childlike, while also being a luring seductress. The first mention of her is a physical description from which we learn that she is about twenty years old, with blond hair and a thin face. The description of her eyes, though, is the most telling: “les larges yeux gris, de vrais yeux de Russe, s'ouvraient comme étonnés, presque effrayés de tant de laideurs et de misères” (404). Not only do her eyes bespeak her fragility, and thus her femininity, but also her nationality. We further learn that she is of the working class and comes from an unhappy and violent childhood. The narrator describes Polia's rape thusly:

Avant l'âge, elle fut violée par les ouvriers, comme toutes ses pareilles. Ce fut une galopade brutale de mâles insoucians, et sa santé frêle en fut ébranlée pour toujours. Elle était restée passive, comme hébétée, les sens endormis subissant les hommes avec résignation, comme une des formes de la misère. (404)

Here we learn that Polia leads a life not of choice, but of necessity. The correlation of sexual abuse and poverty is striking in that our narrator is implying that the incidents Polia suffered were more or less inevitable. Her lot in life, then, is determined in a Zola-like positivism. It is only “natural” that she will go on to become a drinker, like her parents, and a prostitute. Abdel-Jaouad explains that this is due to the way that Eberhardt portrays all of her female characters – “as victims of frustrated love, and of social and moral constraints and misunderstandings, [who] ultimately escape their unfulfilled life and seek oblivion in alcohol, drugs, prostitution [. . .]” (103).

Polia’s role in Dmitri’s life is twofold. On the one hand, she is there to satisfy his physical desire while, at the same time, she is there to help him experience the dark and decadent aspects of life that he craves: “Lui s’était attaché à elle, parce qu’elle incarnait pour lui la souffrance et la déchéance où il se plaisait à vivre” (405). Her role as corruptor manifests itself in his drinking, something he only does with her:

Et, peu à peu, éprouvant dans l’ivresse un apaisement mêlé d’une étrange volupté sombre, Orschanow s’était mis à boire, avec Polia qui, le regard trouble et lointain, semblait écouter les choses, bien inintelligibles pour elle, que lui disait Orschanow, dans l’ivresse. « Elle me comprend avec son cœur », se disait-il, quand, parfois, simplement, de le voir pleurer, Polia sanglotait désespérément. (405)

Ultimately, though, be she Dmitri’s comforter or his corruptor, she is simply there to be used. She is a stepping-stone on his path to becoming a vagabond, to be discarded when she is no longer needed. Dmitri has no real feelings for Polia; he merely uses her for a short while.

When he comes to say goodbye to her, momentarily convinced that his place is as a student with Véra, Dmitri finally realizes that Polia is not just a prostitute, but also a person with feelings. The narrator explains that Dmitri was an exception among Polia’s typical clients and that these differences had endeared him to her: “Un tel amant, si bon, si doux, qui ne la battait pas, c’était quelque chose de si rare et de si bon, pour elle, la loqueteuse bousculée et méprisée” (418). Within this relationship we see that Dmitri and Polia have played out their assigned gender roles perfectly. She was there when he needed her, and when he was through with her he abandoned her. Ultimately, the entire relationship comes down to a traditional binarism of gender: she is passive; he is active.

Véra

Dmitri's relationship with Véra is much more complex than what he had with Polia in that he and Véra switch roles. When they first meet, Véra is the strong, active, masculine character and Dmitri is the weak, passive, feminine character. Véra represents Dmitri's life as a student and a revolutionary, before he comes to terms with his vagabondage. As a student, Dmitri's opinions about gender roles are radical for someone at the end of the end of the nineteenth century. Once Dmitri abandons his life as a student, however, he also abandons the ideologies that accompanied that life. When we first meet Dmitri, he is in the café with women casually "s'accoudant fraternellement parmi les hommes" (391). There appears to be no question that women and men are equally welcome in this setting and that there is camaraderie regardless of gender. Our narrator explains that at this point Dmitri is of the same opinion as his comrades and sees that woman is man's equal: "Malgré l'ardente sensualité de sa nature, il gardait une grande chasteté de pensée, *entretenu par le milieu où il vivait*, et où la femme, égale de l'homme, était traitée en camarade et respectée comme telle" (394, my emphasis). It is already clear, though, that Dmitri's feelings about gender equality are directly tied to his environment. The title of the novel already warns us that this milieu is going to change, and so we expect that Dmitri's feelings about women will change, too.

When we meet Véra, we are impressed, like Dmitri, with this "belle créature si saine et si forte" (394). We learn that she came to Petersburg to study medicine, married her first love, and then they went separate ways because they could not work out their differences. Their break, though, was healthy and unemotional and they left each other as "camarades, sans rancune et sans haine" (393). From the beginning, then, it is clear that Véra is independent, strong, and sure of herself. She is not the fainting, melodramatic romantic heroine, but rather the exact opposite. Her work in Siberia as a nurse is further proof of her independence and ability to make her own place in the world.

While Véra's civilizing mission vis-à-vis Dmitri has already been discussed, the gender implications implicit in that action must be examined. For since Dmitri is the wild, untamed Other that Véra is trying to calm, he is performing a more feminine identity than Véra. A few pages earlier in the text, he too recognizes his lack of direction as a feminine shortcoming in his life: "Non, il fallait se secouer, *dompter ses nerfs de femme malade*,

redevenir celui dont la volonté opiniâtre et la calme audace étonnaient les camarades, naguère encore” (398, my emphasis). He understands his indecision and inaction to be uncivilized, feminine, and therefore weak characteristics. When the members of the Committee meet to discuss the fact that Dmitri has been distancing himself from them, it is Véra who acts as the masculine voice of calm and reason. Nowhere is there to be found emotional hysteria in her words or actions. She quietly explains to the Committee that Dmitri simply needs some time to get himself together again and tells Dmitri that he is right to “revendiquer votre liberté” (403). Dmitri is well aware that she is on his side, and the fact that she spoke in his defense “acheva de le calmer. Il n’était plus seul, puisqu’il y avait Véra” (403). Véra, then, acts as his defender and protector – actions traditionally reserved for men.

Véra continues in this role when Dmitri comes to her because he has decided that a life of debauchery is not well suited to him. He comes to her for both moral and financial support, as she is the one who convinces the Committee to give him some money until he is emotionally strong enough to work again. Véra is Dmitri’s strength, his salvation, and his guide. When he does not know where to turn, he turns to her. After asking her what to do with his life, she is quick to respond with what appears to be the answer to all of his problems:

Faites un effort sur vous-même et prenez une résolution. Je doute fort que, dans l’état moral où vous êtes, vous puissiez prendre une décision définitive. Alors, reprenez empire sur vous-même, rentrez chez vous, essayez, de toutes vos forces, en toute énergie et en toute sincérité, de redevenir étudiant et homme d’action. Si, sans faiblir, sans vous laisser aller, vous sentez que votre cœur n’y est plus, que cette vie ne vous est plus tolérable, quittez-la bravement, et allez-vous-en, pour vous faire *bourlak* ou vagabond, ou n’importe quoi, selon ce que vous voudrez être. Mais ne laissez pas le désordre s’implanter dans votre vie, ne vous laissez pas aller à la dérive : c’est le gage le plus certain d’une perpétuité de malheur et de souffrance.

Orschanow avait écouté Véra, attentivement. Comme elle avait raison ! C’était si simple, le salut ! Il obéirait, et puis, elle était là : cela faciliterait tout. (414).

The performance of gender here is significant. Véra, in every way, is the masculine hero who rides in to save the damsel in distress – although in this case the damsel is a man. Her advice is clear, reasonable, and, most importantly, heeded. Dmitri's reaction to Véra's advice acts out his femininity. He is submissive, eager to please his protector, and obedient. For a while he does nothing but follow her advice and do as she tells him. While Dmitri is in this feminized state, he still holds women to be the equals of men: "Pour lui, la femme qui vivait côte à côte avec lui, partageant son labeur et ses aspirations, était un être humain, une individualité distincte et non un sexe. Ainsi, il n'éprouvait pour Véra qu'une tendresse toute fraternelle [. . .]" (417). Once Dmitri realizes his sexual attraction to Véra, though, those ideals all disappear and the gender roles begin to change.

The in-between space comes into play when Dmitri begins to waver in his commitment to Véra and their life together as students and activists, in part because of his physical attraction to her. The night that Dmitri goes to see Polia to say goodbye, he realizes for the first time that he wants to be with Véra sexually: "Une idée lui était venue, une vision subite, fulgurante, qui l'avait rendu fou, et qui le laissa brisé en une telle lassitude de volupté, qu'il pouvait à peine penser: au lieu de Polia dolente, tenir Véra ainsi, dans ses bras, la posséder" (419). The substitution of Véra for Polia is the first indication of a gender switch. It has already been established that when Dmitri is with Polia he performs a masculine role and Polia performs a feminine role. Therefore, when Dmitri in his mind replaces Polia with Véra, he also encodes the gender roles he enacts with Polia into his relationship with Véra. Once this switch happens, Dmitri changes. He who had always obeyed Véra and followed her advice begins to be frustrated with her and "la défiait presque" (421). When he confesses his feelings to her, Véra changes too: "Véra avait pâli. Un grand trouble s'était fait en elle. Son esprit se révoltait contre l'inconscience où elle avait vécu, depuis des semaines... Et pour la première fois, elle éprouvait un immense vouloir d'aimer" (422). Véra is clearly shaken – troubled even – by the possibility of a liaison with Dmitri. It is, then, precisely due to the impending change in gender roles that she suffers this anxiety, albeit an unconscious realization of change. Dmitri, too, is aware of the change in Véra and is masculinized by her feminization: "Et Orschanow sentait qu'elle était à lui, qu'elle aussi n'était plus la même" (422). The reference to possession illustrates that Dmitri is becoming more "masculine," that he already sees Véra as an object to be owned.

Véra, however, is slow to give up her masculinity, as seen in her reticence to consummate her relationship with Dmitri. In spite of his tantrums, Véra holds her ground: “Mais Véra, très calme et très ferme, très douce pourtant, le dominait, et ne céda pas” (424). While already addressed in the nation section of the chapter, this quote deserves a second glance in our gender analysis. There is indeed the notion here that Dmitri is the savage Other that needs to be “dominated,” but there is also a sort of self-domination that Véra performs. In a sense, she is dominating the feminine in herself by delaying sex with Dmitri. In so doing, she is guarding her masculinity, continuing to dominate Dmitri, and suppressing all that is feminine in her.

After Dmitri’s trip home for his father’s funeral, however, Véra’s power over Dmitri begins to wane. For it is at this time that Dmitri’s desires for vagabonding grow stronger and clearer. The text seems to imply that vagabonding, in its essence, is masculine. When Dmitri realizes his purpose in life is to travel, therefore, he also realizes his masculinity. As Sidonie Smith explains, travel is only for the man to undertake:

Discourses of travel [. . .] constitute the traveler as “male” and the one allied with the home [. . .] as “female.” Or they constitute the exotic woman as a menace to the traveler, a threat to his sovereignty and to the profit of his travels. Seduced by women and their calls to desire, he may get lost in the midst of his travels. (300)

Smith’s comment also illustrates that Véra’s role, once Dmitri realizes his calling in life, is to be a “menace” to Dmitri, to sidetrack him from his quest for freedom and the road. Véra’s feminization is further witnessed when she goes looking for him during his final foray into Siennaya and she begins to question the sagacity of this search: “Devenait-elle folle et comment elle, si énergique, si calme d’ordinaire, en était-elle arrivée à un pareil désarroi moral?” (434). Here, Véra begins to reveal the “typical” characteristics of her sex – hysteria, fatigue, immorality. Her gender is switching. Once she finds him, she realizes her defeat. As mentioned before, the following quote shows that the colonizer has become the colonized: “Elle se méprisait d’être si faible: elle n’avait pas su le dompter et le faire sien, et elle s’assujettissait à lui maintenant” (435). We see here that the gender switch has also taken place. Véra’s submission to Dmitri is the ultimate exemplification of her new femininity and his new masculinity. At this point her feminine and allegorical name take on a significant

role. The “truth,” then, that Véra represents could very well be her femininity that was suppressed before her sexual encounters with Dmitri.

The only barrier separating Véra from complete femininity and Dmitri from complete masculinity is the physical consummation of their relationship. This finally happens when they are on their way to Geneva. The symbolism is clear. Dmitri, finally traveling, finds his masculinity. Ergo, Véra must take on a feminine identity in order to stay with him. The description of their coupling is violent and turbulent:

Instinctivement, Véra se débattait. Pourtant, sa tête tournait, un tourbillon d'idées vagues la traversait et une fièvre soudaine soulevait toute sa chair enfin éveillée. Orschanow *écrasa violemment* les lèvres de Véra sous les siennes. Tous deux tremblaient, défaillants. Véra s'abandonnait maintenant à *cette étreinte ardente qui semblait vouloir la briser* (442, my emphasis).

The use of the word “étreinte” is significant in that it means both embrace and stranglehold. It is thus up to the reader to decide just how violent this encounter really was. What is most important here, though, is that Véra’s masculinity has been broken and replaced with femininity. She is no longer the one in control, the strong, masculine character, but rather the subdued, subjugated, and conquered feminine character. When Véra stares too long at Dmitri he says to her: “Comme tu es autre!” (443), further emphasizing her new status as feminine and thereby Other.

After this point Véra is only feminine, her masculine ways having been stifled by Dmitri. When she reprimands him for not taking charge of his life, he violently reminds her again of his masculinity:

Orschanow était aveuglé par la colère et le désir. Ils se tordaient l'un contre l'autre, en une lutte orageuse.
-- Brute ! Lâche ! râlait Véra, pâle, avec une barre dure entre les sourcils.
Enfin, tous deux, roulèrent à terre.
Ce rut sauvage et cruel soulevait le cœur de Véra de dégoût et de honte.
Orschanow se releva. Sous sa main, le poignet droit de Véra avait saigné.
Elle était pâle, elle n'avait pas répondu à son étreinte, elle lui en voulait.
Quelque chose s'était brisé. (448)

While Véra does indeed fight back and try to defend herself against Dmitri, her defense seems to be more from his savage ways – related to his “Orientalness” – than to his masculinity. She is disgusted with and ashamed of his cruel savagery, indicating her shame, perhaps, at ever having involved herself with an Other. With this final explosion, Dmitri finally has the masculinity he requires to leave Véra and his other Russian comrades, to leave forever and begin his vagabondage. The truth embodied in Véra ultimately symbolizes both Véra and Dmitri’s recovery of their “true” gendered identities.

Véra’s relationship with Dmitri is symbolic, then, of his vacillation, vis-à-vis his decision to become a wanderer. She is there to illustrate Dmitri’s in-between gender status that is directly correlated to his indecisiveness. While still uncertain as to his path, Dmitri is more feminine. Once he makes a solid decision about his future, he is masculinized, and Véra’s presence in his life is no longer required. Like Polia, Véra too is rejected and discarded when her job is completed.

Zohra and Aïcha

Dmitri’s relationships with the women he meets in Africa illustrate the fact that he has finally come into his own masculinity, one with which he feels comfortable and at ease. The resulting message is that the male traveler is one who, by proclaiming his masculinity through travel, relegates women to the confines of traditional femininity. Sidonie Smith argues: “Eberhardt’s African woman is voiceless, powerless, beneath observation, outside the desire for identification” (299). This voiceless woman is most overtly seen in the characters of Zohra and Aïcha, but first let us address how this image comes through in Eberhardt’s short story “Yasmina” as well.

The young Yasmina completely trusts Jacques – or Mabrouk as she renamed him so that the Muslim birds would be able to pronounce his name – and utterly loses herself and her spirit in him. When he leaves, he takes this part of her with him, leaving behind a woman “*toujours triste et silencieuse*” (110) – in other words, voiceless. Brahimi, however, argues that Yasmina expresses herself through her body and not with words, thereby resorting to the only option left her, destruction of that body in protest to what has happened to her:

C’est justement le constat que ces femmes [les Maghrébines] n’ont que leur corps comme ressource et comme moyen d’expression ; en sorte qu’elles vont

parfois jusqu'à le détruire, parce qu'elles n'ont pas d'autre moyen d'affirmer une présence et d'exercer une action. Ce rabattement sur le corps est un symptôme de l'impuissance à laquelle elles sont vouées ; c'est aussi affaire de langage : n'ayant pas les mots pour le dire, elles utilisent leur corps comme support de signification. (81)

When Yasmina finally sees Jacques one last time, it is indeed because her body has changed so much – been destroyed – that he only recognizes her when she uses the name “Mabrouk.” Her almost dead body, however, grants her a final power and allows her to inform Jacques of the pain he has caused her:

Pourquoi as-tu usé de toutes les ruses, de tous les sortilèges pour me séduire, m'entraîner, me prendre ma virginité ? Pourquoi avoir répété traîtreusement avec moi les paroles qui font musulman celui qui les prononce ? Pourquoi m'avoir menti et promis de revenir un jour me reprendre pour toujours ? [. . .] Oui, pourquoi, *roumi*, chien, fils de chien, viens-tu encore à cette heure, avec ta femme trois fois maudite, me narguer jusque dans ce bouge où tu m'as jetée, en m'abandonnant pour que j'y meure ? (116)

This fight that Yasmina demonstrates in the last hours of her life represents the hopelessness and degradation that a poor shepherdess like Yasmina is forced to accept. The text clearly deplors the treatment of Algerian women in poverty, left with no other solution than prostitution. As Brahimi explains, they are caught in this world of diverse women because of “le manque d'espaces pour les femmes qui n'ont pas ou plus leur place dans la famille traditionnelle” (80).

While aptly illustrating the utter desperation of these women, this story also relies strongly on the binarism of colonizer/colonized, thereby reintroducing the question of nation. Jacques obviously represents the French colonizer who has come into Algeria, taken what he liked, exploited that “object,” and then returned home quite happy with his adventures in the exotic Orient. Yasmina, on the other hand, symbolizes Algeria – the feminized and colonized place that the masculine colonizer, France, has plundered. It is almost as if Eberhardt has taken a page out of Staël's *Corinne*. Eberhardt, however, cannot sustain her social commentary on the plight of colonized women and Algerians in *Trimardeur*. Her depiction of Algerian women in this text bears little resemblance to the obvious sympathy

illustrated in “Yasmina.” In *Trimardeur*, the Algerian women are consistently described with animal metaphors and as nothing more than servants – both sexual and otherwise – to their male superiors.

Zohra is the mistress of Mohammed and is the epitome of the stereotypical Muslim woman: ‘En effet, elle ne s’assit pas auprès d’eux [Mohammed and Dmitri], gardant son rôle d’emprunt de femme mariée, attentive, obéissant au regard du spahi qui se calait dans des attitudes de maître’ (494). Aïcha, Zohra’s sister, also falls into this category, being described as “une brune frêle, bronzée, avec ce lourd regard impénétrable et farouche des bédouines” (494). The scene at Mohammed’s home, where we meet Zohra and Aïcha, is highly Orientalized and exoticized and the language used is heavy with Orientalist jargon. Dmitri sees Aïcha as a “fleur sauvage,” and Aïcha for her part plays the part of the exotic Other who is seated in a corner: “silencieuse, elle gardait une immobilité d’idole” and “Elle baissait les yeux, ne regardant pas même ce *roumi* pour lequel sa sœur l’avait fait venir” (494). She is what the European traveler would expect her to be – humble, submissive, exotic, and strange.

Dmitri, in this situation, takes on the role of masculine European colonizer, by giving his moral commentary on the events he witnesses here. He questions Mohammed when he knocks Zohra to the floor with a blow to her head, saying: ‘Pourquoi la bats-tu ? dit Orschanow, le prenant par le poignet.’ Mohammed calmly justifies his actions, responding: “Ce n’est rien, ça... si tu voyais comme je la bats, quand ça me plaît, quand je suis en colère ! ça lui fait plaisir... Dis, ça te fait plaisir, hein ? Elle se hasarda à lever la tête, avouant, de peur d’être battue encore” (494). There is no doubting here that traditional gender roles are in place.

Dmitri, at first seeming unsure of Mohammed’s actions toward Zohra, ultimately decides that this is a place of pleasure for him:

La tête d’Orschanow tournait délicieusement. Ce décor d’orgie brutale ne lui déplaisait pas. Combien il s’était méprisé, jadis, de ce goût de l’amour sauvage qu’il se connaissait bien, et qui le jetait souvent à des aventures dont il restait honteux ! Maintenant il s’y abandonnait, tranquille, conscient malgré son ivresse. (495)

Dmitri no longer resists the urges that he now realizes are simply a part of him, due to his mother's Tartar blood flowing through him. Like all of the women in this novelogue, his mother's role also serves only to define Dmitri's masculinity through his desire to be a vagabond. His mother, though, having died at his birth (394), could only affect a direct influence on Dmitri's physical makeup. His only understanding, then, of Muslim Tartar women comes indirectly through his interaction with Muslim Algerian women. And so he dives headfirst into the "orgie brutale" and goes to Aïcha: "Il prit Aïcha, la leva à bras tendu, malgré ses ongles de jeune chatte qui entraient dans la chair de ses poignets, il la jeta sur les coussins, et, la violentant, l'obligea à boire un verre d'absinthe" (495). The cat symbolism, of course, renders Aïcha both feminine and exotic, Other and animal. Her purpose is only to serve Dmitri's – and for that matter any other man's – needs. When he returns to the military camp, Dmitri revels in his happiness and refuses to feel any sort of regret, for, as he explains: "Il était comme ça, et la conscience de sa virilité simple, retrempée aux origines lui donnait des heures d'un bonheur profond. Pourquoi dès lors se fût-il torturé de scrupules, compliqué de nuances ?" (496). And so Dmitri has come to terms with his lot in life and with his masculinity, never to be "torturé" again by uncertainties imposed by European ideals.

Ultimately, we see that Dmitri's search for himself has led to a disappearance of the non-feminine woman. For Dmitri to be masculine, the women he encounters must be his gendered counterparts. The result, therefore, is that women in this text are systematically relegated to a place that – far from being in between masculine and feminine – is clearly situated on the feminine side of the binarism. Dmitri's quest for freedom, for his masculine identity, undoes the possibility of an in-between space. For him the in-between areas were located in his arrival at his life's calling. While we saw that for Tristan and Corinne those in-between spaces offered freedom and choice, for Dmitri they only offered struggle and uncertainties.

The connection between gender and nation in this text, while it exists, digresses from what Staël and Tristan maintain in their works. For Eberhardt, the most important theme is one of personal freedom, not universal freedom as her predecessors insist. Dmitri's freedom in this text is directly related to his discovery of his masculinity, which stands in opposition to the femininity of both the women he encounters and also his final destination, Algeria. Moreover, while multi-nationality permits Staël and Tristan liberty, it is a complete lack of

any nationality – multi or otherwise – that allows the vagabond his freedom. In spite of these significant differences between Staël, Tristan, and Eberhardt, the fact remains that each woman must search out and inhabit an in-between space that allows her to recreate for her characters a space in which they can freely define their own unique identities.

Conclusion

In each of the works analyzed in this study, the overriding theme has been one of effecting social change through a creative outlet. Germaine de Staël, Flora Tristan, and Isabelle Eberhardt all portray their own personal visions of utopian society through their novelogues. Each author addresses similar topics in her work and creates a commonality of ideas that threads from the beginning of the nineteenth century to its end. These topics include gender roles, national identity, travel and exile, the role of the outsider, and freedom.

Gender Roles

For each author in this study, the question of gendered identity is directly related to the utopian society imagined in her work. In *Corinne ou l'Italie*, Staël presents Corinne as an idyllic possibility of what women can accomplish, given the freedom to be both masculine and feminine. For Staël, however, the conclusion of her novelogue is necessarily disheartening and comes across as a warning to her readers: deny women gendered equality and society throws away potential greatness. Tristan, in *Pérégrinations d'une paria*, recounts her own experience as the victim of an abusive husband. Unlike the cautionary tale the Staël proffers, Tristan's message focuses more on possibility. When a woman like herself escapes the confines of a brutal marriage, her options are limited only by her capabilities. Eberhardt's depiction of gender roles in *Trimardeur* does not correspond to what her predecessors posited. In her work, gender is indeed connected to the text's version of utopia, but that utopia is only available to men. The female characters in her novelogue serve only to reinforce the masculinity of the male characters. For each of these authors, then, gender roles are inextricably linked to their particular views of an ideal society, but those roles change significantly as the century progresses.

National Identity

Each of the main characters in *Corinne*, *Pérégrinations*, and *Trimardeur* possesses multiple national identities. In *Corinne ou l'Italie*, Staël presents an idealized character who accomplishes political and social greatness due to her national in-between status. By being

both Italian and English, Corinne is afforded the possibility of encompassing a perfect combination of the characteristics traditionally associated with each nationality. Corinne triumphs in her dual nationality and serves as a lesson to society about the importance of crossing national boundaries. For Tristan, the question of national identity is of equal importance, but she does not find the same welcome in her maternal home, France, that Corinne finds in Italy. Tristan's journey begins as one in which she hopes to overcome what she feels is an abandonment by French society. When she is not fully accepted in her father's home of Peru either, however, she is forced to reevaluate the importance she places on one singular nationality. She eventually comes to welcome her dual standing and, like Corinne, accomplishes great political and social transformations. In *Trimardeur*, Eberhardt introduces a character who seeks to do away completely with nationality. Whereas in Staël's and Tristan's works the main characters find great freedom in accepting their dual national status, Eberhardt's character holds that true freedom comes from total rejection of national allegiance. Dmitri casts off his Russian identity and turns instead to vagabondage, wandering aimlessly, to express his true and free selfhood. While the importance of national identity changes from Staël and Tristan to Eberhardt, one common theme remains: the maternal home. Corinne, Flora, and Dmitri all return to their maternal homes. Corinne understands that England will never be able to accept her and so returns to Italy. Flora, being denied the familial and social status from her father's family in Peru that she had hoped to receive, returns to France to begin a new life as a writer and social activist. For Dmitri's part, his return to the motherland is more figurative. Having acknowledged that it is his mother's Tartar blood in him that created his wanderlust, his desire to be a vagabond, Dmitri finds himself in the land of nomads and vagabonds, Algeria. Although the importance of national identity changes as nationhood takes on greater importance in the nineteenth century, the focus on the nation question in these works remains a central theme.

Travel and Exile

In Staël's personal life, exile (and the travel necessarily incorporated therein) plays a central role that carries over into her literary works. Corinne's departure from Italy upon her mother's death and her exile from England after her father's death forced her to travel and find her own place of belonging, her home where she could nurture all aspects of her

personality. The exposure she had to both England and Italy allowed her to make an informed decision about her country of residence. Similarly, Tristan also had to experience the cultures of both her father and mother before realizing where she should settle. Her self-imposed exile from France provided her the opportunity to meet her father's family and to explore a society vastly different from her own. Ultimately, the observations she made during this trip brought about the energetic social activism for which she is known today. For Eberhardt, too, the exile that Dmitri experiences is self-imposed and his travels are central to the work. Eberhardt's vision of utopia can only be accomplished through constant wandering. Each of these writers, then, uses the travel theme to illustrate both a quest and a final destination: Corinne must find a place where she can embrace all sides of her personality, Tristan must witness common social problems the world over to arrive at place where she can effect social change, and Dmitri, simply, must travel and lead a nomadic life.

The Outsider

The role of the outsider in Staël's, Tristan's, and Eberhardt's work is a direct result of the themes just mentioned. Because each work presents a character who must grapple with gender roles and national identity as they travel the world, they more often than not must examine these issues from the periphery of society. As Corinne and Flora come to terms with being both masculine and feminine and having dual nationality – existing in-between labels – society alternately rejects and accepts them. Dmitri, on the other hand, finds that he is most at home with other outsiders. Be he searching for his calling in life or living his dream of vagabondage, he always chooses to do so in the margins. From their positions in the periphery, however, these characters find their unique voices and manners of self-expression. Instead of limiting the characters, then, the margins of society provide them with a sort of vantage point from which they are better able to observe, comment on, and then imagine an ideal civilization.

Freedom

The final theme repeated in each of the works examined in this study is that of freedom. Corinne, Flora, and Dmitri each have the same underlying goal: freedom of self-expression. While that freedom is differently imagined from character to character, the end message is the same. Staël imagines Italy as the last bastion free from the political

constraints of an expanding Europe. Were Italy allowed to exist free from Napoleon, the budding nation state would be able to continue to allow excellence from people regardless of gender. Tristan's vision of freedom focuses on the downtrodden and the lack of freedom they enjoy. Both women and slaves are the subject of numerous discourses in her work and her overall claim is that, granted freedom from their oppressors, both groups would be able to accomplish greatness. For Eberhardt, freedom is much more personal. Dmitri is not concerned with the freedom of others, but rather with his own desire to be free from the constraints of society. His dream of vagabondage, though, could be traced through the idealized portraits offered by Staël and Tristan. In other words, if the national and gendered freedom that Staël and Tristan envisioned would come to pass, then the freedom question would indeed be one of more personal and individual proportions.

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