

The Commitment to Scandal  
in French Post-War Fiction (1945-1950)  
Through The Works Of  
Marcel Aymé, Jean Genet And Roger Nimier

by

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**Declaration of Authorship**

I Anne-Célia Feutrie hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis studies a period of historical transition (1945-1950) and proposes to use scandal as a critical tool to account for the ambiguity of the immediate post-war period in literature. As set out in pragmatic sociology, scandal is understood to involve a test to the stability of values through a public act of denunciation.

While this research project makes a new contribution to the study of fiction as a powerful and reactive ‘vecteur de mémoire’ (Rouso 1987), its focus is on exploring the notion of fiction as an ethical space where disputes (controversies, violence, affairs and, importantly, scandals) are represented, organised, controlled and sometimes resolved within the space of the novel.

This thesis reframes this question of the role of literature in a period of transition by revisiting the historiographical claim that some aspects of Vichy and the Occupation were rarely discussed in France before 1968. Instead, it suggests that the fictional production in the immediate post-war years attests to a readiness and commitment to narrate and organise dissent.

To explore these issues, the thesis focuses on three major, contrasting writers – Marcel Aymé, Jean Genet and Roger Nimier – all of whom have in common to have explicitly, deliberately and problematically represented the Occupation and the Liberation in 1945-1950 novels.

Chapter I reveals and explores the convergence of a popular and critical interest for scandal between 1945-1950 and the subsequent presence of scandal in historiographical discourse ever since.

Chapter II identifies ‘scales of scandal’, namely the mechanism of narrative scandal at lexical, stylistic and structural levels.

Chapter III shows how time and space constitute the a priori conditions of scandal and how they become scandalised in the process.

Chapter IV systematically analyses the thematic uncertainty and ethical undecidability brought about by scandal affecting notions of morality, authority and identity. The thesis concludes with reflections on the novel as ethical space and the critical potential of scandal in literary studies.

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# Introduction

This thesis explores the fictional production of the immediate post-war period through the prism of scandal. The novels published by Marcel Aymé, Jean Genet and Roger Nimier in the years 1945-1950 dispute the nascent historical account of a victorious France through their representation of the Occupation and the Liberation. The study fits into a larger, relatively recent but increasingly strong, research field spanning France, the United Kingdom and the United States, engaging with wide-ranging questions pertaining to the relations between literature and history, political extremes, French Fascism, memory and collective representations and which has contributed to reprinting and critical editions of well-known or marginal writers or groups of writers. Recent international conferences bringing together specialists in history and literature are also testament to the vibrancy of the field.<sup>1</sup> Critical issues regarding the representation of the Occupation and the Liberation in immediate post-war fiction are of particular relevance to this thesis.

The scope and methodological framework of this thesis do, however, depart from the main body of research done on the period. The study examines the fiction of Aymé, Genet and Nimier and proposes a re-reading of their works in the light of the notion of transition or ‘*sortie de guerre*’ (Cabanes 2007) rather than as early examples of ‘*romans de la mémoire*’ (Hamel 2006). My contention is that understanding the immediate post-war fictional production in terms of transition rather than memory not only allows for

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<sup>1</sup> International Conferences, ‘Framing Narratives of WWII and Occupation in France (1939-2009)’ convened by Margaret Atack and Christopher Lloyd (Leeds University, 14 September 2009), ‘Vichy et après: l’écriture “occupée”’, co-organised by Marc Dambre, Richard J. Golsan and Christopher Lloyd (Paris III Sorbonne Nouvelle, 30 May-1 June 2012), ‘The Liberation of France: Histories and Memories’ (French Institute in London, 13-14 June 2014) and especially ‘Literature of the Liberation’ chaired by Claire Gorrara, ‘Occupation/Liberation: Cultural Representations of 1944-45 and Its Legacy’ (School of Modern Languages, Bristol University, 10-11 September 2014) are just a few examples of the dynamism of the field.

more fruitful exchanges between history and literature, but also for more systematic and meticulous accounts of what is at stake in the so-called ‘ambiguity’ of the literature of these years. I will argue that scandal understood as a test and a moment of instability can describe the underlying issues reflected by the fiction of these years.

Pragmatic sociology offers descriptions which help distinguish scandals from affairs and causes. While a scandal is defined as ‘une mise en accusation publique qui conduit sans coup férir au châtement, unanimement reconnu comme légitime et souhaitable, de l’accusé. [...] l’accusé ne rencontre jamais personne qui prenne sa défense – lui-même ne s’y aventurant guère’, the unanimous decision and satisfaction of the punishment or ‘communauté de jugement’ is divided in the case of affairs (Offenstadt 2007, 10-12).<sup>2</sup> ‘L’affaire repose donc à la fois sur l’engagement d’un médiateur – individuel ou sous forme de collectif – et sur la saisie d’un espace public pris à témoin de l’injustice’ (12). Moreover, if an affair connotes trouble and darkness, a “cause” désigne l’enjeu porté par les acteurs dans toute sa “clarté” (11), namely, clear objectives and priorities. While literature is no stranger to scandal as expressions such as ‘succès de scandale’ attest, no literary study has sought to make use of the many case-studies, lexicon and grammar devised by anthropologists and pragmatic sociologists studying scandals, affairs and their corollaries (rumours, threats and fear), from Max Gluckman or Eric de Dampierre, to more recent work by Luc Boltanski and the ‘Groupe de sociologie politique et morale’ (GSPM). This lacuna seems all the more surprising as the pragmatic dimension of their research puts the notion of discourse and narrative at the centre of the aforementioned research. It is therefore this gap that this thesis seeks to bridge.

This introduction establishes what scandal can be taken to mean in this study. The Dreyfus Affair as the paradigmatic example of modern scandal in France will furnish

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<sup>2</sup> These three terms are not taken as vernacular expressions but as analytical notions. Full bibliographical details of cited works and editions used are given in the Bibliography.



the starting-point for the construction of scandal as a hermeneutic tool in literary studies. This will allow key notions to emerge and connections to be made with literature and the literary production of the post-war in particular.

A mesure que tombait l'agitation des vagues, le même océan reparaisait sous le même ciel; on voyait se reformer le même monde. Avant ou après "l'Affaire", avant ou après la guerre, qu'y avait-il de foncièrement transformé en France? (Blum 1935, 178)

It is in these terms that Léon Blum reflects upon the legacy of the Dreyfus Affair. What Blum acutely perceives here is that the rupture created by scandals does not necessarily lead to a complete overhaul of the foundations of social, political and symbolic order.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Blum's question demonstrates that scandal, whose alleged mechanism is routinely depicted metaphorically, is first and foremost a moment disconnected from conventional time (creating an 'avant' and an 'après'), a sudden 'inquiétude', etymologically evoking a sense of agitation, followed by some form of resolution, a double movement of inflation and deflation.<sup>4</sup> Blum signals a paradox in scandal whose disruptive force does not necessarily measure up to what Boltanski (2011) calls its 'force instituante' or the changes it brings about. Romain Rolland (1959, 157) similarly perceived the resolution of the Dreyfus Affair as a case of a 'damp squib', a missed opportunity or an unkept promise: 'Il s'y est dépensé une somme de passions telle qu'on aurait pu fonder une société nouvelle avec. On ne l'a pas fondée, et l'affaire se termine par des décorations.' The promise of change contained in the conditional form, the utopian horizon of purification and transparency for the whole community hinted at with the collective 'on', echo a common vision of scandal as a 'fountain of youth' and

<sup>3</sup> The same observation can be made for financial scandals, which after widespread indignation in the press saw cases eventually dismissed, see de Blic (2007, 231-48). Water analogies abound in Blum's memoir: 'La crise avait eu beau parcourir la surface de violents et longs remous, elle n'avait pas ébranlé le pays dans ses profondeurs' (176-177). Similarly, images of marshes and mires pervade the corpus, see Chapter IV.1 for an analysis of the image of the mud.

<sup>4</sup> In Late Latin, 'inquietudo' designates the lack of quietism. Michel de Certeau (1980, 7) writes about 'inquiétude' as a form of ancient, undefined anxiety which he sees as periodically recurring throughout history: 'Cette force à l'affût s'insinue dans les tensions de la société qu'elle menace. Soudain, elle les aggrave; elle en utilise encore les moyens et les circuits, mais au service d'une "inquiétude" qui vient de plus loin, inattendue [...].'

an equally familiar one of a ‘flash in the pan’. Scandal is conveyed by superlatives but seems ultimately to prove an anti-climax, which invites the following question: if the Dreyfus Affair allegedly proved to have only temporarily and superficially upset order, what is it then that such scandals produce? What is their function, and why study them at all?

An initial response could be that scandals need to be analysed as events; by generating *hors-temps* through the blurring of the past, the present and the future, they resonate with what Michel de Certeau calls ‘moments instables’ in the sense that their unforeseen emergence aggravates existing flaws (‘une faille’), precipitates ‘un processus avec des prises de position’, and provides a society with a lexicon or ‘registre d’inquiétude’ capable of articulating the vague, amorphous anxieties at a given time.<sup>5</sup> Certeau (1980, 7-8) describes the possession of Loudun as a ‘crise diabolique’ or ‘poussée de l’étrange’ which gripped the city in 1632-1640. If the emergence of a crisis ‘sous une forme sauvage et spectaculaire’, and its subsequent more civilised and orderly phases, raised questions pertaining to ‘la science et la religion, sur le certain et l’incertain, sur la raison, le surnaturel, l’autorité’ in the aftermath of the plague and in the context of the larger dispute between religion and reason, the event more generally challenged the certainties of the society at the time, as well as those it sought to give itself. Modern scandals retain some features of these crises of demonic possession: the unpredictability of their emergence, the social and institutional mobilization they induce, the discursive dimension of the dispute, albeit that scandal in the immediate post-war period cannot be explored merely from the perspective of past forms of

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<sup>5</sup> For a summary of the methodological stakes of pragmatic sociology and the concept of test, see Lemieux (2007a). Certeau accounts for the ‘force instituante’ of the possession, the fact that it cannot only be analysed as the result of a process but as an object in itself: ‘Ce débat [public entre Dieu et le Diable] est pourtant plus qu’une conséquence. Il crée une situation nouvelle. Il partage.’ (39). Certeau describes the beginning of the possession as a ‘moment instable et bref’ (25; 44-45), a crisis which ‘surprend à chaque fois’ (7), whose effect on time is that ‘le présent remue le passé, une vieille histoire remonte aussi à la surface.’ (104). The crisis is expressed by ‘langages de l’inquiétude’ and ‘registres d’expression’ which as well as borrowing from the past are novel (7; 39).

disputes, in large part owing to the major changes to the public space, political regimes (democracy) and the role of public opinion.<sup>6</sup> The argument for making demonic possessions the precursors of modern scandals is supported by Certeau's conclusion that in spite of the evident religious character of the possessions, their political dimension should not be disregarded or understated. Moreover, the Durkheimian concept of 'collective effervescence', which has been widely used in recent studies of scandal is itself rooted in observations of religious phenomena.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, 'collective effervescence', while was originally coined to describe the energy and euphoria ('*délire*') of totemic gatherings of Australian Aborigines (Durkheim 1968, 214), now describes the momentary feelings of communion experienced as a mode of social interaction. The intersecting attributes of possessions, scandals and other forms of transient social mobilization point to generic qualities that can further extend the reach of what Boltanski (2011, 22) calls the '*forme affaire*' as a way to subsume the great variety (cultural and historical) of scandals.<sup>8</sup>

This dual heritage places us in the lineage of Certeau's anthropological tradition and the Durkheimian school of sociology both of which both acknowledge these (religious or profane) moments of euphoria as breaks in time ('*cassures du temps*'), extra-ordinary moments necessary to the preservation of the ordinary, and 'normality'. Indeed, just as crime and suicide are abnormal in the sense that they are seeds of disorder, they are also normal at the level of society, precisely because they are

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<sup>6</sup> The connotations of a diabolical act, if largely toned down in modern scandals, are nonetheless present and sometimes expressed in terms of an unknown evil or an indeterminate force as in periods 'rich in demons' (Mühlmann 1968, 183; quoted in Certeau 1980, 9).

Boltanski emphasises that 'disputing processes' can only be analysed in democratic societies. If public opinion is admittedly difficult to assess, Georgette Elgey (1965, 190) turns to opinion polls to measure the reactions of the public to the '*Scandale des Vins*' of 1946.

<sup>7</sup> Aymé (1938, 54; 157) also writes about the public's '*entrée en effervescence*', violence and '*fièvre*' (141-42).

<sup>8</sup> The '*forme affaire*' designates an ideal type of the affair designed to account for scandals throughout history, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to ecological scandals of the present day see Claverie (1994). Boltanski (1993, 95) also defines the '*forme affaire*' as '*l'une des formes sociales dont disposent les gens pour s'opposer et pour se lier*'.

unavoidable; scandals give a group or a society the opportunity to test the stability, resilience and justice of the principles by which they are governed.<sup>9</sup>

More generally, the distinctive anti-Republican and seditious designs of scandals throughout the Third Republic (1870-1940) until 1968 may explain the prevalence of ideological and political accounts of dissent and disruptions to order.<sup>10</sup> Boltanski and Thévenot trace back the political origins of scandals in France to the Revolutionary division between the ‘cité démocratique’ and the State, which, according to them, has only been partially consented to and acquiesced:

Une affaire est scandaleuse quand elle dévoile au public des liens qui unissent les personnes, qu’elle ‘déballe’, sur ‘la place publique’, le ‘linge sale’ des familles. La forme affaire (Boltanski, 1984) se développe dans la tension entre le monde domestique et le monde civique. Elle est liée par là à la séparation, réalisée sous la Révolution, de la cité domestique et de l’Etat, qui distribue dans deux mondes incompatibles les ‘petites’ histoires entre les gens, leurs ‘secrets d’alcôve’, les péripéties de leurs intrigues et, d’autre part, la ‘grande histoire’, l’histoire ‘politique’ ou économique’ de la Nation (1991, 313-314).

From a linguistic and rhetorical viewpoint, scandal relies on ‘resources’ which are not usually present in the ‘monde civique’, by alluding to familial links, signs of complicity interpreted as evidence of nepotism:

Ces ressources permettent de recomposer la situation dans un autre monde et c’est la tension entre le monde apparent et le dispositif sous-jacent qui est objet de scandale: derrière les apparences du civisme la situation dissimule une autre réalité qui est de nature domestique. Mais cette réalité est condamnable et doit être à son tour dénoncée pour que la situation puisse être rétablie dans toute sa pureté [...]. La dénonciation du scandale se complaît dans un style pamphlétaire (Marc Angenot) dont une des particularités est d’associer la hauteur à la bassesse, l’emphase à l’ordure (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991, 314).

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<sup>9</sup> Similarities between crime, suicide and scandal can be identified in light of Durkheim’s analysis of the normality of crime. Durkheim (1967, 61) notes that ‘Il n’est pas de peuple dont la morale ne soit quotidiennement violée. Nous devons donc dire que le crime est nécessaire, qu’il ne peut pas ne pas être, que les conditions fondamentales de l’organisation sociale, telles qu’elles sont connues, l’impliquent logiquement. Par suite, il est normal.’

<sup>10</sup> See in particular Angenot (2013). ‘The disaffected Right [...] repeatedly fell back on conspiracy, and the exploitation of scandal against the hated enemy’ (*Political Scandals and Causes celebres* 1991, 62); see also Ory (1985, 70).

Boltanski and Thévenot add that these ‘discordances de style’ typical of pamphleteering serve the process of unveiling the sham of general interest in post-revolutionary France.<sup>11</sup> In other words, scandal appears as a symptom and public manifestation of social anxiety and purports to publicize a hidden state of affairs, expose a discrepancy between appearances and an alleged reality, dichotomies of inward and outward, collective and individual. These considerations of the heritage, national specificities and generic qualities of modern scandals are essential to propose a working definition of scandal. In this thesis, scandal is understood as an act of exposition of a perceived injustice or inconsistency between an outside (public) and an inside (private), relying on a more or less elaborate counter-narrative threatening the bases and foundations of a certain order at a given time.

Understandably, scandals in literature have been examined mainly from the point of view of a sociology of literature (namely, the negative image of what they seek to overturn), from a structuralist point of view, making scandal a purely textual construction, or from the point of view of their reception. Remarkably, scandal has not been the object of the same levels of attention in literary studies as it has in sociology, politics and communication studies, perhaps because cognate concepts such as transgression and crisis have been the object of literary focus. It should be noted that if history and sociology have been viewing scandal as an object deserving close analysis, literature seems less wary of scandals if not partial to them and is keen to underline their subversive and aesthetic connotations.

The notion of scandal as narrative – or as counter-narrative – is central to the argument of this thesis. A key question is: ‘what does fiction have to say about scandal?’ Moreover, a second question follows on from this: ‘how does scandal work in fictional narratives and what purpose does it have?’ In other words, what does fictional

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<sup>11</sup> Maingueneau’s *Sémantique de la polémique* (1983) and Angenot’s examination of ‘discours agoniques’ and ‘discours pamphlétaires’ in (Angenot 1982) are of particular relevance to this study.

scandal ‘test’ in the immediate post-war period?<sup>12</sup> Contrary to a persistent view (Rousso, 1990), the Gaullist myth of a victorious France was widely contested and questioned before the 1960s. At the Liberation, literature assumed a central function in the intellectual and symbolic reconstruction of the country at a time when the parliamentary Right fell into disrepute and the literary field represented an arena where dissenting voices could make themselves heard. The post-war years saw an unprecedented interest in scandal through the popular demand for *Noir* fiction and the critical debates around literary scandal of the kind Sade came to epitomise. Indeed, literature – and the novel in particular – appear in these years as the privileged space and genre for the production, consumption and formulation of new critical paradigms, emphasising in the process the role of the (literary) text in investigations into culture, history, morality and analogous subjects.<sup>13</sup>

It seems that the unprecedented importance assumed by literature in the immediate post-war period has been only partially recognised and when it has, a focus on Existentialism has led to the overlooking of the intensity and frequency of the disputes within the literary field and within the space of the novel itself. Margaret Attack (2012) has reiterated an apparent reluctance to acknowledge a cross-ideological ‘mass phenomenon’ of literary dissent in the aftermath of the Occupation. A number of studies and monographs have sought to redress this blind spot in literary history by providing individual analyses of marginal, virtually forgotten writers, and famous, mainstream writers such as Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Jean Genet, François Mauriac, Jean Paulhan and Julien Gracq. However, none of these studies has accounted for the large-scale phenomenon of dissenting accounts of the recent experience of the Occupation and the

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<sup>12</sup> An analysis of scandal in fiction differs from other types of scandal in society as the novel is a closed, controlled universe where the narrator exerts an almost total control. It is therefore interesting to analyse the relations between the narrative voice, the characters, the *énoncé*, the *énonciation* and how they all come together to produce or prevent scandals from occurring.

<sup>13</sup> The ‘linguistic turn’ in history only confirmed this trend of envisaging reality as a text, see Delacroix (2010, 476-490).

Liberation.<sup>14</sup> What is more, it is the timeline and methodology used by literary scholars that is mostly problematic. The FRAME project ('FRAnce RoMan GuErre') is a case in point. While undoubtedly contributing to the better understanding of post-war fictional representations of the war and providing researchers with a large bibliographical database, the doctoral dissertations (Lawrie 2013) and research papers from the larger project tend to reflect the influence of *mode rétro* novels and concepts borrowed from the narrow but influential field of the history of memory, sometimes blurring the distinction between 'romans de la mémoire' and 'romans mémoire' usefully made by Yan Hamel (2006). Two general objections can be made here. First, the use of concepts unquestioningly adapted from history by literary studies is problematic, and can be seen as the latest example of the quasi-monopoly exerted (indirectly) by historians and historiography on the post-war period, whilst literary scholars content themselves with questions of representation, resulting in the confusion between *mode rétro* novels and novels of the transition.<sup>15</sup>

It is precisely here that I depart methodologically from other analyses of the period. It is my contention that the immediate post-war period should be envisaged discretely in terms of transition rather than as a primary and early example of a 'travail de la mémoire' (Rouso 1990) which literature might be thought of as naturally lending itself to. This thesis acknowledges, explores and begins this timely work of seeking to understand immediate post-war fiction in the context of the transition to peace when values are at their most unstable and scandals are rife.<sup>16</sup> It is in the context of such transition that the concept of scandal can be exploited, here in some particularly fruitful case-studies of novels by Aymé, Genet and Nimier.

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<sup>14</sup> An unsatisfactory label of 'roman de l'ambiguïté' has been used as a descriptor of some reportedly unclassifiable works such as Aymé's post-war cycle of 'romans sérieux' in particular.

<sup>15</sup> Confino (1997) underlined the 'sacrifice of the cultural to the political' in studies on collective memory, and more specifically Rouso's work.

<sup>16</sup> The concept of transition in a French, metropolitan context has recently been envisaged as a 'retour à l'intime' by Cabanes and Piketty (2009) in reaction to the alleged 'normalisation' happening in immediate post-war periods.

The novel constitutes a ‘ligne de fuite’ in Gilles Deleuze’s sense of an evasion from ‘lignes molaires’ and ‘moléculaires’, a ‘fuite’ (1977, 152-154) which allows for the expression of the dark and quotidian side of life, unseen by history. In Michel Foucault’s words:

acharnée à chercher le quotidien au-dessous de lui-même, à franchir les limites, à lever brutalement ou insidieusement les secrets, à déplacer les règles et les codes, à faire dire l’inavouable, [la littérature] tendra donc à se mettre hors la loi ou du moins à prendre sur elle la charge du scandale, de la transgression ou de la révolte. Plus que toute autre forme de langage, elle demeure le discours de l’ “infamie”: à elle de dire le plus indicible – le pire, le plus secret, le plus intolérable, l’éhonté. (2001, 252)

‘La charge du scandale’ appears as the very mission of literature to the point that scandal and fiction seem tautological. In the novel, the political dimension is inscribed in the individual and domestic sphere: ‘Le drame historique s’y prolonge et s’y démultiplie en une infinité de drames privés où l’on n’observe pas seulement le choc frontal des convictions, mais l’opposition oblique et secrète des lieux et des âges.’ What scandal finds in the novel is a space and a method of exposition of intricate and ambiguous aspects. Moreover, the origin of the novel and scandal can be found in a common ‘primitive scene’; in Michel Deguy’s words, scandal constitutes a primitive scene of interlocution in which people ‘se portent accusation, cherchent à imputer le premier tort, plaident, témoignent, jugent [...] se rassemblent pour entendre, ou surprendre les griefs, l’impatience réciproque, les témoignages, les plaidoiries, le jugement’ (Deguy 1994; quoted in Roussin 2006). It would be tempting to go as far as saying that immediate post-war literature seems to be a pre-politicized reaction to historical events, but that would be to considerably underestimate the political dimension of fiction. In fact, as Anne Simonin (2008, 34) argues ‘la littérature dispute au droit cette opération dont il prétend avoir le monopole de la qualification, cet “acte d’évaluation qui consiste à donner le nom non pas qui revient à la chose, mais que mérite la chose [...] en vertu de déterminations foncièrement politiques”’. This not only



highlights the central function of literature in the cultural reconstruction, but also the fact that the immediate post-war period was a mythical time (Kelly 2004, 2), both in the sense that ‘myths flourished’ (Sartre 2005, 57-64; 59) and that the period of the Occupation itself was in the process of becoming a myth.<sup>17</sup>

There are three main criteria for the selection of the present corpus. Firstly, the thesis focuses on the fictional production published between 1945-1950 which explicitly deals with the Occupation and the Liberation. Secondly, Aymé, Genet and Nimier are the representatives of three generations whose literary coming of age took place at different moments. Thirdly, the critical clout of each writer could not be more different.<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of the war, Aymé was an acclaimed writer of popular novels and short stories which contributed to his Rabelaisian image and his reputation for independence. His popularity throughout the Occupation, with the reprinting of his pre-war works in spite of some contributions to collaborationist newspapers saw him emerge from the war with a virtually spotless reputation.<sup>19</sup> If his originality was hailed by the Right and the Left and many contributions to the study of his post-war texts seem uncertain as to how to locate his ideological allegiances, he is nowadays mostly

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<sup>17</sup> The importance of imagination in scandal is analysed by Aymé (1938, 52).

<sup>18</sup> The third generation ‘qui a commencé d’écrire après la défaite ou peu avant la guerre’ identified by Sartre (1999, 220) corresponds to Genet and Nimier. No detailed accounts of the works will be given in the introduction as the narrative content of the chosen works will be dealt with in detail in the thesis.

<sup>19</sup> Nimier (1965, 56-57) notes that ‘Aymé fut découvert par le grand public avec *La Jument verte* [1933]. On le prit pour et la confusion fut si forte qu’il s’y trompa lui-même.’ Aymé’s reputation as a short-story writer somehow confirms Jamet’s intuition: ‘Charles Perrault (de l’Académie française) avait aussi une oeuvre “sérieuse” et distinguée; on ne lit que ses *Contes* aujourd’hui. Ou je me trompe fort, ou l’avenir fera de même avec Marcel Aymé.’ (Jamet 1943, 319; quoted in Vandromme 1960, 284-85). Lemaître (1984, 773) rejects the distinction between Aymé’s short stories and longer stories and makes him a ‘fabuliste’ who ‘parcourt [...] tout le champ traditionnel du conte’.

Hewitt (1989, 208) situates Aymé ‘in the context of the culture of Montmartre in the interwar years and immediate post-war period’, as a ‘member of an ill-defined if largely forgotten artistic community’ along with Pierre Mac Orlan, Roland Dorgelès, Céline and painters [...], actors and illustrators. Sartre (1999, 194) notes that ‘C’est à Paris que les écrivains de province, s’ils sont bien nés, se rendent pour faire du régionalisme’.

See also Brenner (1982, 66). Lecherbonnier (1989, 447) classifies Aymé as ‘attentiste’ and makes no mention of his post-war novels, thus validating a clear-cut division between a pre-war novelist and a post-war playwright. Simonin (2000) situates Aymé within the ‘Opposition Nationale’ movement.

regarded as a right-wing writer.<sup>20</sup> In fact, for Michael Kelly (1989, 250) ‘Aymé’s work marks the beginnings of the re-emergence of former collaborators into print and coincides with the first major attenuation of the “E.puration”’. Michel Lécureur defends Aymé by underlining the fact his stance was never anti-Semitic and that his ambiguity may more likely have been imposed upon him as his almost simultaneous ‘blâme’ in 1946 and his nomination for the ‘Légion d’honneur’ in 1949 attest.<sup>21</sup> A number of cinematic adaptations of Aymé’s novels have further contributed to make him a staple of literary history and popular culture alike.<sup>22</sup>

The two fictional works published between 1945 and 1950 constitute the second and third parts of the trilogy on France’s political life started in 1941 with *Travelingue*. *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* appeared in 1946 and *Uranus* in 1948. The anthology *Le Vin de Paris* published in 1947, ‘L’Indifférent’, first published in *La Revue du Monde* in June 1944; ‘Traversée de Paris’, first illustrated by Jean Oberlé and published by Editions Galerie Charpentier in 1946 and ‘Le Faux policier’ in *Pan* in 1947. *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* which was serialised by François Quilici in the Gaullist-led newspaper *La Bataille* from January to June 1946 after having been written in the year 1945 and subsequently republished at Gallimard in 1946 is set in occupied Paris, as are the three selected short-stories. *Uranus*, published in 1948, also belongs to Aymé’s ‘période citadine’ and is set in the imaginary provincial town of Blémont, this time after the

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<sup>20</sup> Lécureur dates it to Aymé’s signature of the ‘Manifeste pour la Défense de l’Occupation et de la Paix en Europe’ in 1935, when he supposedly committed ‘l’irréparable: soutenir une idée de droite alors qu’il était classé à gauche’ in Lécureur (1997, 201-202); see also Aymé’s charge against the ‘épurateurs’ (Aymé 1968; quoted in Lécureur 1985, 79).

<sup>21</sup> See Simonin (2008, 432) on the ‘blâme sans affichage’ (non-public reprimand) to which Aymé was condemned for selling the script for ‘Le Bal des soupirants’ to the German-owned Continental corporation, an accusation against which Lécureur defends Aymé (Siclier 1981; quoted in Lécureur 1997, 248).

<sup>22</sup> The first adaptation of *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* was directed by Michel Boisrond’s 1959 version with Lino Ventura, Bourvil and Alain Delon. *La Traversée de Paris* was directed by Claude Autant-Lara in 1956, with Jean Gabin and Bourvil in the lead roles. Claude Berri’s *Uranus* was released in 1990. On the problems posed by cinematic adaptations of Aymé’s post-war fiction, see Lloyd (1996) and Golsan (1998).

Liberation.<sup>23</sup> *Uranus* is often viewed as evidence of a change of tone in Aymé's writings and parallels have been drawn with his play *La Tête des Autres* in 1952, owing to the fact they both can be seen as satirical of the epoch (Henri 1951, 2).<sup>24</sup> For Louis Aragon, Aymé's technique and primary subject-matter consists of describing characters as 'ceux qui tremblent pour leurs biens, réfugiés derrière leurs persiennes ou leurs tentures de velours' (Aragon; quoted in Lécureur 1985, 12). For Lord (1987, 28-29) Aymé manages to 'tear down facades to get at a scandalous reality'.<sup>25</sup>

Genet, like Aymé, has been accused of terrorising French literature: Jean Albertini (1981, 328-33; quoted in Kelly 1989, 239-251) noted that some successful writers 'ont joué, vis-à-vis de notre pays, le rôle de ces pierres dont les auteurs d'un crime crapuleux alourdissent les poches de leurs victimes pour être sûrs qu'elle ira au fond et ne remontera jamais à la surface'.<sup>26</sup> Genet's marginal position in French literature results from the fact that, by his own confession, 'mes cinq romans, si on peut les appeler ainsi, je les ai écrits en trois ans, presque toujours en prison' (Genet; quoted in Malgorn 1988, 165).<sup>27</sup> His status of 'homme de lettres' as he was described in the appeal for the presidential grace (Dichy 2010, 269-273) marked his increasing respectability (especially between 1945-1952), thanks in large part to the support of

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<sup>23</sup> See Dufresnoy (1982, 5) for a classification of Aymé's provincial and urban fiction.

<sup>24</sup> Aymé (1948, 14) confesses about *Uranus* that 'le fond est très sombre et parfois très pénible'. As a corrective to the darkness of his novel, Aymé offers Watrin to his readers: 'Au moins je leur dédie mon explorateur d'*Uranus*, qui pourrait presque être mon portrait, c'est à dire celui d'un homme facilement heureux et inaltérablement optimiste.' (Aymé; quoted in Lécureur 1985, 130) *Uranus* generated few reactions on the Left, which was interpreted by the Right as proof of their hypocrisy. Pierre Boutang (1952, 310; quoted in Vandromme 1960, 287) writes: 'On s'est tu sur *Uranus*, un des plus grands livres parus depuis la Libération, par crainte de se regarder en ce miroir de l'hypocrisie moderne [...].'

<sup>25</sup> On scandal in Aymé, see Vandromme (1984, 17) and Lord (1987, 30).

<sup>26</sup> Cocteau (1989, 206-207) reflects upon the discovery of Genet's *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* (1943): 'Que faire? [...] Le scandale devait revenir. Le vrai scandale. Il éclate en silence avec ce livre et naturellement chez moi. [...].', and on 22 February: 'Pour moi, c'est le grand événement de l'époque. [...] Il pose mille problèmes. Il arrive sur les pieds légers de scandale, sur ses pieds de velours [...].'

Brooks and Halpern (1979, 1) note that 'for more than thirty years, the name of Jean Genet has been synonymous with scandal.'

<sup>27</sup> In an interview for *Playboy*, Genet (1991, 19) confesses that he discovered the power of writing when he wrote a postcard to a German friend in the United States.

On the genre of Genet's prose texts, Moraly (1988, 64) writes that his 'romans sont à la fois des récits et des textes ne renvoyant à rien d'autre qu'à eux-mêmes.'

Cocteau and Sartre whom Mauriac called Genet's 'étron'. The initial financial and critical support for Genet indelibly marked his critical clout; as Gisèle Child-Bickel (1987, 1) observes, Sartre's *Saint-Genet, Comédien et Martyr* initially envisaged as an introduction to the publication of the first volume of Genet's *Œuvres complètes* 'délimite le champ où se joue tout débat critique postérieur qui prend, à maints égards, la forme d'un dialogue avec Sartre'. Sartre's mediation was then complemented by contributions by Georges Bataille and Jacques Derrida (1974) who have also enduringly marked our present readings of Genet (Bougon 1995b, 1).<sup>28</sup> Dichy (1997, 21-24) identifies three phases and three corresponding tactics in Genet's relation to literature: the first phase from *Le Condamné à mort* to *Journal du voleur* marks what he calls the 'frontal attack or the period of the novels'.<sup>29</sup> The intense period of fictional production between 1942 and 1947 corresponds to what Edmund White called Genet's 'manic-depressive period'.<sup>30</sup> The second phase started in 1948 marks, according to Dichy, a transitional period with *Splendid's*, *Haute Surveillance* and *Les Bonnes* during which Genet had not yet 'systematically exploited the resources of the dramatic technique' (23). The lack of obvious thematic continuity between his fictional works and his theatrical production has contributed to the former being overlooked. Nathalie Fredette

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<sup>28</sup> Stewart and McGregor (1993, 1; 4-6) argue that the 'Sartrean myth of Genet' left us with a 'Leftist reputation' of Genet which does not correspond to his evolution from 'Fascist to Nihilist'.

Ben Jelloun (2010, 164) writes about Genet and Derrida's friendship that it 'témoigne également de ce dépassement de Sartre'. Hélène Cixous (2011, 9) makes the same observation when describing Derrida as the 'lecteur idéal de Genet'.

Jablonka (2004) contends that Genet's phases correspond to radical changes in his social circle, especially in 1943-1948; Jablonka (2005, 189) argues that before 1943, Genet benefited from the 'parrainages de Turlais, poète pénétré de l'esthétique fasciste et des 'rites nocturnes de Nuremberg', Laudénbach, maurrassien convaincu et fondateur après-guerre des Editions de la Table ronde, Maulnier, jeune intellectuel fasciste dans les années 1930, et Sentein, collaborateur des *Cahiers français*, organe de la Révolution nationale, ont fait partie du premier cercle de Genet dans les années 1942-1943. Les deux premiers l'ont présenté à Cocteau; [...] changement de terrain [...] moment où Genet rencontre le succès. [II] expurge ses écrits, préférant au Mal nazi l'apologie du vol et de l'homosexualité.'

<sup>29</sup> This period 'records the (illegal) entrance of the delinquent, the prisoner, the thief onto the stage of literature.' (Dichy, 22), an analysis which resonates with Madeleine Gobeil's view (Genet 1991, 13) and Bougon's formulation that 'un vol se publie, exactement au même titre qu'un livre' (Bougon 1995, 67-81).

<sup>30</sup> White (Daviron 2007, 245-260, (249) speaks of the 'explosion créatrice entre 1944 et 1947' with *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, *Miracle de la Rose*, *Pompes funèbres*, *Querelle* and three long poems and plays (*Haute Surveillance*, *Les Bonnes*) and *Journal du Voleur*. However, White (Genet 1990, 12-13) refuses to accept that Genet has been 'enterré vivant' or 'statufié' by Sartre's monumental study.

(1995, 101) notes that the publication of *L'Ennemi déclaré* in 1991 led critics to focus mainly on his political commitments 'en creusant encore la distance qui semble séparer un premier Genet, poète et romancier, d'un deuxième qui aurait été séduit par l'aventure politique, après l'interruption de son œuvre théâtrale', especially as Genet's production for the theatre has also long been viewed as the more palatable side of his *œuvre*.

Extracts of *Pompes funèbres* were first published in the third issue of the *Temps modernes* in December 1945 before being reprinted anonymously by Paul Morihien in April 1948 in two separate editions and being finally published by Gallimard in 1949.<sup>31</sup> The consensus on *Pompes funèbres* is that it 'fait figure de seul véritable roman' (Malgorn 1988, 40) but also that it is the 'weakest of the four novels' whose 'technique of fragmentation [is] irritating' (Coe 1983, 135).<sup>32</sup> Hamel notes that *Pompes* is a 'texte de deuil', and Dichy (1997, 21) argues that it illustrates war, which 'sans être un motif central, hante son œuvre complète'.

Nimier is the only author in the corpus who started to write after the war. He wrote three quarters of his published work between 1946 and 1950. *L'Etrangère* published posthumously (1968) after being refused by Gallimard (it was dedicated to Jean-Paul Sartre) was written before *Les Epées* in 1947 and *Le Hussard bleu* in 1950. These two novels written before 1950 precede what Crescucci (2011) calls 'la décennie des Hussards', with Antoine Blondin's *Prix des deux Magots*, Jacques Laurent's publication of *Caroline Chérie*, and Michel Déon's *Je ne veux jamais oublier* (Hewitt 2009, 163-172).<sup>33</sup> According to Nimier (2012, 54-56), the subject of *Les Epées* can be summarised by 'je n'ai rien fait de mal', while *Le Hussard bleu* narrativizes a hidden period in the biography of François Sanders, the narrator of *Les Epées*. The almost

<sup>31</sup> For details on the publication of *Pompes funèbres*, see Moraly (206).

<sup>32</sup> Unlike *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* and *Miracle de la Rose* 'the purely emotional revolt of the first two novels is transformed into the vitriolic subversiveness of paradox.' (Coe, 150).

<sup>33</sup> Roger Vailland's *Drôle de Jeu* (1945), *La Loi* (1957), *Le Hussard bleu* (1950), Blondin's *L'Europe buissonnière* (1949), Michel Mohrt's *Mon Royaume pour un cheval* (1949), Jacques Perret's *Bande à part* (1951), Alexandre Vialatte's *Les Fruits du Congo* (1951), Bernard Frank's *Les Rats* (1953) share a chapter and a title 'Romans de l'engagement' in Lecherbonnier (1989, 503-530).

simultaneous abandonment of the form of the novel by all three writers invites an exploration of the generic limits of fiction as the preferred narrative mode of scandal.

As Aymé (1938, 166) notes in his conclusion to *Silhouette du scandale*, the word scandal can easily be misused as ‘c’est le danger des mots qui servent à exprimer plusieurs idées.’ Throughout this thesis, the term scandal will be used analytically, evoking the definitions of pragmatic sociology, namely the sense of a moment of test. The first chapter of the thesis (‘Cultures of scandal’) will investigate what scandal means in 1945-1950 by examining the conditions of reading and writing in the aftermath of the Occupation when scandal enjoyed popular and critical interest as theme, practice and notion. It will then explore how scandal has come to be perceived in the historiographical discourse on the period. The second chapter (‘Scales of scandal’) will identify the mechanism of scandal in fictional narratives by showing that it proceeds from an interlocking of different units of scandal (lexical, episodic and structural). The third chapter (‘Chronotopes of scandal’) will explore the ways in which scandal exploits everyday spaces and how, in turn, it transforms time and space into scandalous narrative elements. The fourth chapter (‘The Scandals of Morality, Authority and Identity’) will explore thematically how scandal tests the stability of moral conventions, disrupts authority at individual and collective levels, and relies upon, or conversely perturbs, identity by consistently alluding to doubles and divisions at individual and collective levels. The conclusion will summarise the findings from the analyses of these fictional narratives and make the case for the critical potential of scandal as a hermeneutic tool in literary studies to better understand how literature negotiates social unrest and individual ‘inquiétudes’ in periods of transition.

# I. Cultures of scandal

The Occupation and the immediate post-war years have come to be associated with scandal through a series of events, images and narratives which have included international searches for war criminals and large-scale trials of high-ranking officials who collaborated with Nazi Germany, media revelations of post-war politicians' involvement with the Vichy regime, products of popular culture and academic monographs which have all contributed to designate and indict individuals and institutions for collaboration or crimes against humanity.<sup>34</sup> Scandal thus became the privileged method of exposition of France's Vichy past. But it is precisely because of the intensity and frequency of scandals throughout the second half of the twentieth century, and more particularly since the early 1970s, that scandal started to be viewed negatively as a symptom of France's inability to confront its past peacefully. The ambivalence of scandals is aptly summarised by Aymé (1938, 168) in these terms:

On dira, par exemple, que le scandale est pareil à l'acier dont on fait le bistouri du chirurgien et le couteau du crime, ou plus gracieusement qu'il est comme l'amour un élément d'équilibre de la jeunesse et un facteur supplémentaire de décadence pour la vieillesse, ou encore, excellente comparaison, que toute médaille a son revers.

Studying scandal poses a key problem which is reminiscent of the distinction between *énoncé* and *énonciation*, scandal as perceived and formulated in 1945-1950, what Sartre calls 'l'esprit objectif de l'époque', and scandal as a staple of the current critical discourse on this period. This is thus a double culture of scandal that this chapter will seek to examine. It is thus a double perspective shows an initial convergence of a popular and intellectual interest for scandal and literature in 1945 and a gradual shift from the mid-1970s onwards towards a negative view of scandal, mainly propagated by

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<sup>34</sup> Steven Ungar (1995, 15) notes that 'it is no coincidence that the debate surrounding Vichy has come to focus increasingly on figures of scandal [...].'

historiographical discourse. What was scandal understood to mean in the aftermath of the Occupation and further, can it be reclaimed as a valid and legitimate critical tool today? Scandal in 1945-1950 consisted in an unprecedented alignment of a popular taste for scandal in fiction through the *Noir* novel and a critical interest for scandal which crystallized around Sade. It is also the place of scandal within the main interpretative framework used to investigate the Occupation that will allow me to situate scandal as an unwanted paradigm in the critical apparatus used on the period, and finally propose its use as an alternative hermeneutic tool in literary studies.

## **1. Reading and writing in 1945-1950**

### **A. The ethics, politics and aesthetics of literature: rebuilding the nation**

In the aftermath of the Occupation, it was, in Pierre Nora's words, 'pour une fois dans le domaine intellectuel que l'après-guerre s'est le plus intensément exprimé' (Nora 1989, 31). Paul Bénichou (2004, 47-48) noted that, at that time, 'la littérature est devenue à sa façon religion et continue de l'être. Mieux, on peut soupçonner que la religion de beaucoup de fidèles, au fond d'eux-mêmes et insensiblement, s'est faite littérature.' Nora's and Bénichou's views underline the primacy of culture and literature as instruments of national regeneration. Arguably, if the economic and physical reconstruction of France was organised by the Marshall Plan, the cultural and symbolic reconstruction was entrusted to and assumed by French intellectuals.

The central role given to culture is partly in keeping with the increasing prestige of writers in France's public life and their representation in the collective imagination since the Dreyfus Affair, an evolution that the collaboration and the subsequent



‘Eputation’ of writers came to give credence to.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, the birth of the intellectual is concomitant with that of modern scandal, and, to this day, the Dreyfus Affair remains the paradigmatic example of scandal.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, Emile Zola’s recruitment to ‘remue[r] la masse’ (Winock 1997, 22), namely formulate the scandal of Captain Dreyfus’ condemnation and seek its graduation to an affair, also points to the proximity between the scenography of major scandals and the dramatic organization of fiction. As Uri Eisenzweig (2013, 60-61) notes: ‘A vrai dire, rien ne fut plus répandu parmi les contemporains de l’Affaire que sa perception sous l’angle de la question du récit, sinon même du roman.’<sup>37</sup> Scandal, fiction, narrative and the person of the writer heroically portrayed in the Republican hagiography under the traits of Zola, contributed to link literature to scandal in an enduring way (Sapiro 2011, 9).

It is in this context of the symbolic prestige of the writer that intellectual collaboration was perceived as treason and that the rehabilitation of the person of the writer and literature more generally was felt to be a post-war priority (Watts 1998, 15-

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<sup>35</sup> Charle (1990) argues that the Dreyfus Affair and the ‘Manifeste des Intellectuels’ of 1898 gave the intellectuals ‘le droit au scandale’, ‘le droit de se liguer pour donner plus de force à [l]a protestation’ and ‘le droit de revendiquer un pouvoir symbolique’.

Genet (1991, 71) notes that, in America, ‘jusqu’à présent, il n’y a eu aucun Clémenceau, aucun Jaurès, ni surtout parmi les intellectuels, aucun Zola pour écrire "J’accuse"’, therefore underlining the original relation between scandals and intellectuals in France. This remark echoes Sartre’s view that French intellectuals cannot be compared with their American and English counterparts ‘qui n’ont pas ces souvenirs glorieux [La Révolution], ne font peur à personne, on les juge tout à fait inoffensifs.’ (Sartre 1999, 191).

<sup>36</sup> Loué (2007, 214; 226) notes that ‘La complexité de l’affaire Dreyfus tient [...] à l’emboîtement des affaires les unes dans les autres et aux rejeux de logiques diverses à l’œuvre antérieurement à l’éclatement de l’affaire et qu’ils contribuent à définir.’ Similarly, Clavier (1994) suggested to use the Dreyfus Affair as a template to understand the development from scandals to affairs, and from affairs to causes. Aymé (1938, 21) describes the complexity of some scandals as ‘[...] scandales gigognes qui ont d’innombrables ramifications’, a description particularly fitting for the Dreyfus Affair.

<sup>37</sup> Bernard Lazare’s description of his first meeting with Zola emphasises the narrative dimension of scandal: ‘[...] il n’avait aucune idée sur l’affaire et je sentais qu’à cette heure elle ne l’intéressait pas; elle ne l’intéressa que quand le mélodrame fut complet et quand il en vit les personnages’, (Zola 1901, 32) A psychological interpretation of Zola’s role is advanced by Winock (1997, 20-21): ‘La prospérité de Zola n’a pas annulé sa marginalité. [...] L’audace dont le grand romancier va faire preuve dans l’affaire Dreyfus s’explique en partie par cette situation double [...]’. For Bourdieu (1972, 170), it is precisely because Zola viewed the literary field as autonomous prior to the Affair that his role was all the more potent: ‘[Il] proclamait très haut l’indépendance et la dignité de l’homme de lettres, affirme, dans son œuvre même, la dignité supérieure de la culture et de la langue littéraires [...] se désignant ainsi comme l’auteur par excellence de l’éducation populaire, toute entière fondée, elle aussi, sur la reconnaissance de cette coupure qui est au fondement du respect de la culture.’

58).<sup>38</sup> The ‘Epuraton’ (from August 1944 to the first amnesty laws of 1951) and the perception that, in Pierre Assouline’s words, ‘la liste du CNE a chassé la liste Otto’ (1985, 106), a phrasing which shows that the Liberators were perceived as reproducing the methods of the collaborators, are of central importance to the reconfiguration of the post-war literary landscape.<sup>39</sup> Much reparation was expected on the part of the writers at the Liberation, the public showing a ‘demande harcelante de grands écrivains’ or ‘voix prophétiques’ that would take the form of ‘a D-day of intellectual restoration’ (Gracq 1950, 16-17).<sup>40</sup> ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un collaborateur?’ (Sartre 2003, 35-48) and ‘Qu’est-ce que la littérature?’ (Sartre 1999, 52-309) established the ethical and aesthetic coordinates of the post-war intellectual landscape by arguably ‘compensating for the regime’s shortcomings in moral integrity [which was] made possible by its organization under the banner of humanism’ (Kelly 1989a).<sup>41</sup> The opposition to Existentialism partly

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<sup>38</sup> Beauvoir (1955, 85-184) adamantly argued that ‘[I]es erreurs défendues par [Thierry] Maulnier sont de nature très concrète: ce sont des fautes politiques qui ont mis en jeu des vies humaines.’ The responsibility of the writer is conveyed in Sartre’s description of the necessity to ‘économiser les mots’, therefore inserting literature into a larger economic system (Sartre 1999, 243). Denis (2000, 30) notes that ‘s’engager, c’est donc donner sa personne ou sa parole en gage, servir de caution [...]. D’emblée apparaît donc l’idée que l’engagement relève d’une manière de contrat entre diverses parties, qu’il s’agit là d’une forme d’échange ou de transaction [...].’

The confirmation of the importance of literature during the Occupation is evident in the attention Bernhard Payr [director of the *Amt Schrifttum*] paid to the image of Germany given in seventy French writers. Loiseaux (1995, 21-23) notes that Payr ‘a cherché la confirmation du déclin français et aussi, le paradoxe n’est qu’apparent, les signes d’un éventuel redressement de la France.’

<sup>39</sup> For a synthesis of the Epuration in the arts, see *Le Nouvel Observateur* (2012) and more generally on the ‘logiques de champ’ informing writers’ commitments, see Sapiro (1999) and Winock (1997, 474-84) for the perception of the Epuration by other writers.

1945-1950 show that a number of indictments of the Epuration, if undoubtedly less influential, preceded Paulhan’s *Lettre aux directeurs de la Résistance* published at Minuit and which famously developed a legalist argument around Article 75 and the legal status of the Vichy regime.

<sup>40</sup> Garaudy (1947, 11) also deemed Sartre ‘un faux prophète’. Sartre’s awareness of being in a historical period is evident in his anticipation of how future critics would analyse ‘comment la littérature de demain fut fécondée par les souffrances de l’Occupation’ and how ‘[d]ans cent ans on pourra décider pour de bon si le surréalisme a fait ou non un retour offensif vers les années 45, si *L’Education européenne* était ou non le livre de la Résistance; dans cent ans on déterminera les courants littéraires de cette après-guerre; dans cent ans on pourra donner une description appropriée de la forme romanesque que nous attendons [...]’. Sartre (2005, 36).

<sup>41</sup> See also Kelly (2004, 127-54). Sartre and Beauvoir emerged as the focal point of the post-war years with the *Temps modernes* whose birth is intertwined with the first days of the Liberation as its first issue in 1 October 1945 attests and which rapidly became the dominant organ of the literary press. Alain Cresciucci (2011, 107) noted Sartre’s opportunism and acute sense of timing: ‘Sartre récupérait le capital symbolique de Gallimard en imposant une nouvelle donne mieux adaptée aux circonstances que la N.R.F.’. See more particularly (2011, 85-112). Suleiman (2006, 30) argues that the ‘monumentalization of his text took place in America where it received a new twist [and] became an incarnation of the

found inspiration in an anti-humanist tradition, but more generally in the apparent affirmation of the primacy of literary values over vitalist values, thus renewing the long-standing debate about the function of literature, which Barthes (1964, 138) summarised as follows: ‘Notre littérature serait-elle donc toujours condamnée à ce va-et-vient épuisant entre le réalisme politique et l’art-pour-l’art, entre une morale de l’engagement et un purisme esthétique, entre la compromission et l’asepsie?’<sup>42</sup>

In 1945, dissent was construed as what Sartre (1948, 140) accurately analysed as the right to ‘provoquer le scandale et pour droit imprescriptible d’échapper à ses conséquences’ (Sartre; quoted in Macé 2005) and took the form of a counter-culture in the sense of an opposition to ‘the political, moral and aesthetic orthodoxy of the day’ and whose originality was to be able ‘to extend itself away from the narrowly parochial extreme Right to a much broader base closer to the centre’ (Hewitt 1996, 44).<sup>43</sup> The Occupation represented the main subject of dispute within the literary field until the end of the 1940s when it gradually shifted to the Cold War; this change in preoccupations

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Resistance’. See also Suleiman (2001, 213-237). On Camus’s comparatively minor role in the intellectual reconstruction, see Winock (1997, 500-512).

<sup>42</sup> Barthes (1964) poses the distinction between the ‘écrivain’ as ‘un homme qui absorbe radicalement le *pourquoi* du monde dans un *comment* écrire’, for whom literature is an end in itself and the ‘écrivain’ who are ‘des hommes “transitifs”’; ils posent une fin (témoigner, expliquer, enseigner) dont la parole n’est qu’un moyen; pour eux, la parole supporte un faire, elle ne le constitue pas.’ See Sapiro (2012, 205-84) for an analysis of the role of scandals and literary trials (Baudelaire and Flaubert) in the evolution of the social function of writers.

Contrary to collaborationist or unapologetic writers such as Rebatet, Céline or Bardèche, Aymé, Genet and Nimier can be viewed in the light of Tony Judt’s remark that ‘[t]he frailty of their position [the opposition to Existentialism], a sense that the membrane separating the authenticity of existentialists from the bad faith of Fascists was far too thin, was part of what drove postwar intellectuals into ever more radical postures, a sort of epistemological overkill.’ Judt (1992, 85). The last sentence of the *Hussard bleu* ‘Tout ce qui est humain m’est étranger’ somehow appears just as that, an ‘epistemological overkill’, a mere provocation to the humanist discourse of the time which Beauvoir (1955, 166) analysed as ‘the solipsistic turn of right-wing literature’.

<sup>43</sup> The alleged risk of the ‘consequences’ of commitment has been questioned by Leiris (1993, 14) ‘Le fait d’écrire peut-il jamais entraîner pour celui qui en fait profession un danger qui, pour n’être pas mortel, soit du moins positif?’ Dissent was tellingly described by Existentialists in political terms accusing their opponents of being Fascists or ‘collabos’. Two examples can demonstrate this compellingly: Triolet’s accusation of Paulhan as ‘le successeur de Drieu la Rochelle’ (Triolet 1952) and Frank’s association of the Hussards to Fascists, (Frank 2012, 112-113).

Hewitt (1996) proposed the notion of ‘counter-culture’ to account for the cross-ideological dissent. If the notion of counter-culture is not common in the history of French thought at least before 1968, it is broadly understood to designate a socio-cultural contestation which implies that Existentialism is viewed as the ‘mainstream culture’.

delimits 1945-1950 as an intellectual battlefield where ideas and representations of the recent past were being formulated.<sup>44</sup>

Prose fiction found itself at the centre of the dispute, with the novel appearing as the *pharmakon*, the prescribed form that is historically aware, morally committed and fervently didactic.<sup>45</sup> The attempt at ordering fiction along the lines of realist fiction precipitated the derogatory rapprochement of Sartre with Paul Bourget by Jacques Laurent in *Paul and Jean-Paul* in 1951 or his satiric portrayal in Boris Vian's *L'Ecume des jours* in 1947.<sup>46</sup> According to Vandromme (1960, 51), 'le seul parti convenable que puisse prendre un écrivain, c'est celui de son œuvre. [...] Il ne l'organise pas comme un meeting. Il ne l'inflige pas à autrui comme un pensum', a view which echoes Gracq's opinion that Existentialist fiction resembles a 'littérature de magisters' in which 'une certaine métaphysique de la chaire dont l'injection à froid dans la littérature me paraît génératrice de précipités indigestes' (Gracq, 74).<sup>47</sup> Opponents of Existentialist ethics and politics also refused the alignment of author and narrator prescribed by Existentialism. It is in this sense that Nimier (2012, 52) sought to defend himself against allegations that he had 'fourvoyé comme lui [Sanders] dans la Milice' and described his novels as recounting that 'Je n'ai rien fait de mal'. (52) Similarly, the homodiegetic narrator of *Pompes funèbres* prompted Leo Bersani (1976, 287) to defend Genet against

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<sup>44</sup> An IFOP poll of August 1948 about the Epuration found that 63% answered that it was 'temps de passer l'éponge', 47% that 'l'épuration n'a pas été assez dure' and that another 47% found that Pétain 'doit rester à l'île d'Yeu' (Simonin 1989, 71).

<sup>45</sup> '[L]'empire des signes, c'est la prose; la poésie est du côté de la peinture, de la sculpture, de la musique.' Sartre (1999, 61). He later opposed prose and poetry on the basis that the poet 'sert le langage' and the 'parleur' 's'en sert'; he is 'en situation dans le langage'. Poetry is considered as a 'langage à l'envers' (Sartre, 67). 'L'écrivain "engagé" sait que la parole est action: il sait que dévoiler c'est changer et qu'on ne peut dévoiler qu'en projetant de changer.' (Sartre, 70). This distinction between prose and poetry in the mid-1940s was to be later replaced by an opposition between a 'langue littéraire et une langue non littéraire' [...] textes "en style" et textes techniques', see Philippe (2009, 463).

<sup>46</sup> The existentialist critic Derecoi at *Moi et le Monde* in 'La Bonne peinture' (Aymé, 2001) derides the existentialist jargon. Derecoi's 'alcalinité-angoisse' prefigures Vian's *La Lettre et le Néon, Etude critique célèbre sur les enseignes lumineuses* (1949). See Girardet (1957) for an analysis of 'la jeune droite et l'école de la frivolité'.

<sup>47</sup> It is worth noting that Sartre denied writing 'romans à thèse': 'Après tout, un roman n'est pas d'abord une application concertée de la technique américaine, ni une illustration des théories de Heidegger, ni un manifeste surréaliste. [...] C'est l'entreprise hasardeuse d'un homme seul.', Sartre (1999, 42; see also 2005, 97).

allegations of sympathies for Nazism. According to Bersani, *Pompes funèbres* ‘is constantly reminding us that identities and convictions cannot be assigned, in fantasy, to particular persons, that the subject responsible for the fantasy cannot be located among the *dramatis personae*.’<sup>48</sup> Nathalie Fredette (1990) coined the phrase ‘fictions biographiques’ to account for these ‘identities and convictions’, the oscillation between ‘je’ and ‘il’, which produce ‘une ventriloquie généralisée qui implique l’impossibilité d’assigner une origine certaine à un tel énoncé’ (Bougon 1996, 68) and greatly complicates the question of commitment.<sup>49</sup> The same can be argued about the difficulty in locating the narrator’s stance – and by extension the author’s – in the case of Aymé who uses fantasy as a narrative technique to evoke the strangeness of the Occupation and remove himself from a position he could be judged for.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the opposition to Existentialism is not synonymous with a withdrawal from all questions pertaining to commitment. In fact, as Dambre showed, Nimier is no stranger to commitment: ‘le roman de Nimier émane d’un contre-engagement, comme celui de Blondin d’un désengagement.’<sup>51</sup> What Dambre’s remark warns against is the minefield of the notion of ‘commitment’, or rather, the triadic distinction between ‘engagement/

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<sup>48</sup> See also Bersani (1995, 113-81), and especially (151-81) about *Pompes funèbres*.

<sup>49</sup> Laroche (2010, 9) also conceives his biographical study as ‘une déconstruction des fictions données par l’écrivain en réponse à ces questions [trinité identité, langue, patrie, amitié et violence, héritage des déshérités].’ For Hubert (1996, 25): ‘La présence de Genet dans le roman si elle semble constituer le garant de l’authenticité, mine pernicieusement la crédibilité de l’univers fantasmatique étant présenté comme plus digne d’intérêt que le réel.’

<sup>50</sup> According to Hewitt (1989, 210) it produces ‘indispensable camouflage for an author approaching a politically dangerous subject matter; [...] it enables Aymé to adopt a vantage point from which historical detail may be portrayed in a broader moral and metaphysical context’.

<sup>51</sup> Dambre (2008, 153-54) sees *Les Epées* ‘sinon comme un pamphlet fictionnel, une fiction pamphlétaire’ in which ‘la désinvolture s’impose comme une posture de combat plutôt qu’elle ne masque l’imposture.’ Indeed, ‘[l]es personnages parlent tous “en direct”, et créent l’illusion d’une implication auctoriale, si bien que ces romans semblent l’œuvre d’un auteur qui n’a pas abandonné l’espoir d’infléchir l’avenir; et c’est en ce sens qu’on parlera de contre-engagement.’

Their reaction is also to be situated within the gradual disappearance of ‘écoles littéraires’ and the absence of an explicit literary programme, in the context of the growing individualism of the 1970s, see Kylousèk (2001).

dégagement/ contre-engagement' somehow all pointing to a form of commitment.<sup>52</sup>

This dialectic which structured numerous disputes within the literary field in the immediate post-war period can also be seen to be at work in Sartre's attempts at neutralising scandal and assimilating dissenting expressions, through essays on famously 'dégagé' poets and writers such as Mallarmé (Sartre 1986) or Genet in the sense he represents an expression of dissent that is difficult to assimilate, an example of disintegration (Genet 1952, 42) that he wishes to comprehend and ultimately assimilate.

It is in the light of these new ethical and aesthetic norms (humanism, commitment, social function of prose) that scandalous fiction needs to be understood. The necessity to adapt fiction to the realities of the post-war is not solely expressed by Existentialists, as Aymé's following observation attests, thus signalling a more general preoccupation among post-war writers to write for their epoch:

Autrefois, hier, l'art du romancier consistait à regarder l'humanité par le trou de la serrure [...] L'année dernière, le trou de la serrure a sauté et, du même coup, la porte et la muraille derrière lesquelles s'abritait une vieille humanité clandestine. Le monde, étonné ou feignant de l'être, a découvert les camps d'extermination et de torture: Auschwitz, Dachau, Buchenwald et autres. Aujourd'hui, et c'est dans l'ordre, on se hâte de relever le mur écroulé [...]. Les romanciers vont-ils poursuivre le petit jeu qui consiste à regarder par le trou de la serrure et le pourront-ils sans être un peu ridicules? (Aymé 1946, 8)

The novelists' 'petit jeu' inherited from Balzac is admittedly no longer possible after the trauma of the war and the exploration of new novelistic forms such as science fiction and the *Noir* novel attest to the changing priorities, tastes and references of both novelists, critics and readers in the immediate post-war period.

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<sup>52</sup> The strategic uses of 'littérature dégagée' can be found in Paulhan's defence (1947) which, in fact, permitted the return of Jouhandeau onto the literary scene. On the role of the *Cahiers de la Table Ronde* and the *Cahiers de la Pléiade* between 1946 and 1952, see Martel (2012).

## **B. The Sadian intertext: corpus, tradition and instruments**

‘Il n’y a rien d’étonnant à ce qu’un pays reprenne ainsi périodiquement les objets de son passé et les décrive de nouveau pour savoir ce qu’il peut en faire: ce sont là, ce devraient être des procédures régulières d’évaluation’ Barthes (1966, 9) writes. Sade served as a screen and a template to post-war writers and made it possible for them to question their recent experience of historical violence and individual solitude which, in the process, contributed to reinforce the importance of literature as a mode of practical knowledge. As Jean-Louis Curtis (1973, 130) acutely perceives

il arrive que les écrivains et les poètes aient des intuitions que personne n’avait eues avant eux, et qu’ils découvrent, un peu avant les savants, telles ou telles lois que les savants plus tard mettront en formules et d’où ils tireront des systèmes (ainsi Sade et Lautréamont ont-ils précédé la psychanalyse).

This underlines the necessity for literature’s intuitions and formulations to be taken into account as primary modes of understanding.

1947 ushered in a new era with the concomitant publication of three essays: Klossovski’s *Sade mon prochain*, Bataille’s *Sade* republished in *La littérature et le mal* and Blanchot’s *A la rencontre de Sade*. Sade found himself at the crossroads of a debate on humanism in the twentieth century, as the intellectual opportunity to bring together Sade’s fragments and incomplete manuscripts into a text and interrogate – through various practices of reading and interpretation – the author who became ‘l’emblème stéréotypé qui sert à figurer l’horreur nazie, alors saisie et comme capturée dans l’image sadique’ (Marty 2011, 74). It is Sade as the superlative form of scandal, the absolute evil he represents, the ‘livre presque impossible’ (Blanchot 1963, 18), and ultimately the intolerable contract that literature seeks to make with society that post-war critics sought

to tackle.<sup>53</sup> It is also literature exploring its very conditions of possibility through its own history that the post-war Sadian turn represents. Beauvoir (1972, 45) underlines that ‘[c]e n’est pas par le meurtre que s’accomplit l’érotisme de Sade: c’est par la littérature’, thus emphasising the key role of literature and the text in particular in the understanding of the outside world. This detour through the medium of the text is more generally characteristic of the post-war development of the ‘sciences de l’homme’, of which structuralism became the archetype. Admittedly, the analyses of Sade’s text in the immediate post-war period framed or at least informed all questions pertaining to disruptions to order (social, civic, political, moral, symbolic, linguistic) posed at and by the Liberation. In this sense, it can be argued after Simonin (2008, 588) that Sade’s ‘réhabilitation est le prétexte d’une plus vaste entreprise qui a pour but indicible la restauration du champ littéraire’.

The appeal exercised by Sade on writers from the extreme-right to the left allowed them to obliquely discuss an epoch through new readings of literary tropes, themes and motifs found in the Sadian text and which served as a matrix for the examination of later texts.<sup>54</sup> It is in this sense that Paulhan’s following comment can be understood:

il est d’usage, depuis cent cinquante ans, de fréquenter Sade par auteurs interposés. Nous ne lisons pas *Les Crimes de l’amour*, mais par exemple *L’Auberge de l’Ange Gardien*, ni *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, mais *Au-delà du Bien et du Mal*, ni *Les Infortunes de la Vertu*, mais *Le Château ou Le Procès*, ni *Juliette*, mais *Les Diaboliques*, ni *La Nouvelle Justine*, mais *Le Jardin des Supplices*, ni *Le Portefeuille d’un Homme de lettres* (qui est d’ailleurs perdu) mais *Les Mémoires d’outre-tombe*. (1951, 18-19)

This indirect reading of Sade through ‘auteurs interposés’ points to a ‘parcours’ of

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<sup>53</sup> Bataille (17) argued that ‘Nous tenons là l’œuvre la plus scandaleuse qui fût jamais écrite [...]. Nous avons en quelque sorte sous la main, dans le monde si relatif de la littérature, un véritable absolu.’ For Foucault (1999, 69), ‘le monstre moral éclate, dans la littérature [...] avec Sade’.

Sade’s imprisonment for a third of his life attests to the unacceptable contract attempted between literature and society. Similarly, considering that Genet was pardoned on the grounds he is an ‘homme de lettres’ (Dichy 2010) reflects back on Sade and clarifies how literary scandal questions the relations between society and literature.

<sup>54</sup> For a sociology of Sade’s readers, see Roussin (2006). For a discussion of the dialogue on transgression permitted by Sade (Gallop 1981).



radical writing through literary history by which Sade became known to us through ‘d’autres livres que d’autres morts ont écrit sur eux’ (Sartre 1948, 75). Other texts came to be added to this corpus of a transgressive literature in the making. Jablonka (2007, 184) underlines that Genet’s integration to

une filiation [qui] s’ébauche de Villon, Verlaine, Lautréamont, Rimbaud [...] loin d’être une donnée intrinsèque, acquise de tout temps, cet apparemment est le fruit d’un long effort opéré par Genet lui-même avec le concours de Cocteau, Sartre et de nombreux autres. Leur apprêt a fonctionné non seulement comme un instrument de reconnaissance, mais comme le creuset des écrits futurs.

This shows that post-war writers not only worked at constituting the corpus of a literature of transgression starting with Sade, but sought to find contemporary expressions. Sade served as a precedent, a ‘creuset’ and inaugurated a tradition, an intuition shared by Foucault (1994, 320) who sees Sartre’s ‘pavé’, as indirectly bearing Sade’s imprint:

à défaut de Sade, Sartre aura au moins l’un de ses doublons, Jean Genet, à propos duquel avec *Saint-Genet* (1952), il va tenter d’affronter des questions identiques en s’employant à comprendre le sujet pervers, à l’assimiler, à le défendre, à le détruire peut-être aussi, et, en tout cas, à penser sa relation à la société, pour finalement retrouver en hégélien résigné, l’issue dialectique qui, pour Genet, est le salut par l’écriture, par l’œuvre [...].<sup>55</sup>

Genet is presented as a ‘doublon’ of Sade and Sartre’s existential psychoanalysis of Genet, as an ersatz for the real thing that would be Sade, an intuition indirectly confirmed by Sartre’s refusal to recognize Sade’s scandal (1999, 76-77): ‘Sade s’évertue à nous gagner et c’est tout juste s’il scandalise: ce n’est plus qu’une âme rongée par un beau mal, une huître perlière’. This however does not invalidate the notion that a tradition of scandalous writing began with Sade. As Marty (2011, 13) argues, Sade was made ‘une victime noire qui servira de modèle plus ou moins

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<sup>55</sup> See Jablonka (2005, 56-59). Hughes (2001, 2) similarly argues that ‘*Saint-Genet* thus marks a potentially opportunistic espousal of *causes célèbres*, a scouring of shadowy fringes designed to secure for Sartre a vicarious *succès de scandale*.’

conscient pour des écrivains comme Céline ou plus tard Genet'. The post-war interest for (graphic) violence and pornography, as a theme and a genre (Herzog 2005), not only reactivates an interest for the Sadian text but constructs a mythical, sadistic (Von Krafft-Ebing 1928) repertoire of tropes and images of direct relevance for the period of transition:

Dans la France de la Libération, la littérature érotique est la forme historique la plus achevée de la littérature, celle qui, selon Witold Gombrowicz [1962], correspond le mieux 'à notre sort et à notre histoire récente – faite de viols, d'esclavage, de luttes de chiens, une descente vers les obscurs confins de la conscience et du corps. (Simonin 2008, 635)

Gombrowicz's analysis of the taste for erotic and pornographic literature in the immediate post-war period interestingly evokes the 'obscurs confins de la conscience', an expression which resonates with Romain Gary's view that 'la vraie pornographie est habillée' (2008). The notion that real pornography would not only concern nudity and sexual acts (the 'confins du corps') but 'conscience' invites an altogether more serious observation that pornography is experienced as an expression of the obscenity of violence ('viols') in the literature of the post-war period.

It is therefore through the readings of Klossowski, Blanchot and others that scandal has come to shape our current perceptions of scandal and explain in large part the prominence of the notion of transgression as a critical instrument in literary studies; but the notion of transgression closely associated with Bataille as it is makes it difficult to consider for the study of Genet because Bataille himself rejected any possibility for Genet to achieve transgression understood as the organized contravention of order. According to Eribon (2001, 55) Genet acted as a revealer of Bataille's limitations: 'Bataille se situe dans l'espace social, culturel et sexuel de la normalité dont il peut décider, à sa guise, de transgresser, quand bon lui semble, les interdits'. The freedom to transgress experienced by Bataille can be seen as contrasting with the austerity of Genet's discipline which Sartre (Genet 1952, 64) calls 'éthique noire'. Transgression

would also fail to account for Nimier's novels as scandal is essentially conceived as a search for order. The concept of evil is also heavily marked by Bataille's analyses; literature itself is viewed as the expression of evil: 'Le Mal – une forme aiguë du Mal – dont elle [la littérature] est l'expression, a pour nous, je le crois, la valeur souveraine' (Bataille 1957, 9).<sup>56</sup> It is now clear that the literary and philosophical examination of the notions of scandal, transgression and evil in the immediate post-war period is indicative of the relevance of tropes and patterns encountered in minor literary genres, such as erotic and pornographic literature and to some extent, crime fiction.

### **C. *Noir* as cultural practice**

The relation between the literary work and its readers deeply changed to the point where 'le public français se conçoit plutôt à la manière d'un corps électoral où le vote est obligatoire, et où chaque écrivain, chaque livre un peu voyant, par sa seule apparition remet en route un perpétuel référendum' (Gracq, 30-31). It is therefore in political terms that Gracq takes stock and criticises the relation between the writer, the novel and its readers. The referendum in which readers reportedly take part is all the more important as they have become acutely aware of the void left by parliamentary politics in the first few years after the Liberation.

Popular tastes among the reading public confirmed the trend and fashion of American *Noir* novels started in the early 1930s with the 'Chefs-d'œuvre du Roman d'Aventures' Collection at Gallimard and 'Le Masque' Collection which paved the way for the creation of the 'Série Noire' at Gallimard in 1945 and the 'faux Américains' at Minuit. The 'faux Américains' (Léo Malet as Frank Harding and Leo Latimer, Louis Chavance as Irving Ford and Jack River or Boris Vian as Vernon Sullivan) created a new genre which came to be called 'le roman américain à la française'. Vian's pseudo

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<sup>56</sup> Malaparte's publication of *Kaputt* (1946) and the release of Clair's *La Beauté du diable* in 1950 attest to a post-war keen interest for evil.

translations are emblematic of the attraction that America had exerted in France since the 1930s and the post-war booming success of the genre can be partly explained by the fact that the Occupation was also experienced as a privation from American products.<sup>57</sup> The translations and pseudo-translations of American *Noir* novels are inseparable from the scandal American literary imports provoked in France: Vian/ Sullivan's overtly pornographic novels are a feature of a literary landscape in which the reference to America (although sometimes parodic) was synonymous with scandal. America thus bequeathed narrative patterns, themes and a tone to French writers and garish book covers, playful titles, pornographic or violent contents to French readers. France's interest for America and American literature reached a pinnacle in 1945-1950. Magny's publication of *L'Âge d'or du roman américain* in 1948, prepared by the eighth issue of the *Temps Modernes* in May 1946 which hailed the translation of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* as a 'révolution sexuelle en littérature' was quickly followed by the special issue 'Etats-Unis' in August of the same year and the publication of 'L'Homme américain' in November in *L'Esprit*.<sup>58</sup>

From a narrative point of view, the debauchery, the racial and misogynistic violence can be viewed as a case of geographical displacement which has the same function as transpositions to other historical periods.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the displacement from a French social and political context to an American setting, with the replacement of ideological debates with racial ones, institutionally-organized violence in Europe with casual, criminal acts in America, may have permitted the anger and frustration

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<sup>57</sup> Schweighaeuser (1984, 15) notes that America functioned as a 'catalyseur à la fois au niveau des écrivains et au niveau des lecteurs.'

<sup>58</sup> The novel was published at Denoël and *Tropic of Capricorn* quickly followed in August at Editions du Chêne. The blurb for the first edition of the American translation of *Le Hussard bleu*, *The Blue Hussar* translated by Julian Messner (1953) reads 'The great new French War novel comparable to *The Naked and the Dead*'.

<sup>59</sup> The seamless adaptation of a foreign genre and its conquest of French markets can be envisaged from the point of view of the theory of polysystems. Developed by Even-Zohar of the Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics at Tel Aviv University 'in response to problems concerning translation, polysystem theory is grounded in Russian formalism. It is concerned less with investigating what constitutes literature than with how and why certain kinds of literary work come into or go out of favour.' ('Polysystem theory'; see also Toury (1995)).

contained in France's social body to be discharged. This is Hamilton's interpretation of the passage from the whodunnit to the '*Noir*':

Known as the roman noir, the new genre reflected the anxiety and disillusionment of the period; its sombre tones and bleak depictions of a seething urban underworld and a corrupt, amoral society replaced the stratified, quaint country settings and genteel ambience of the classic whodunnit. (2000, 228-229)

Sartre (1999, 239) subtly analysed the attraction for American fiction as follows:

Quant aux Américains ce n'est pas par leur cruauté ou leur pessimisme qu'ils nous ont touchés: nous avons reconnu en eux des hommes débordés, perdus dans un continent trop grand comme nous l'étions dans l'Histoire et qui tentaient, sans traditions, avec les moyens du bord, de rendre compte de leur stupeur et de leur délaissement au milieu d'événements incompréhensibles.

In the same vein, Genet (1991, 21) furnishes a compelling explanation as to why American narrative patterns have become attractive to French writers by arguing that: 'Les écrivains européens, comme les écrivains américains, plus ou moins clairement, choisissent un mode d'expression qui correspond à une demande. L'Europe demande une apparence de culture, l'Amérique se veut rudesse et instinct.'<sup>60</sup> According to Gorrara (2012, 30-31), the seduction of the 'template of *noir*' can be explained by the fact 'crime fiction approaches the past in the mode of investigation' (Gorrara, 2). It would however be naive to account for the success of American crime fiction in France by arguing that *Noir* novels are more authentic or 'instinctive' than seemingly more culturally refined expressions French writers and readers would be more accustomed to. In fact, what the American *Noir* novel provides is a blueprint, a narrative form allowing post-war writers to express their intuitions on the epoch they live in. In this regard, Aymé's following meditation on the 'roman qu'il y aurait à écrire' demonstrates that the

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<sup>60</sup> On the mythology of the American writer as manual labourer, see an example in Sartre (1999, 147).

peculiar circumstances of the Occupation would necessitate an adaptation of the American *Noir* template to be relevant:

le roman d'un brave homme gagnant soucieusement le pain de ses enfants chéris; mobilisé, les hasards d'une affection l'amènèrent à tuer, à torturer et à dépenser avec allégresse une partie de ses inépuisables réserves de cruauté et de sadisme; rendu à la vie normale, il retrouve sa petite famille avec des larmes de joie et se remet courageusement au travail. (1946, 131)

Contrary to Sartre's view that the success of Faulkner and Dos Passos in France is symptomatic of 'le réflexe de défense d'une littérature qui, se sentant menacée par ses techniques et ses mythes n'allaient pas faire face à la situation historique, se greffa des méthodes étrangères pour pouvoir remplir sa fonction dans des conjonctures nouvelles' (Sartre 1999, 239), Aymé's fantasized French post-war novel would immerse in the domestic sphere rather than borrow – or worse – have foreign elements grafted on to it. The idea that American literature is to some extent overrated in France became a topos of the critical discourse on literature in the immediate post-war period. Indeed Nimier (1990, 35) similarly contended that American fiction played a cathartic role and, in the process, came to replace scandalous French fiction:

On n'avait plus le droit de lire Céline, mais il y avait Miller. On accusait Proust de futilité: il restait Faulkner. On n'aimait plus Montherlant – et on se pâmait sur la moindre ligne d'Hemingway. Je ne veux pas dire que nos cousins d'Amérique nous copiaient, mais seulement que nous possédions déjà leurs techniques, leurs goûts depuis longtemps; il n'y avait pas rupture d'un pays à l'autre, ce n'étaient pas deux civilisations si différentes. [...] On avait cru que l'Atlantique existait. Il n'y en avait plus depuis trente ans.

If right-wing writers were more reserved or even outrightly critical about American literature, Nimier makes it clear that scandalous American literature (Miller, Faulkner and Hemingway) has been used to compensate for the loss ('on n'avait plus le droit') of scandalous French writers – who symmetrically appear in the quotation as their French

counterparts (Céline, Proust, Montherlant).<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, the cultural substitution can also be observed diachronically, within French literature, with Aymé (1949, 29) for example expressing his surprise that *Les Fleurs du Mal* should have become ‘la bible nationale’, at least until the ban was lifted in 1949. Characteristically, the influence of those Céline ironically calls the ‘génies américains’ is altogether negative and threatens to transform the French language into a ‘français de traduction’ which is in contradiction with his literary project.<sup>62</sup> In a letter to Albert Paraz, Céline indeed complains that:

Peu à peu tu vois on enterrera le français – on le remplacera par le faux français – du décalqué des ‘génies américains’ – (‘anatomiques’) bien entendu. Ça agace les Winkler et Cie – le français vivant! Ils aiment mieux le Berlitz! Ils s’y retrouvent! J’excepte Nimier qui écrit lui en français direct vivant – pas en français de traductions, aplati, mort. (Céline 1951; quoted in Vandromme 1984, 140-141)

Both Nimier and Céline are concerned by what they perceive as a rejection of original French voices in post-war literature. The porosity of genres, the contamination of the novel by the ‘polar’ sheds light on the investigative dimension of the novel and on the writer-narrator as the primary investigator of crimes. In his preface to Simenon’s *Le Chien jaune* Marcel Aymé reflects on the likeness between *commissaire* Maigret and the novelist in general:

Maigret possède justement cette forme de sensibilité, doublée d’une sorte de plasticité, qui lui permet de sentir les êtres, d’entrer dans la peau d’un personnage et de vivre un peu la vie du suspect, fût-ce fugitivement, le temps d’apercevoir une vérité que les plus savantes déductions n’auraient su tirer de son humble retraite. Ainsi, durant ces longs silences dans lesquels se plonge le commissaire en tirant sur sa pipe, n’est-ce pas de méditation qu’il s’agit mais d’un jeu très subtil qui s’apparente à l’art du romancier et celui du romancier. (Aymé 1936; quoted in Lécureur 1997, 249)

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<sup>61</sup> Curtis (1985, 50) speaks of Montherlant’s ‘écrasement posthume’ caused by his articles during the Occupation, which he calls a ‘petite tâche de sang intellectuelle’ Curtis (1973, 113).

This is along these lines that Robert Kanters’s praise of Vernon Sullivan’s *J’irai cracher sur vos tombes* can be read: ‘Miller dépassé’ (Kanters 1946).

<sup>62</sup> See (Godard 1985).

What appears clearly at this stage is the prominence given to literature in the aftermath of the Occupation to secure the reconstruction and the recommendation of new norms concerning the relations between literature and society. The critical and popular thirst for scandal in the years 1945-1950 can therefore justify my ambition to make scandal a key concept for the analysis of the period. I will now seek to demonstrate how scandal has become an unformulated paradigm in the study of the Occupation and the post-war period.

## **2. Mapping out an historiographical obsession**

### **A. Of paradigms and metaphors: a discussion of Henry Rousso's *Vichy Syndrome***

In order to understand how scandal has been formulated and developed throughout the second half of the twentieth century, it is essential to go back to Rousso's 'Vichy syndrome'. A good starting-point is to outline the place of scandal in the dominant critical paradigm used to study the Occupation in history, cultural and literary studies after Rousso. The notion of scandal can be tracked down in Rousso's analysis of France's 'obsession' with the Occupation, an idea which has become something of a truism in academic studies and among the general public alike and shows no sign of abating.

Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, first published in 1987 in France, and in English with a preface by Stanley Hoffman in 1991, received wide critical acclaim in France and abroad. This can be explained by its innovative endeavour. The 'deuil inachevé' or 'unfinished mourning' (1944-1955), the longer phase of 'refoulement' (1955-1971), the 'miroir brisé', the shorter phase of the 'retour du refoulé' (1971-1974) and the 'obsession' phase itself from 1974 onwards, continue to provide signposts for post-war French history. This slicing-up of history into five phases has been particularly



influential in literary and film studies where the question of representation and memory is central. In the field of the then relatively new history of representations in France, Rousso's book provided a new angle into the history of Vichy by accounting for France's collective memory of Vichy, whose anatomy revealed what he famously termed 'a French obsession'. The memory of Vichy is tellingly deemed 'un cadavre encore chaud' (Rousso 1990, 9). This observation is in line with the task contemporary historians had been giving themselves, namely that of being pathologists and psychoanalysts at the same time.<sup>63</sup> Ever since the early 1970s and Paxton's seminal study on Vichy, to which Rousso is self-confessedly greatly indebted, the overhaul of Vichy by French and foreign historians has taken several directions.<sup>64</sup> Rousso's 'Vichy Syndrome', initially conceived as a contribution to history of representations and national identity, what the *Institut d'Histoire temps présent* (IHTP) refers to as a 'histoire de la mémoire collective et des usages publics du passé' has been influential beyond the narrow frame of the field to admittedly become one of the seminal historiographical essays on the period.

Undoubtedly, the convenient periodizations and practical interpretative grid of the post-war years that Rousso introduced can account for the enduring critical clout of his book. According to Ungar, the production of new periodizations is directly a function of a decisive frame-break in Goffman's sense: 'the collapse of the myth has recast the Occupation as a more complex and unstable phenomenon. A first change involved how the period was to be broken down into phases and moments' (Ungar, 20; Goffman, 1974). The scale of the trauma of the experience of the Occupation informs the revised

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<sup>63</sup> Golsan (2000, 1) refers to it as 'the Body in the Basement'.

<sup>64</sup> Paxton's study is credited with paving the way for a systematic overhaul of the French experience of the war, the Occupation and the Vichy regime and to have put an end to Aron's *Histoire de Vichy* which defended the 'théorie du glaive et du bouclier', even though Jäckel's 1968 study had already argued that France had volunteered to collaborate with Nazi Germany. Sternhell (2012, 59) notes that Paxton's study broke away and discredited both André Siegfried and the rue Saint-Guillaume more generally as they were then adamant that the Révolution nationale could not be Fascist. See also Fishman 2004, 22-47; 63-71.

timeframe suggested by Rousso, which seeks to account for it by apprehending it in terms of collective memory. The acknowledgement of the complexity of the memory of Vichy is reflected in the use of longer durations and a psychoanalytic diagnostic. Rousso's coherent framework supported by his conceptual clarity and assured, elegant turns of phrase have worked towards making his 'syndrome' a canonical text in post-war studies.

Among these five phases, I will now more particularly direct my attention to the first one before showing the limits of the concept of 'obsession' to account for the representation of Vichy in the aftermath of the war. At this stage, it is primarily the metaphorical dimension of Rousso's paradigm, namely his use of medical analogies to describe the pathological aspect of France's 'obsession' with Vichy that is worth examining. Demonstrating the limits of the metaphorical validity of the expression 'unfinished mourning' is key to suggesting an alternative analytical framework and periodization to the study of the immediate post-war literary production.

Some of Rousso's metaphors are indisputably efficient as Ricœur (2000, 582) noted:

Le choix du thème une fois assumé [l'histoire de la mémoire], la justification de l'emploi de la 'métaphore' psychanalytique de la névrose et de l'obsession trouve sa fécondité heuristique dans son efficacité herméneutique. Cette efficacité se démontre principalement au niveau de la 'mise en ordre historique' des symptômes afférant aux syndromes.<sup>65</sup>

The 'hermeneutical efficacy' of Rousso's metaphorical system is however not unproblematic as a psychoanalytic reading of 'unfinished mourning' makes apparent. Ricœur (2000, 582) underlines that the '[p]hase de deuil entre 1944 et 1955, au sens de l'affliction plutôt que du travail proprement dit de deuil, qui précisément ne se fait pas'.

I would like to argue in this part that a Freudian reading of the expression 'unfinished

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<sup>65</sup> See also Ricœur 2000, 109. In *La métaphore vive* (1997) he argues that meaning is created by the power of metaphoricity and that metaphors have genuine cognitive import in their own right and are untranslatable without remainder into literal language.

mourning' exposes inconsistencies in the seductive coherence of Rousso's framework.<sup>66</sup> Rather than mourning, I would like to suggest that melancholy corresponds to the uncertainty typically brought about by periods of instability and would better describe the immediate post-war period, at least in the literary field. This is what I would like to show through a discussion of the concepts of mourning and melancholia. I will borrow some of Hewitt's findings and remarks made in the context of a discussion about 'malaise' in the inter-war years in France. Hewitt points to Sigmund Freud's distinction between a 'normal attitude' of mourning and the pathological state of melancholy in 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1957, 258): 'Melancholia contains something more than normal mourning. In melancholia the relation to the object is no simple one; it is complicated by the conflict due to ambivalence.'<sup>67</sup> While 'mourning' refers to the loss of a 'loved object' (through death or infidelity) which triggers the detachment of all libido, 'melancholy' is – in Hewitt's words – 'an unhealthy state in which the emotional attachment to the loved object becomes part of the personality of the subject and is, indeed, turned against it' (1988, 31). Freud further notes that the 'struggles due to ambivalence remain withdrawn from consciousness, until the outcome characteristic of melancholia has set in' (Freud 1957, 257). With melancholy, the 'break from the past is less clean [...] he does not know what he has lost in him'. Freud underlines the uncertainty of the outcome of melancholia: 'It is possible for the process in the Ucs. to come to an end, either after the fury has spent itself, or after the object has been abandoned as valueless.'<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Rousso noted the unpredictability of the outcome

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<sup>66</sup> In the 'Avant-propos' to the second edition, Rousso (1990, 23) reflects on the criticism levelled at his use of Freudian concepts conceding he made such use 'sur le mode de la métaphore', thereby acknowledging the pitfalls of metaphorical borrowing.

<sup>67</sup> Freud defines ambivalence as the 'countless separate struggles carried over the object'. It is in other words the love/hate feelings for a loved object. Ambivalence can be either 'constitutive' in the sense that it is 'an element of every love-relation formed by this particular ego or else it proceeds from those experiences that involved the threat of losing the object.' Freud (258) summarised the three features of melancholy as 'loss of the object, ambivalence and regression of the libido into the ego'.

<sup>68</sup> Rousso (1990, 9) says as much in his depiction of the 'neurosis' of Vichy's persistence 'son devenir, après 1944 et jusqu'à une date qu'il est aujourd'hui encore impossible de déterminer'.

of France's obsession with its Vichy past. The undecidability of the outcome, the role of the unconscious, the mechanism of the libido, which in the context of the memory of Vichy is to be found in the struggles to collectively liberate oneself, all point to the memory of Vichy as a case of melancholy rather than mourning. It could also be noted that the adjective 'unfinished' points to melancholy, the non-resolution of the loss of an object rather than to a process of mourning. Moreover, it could be argued that, unlike with the First-World War, the French experience of the Second World War was mainly a civilian experience. As a consequence, the very idea of mourning only bears limited relevance to the French experience of the war, which is confirmed by the focus of the majority of the novels of the corpus. Melancholy can also more accurately reflect the intellectual state of a nation which ended the war 'half-victor, half-vanquished' (Nora 1989, 27-31).

Tellingly, the general sentiment of melancholy can be detected among post-war writers. Commenting on Nimier's literary prowess, Mauriac (quoted in Van Cauwelaert 2012, 88) notes his 'badinages de jeune ours irrité; un jeune ours un peu hagard et qui saigne, mais dont on ne voit pas où est la blessure qui le rend soudain si furieux'. The impossibility to locate and account for Nimier's anger (a violent discharge of libido in Freudian terms) points to a typical case of melancholy, a view generalised by Frank (2012, 113) to the whole Hussard movement: 'Sous des apparences frivoles, les hussards cachent une âme d'écorché.' Similarly, Orsenna (1990, 203) notes 'la permanence du fragile, qui est là, même le jour de la victoire', whilst Hamel (2006, 388) notes more generally the 'humanisme blessé et refoulé' in anti-Resistance novels, whilst Cixous (2011, 25) draws attention to the fact that 'on entre en littérature par lésion' and 'de page en livre, on fai[t] parler la plaie', an observation that can be extended to other post-war writers. This metaphorical network which puts blood, wounds and lesions at

its core, signals a return of ‘tristesse’ as a mode of being in the aftermath of the First World War.

It seems clear that looking at the ten-year period after the end of the war in Rousso’s prism of ‘mourning’ rather than ‘melancholy’ risks overlooking this parallel (continuity or repetition) with the aftermath of World War I and the intellectual representation of a cyclical movement of ‘avant-guerre, guerre, après-guerre’ which it inherited. Melancholia as explored through literary and critical works in France and Germany in the inter-war years provided a vocabulary, themes and tropes – an intellectual tradition – from which writers could draw in 1945 (Hewitt 1988, 9). It is only with the ‘melancholic intertext’ of the inter-war years that the ‘souffrance de l’après-guerre’ identified in the Hussard ‘tone’ can be properly explained. Despite its initial attraction then, the concept of ‘mourning’ applied to literature and culture deprives the scholar of the intellectual formulation and artistic expressions of melancholy during the inter-war years.

Another problematic aspect of Rousso’s metaphor of ‘mourning’ is that it misreads or does not adequately account for the ambivalence of transitional periods which Frank calls ‘périodes truquées’ and Gracq (1950, 17) perceives as ‘époque[s] [pas] comme les autres’. Writing in 1912, Georg Simmel (1995, 137; quoted in Lemieux 2007, 109) analysed transitional periods as ambivalent in the sense they are different in nature from the conflicts that led to them: ‘La fin d’un conflit est toujours une démarche très particulière qui ne procède pas directement du conflit lui-même’. It was also Valéry’s intuition in his ‘Deuxième Lettre’ of *La Crise de l’Esprit* when he notes that ‘le commencement et la mise en train de la paix’ is more complicated than war itself (Valéry 1967, 22).<sup>69</sup> The ‘hermeneutic efficacy’ of Rousso’s expression of

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<sup>69</sup> ‘Je vous disais, l’autre jour, que la paix est cette guerre qui admet des actes d’amour et de création dans son processus: elle est donc chose plus complexe et plus obscure que la guerre proprement dite, comme la vie est plus obscure et plus profonde que la mort. Mais le commencement et la mise en train de la paix

‘unfinished mourning’ to describe the first ten years after the war is therefore far from being unproblematic. I have suggested that his framework, inspired by Freudian psychoanalysis, can be challenged with the very instrument it employs. As we have seen, melancholia can more adequately than mourning describe the state of literature and culture in the aftermath of the Liberation. But where does scandal fit in this respect? Scandal needs to be tracked down within the central concept of ‘obsession’ which underpins the so-called ‘syndrome’.

In Rousso’s system, scandal is conceived as a symptom of the ‘syndrome’, the privileged expression of the ‘obsession’ with Vichy. In this section, I will show how scandal has shifted from being a mere mode of denunciation of the abjection of Vichy to being abjection itself. According to Rousso (1990, 9):

L’obsession culmine dans l’opinion sous la forme d’une dénonciation inlassable et réitérée de la génération de la guerre’ [à travers des] ‘scandales incessants, injures, anathèmes et procès en diffamation, affaires pouvant prendre une dimension nationale comme le procès de Klaus Barbie ou l’arrestation de Paul Touvier, champ culturel envahi par les images d’un passé troublant et fascinant, comme la mode dite ‘rétro’.<sup>70</sup>

The wholesome initial inquisitiveness to interrogate the past, to take a peek at what Ory (1981) amusingly called ‘les papiers de famille’, allegedly morphed into a fixation, a neurotic or even manic state characterised by repetition, oblivion to the passing of time and the inability to find closure.<sup>71</sup> But, as with ‘mourning’, Rousso’s choice of the term ‘obsession’ calls for further investigation. Julia Kristeva’s analysis of the ‘abject’ dimension of the corpse can help refine the comprehension of Rousso’s concept of ‘obsession’, and explain the place that is consistently attributed to scandal in historiographical studies. According to Kristeva (1980, 11-12), the cadavre is the

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sont plus obscurs que la paix même, comme la fécondation et l’origine de la vie sont plus mystérieuses que le fonctionnement de l’être une fois fait et adapté.’ (Valéry, 22).

<sup>70</sup> It is in the same sense that Robin (2003) wrote about the saturation of memory.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Les enfants de de Gaulle et de Coca-Cola se retrouvèrent orphelins et, avec la mauvaise éducation qui les caractérisait, s’empressèrent d’aller fouiller dans les papiers de famille’ Ory (1981, 103-117).

‘comble de l’abjection. Il est la mort infestant la vie. [...] Il est un rejeté dont on ne se sépare pas, dont on ne se protège pas ainsi que d’un objet.’ It is the morbidity (etymologically, ‘morbidus’ describes plasticity) inherent in the cadavre that explains the fact abjection cannot be escaped (‘on ne s’en sépare pas’). One cannot separate from Vichy either, precisely because Vichy is ‘un cadavre encore chaud’ and, as such, involves a morbid, malleable dimension in Kristeva’s sense.<sup>72</sup> Kristeva observes that in post-religious and dechristianized societies, the cathartic capacity to purify the abject has disappeared, leaving us with no way of overcoming it. In fact, this modern abjection subsumes ‘those morally ambivalent experiences that provoke within us the same horror and destabilization of identity as this [medieval, physical, i.e leprosy or syphilis] decay’ (Catani 2013, 126). Lozier (2012, 9) notes that the ‘action mortifère de l’abject s’exerce aussi sur le psychisme’ – which is reminiscent of Lacan’s ‘objet petit a’ – the other, or the remnant that cannot be reached (Lacan 1973). In the wake of Bataille, Bizet (2007, 26) observes that what distinguishes modern abjection from its ancient forms is that: ‘[l]e sacre des bas-fonds ne réveille plus tant une terreur sacrée qu’une menace de subversion.’ It is indeed the very unpredictability of ‘the abject’ that is most menacing, an observation of direct relevance for this thesis: my argument is that scandal can be viewed as an expression of potential destabilization and abjection. Scandal, abjection and the memory of the so-called ‘dark years’ of the Occupation can thus be seen as intersecting, by way of the metaphor of the corpse and scandal appears as the embodiment and privileged expression of abjection.<sup>73</sup> Scandal then appears as an unformulated but nonetheless central paradigm in Rousso’s framework.

His relentless denunciation of scandals as abject can be interpreted in the context of the conflicting nature of the abject drive. Indeed, the ‘abject’ drive simultaneously

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<sup>72</sup> It is in this sense that Vichy appears as ‘un passé qui ne passe pas’, Conan and Rousso (1994).

<sup>73</sup> Valensi (1993) notes the use of periphrastic expressions to designate the Occupation (‘les années noires’, ‘une période douloureuse’).

plays on desires of transgression and appeals to ‘sobr[iety]’ (Golsan 2000) from the superego. Desires of transgression find an expression in the fascination with scandals among the general public and the media and the superego can be seen as represented by many historians’ weariness and enervation at such collective outpourings. This double nature of abjection, both curative and criminal, can be found in scandal. So how can scandal be said to have become what could be deemed an unwanted paradigm? Scandal seems to have shifted from being the preferred mode of expression and denunciation of the abjection of the Occupation to being symptomatic of the French collective obsession with its past. The hygienic if not salutary function of scandals whose far-reaching effects have contributed to expose high-level complicities with the Nazi occupier led to a growing lassitude with scandals, among academics and the general opinion alike. Within thirty-odd years since the shattering of the post-war consensus, scandal has become the abjection itself, ironically triggering yet more debate. In *Vichy, an ever-present past*, Rousso came together with the journalist Eric Conan to call for what Golsan describes as ‘a moratorium on such scandal mongering in favor of a more sober analysis of the facts and realities of the period’ (Golsan 2000, 2). It seems that it is precisely this compulsive mode that historiography increasingly grew tired of and sought to rectify or caution against. Rousso’s appeal for a respite, if not an epilogue, is straightforwardly summarised in the following near-aphorism: ‘Il est un temps pour parler, pour écrire et un temps pour se taire’, a formulation that is reminiscent of Ecclesiastes 3.7 (‘a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak’). Rousso has tirelessly denounced the attempts by the government, historians, judges or the general public to ‘summon’ the past and create confusion between the three types of memory that Vernant (2004) defined and analysed. According to Vernant, ‘personal memory’, ‘social memory’ and the ‘memory of historians’ need to be separated to avoid affecting and putting pressure upon historians into taking sides in the



public-media debate.<sup>74</sup> In the case of Vichy, the confusion between these three types of memory admittedly reached a pinnacle in the mid-1990s and could therefore be seen as evidence of a dysfunctional relationship, induced by the French obsession with Vichy, involving the State, historians and public opinion.

In this context, how can we legitimately pose scandal as a viable tool at a time scandal is reviled? For a start, scandal in this sense confuses the frequency of the revelations with what Mehlman (1994), calls a ‘traumatophilie’ or ‘recherche active du choc’. But this only superficially explains why scandal has evolved from being a cathartic expression of the taboo to the taboo itself. A conjunction or rather an alignment of factors can be seen as having contributed to make the Occupation a unique object of general interest.<sup>75</sup> Firstly, the revelation of the ‘resistancialist myth’ was commensurate with the attempts to make Maréchal Pétain’s ‘Révolution Nationale’ a parenthesis in French history, an hapax legomenon or a period that could be altogether dismissed and forgotten (O. Wieviorka 2010, 24-25).<sup>76</sup> The (perceived) partial continuity in personnel from the Vichy government to that of the Fourth Republic only aggravated and delayed the exposition of the scope of the scandal. Secondly, the mutual influence of popular culture, journalism and academic research undoubtedly confirmed and reinforced the view and ambition to make a subject of the Occupation.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the epistemic change in history that prompted the academic interest for products of popular culture (fashion, cinema and more generally the everyday) corresponds to what Lynn Higgins (1996, 2) calls the ‘back-door, inadvertent engagement of New Novelists and New Wave film-makers’ capable of having a discourse on history (Ferro 1976, 12).

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<sup>74</sup> See Vernant (2004, 187) about the monopoly of memory.

<sup>75</sup> Only the French Revolution or Napoleon or to some extent the Dreyfus affair can be viewed as objects of equal national curiosity. Blum (1935, 14) observes: ‘L’Affaire fut une crise humaine, moins étendue et moins longtemps prolongée mais aussi violente que la Révolution française ou que la Grande Guerre.’

<sup>76</sup> Sartre (2003, 132) notes the deliberate lexical confusion created by Pétain with the choice of the word ‘Révolution’ which conventionally goes against the principle of maintaining order.

<sup>77</sup> ‘[*Le chagrin et la Pitié*] a surmultiplié l’effet d’ouvrages, tel que celui de l’historien américain Robert Paxton sur la collaboration volontaire d’Etat menée par Vichy [...]’ Ferro (1976, 14).

My final argument in this discussion of the concept of ‘obsession’ aims to question not only the object, but the very subject of the observation. In reaction to Rousso’s suggestion that there is indeed such a thing as a ‘cadavre encore chaud’ and that scandals are the revealers of what could be deemed a ‘Vichy abjection’, a clinical mania, we can surmise that obsession does not entirely spare historiographical accounts either. If Rousso’s outlook has been criticised for ‘ses airs de manifeste’ it is more importantly revelatory of the current presentist regime of historicity, namely the present concerns of the historian rather than the period in question (Hartog 2003). Historiography can admittedly be seen as having monopolised the period of the Occupation and forgotten that it does not have the monopoly of knowledge. As Valensi (1993, 500) notes: ‘habités que nous sommes à penser que tout relève de l’histoire, nous devons admettre que rien ne lui appartient en propre.’ Historiography is one method among others to deal with the past and more accurately perhaps historiography may not be best suited to account for non-political realities, such as literary production. According to Todorov (1996, 16) the importance of fiction needs to be acknowledged: ‘Les vrais rivaux des témoins ne sont pas les historiens, mais les romanciers qui recréent, eux aussi, la vie telle qu’elle est vécue par les individus’ Lloyd (2003, 3) too envisages fiction as capable of acting as a historical corrective: ‘literary writing or imaginary production can often get round topics which remain forbidden to the discourses of the real practised by historians’. For Sapiro (2012, 24), literature is important because it sought to remedy ‘the failure of both science and the press to provide an answer and opened up a space for other ways of experiencing or understanding the world.’ The premiss that the ‘work of the imaginary, broadly conceived, plays a structural role in the understanding of the experience of the war and their representation’ (Atack 2012, 10) forms the backbone of the FRAME project and admittedly my own. The capacity of literature to expose the unsaid of history, to be an ‘aveu de l’histoire’ (Atack 2012, 8) is consonant with Jacques

Bouveresse's idea that literature can provide a mode of practical knowledge as valid as a historical document (2008, 63-64).<sup>78</sup>

This view of the relations between history and literature, to the advantage of literature, leads to what Bersani (1990, 1) calls the 'culture of redemption' whereby a 'superior patching function' is given to art. If that may be true to some extent, one should beware of viewing non-consensual accounts of the war as somehow more reliable than more consensual accounts. For instance, Vandromme (2002, 39) argues that Nimier 'avait rendu à l'ambiguïté romanesque les droits que la littérature engagée lui avait enlevés, marquant la part du hasard dans les choix idéologiques les plus radicaux'. But radicality is not synonymous with truth as Atask (1989, 213) observes:

The novels of ambiguity are no less didactic than the novels of unity [the structure of 'us' versus 'them'], but the fact that knowledge is structured hierarchically, belonging to the narrator and his surrogates rather than the characters, to the observer rather than the observed, means that the reader is now invited to share.

If Rousso's 'intuition métaphorique' (Bouveresse 1999, 66) is to some extent efficient from a hermeneutical viewpoint, the use of his first phase of 'unfinished mourning' appears problematic and inadequate to account for the fictional production of the immediate post-war period and the understanding of how dissent was articulated in the literary field at the time. It became apparent that Rousso's 'Vichy Syndrome', if widely used in literary studies, fails to understand the decisive role of literature in 1945-1950 and has contributed to impose a thoroughly negative view of scandal understood as a mode of exposition and denunciation.

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<sup>78</sup> The idea that literature can help to shape an era's world-view and constitutes a valid mode of knowledge can also be found in Macherey (1990).

## B. On narrative: truth, history and fiction

The case of the ‘Aubrac Affair’ not only demonstrates the role of the narrative in the emergence of scandal and its transformation into an affair, but also manifests the fact that historical narratives and fictional ones are indeed woven in the same material.<sup>79</sup> According to Hayden White (quoted in Suleiman 2006, 44) they bear more than an incidental resemblance: ‘the writing of history relies on patterns of narrative that shape the raw documentary material, thus establishing at least formal similarities between historical narratives and fictional ones’ (White 1978, 122; White 2006, 30). From a narrative viewpoint, the alleged continuum between history and fiction is ethically problematic, as Carlo Ginzburg (1992) famously argued against White’s relativism. Ginzburg’s critique of White targets more generally what has come to be deemed the ‘linguistic turn’ or narrative turn (Roussin 2013). The focus on the mechanism of narrative construction in fiction and history has led to an increasing wariness of the *récit* as a form of knowledge. Consequently, the narrative dimension inherent in scandals has discredited their value in current analyses of issues pertaining to Vichy. Narratives of scandal rely on the challenge to prior – more or less elaborate – narratives in which they seek to expose falsehoods or inconsistencies. Scandals understood in their narrative dimension endanger the dimension of the promise inherent in any narrative and challenge the promise of truth contained in prior narratives.

Analysing the ‘Aubrac Affair’, Suleiman (2006) indirectly provides us with clues as to how the narrative dimension of scandal has come to bring scandal into disrepute. She starts by summarising the context of the ‘Affair’ that emerged with the publication of Chauvy’s book in 1997 which reignited the controversy over the Aubrac spouses’ version of events that led to Jean Moulin’s arrest in 1943.<sup>80</sup> In suggesting internal

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<sup>79</sup> Laborie (2011, 54) speaks of the ‘roman national’ in this sense.

<sup>80</sup> The controversy started in the early 1980s in the context of another trial, that of Klaus Barbie. In 1997, the Papon trial was about to start.

ideological disagreements between the Communist Aubrac and the Gaullist Moulin, Chauvy – in effect – produced a counter-narrative so powerful that a roundtable at the *Libération* headquarters bringing together historians, witnesses and journalists was organised to find a resolution. Suleiman (2006, 46) describes Chauvy's narrative as a 'story of abjection', which originates in 'narrative desire, [...] the desire to unmask, to demystify – in a word, to dethrone what was previously extolled.' The association of scandal, narrative and abjection is made complete here but if scandal can be exploited strategically – and may indeed represent an illegitimate discursive practice – the 'Aubrac Affair' and Suleiman's analysis of scandals as 'stories of abjection' underplays the complex rhetorical and narrative strategies at work in narratives of scandal, and presupposes the falsehood of all counter-narratives.

Following these remarks on the narrative dimension of scandal and the relations of history and literature it seems that what historians see as an 'obsession' with Vichy as a historical period may equally – or at least just as well – be seen from the point of view of a cultural historian as a literary form that can be used in a literary exercise. Hence, it may be less the Occupation as a historical period than the Occupation as a literary structure that can account for the 'ever-presence' of Vichy in French collective consciousness. Earlier examples of this literary opportunism can be found in literary history. Hewitt (1988, 77) notes that 'Romanticism adopted 'inquiétude' as both a tragic state and a covert possibility for renewed creation' which allows him to then envisage committed literature less as a reaction to the historical situation than as the very literary expression and solution to a primarily literary problem:

The fact the political solution is often being directed at an ultimately metaphysical problem introduces an ambiguity into the entire concept of committed literature and the essential literary element raises the possibility that the political drama is merely a pretext for drama itself.

This idea of the ‘pretext’ points to the ‘exploit[ation of] a sociological phenomenon for aesthetic purposes’, of a literary response to a fundamentally literary problem (Hewitt, 20). Hewitt adds that ‘angoisse’, ‘inquiétude’ and ‘désorientation’ are ‘rather a continuation of the malaise of the Restoration period’ that is to be found in Alfred de Vigny’s *Servitude et grandeur militaire* (1835) and is therefore ‘less a response to the social and moral problems posed by the First World War than the result of an intellectual and artistic “block”, already present in France before 1914’ (Hewitt, 10; 19). In other words, the ‘malaise’ or ‘block’ expressed in the inter-war years may be less an after-effect of the war than it is a remnant of something more ancient, dating back to the Restoration, and which found its sources in aesthetics or literary history rather than in reality. Interpreting the ‘malaise’ or the ambiguity of the post-war period as solely symptomatic of the trauma of the war could thus admittedly amount to drawing literary conclusions from non-literary causes. The representation of the Occupation in the literary production of the immediate post-war period can therefore not only be seen as an obsession with the historical period as such, but as an obsession with the themes and figures formulated in that context. ‘Malaise’, ‘inquiétude’, ‘tristesse’ and ambiguity have roots in a literary tradition that post-war writers, from Existentialists to right-wing writers, can in turn utilise to overcome the creative block they are faced with after the Occupation. This is the ambiguity and ambivalence inherent in periods of crisis (the Restoration, the aftermath of World War I and the Occupation), the historical expression of a stumbling block, that literature seeks to overcome with its own instruments and tools. Genet (1990, 77) observes that homosexual writers do not have a specific moral and literary tradition apart from Gide or Jouhandeau:

Outre qu’aucune tradition ne vient au secours du pédéraste, ne lui lègue un système de références – sauf par des manques – ne lui enseigne une convention morale relevant de la seule homosexualité, cette nature même, acquise ou donnée, est éprouvée comme thème de culpabilité.

Genet's knowledge of the 'grands auteurs' from Proust to Dostoyevsky or Kafka, can be interpreted as an attempt to familiarise himself (reconstitute an elective literary family) with the themes, tropes and structures that have been used in the literature of the past. Moreover, the confusion between the literary and the political in Genet's texts, and in *Pompes funèbres* in particular, can be interpreted as a way to appropriate a vocabulary and create literary figures and postures capable of giving an expression to his poetic programme. This view is confirmed by Rabaté (Bougon 1995c) who focused his interpretation of Genet's work on the polysemy of the word 'posture' that can designate erotic as well as political positions. The fact that the Occupation may primarily serve as a depository of forms, provide a reservoir of forms rather than a historical period as such is confirmed by Modiano's confession that the Occupation functions as an intertext: 'Ce n'est pas vraiment l'Occupation qui me fascine. Elle me fournit un climat idéal, un peu trouble, une lumière un peu bizarre, l'image démesurément grossie de ce qui se passe aujourd'hui' Roux (1999, 30). The Occupation appears as a 'climat idéal', an 'image', that is the representation of a reality that can be transposed in time and is always already mediated by literature. As Blanckemann (2012, 122) writes, Modiano's evolution as a novelist – from his first three novels to the finding of his own voice through a 'dérég[ement]' of Nimier's – sheds light on the influence of the Occupation as a narrative form capable of restoring 'un psychodrame, historique et intime, en laissant agir les forces de la décomposition à même les structures de la langue et de la narration.' This triple perspective (Hewitt's, Genet's and Modiano's) brings a compelling argument to the claim that the fascination with the Occupation, in the post-war period and even more so with the *mode rétro*, can be elucidated as a form that funnels, feeds and shapes new generations' (literary) preoccupations. The post-war literary production can be said to have influenced and bequeathed thematic and narrative patterns inspired by the Occupation and earlier

traditions. Higgins (1996, 211) calls this ‘the layering of memory in the national imagination that has compelled so many storytellers to construct complex fictions with multiple and inextricably interwoven stories, false paths that cancel each other out, unsatisfying conclusions’. This model of ambiguity has developed as a response to the ambivalent experience of the Occupation and as a literary actualization of themes and tropes formulated in earlier periods of crisis. This points to what Higgins calls the ‘active role of crises’ to ‘belatedly rework traumatic events’ (209). Taking the example of the last scene of *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, she notes (209): ‘The ending [...] depicts one critical moment of passage in French national identity (the Liberation of France in 1944); the film was made in the wake of another critical moment (1968) and finally disseminated in the context of a third (1981 and the socialist electoral victory).’<sup>81</sup> Higgins’ argument can be prolonged to integrate earlier periods of crisis, such as the Restoration and the aftermath of World War I, to understand that literature is worth examining from the point of view of scandal. This involves considering longer durations and the literary responses to scandalous events.<sup>82</sup> But it is perhaps the difficulties which surrounded the filming of Louis Malle’s *Lacombe Lucien* (1974), allegedly one of most scandalous films ever made on French collaboration, that compellingly illustrates the fact the Occupation needs to be primarily envisaged as a literary form. According to Ghislain Uhry (Moraly 1988, 229-233) who was then first assistant director to Louis Malle, the film was initially set in Mexico and was meant to depict a young peasant cared for by the authorities: owing to the social unrest in Mexican universities at the time, Malle had to adapt the film to a French setting so that it became ‘une petite

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<sup>81</sup> Rousso (1990, 12) makes the same observation: ‘D’autant que ces crises s’alimentent l’une l’autre, la mémoire de la précédente jouant sur la suivante : la Révolution dans l’Affaire Dreyfus, Dreyfus dans Vichy, Vichy dans la guerre d’Algérie, etc., les souvenirs du passé étant des éléments constitutifs – même s’ils sont seconds – de la crise.’

<sup>82</sup> Ungar (1995, 15) similarly notes: ‘Concerning France since 1930, the memory of Vichy has haunted those who have sought to explore it from the perspective of national identity and inscribed within longer durations from the Dreyfus Affair to the present. The persistence of debate in the press and mass media also illustrates the extent to which irresolution has maintained words and images surrounding Vichy visible within a public sphere, as an object of scandal [...].’



histoire de la Milice'. The film that generated a scandal and triggered a round of soul-searching in France therefore appears as transposable (and as having been transposed) to other similar contexts. The transhistorical and transcultural theme and structure of the Occupation underlines the flexibility and adaptability of forms, themes and narrative patterns from one historical and geographical context to another. The 'obsession' with the Vichy past can in fact be linked to literary and filmic representations of events or periods that are not, in fact, as historically specific as one may think at first. It can be envisaged as deriving from an inherently literary preoccupation with what the Occupation is taken to represent, that is an atmosphere suited to fictional investigations.

### **3. The case for literature: reclaiming the post-war period**

#### **A. The blind spot of literature: between history and cinema**

If the third phase of Rousso's 'syndrome', that of the 'miroir brisé', paved the way for many fruitful investigations of cultural production after 1968, the first phase has attracted two main lines of criticism among literary scholars: the incompatibility of historical periodizations and the role given to the cinema rather than to literature in the exposition of the abjection of Vichy.<sup>83</sup> First, Rousso's periodizations, modelled on political timelines, can be seen as evidence of his partiality to a political order which fails to reflect the admittedly more fluid rhythms proper to culture:

Rousso's phases [...] are mapped on to changing political regimes and generational attitudes. [...] The repressive phase overlaps with de Gaulle's return to power from 1958 to 1968 and the return of the repressed with the more critical stance adopted by the post-Gaullist generation after 1968. (Atack 2012, 4)

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<sup>83</sup> Ricœur (1997, 582) writes that 'c'est ici que Rousso offre ses meilleures pages avec la méditation autour de l'admirable film *Le Chagrin et la Pitié*, l'affaire Touvier [...].'

The non-coincidence of party politics and literary sensibilities has been explored by a variety of students of the period, from literary historians, such as Michael L. Berkvam, literary critics such as Hewitt, to film scholars, Pierre Sorlin and Michel Jacquet.<sup>84</sup> In their introduction to the edited volume of essays summarising the directions taken by the FRAME project, Attack and Lloyd underline the pivotal role of these critics in the field of post-war literature:

the literary historian Michael L. Berkvam has shown that novels taking a critical or cynical stance towards France behaviour and spurious myths of mass resistance during the Occupation were not only published in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but were well received, widely read and sometimes awarded literary awards.

Berkvam (2000, xiii) indeed asks in his introduction:

How was it possible, for example, for de Gaulle to persuade the French (and the world) in 1944-1945 that France had behaved in a glorious manner during the war, that France had resisted the German occupation and had scorned Vichy, when this literature screams out another, darker message of accommodation, attentisme (the wait-and-see mentality), and collaboration [...] Furthermore, several of these literary accounts that most pointedly contradicted the myths (Gaullist and communist) that emerged concerning France's role in World War II, were well-received, won the most prestigious literary award bestowed in France, the Goncourt Prize (Triolet in 1944, Bory in 1945, Curtis in 1947 and Merle in 1949 for *Week-end à Zuydcoote*).<sup>85</sup>

The rejection of historiographical classifications stems from the empirical observation of the post-war literary output which attests to a more complex representation of the war, namely, an initial period of testimonies between 1945 and 1950 followed by a twenty-year hiatus.<sup>86</sup> For Kelly (1989, 249-50), it is only two years after the Liberation that

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<sup>84</sup> For Hewitt (1996, 7) 'the intellectual's agenda, while it may coincide with a political one, is essentially different and is driven by different, non-political concerns.'

<sup>85</sup> Attack and Lloyd (2012, 5) argue that 'neither Buton's assertion that the immediate post-war decade is a period of reassuring, rose-tinted memories, nor Rousso's that this is the time of reverential 'mourning', actually corresponds to the attitudes and judgements evinced by many post-war novels.'

<sup>86</sup> The nature of the French experience of the war explains in large part the difficulty to create a 'single tale', a master narrative at the end of the war. Lyotard (1979) analysed the distrust in grand narratives in thus pointing to the fact that master narratives are neither possible nor desirable. See also Hynes (1997,

‘direct representations of the collaboration in literature became less common.’ As Guérin (2008, 1) notes about the literary representation of the ‘militant’, it is necessary to ‘reprendre la question de l’engagement’ in the sense that ‘la question a été abandonnée aux historiens et aux politologues’. According to him, if the twentieth-century literary landscape appears saturated, it nevertheless contains fallow fields or blind spots left by historiographical accounts. Guérin’s formulation resonates as an injunction to students of literature to reclaim notions and terrains previously left to historians. In that respect, Atack (2012, 6) writes that this systematic reevaluation remains to be done:

although there are innumerable monographs and articles devoted to individual writers, relatively few commentators have attempted the more ambitious task of reviewing and analysing fictional narratives about the Occupation as a mass phenomenon.

Indeed, studies on individual writers such as Violette Leduc have come to emblemize the global overhaul of the period. Houlding (1997, 100) economically sums up the stakes of *La Bâtarde*: ‘dealing with a moment that was not a war, produced by a writer who felt that she was not a woman, Leduc’s *La Bâtarde* offers today’s readers a strangely legitimate way of looking at the still controversial, unclassifiable war years in France.’ Gorrara (2012, 9) proposed a reading of crime fiction to further demonstrate the illusion of the post-war consensus and criticise Roussio’s ‘chronological model of memory evolution [which] is not one that corresponds well to patterns of production in French fiction.’ Atack’s seminal 1989 study of post-war fiction showed a clear division between ‘resistance novels’ and ‘novels of ambiguity’, categories that Hamel (2006, 32-33) recently sought to refine by suggesting a third category, that of ‘romans de la conscience inquiète’ along the classic ones of ‘romans résistencialistes’ and ‘romans anti-

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173; cited in Atack 2012, 6) who famously argued that ‘the canon of the Second World War does not exist’.

résistancialistes'.<sup>87</sup> If the interest for extremism and the global reappraisal of the infamous literature of the Occupation and the post-war period undoubtedly uncover interesting aspects concerning consensus and scandal, they have rarely led to attempts at grasping the 'mass phenomenon' of cross-ideological literary dissent in the post-war period. It is in this sense that Hamel's classification of novels can be read as an attempt to refine Atrack's categories as she analysed in her seminal 1989 study. But the 'reluctance' to probe into the reasons why the image of a post-war consensual literary production came about and persisted, only to be shattered in the late 1960s, remains an open question that few have tried to address. My contention is that this view exaggerates the importance of 1968 in the revelation of the Vichy past and in the process plays down the importance of the immediate post-war literature.

The second line of criticism of Rousso's phase of 'unfinished mourning' among literary critics has to do with the importance he gives to the cinema rather than literature in his analysis of the 'vecteurs du syndrome' (1989, 251-308). If Rousso (1989, 12) acknowledges the fact that novels can be seen as an entry-point into the reexamination of the period in *Vichy: l'événement, la mémoire, l'histoire*, he fails to recognize the reactivity of literature as compared to the film industry. This is what Jacquet (2011, 28) observes: 'la production romanesque de la fin des années 40 fit preuve de beaucoup plus de vivacité' and that '[a]près la Libération, le roman compensait ainsi par une liberté d'expression quasi totale la relative désaffection que lui valait l'expansion du septième

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<sup>87</sup> Aymé, Nimier and Céline are classified within the second category in the sense that they supposedly 'travaille[nt] à la constitution d'une mémoire marginale du conflit' (Hamel 2006, 133), rely on an organic vision of society in line with right-wing literature. In his third category, he argues that Genet, Gracq, Duras and Modiano's 'romans de la conscience inquiète' are devised to 'Plutôt que de chercher à triompher des inintelligibilités, ces écrivains ont usé des tensions, joué des équivoques, plongé au cœur des contradictions collectives et personnelles qui furent exacerbées par les événements historiques.', whereby war becomes a mere 'motif poétique' (2006, 212; 234). See also his (Sartrian) analysis of the characters of *Pompes funèbres*, (240-242 and 254). By dismissing all ideological interpretations of Genet's text, Hamel in fact points to the production of a 'position aporétique' (274), the image of a 'société atomisée [...] La guerre [...] est une lutte sans merci entre l'individu isolé et les groupes qui font pression sur lui [...]' (384-85). This interpretation can interestingly be confronted to what Laignel-Lavastine (2002) views as a case of 'oubli du fascisme' in her analysis of Cioran's critical clout, an idea reprised by Jablonka (2004) about Genet.

art'.<sup>88</sup> Jacquet's comparison of the literature and the cinema of the post-war period shows that literature took advantage of the conditions of publication that were more favourable than those of the film industry. If this perceived failing on Rouso's part has been construed as a result of the role of *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* in the shattering of the consensus on Vichy, it is nonetheless surprising that he should have left out the novel altogether.<sup>89</sup> In fact, it could be argued that the censorship of *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* until 1981 in France may have helped to confirm the value of the cinema as a worthy cultural product in the eyes of scholars and intellectuals. But, ultimately, to Rouso's defence, if his first phase does not seem as convincing as the others (especially that of the 'miroir brisé') it may be due to the very ambition of his project, that is to chart France's growing 'obsession' with Vichy throughout the post-war period. As obsessions in the psychiatric sense require time to develop and become fixations, transitions and 'sorties de guerre' therefore appear as an altogether different subject.

Admittedly, periodizations seek to insist on certain aspects, necessarily to the detriment of others, and literary historians are not the only ones to have suggested alternative chronologies of the immediate post-war period.<sup>90</sup> The timescale of this study reflects the dates of composition and publication of the texts of the corpus: it is

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<sup>88</sup> Jacquet notes that Aymé 'avait donné aux emballements de l'histoire une réponse littéraire extrêmement prompte' and more generally that 'l'industrie cinématographique subit des pressions incomparablement plus fortes. Elle se trouve confrontée à des enjeux sociologiques, politiques et commerciaux auxquels la littérature échappe plus aisément, parfois même avec une désinvolture ostentatoire.' (2011, 16). The severe conditions imposed on the film industry can explain the intensity of the release exerted on the industry until the beginning of the 1970s. This 'désinvolture ostentatoire' finds its most confident expression in the Hussards' dandyism.

<sup>89</sup> '*Le Chagrin et la Pitié* sonne l'hallali d'une vision d'une France globalement résistante', Jaquet (2011, 66); see also Hoffman (1960, 45-60) and Laborie (2011, 81-125) on the role of the film.

<sup>90</sup> Finer periodizations have been proposed to account for France's slow transition to a modern post-war society; Fourastié (1979) underlines the speed and simultaneous slowness of the advent of modern society in France. About the resurgence of bread wars after 1945, Kaplan (2008, 1072) notes 'on croyait sa problématique bien dépassée, sauf l'anomalie de l'Occupation.' If Kaplan's periodization underlines the political context of the Fourth and Fifth Republics to shed light on the poisoning in Pont-Saint-Esprit in 1951, it acknowledges longer durations because bread is 'un des plus grands acteurs de l'histoire de France. [...] Il donne un sens et une structure au temps long et lent, tout autant qu'il bouleverse la vie dans le très court terme.' (Kaplan, 11).

These longer durations are reminiscent of Braudel's three histories ('histoire immobile', 'histoire sociale' and 'histoire individuelle' (1949, 13-14). See Laurent's 'Discours de réception' (1987) and his homage to Braudel's preference for 'continuités plutôt que les ruptures', acknowledging the necessity of longer durations.

therefore an internal coherence that the period 1945-1950 primarily reflects. All narratives in the corpus were written and published in the five-year window and can thus be analysed as representative of a ‘sensibilité’. It is a key objective of this thesis to demonstrate that the immediate post-war period was indeed a period of intense literary dissent, a meeting-point of different sensibilities rather than an ideological reunion. In Berkvam’s words: ‘In a moment of unusual unity given their ideological diversity [the literature written after 1944] display[s] a thematic cohesiveness’ (2000, xvi). Studying the years 1945-1950 as a transition period can be justified by its coherence: ‘The years which followed the Liberation thus constitute a ‘period’ recognisable in its films, its fashion, in its plans for educational reform, at least as much as in its parliamentary debates.’ (Hewitt 1996, 61) In their chronology of post-war France, Simonin and Clastres (1989, 8) justify the adjunct to the original publication by saying that 1945-1952:

constituent en elles-mêmes une période spécifique. Ce que nous voulions faire ressortir à partir de 1953, c’était la lente érosion d’un lent crédo de gauche triomphant en 1945 sur l’effondrement de la droite, en même temps que la mise en place progressive d’un certain âge d’or d’une science critique de l’homme, intégrant la psychologie, la linguistique, l’économie, la philosophie, l’histoire, et dont le structuralisme a été l’étiquette la plus répandue et la philosophie expérimentale mais qui, très au-delà, a défini, consciemment ou inconsciemment, la cohérence d’expressions artistiques les plus variées.

Their periodization reflects the ebb and flow of the ‘credos’ of the Right and the ‘Left’, alluding to the progressive ‘return to respectability’ of the Right in cultural and parliamentary life.<sup>91</sup> 1951 can be seen as a turning point as the first amnesty laws

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<sup>91</sup> Hewitt (1996, 78) notes the ‘rapid return to respectability of collaborationist authors after a period of heroic publishing’, especially around 1952. The return onto the literary scene of Maurice Bardèche, Robert Brasillach’s brother-in-law, with the publication of *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* in 1948, Marcel Jouhandeau and Jean Giono in November 1947 with *Un roi sans divertissement*, Céline in December 1949 with *Casse-Pipe*, Sacha Guitry’s in 1948, the re-publication of *Aspects de la France* in 1947 along with the monthly journal edited by Paul Malliavin, *Les Ecrits de Paris* which led to the weekly *Rivarol* in 1951 are further evidence of this.

enabled the return of writers sentenced at the Liberation.<sup>92</sup> But their shorter periodization (Rouso's first phase lasts until 1954) also integrates various artistic forms and acknowledges the birth and development of a 'science critique de l'homme', themes, fields and methods that emerged from the war. It is in this intellectual and artistic sense that 1945-1950 can be said to constitute an 'organic whole', with what Hewitt (1996, 127) sees as 'the exhaustion of the theme of commitment, or studied non-commitment in an increasingly industrialized society, and the strain this was placing on the fictional genre'. Mounier (1953, 67) notes in his essay on Camus that the 'années confuses de l'Occupation ont brouillé les naissances littéraires'. Ory (1989, 125) observes that historical events are 'cristallisateurs plus que fondateurs' and defines a generation 'comme [un] groupe d'adoption. Adoption d'aînés par leurs cadets, adoption d'événements orphelins par une communauté qui leur donne un sens, son sens.'<sup>93</sup>

## **B. Fiction and friction: the novel as ethical space**

The novel emerges as an ethical space and the privileged space of scandal. The narrative dimension is so central to literature that the two terms have come to be used almost indistinguishably and, in Nimier's words 'le roman se croit représentatif de la littérature' (1990, 135). In the words of Davis (2000, 2) the privilege of the novel 'derives from its focus on character and narrative; it presents individuals in situations of choice and action, and so allows readers to engage with a world or moral outlook which

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<sup>92</sup> Robert Grenier alludes to the landmark publication of Aymé's *Le Confort intellectuel*: 'A ces moments, Marcel Aymé fait l'effrayé, comme si l'on courait les plus grands périls à attaquer la Résistance. En vérité, ce n'est tout de même pas si dangereux: tous les Vichyssois et les collabos ont depuis longtemps repris la parole.' (Grenier 1949; quoted in Lécureur 1997, 269). The sense of threat felt around 1947 is reflected in the issue of *Esprit*, 'La pause des fascismes est terminée: néofascisme, néogaullisme', n°12, (1947) as does Jean Cassou in *La Mémoire courte* (1953) which goes back to the initial reasons of the intellectual Epuración. All point to a growing concern of the return of collaborationist and other dissenting voices soon after the Occupation and decisively at the turn of the 1950s.

<sup>93</sup> Tonnet-Lacroix (1991, 11) writes: 'Etudier une "tranche de vie" littéraire, c'est examiner une époque et non pas seulement une génération. Une époque est le point de rencontre de plusieurs générations.' She continues: it is the 'reconstitu[ti]on d'une sensibilité' that is less a system, less ideological than it is spontaneous as: 'Des hommes d'idéologies différentes peuvent, pour certaines choses, avoir une même forme de sensibilité.'

may differ from, and therefore extend, their own.’<sup>94</sup> Studying narrative fiction after World War II also makes sense because ‘il semble que le roman corresponde à une phase particulière du développement d’une société’ (Caillois 1974, 153) and is particularly adapted to the full re-creation of historical events. For Caillois, the Flaubertian novel is emblematic of the genre inasmuch as it has a ‘fonction démoralisatrice’, constitutes ‘un acide’ and performs a ‘travail de sape’. Caillois (1974, 214) underlines the antisocial tradition of the novel through the rapprochement of fiction with ‘friction’:

Il fait plus que profiter du vide où il advient que la collectivité laisse l’individu, il l’agrandit, le rend conscient et douloureux. Il n’est conflit latent qu’il ne souligne et n’envenime. Car c’est tout naturellement aux points de friction qu’il intervient: là où rien n’éveille sa curiosité, il ne porte pas son analyse.

The vacuum left to the individual by society is the occasion that Genet found to confiscate the genre of the novel and make it his own. In this respect, Marty (2011, 73) writes: ‘on pourrait dire que l’auteur s’empare du roman en tant que “genre bourgeois”, pour le pervertir et nous pervertir, sans nullement vouloir nous convertir.’ The anti-social dimension of Aymé’s narratives and his exploitation of ‘points de friction’ as resources for fiction is acutely observed by Nimier (1965, 36) as a reluctance for generalities. According to Ozouf (2001, 331) the novel operates as the ‘metteur en scène de l’instabilité des choses’:

Le roman, d’autre part, à la différence du récit historique, inscrit le politique dans le domestique. Tous ceux qu’on trouvera ici décrivent la traîne de la Révolution dans la vie des familles et la manière dont l’histoire est venue menacer la sécurité de l’espace familial et contester l’autorité qui s’y exerce. Une longue affaire qui dure bien après la fin officielle des événements, se nourrit moins d’idées que de souvenirs et d’images, engendre des haines tenaces et des passions invincibles, enthousiasme ici, terreur là, et entre les deux tous les degrés imaginables. Le drame historique s’y prolonge et s’y

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<sup>94</sup> Ethics and morality are usually distinguished on the basis that ethics implies a dynamic element, whereas morality designates a set of fixed rules whose application is not dependent on the circumstances, see Derrida (2004).



démultiplie en une infinité de drames privés où l'on n'observe pas seulement le choix frontal des convictions, mais l'opposition oblique et secrète des lieux et des âges.

Art is the privileged space and domain to examine what Deleuze (1991, 164) calls 'zones d'indiscernabilité': 'Seule la vie crée de telles zones où tourbillonnent les vivants, et seul l'art peut y atteindre et y pénétrer dans son entreprise de co-création. C'est que l'art vit lui-même de ces zones d'indétermination [...]'. Scandal and literature both exploit the quotidian dimension of life and, as such, appear more adapted to represent the quotidian experience of the Occupation and the Liberation, a view which confirms the recent evolution of the debates concerning the frontiers between historiography and literature.<sup>95</sup>

### **C. Scandal as hermeneutic tool**

By disputing or challenging conventions, unspoken, quotidian rules or more rigid, written ones like laws or institutional authority, scandals seek to shake the foundations of order (institutional, social, political, linguistic, discursive and symbolic). In this sense, they can be viewed as a form of social discourse which belongs to the larger field of controversies and disputes.<sup>96</sup> At the beginning of his seminal study on modern scandal, Thompson (2000, 13) suggests as a working definition that scandal 'refers to actions or events involving certain kinds of transgressions which become known to

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<sup>95</sup> Sartre (2003, 17) reflects on the difficulty to describe how the Occupation was experienced by stating that 'l'occupation était quotidienne'. See in particular Wiewiorka (2002, 77); Nora (1984; i-xviii). This view on the comparative role of literature and historiography is to some degree symptomatic of a melancholia or nostalgia for grand historical narratives on the part of historians and of the increasing inhibition of collective memory (Halbwachs 1968) as well as of necessary or concurrent need to resort to the intimate dimension to express the truth of history.

<sup>96</sup> Thompson cites King's remark that 'scandals occupy a sort of middle ground of impropriety' in the sense that they do not designate offences that are deemed too minor and others too monstrous to be scandals (Thompson gives the examples of a parking ticket and the massacre of the Khmer Rouge as examples of the limits of scandal at both ends of the moral spectrum), Thompson (2000, 14); King (1986, 175). However, Thompson's concession to limitations to what can become scandals needs to be taken with caution as what pragmatic sociologists call 'conflits de faible extension' such as minor domestic disputes can potentially generate scandals; a parking ticket can therefore potentially lead to a scandal. One could even imagine that in the case of the Khmer Rouge, scandals could be imbricated within the larger and admittedly more serious crime.

others and are sufficiently serious to elicit a public response.’ If certain themes are more or less ‘scandal-sensitive’ or prone to become subject to scandals, Thompson’s definition establishes four characteristics of scandal. Firstly, scandal flouts certain values; secondly, it ‘involve[s] a degree of concealment or secrecy, but [which] nevertheless become[s] known by others’, meaning that a scandal needs an element of surprise to purport to revealing something new, to expose things that are not already entirely in the open.<sup>97</sup> Thirdly, a scandal cannot break out if it does not find an echo in the public, what Thompson calls ‘public knowledge [and] some degree of disapproval’, expressed by ‘both acts and speech-acts: by acts of transgression and by the speech-acts of others who respond to these acts with suitable forms of expression.’ This means that some degree of articulated public support is necessary for a scandal to occur; in other words, the non-participants of the beginning, the witnesses of what Aymé (1938, 7) calls an ‘*éclat que cause une action honteuse*’, need to become active participants at some point for scandal to gather momentum.<sup>98</sup>

In Aymé’s words, ‘[après] avoir consenti à la réalité du scandale, le public devient lui-même un acteur et non pas seulement à la façon du chœur antique, mais comme un personnage nombreux qui s’incorpore à l’action, la modifie, lui fournit des péripéties et impose ses exigences’(Aymé, 1938, 31). The role of the audience underlines the dramatic dimension inherent in scandal which involves actors, spectators, a

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<sup>97</sup> If the contents of what is revealed cannot be understood by a public (a mathematical formula which has no bearing on the life of the community outside the narrow field of mathematics), one will speak of a peer controversy rather than a scandal.

For Thompson (2000, 14-25), scandal more simply consists in: ‘transgression of certain values’, an ‘element of secrecy’, ‘disapproval of non-participants not directly affected by the transgression’, ‘expression of disapproval by the non-participants’ and, fifth, the ‘disclosure and condemnation of actions or events’ which sometimes leads to damaging their reputation.

<sup>98</sup> The passage from the passive to the active, from immobility to movement, silence to speech, anonymity to recognition (a participant can indeed be made invisible as can be seen in the case of letters of denunciation) reveals a dialectic at work in scandal. Because scandal moves and mobilizes society or social groups (in the literal, physical and figurative, moral and symbolic sense), scandal belongs to the study of social movements.

scenography, logistics (lights and props).<sup>99</sup> The spectacular dimension of scandal, in both senses of the term, as a show and an extraordinary event that perturbs everyday routine, can be justified by the fact it is a moment detached from normal social time.<sup>100</sup> Aymé gives the example of a prototypical scene of scandal in the first chapter of *Silhouette du scandale*; the deliberate banality of the scene underlines the intrinsic prosaicness of scandal.<sup>101</sup> Aymé (1938, 10) describes a patron at his usual bistro who resolves to make a scandal after yet another unpleasant experience with the bartender's wine:

Le client roule sa serviette en boule et la pose sur la table, comme il faut faire quand on va dire quelque chose d'important, puis il murmure entre ses dents: "Cette fois, c'est trop... je fais un scandale." [...] Le client appelle bruyamment le patron, prend à témoin les autres habitués en brandissant son verre dans une lumière favorable à la vérité.

The dramatic aspect of the scandal or 'esclandre' is reflected in the carefully scripted scene of outrage ('comme il faut faire quand') and the drama itself ('bruyamment', 'brandissant'). If the speech-acts of the denunciator and the non-participants can take less dramatic forms they nonetheless need to 'assume the status of public speech-acts: that is it must be uttered (or otherwise produced) in a way that can be heard (or otherwise received) by a plurality of others' (Thompson, 21). In other words, if a scene of scandal does not need to be an 'esclandre', it nevertheless needs to cause some degree of public outrage and lead to the outrage being broadcast. The theatrical metaphor allows one to grasp pragmatically the different linguistic and non-linguistic elements ('otherwise produced') that constitute what one of the main representatives of

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<sup>99</sup> 'Un scandale se présente un peu comme une pièce de théâtre dont le succès est toujours incertain. Le public marche ou il ne marche pas [...]' (Aymé, 1938, 19).

<sup>100</sup> The theatrical metaphor finds further validation here. In their narration of the massacre of a small group of Jews in Saint-Amand in the summer of 1944 Jaquet and Todorov (2004) reflect on the fight between 'miliciens' and 'résistants'. The structure of their narration is that of a tragedy in three acts focusing on the 'characters': 'Acte I: Le Soulèvement', 'Acte II: Les Négociations' and 'Acte III: Les Châtiments'. Thompson (2000, 18) writes about scandal as a 'drama of *concealment* and *disclosure*' [the italics are from the original text].

<sup>101</sup> 'Ce qui confère au scandale toute son importance, ce n'est donc pas son côté singulier, épisodique, mais au contraire ce qu'il contient d'habituel et parfois même de quotidien.' (Aymé, 11).

the French school of discourse analysis, Dominique Maingueneau (1993, 122) calls a ‘scene of enunciation’.<sup>102</sup> As an ethical event, scandal needs to be analysed pragmatically at different narrative levels to determine the stakes of the ethical debates within the space of the novel.

Writing in 1912, Durkheim notes that scandal is a moment of ‘collective effervescence’ whereby a society participates to the same moment. In his exploration of religion, Durkheim (1968, 207) observes that:

Il y a des périodes historiques où, sous l'influence de quelque grand ébranlement collectif, les interactions sociales deviennent beaucoup plus fréquentes et plus actives. Les individus se recherchent, s'assemblent davantage. Il en résulte une effervescence générale, caractéristique des époques révolutionnaires ou créatrices. Or, cette suractivité a pour effet une stimulation générale des forces individuelles. On vit plus et autrement qu'en temps normal. Les changements ne sont pas seulement de nuances et de degrés; l'homme devient autre. Les passions qui l'agitent sont d'une telle intensité qu'elles ne peuvent se satisfaire que par des actes violents, démesurés: actes d'héroïsme surhumain ou de barbarie sanguinaire. C'est là ce qui explique, par exemple, les croisades et tant de scènes, ou sublimes ou sauvages, de la Révolution française.

Durkheim makes a distinction between ‘temps normal’ and ‘effervescence générale’ or ‘suractivité’ which he sees as specific to certain historical periods, such as the Crusades or the French Revolution. It is precisely in line with Durkheim’s analysis of ‘collective effervescence’ that pragmatic sociology has envisaged scandal. The animation generated by scandal causes disruptions to order and if they do not necessarily lead to a revolution or a complete disposal of a regime or an order, it nonetheless brings about changes to a society. Pragmatic sociology proposes to study scandal as a moment, as an object deserving to be studied for itself, that is less for what it reveals – which would make scandal a mere instrument – than for what it changes, for its ‘institutionalizing

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<sup>102</sup> Maingueneau defines the scene of enunciation as underpinning fictional communication: ‘L’œuvre n’existe que prise en charge par un narrateur, situé dans un espace et un temps et s’adressant à un destinataire qui partage avec lui cet espace et ce temps. Une œuvre est toujours une scène d’énonciation [...].’ He distinguishes between ‘scène englobante’ (literary, religious, political discourse), ‘scène générique’ (the specific scene attached to a certain type of discourse) and the ‘scénographie’ (scene constructed by the text and in which the reader is given a place).

force'.<sup>103</sup> This pragmatic approach to scandal underlines the centrality of the concept of 'épreuve' or test in the post-Bourdieuian type of sociology practiced by Boltanski, Thévenot, Lemieux and others at the 'Groupement de Sociologie politique et morale' (GSPM) and the 'Groupe de Recherches Interdisciplinaires sur l'Histoire du Littéraire' (GRIHL).<sup>104</sup> This hybrid branch of sociology is also heavily indebted to the Chicago School with works by Thomas in 1918 and recently republished (Thomas, 1996) on immigration from the point of view of immigrants, Becker's study of deviance as viewed by others (1963), or Mead's influential contribution in 1934 which have all enabled French sociologists to adopt a more reflexive and pluralist approach to social life and the study of social disputes in particular. The contributions of historians such as Claverie (1994) to the constitution of an object of research, the 'forme affaire', a generic descriptor to account for the cultural and historical variety of scandals, along with those of sociologists since the early 1980s, have produced the most thorough and convincing analyses on scandal.<sup>105</sup>

Methodologically, the pragmatic turn in linguistics made it possible for linguists, sociologists and literary scholars to study texts, verbal interactions and situations

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<sup>103</sup> '[Le scandale] est l'un de ces 'moments effervescents' dont parle Durkheim. Raison pour laquelle le chercheur doit faire l'effort de le saisir sous sa dimension performative ou, pour mieux dire, *instituant*. [...] Nous passons alors de la question: 'en quoi le scandale révèle-t-il un ordre préexistant?' à des interrogations comme [...] *qu'est-ce qu'il fait?*' de Blic (2005, 9). Aymé (1938, 11) also underlines that 'Ce qui reste sûr, c'est qu'il est un agent de transformation des mœurs et des institutions'.

The vast literature on the phenomenon of scandal includes lists, diaries, case-studies: see Julliard (2009), *Le Figaro's* publication on scandal (2013) are evidence of a popular interest in lists and catalogues of scandalous fiction. Artistic and forensic metaphors such as 'the art of scandal' or 'an anatomy of scandal' abound in these publications in spite of rare textual analyses. Attempts at understanding scandal generically can be found in Adut's ambitious monograph on scandal (2008).

<sup>104</sup> The 'sociologie des épreuves' and the concept of the 'test' have served as a banner under which scholars from various disciplines have united. The French term 'épreuve' conveys the idea of a trial or an ordeal that the English translation fails to communicate. In pragmatic sociology, actors deploy *competences* to resolve situations of disputes. It is in this sense that the 'sociology of tests' is conceived as a 'sociologie de la critique', reassessing Bourdieu's 'sociologie critique' which views structural forces as the main explicative factors of social life (Boltanski 2011, 61). Other epistemological and theoretical influences can be traced in the field of the ethnography of communication and ethnomethodology which both put language and reflexivity at the centre of their critical practices.

<sup>105</sup> 'C'est ainsi qu'on tentera de distinguer la décision du juge d'une simple position de réponse fonctionnelle, mécaniquement induite, pour la replacer dans les visées et les enjeux de la société politique. En effet, face à des visions qui font du déclenchement judiciaire un automatisme, je voudrais redonner toute sa latitude à l'action de juger en justice, en général, et notamment dans les conditions pénales de l'Ancien Régime.' Claverie (1998, 185-186); see also Boltanski (1990, 22).

dynamically, as part of a scenography. Their use of Greimas' semiological actantial schema (1966) is evidence of the importance given to language in the understanding of how social interaction, disputes and scandals work. Maingueneau (1998) concedes that two elements need to be taken into account to usefully adapt discourse analysis and pragmatics to literary texts. Firstly, what he calls the complex 'auctorialité' of literary texts and the impossibility to account for this solely in terms of 'roles'. Secondly, the place of hermeneutic interpretation which is somehow generically inscribed in literary texts. Admittedly, Thompson uses speech-acts rather loosely as a synonym of discourse or more generally to describe the necessity for 'non-participants' to speak out. But treating (more rigorously, that is) fictional language as utterances or speech acts is central to analysing the mechanism of scandal dynamically at the level of the characters, the narrative voice as well as at the level of the *récit*.

In this chapter I have examined the leading critical framework used in literary studies to account for the post-war literary expressions of the trauma of Vichy. Through an analysis of the medical metaphors underpinning Rousso's critical apparatus I have attempted to show that the first phase of his 'syndrome' and the periodization he suggests cannot adequately explain the large-scale phenomenon of ambivalent accounts of the war and the Liberation. I have established that the denunciation of scandals as symptoms of an obsession with Vichy can be approached as history's obsession with its own object of study and that the recurrence of themes, motifs and patterns are perhaps just as much an expression of a 'real malaise' as a literary response to a literary problem. If the image of the post-war literary landscape has started to be recast through the challenge of Rousso's first phase, the systematic critique of Rousso's paradigm for the study of the immediate post-war period had so far not been made.

The critical disputes around the Sadian text are emblematic of the role given to literature in the aftermath of the Occupation and of the importance of these years in the

shaping of new hermeneutic tools, corpora and modes of reading which keep informing our practices today. The popular success of scandalous or infamous fiction in 1945-1950 confirms that scandal is not a mere retrospective critical illusion. Indeed, Sade and 'Noir' fiction attest to a desire for a new language, themes and even narrative patterns. The concurrent discovery and curiosity for minor genres such as science fiction (by Raymond Queneau (1953) and the wider public), representations of humiliation and defeat and a predilection for unheroic characters can be understood as confirmation of the decisive turn taken by modern literature at the end of the nineteenth century to offer alternative views of the grand historical narrative. The general interest in the minor, the individual and the everyday, as reflected in many post-war novels has paved the way for what Deleuze and Guattari (1975) call 'littérature mineure'. The post-war re-reading of past literature and the interest in the 'minor', both in the generic sense, science fiction, crime fiction, erotic, libertine and pornographic literature, and – in Deleuze's sense – of a minority who seize the language of the majority can be found in the immediate post-war period, notably with Genet.

I have shown through an examination of the cultural function of Existentialism that our image of the relations between literature and history, the direction of literature trapped between commitment and autonomy, the group (Existentialists on one side, right-wing writers such as the Hussards on the other) and the individual (Genet, Aymé, Gracq), still bears the mark of an Existentialist slant. Indeed, our reluctance to envisage cross-ideological resemblances between writers in the immediate post-war and re-assess the unsatisfactory view of a division between Existentialists, former collaborators and other right-wing figures and a third category of allegedly apolitical writers is indicative of the work that remains to be done on a period which has been until recently monopolised by historians. Representing dissent within the post-war literary field in terms of 'ambiguity' and 'ambivalence' is not unproblematic as Kedward and Austin

(1985, 7) sensed when they wondered ‘whether the term should be judgemental [...] or whether it should become neutrally descriptive.’ Their recommendation for the study of the Occupation to ‘normalise the term rather than neutralise it, to make it more understandable and predictable’ operates as a warning against the risk of ‘the term becom[ing] a colourless synonym of human fallibility’ (1985, 8-9). If ambiguity usefully conjures up a wide metaphorical network and binaries (light/darkness, etc) that can help describe what is at stake in ‘novels of ambiguity’ as a concept, it obviously lacks theoretical strength. Scandal can therefore appear as a valid alternative paradigm because it is historically intertwined with the history of the Occupation and refers to a tradition and a corpus of literary texts that have problematically questioned the relation of literature and representation and society.



## II. Scales of scandal

Chapter 1 has shown that the immediate post-war period was conducive to scandal in the sense of an experience (reading), a practice (writing) and an horizon for the exploration of the relations between literature and society through the formulation of literary transgression. The ambivalent experience of the Occupation and its subsequent long repression in collective consciousness have made scandal a prevalent feature of French post-war history and culture.

This chapter will now explore how scandal works within the space of the novel, namely how it is constructed at different levels of the narrative. It will investigate the narrative forms of scandal, how scandal is constructed at different levels of the narrative through units of scandal or ‘scandalemes’ to copy Kristeva’s ‘ideologemes’ (Kristeva 1968) as the minimal units of scandal. The adoption of such a formal approach to narrative scandal is validated by Aymé’s analysis of artistic scandals (1938, 159):

Du reste, il y a une relation entre l’idée de forme et l’idée de scandale. Elle apparaît avec évidence si l’on rapproche les deux verbes ‘se formaliser’ et ‘se scandaliser’ (on pourrait même partir de cette parenté pour établir très généralement le processus du scandale: les idées scandaleuses sont de vieilles rengaines qui passent inaperçues en s’abritant sous des habitudes.

It is the role and responsibility of the form in the outburst and development (‘processus’) of scandals that is foregrounded by Aymé’s intuition of a semantic proximity between ‘se scandaliser’ and ‘se formaliser’. The form or ‘idée de forme’ is presented as the origin of scandal, understood as causing a break in conventions or habits (‘habitudes’, ‘rengaines’), what could be termed a ‘rupture in unanimity’ (Lemieux 2007, 367). Aymé adds: ‘On se formalise du contenant, puis on se scandalise

du contenu.<sup>106</sup> This view places form at the heart of my critical investigations of narrative scandal and makes it the organizing principle of this chapter.

My question could therefore be: how is scandal conveyed or represented narratively? More specifically, what are the techniques, strategies and devices put into place to narrativize scandal? More simply, and perhaps even more crucially, how does scandal work in a fictional narrative? This chapter will seek to provide an analysis of the scales of scandal or ‘échelles de scandale’ in the wake of Barthes (1980) who identified ‘échelles du crime’ in Sade’s text, the imbrication of different discursive levels, by first looking at the lexical presence of the word ‘scandale’ in the corpus and envisaging insults as potential ‘shifters of scandal’.<sup>107</sup> This will pave the way for an examination of the narrative disseminations of scandal at the level of the sentence and the episode. The exploration of the strategies of scandal (rumour, gossip and denunciation) deployed at various levels of the narrative will lead to a case-study of the black market as an example of the contamination of the whole narrative structure by the motif.

Acknowledging the validity of speech-acts in literature can enable us to envisage scandal as a pragmatic construct, and more specifically the strategies used to create scandal in terms of ‘felicitous acts’ or ‘unfelicitous acts’ to eventually determine how literature and the novel in particular can ‘do things with words’.<sup>108</sup> From the point of view of ethical criticism, recognizing the validity of speech-acts in literature confirms fiction as a legitimate arena where ethical questions can be posed dynamically, not only at the level of the *énoncé* or *histoire*, but also at the level of the *énonciation* or *récit*.

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<sup>106</sup> In the same chapter, Aymé (1938, 155) takes the example of Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du Mal* and Céline’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* as examples of the importance of the form in creating artistic scandals, but Aymé makes it clear that ‘il n’y a presque pas de scandales qui soient purement littéraires.’

<sup>107</sup> In ‘Sade I’ Barthes (1971, 32) writes that the ‘grammaire sadienne’ is formed of different discursive units (‘unités de discours’): the ‘posture’ as the minimal unit, set in motion by ‘opérations’ producing ‘figures’ within ‘épisodes’ and larger ‘scènes’ or ‘séances’.

<sup>108</sup> Making the novel a ‘macro act of language’ (Maingueneau) can be further justified by the fact that there is an evident continuum between fiction and non-fiction (what Genette calls the private and public ‘épitextes’) of the three writers.

This theoretical framework enhances the importance of the narrative conditions of production or utterance of these speech-acts, either by the characters, in direct speech, or through the narrative voice in the *récit* through a variety of grammatical, rhetorical and narrative devices, and in so doing reinforced my argument that scandal needs to be analysed dynamically at all levels of the narrative.<sup>109</sup>

If Austin repeatedly rejected the application of speech-acts to literature in his seminal 1955 study, *How to do things with words?*, it may be because, in Joseph Hillis-Miller's words: 'Austin's concept of the felicitous performative is closely tied to the presupposition of the self-conscious. "I", the male ego capable of speaking words like "I promise" or "I bet" or "I declare" in full possession of his senses and with sincere intentions' (Hillis-Miller 2002, 28). According to him, Austin's stark refusal to apply speech-act theory to literature can be explained by the fact that performative acts are only possible in real life, from which it logically follows that speech-acts in literature can only be of a constative rather than of a performative nature. Derrida had already noted that there is an ethical and political dimension to Austin's theory (Hillis-Miller 2002, 59). Derrida (1971) explains that Austin views words and utterances primarily as expressions of sincerity, which implicate 'an assumed subordination of the nonserious to the serious, the impure to the pure' (Hillis-Miller, 79). In Austin's sense, literature would therefore threaten order, vitiate or 'etiolate' speech acts, a view that Hillis-Miller, after Derrida, sees as ideological rather than linguistic. It seems that there is therefore no intrinsic linguistic justification in essentialising speech-acts as necessarily non-literary, precisely because the question of purity is a false premise. Not only can real life utterances be 'impure' – what Derrida calls the fundamental 'iterability' or otherness of any speech-act – but fictional utterances are deserving of an equal linguistic or

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<sup>109</sup> The thesis is however not conceived as an application of the speech-act theory to fiction and I use the Austinian terminology and Derrida's objections to it only when I see these as being appropriate.

pragmatic treatment, no matter how obsessed Austin appears to seek to 'exorcise literature' (Hillis-Miller, 25).

John Searle's reflection on fictional speech-acts is helpful to understand why speech-acts can be used in the study of literature; in 'The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse' he notes, by way of conclusion:

[...] why do we attach such importance and effort to texts which contained largely pretended speech-acts? [...] Part of the answer would have to do with the crucial role, usually underestimated, that imagination plays in human life, and the equally crucial role that shared products of the imagination play in human social life. And one aspect of the role that such products play derives from the fact that serious (i.e. nonfictional) speech acts can be conveyed by fictional texts, even though the conveyed speech act is not represented in the text. (1975, 332)

For Searle, it is the uninterrupted continuum between life and fiction that justifies the extension of Austin's speech-act theory to literature. The reluctance or unwillingness to acknowledge that the novel is part of a continuum of social discourse (from non-fictional accounts, such as newspaper articles, political speeches) is, according to Maingueneau (1998), indicative of a long-standing, tacit 'division of labour' between social sciences and literary studies, with secondary texts reserved to the former and canonical texts to the latter.

Dans une perspective d'analyse du discours on n'appréhende pas la littérature en opposant de manière réductrice textes littéraires et textes non-littéraires, mais en replaçant le discours littéraire dans la multiplicité des énonciations qui traversent l'espace social. On renonce par là à l'opposition consacrée par l'esthétique romantique entre une parole "intransitive" "autotélique" (la littérature), qui n'aurait pas d'autre visée qu'elle-même, et des paroles "transitives", c'est-à-dire le reste des énoncés, qui seraient au service de finalités placées à l'extérieur d'elles-mêmes.

Maingueneau's effort to reconcile what he sees in terms of heuristic disciplines rather than institutional ones, the refusal to separate transitive from intransitive 'parole' informs the pragmatic stance of this chapter.

## 1. Presences. A lexical analysis

If, in linguistics, the minimal unit of meaning or ‘seme’ can vary, the word is usually retained as the primary semantic feature. In the wake of Barbara Johnson (1980, 11) who noted the paradox of Barthes’s assured pronouncement in *S/Z* (Barthes, 1970) that ‘castration’ permeates Balzac’s *Sarrasine*, in spite of the absence of the word ‘castration’ in the original text, I will posit that the textual presence of the word ‘scandale’ should be acknowledged as the basis for a narrative study of scandal. Johnson’s objection to Barthes’s provision of the word in his analysis seems all the more valuable as structuralism gives primacy to the materiality of the text. A key question to ask may therefore be: is there a link between scandal appearing as a word and scandal being produced in the text, and further, can cognates indeed produce the same scandal or does the inscription of the word ‘scandale’ in the text produce a unique, irreplaceable experience? Although these questions are not the sole nor the primary purpose of this thesis, they delineate the contours of a morphosyntactic analysis that could be systematically extended to all cognates of scandal in order to expand or nuance my argument.<sup>110</sup> It is of course not my purpose to suggest that this kind of systematic analysis of a word in a literary corpus is sufficient to grasp the narrative construction of scandal, or to overstate the importance of its use in the corpus. Todorov (1965, 507) warned against the illusion that can be created by the fact that a ‘mot-clé (fréquent dans l’oeuvre) est aussi un mot-thème (fréquent dans le langage)’; the frequency of the word ‘scandale’ in language to refer to situations of dispute and outrage should guard us against taking the textual inscription of the word at face value. This is why it seems necessary, in the wake of Austin in *The Meaning of a Word*, to move away from the

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<sup>110</sup> The compilation proposed here is not based on computational data as the novels in this corpus, partly because quantitative methods would be more appropriate to a larger corpus, but mainly – and this is the contention of this thesis – that scandal is built at different levels of the narrative. A systematic analysis of the cognates of scandal would include: honte, discrédit, infâmie, outrage, disgrâce, injustice, embarras, opprobre, etc. and their variations.

view that the meaning of scandal can be grasped solely by examining the word. For Austin (1979, 55) the expression ‘the meaning of a word’ derives

from the sense in which a sentence 'has a meaning': to say a word or a phrase 'has a meaning' is to say that there are sentences in which it occurs which 'have meanings': and to know the meaning which the word or phrase has, is to know the meanings of sentences in which it occurs.

A systematic examination of the word ‘scandale’, with a focus on the grammatical and syntactical position of the word and its derivative forms in the sentence (in the singular, plural, adjectival, adverbial, verbal, pronominal, affirmative, negative or infinitive forms) as well as with an interest in the theme and context of its utterance, seems best adapted to identify an isotopy or linguistic – lexical/verbal/syntactic/symbolic – pattern of scandal and ultimately account for the importance given to scandal in the six texts of the corpus.

### **A. Scandal en français dans le texte**

The statistical analysis reveals sixteen occurrences of the word ‘scandale’ in the corpus: ten of ‘scandale’ as a noun (four times as subject), two as a verb (in pronominal, non pronominal and infinitive forms) and four as an adjective (with one in the superlative form). Most occurrences are to be found in the four longer narratives of the corpus, *Les Epées*, *Pompes funèbres*, *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* and *Uranus*, a result which, in some measure, confirms the empirical observation that these texts are also the most scandalous of the corpus. This early observation invites us to envisage an intersection between the frequency of the occurrences of the word ‘scandale’ and the experience of scandal from the point of view of the reader and the critic.

The illocutionary and perlocutionary force of the word ‘scandale’, its strategic use and effect, is evident in the last pages of *Les Epées* when François’s uncle comes to visit the narrator and his sister. The word ‘scandale’ is used twice within less than two pages;

François cuts short their discussion on history, politics and the return to order ('Patience, j'ai souri. Le scandale est rafraîchissant, je connais son véritable goût', *Les Epées*, 147; 149). Earlier, François's fiancée was described as 'trop bête pour tremper jamais dans un scandale épouvantable' (148). In the second example, the mention of 'scandale' put an end to a discussion in which François did not wish to take part: the sense of threat contained in the word 'scandale' is reinforced by his wry smile and confirmed by his earlier 'fantaisies', namely joining the Milice. Scandal takes on sensual ('goût') as well as elitist or aristocratic qualities ('je connais', 'véritable' as opposed to what would appear as an inferior, fake taste of scandal).

Thematically, scandal appears as the privilege of a single individual, rather than a class in general, and constitutes the occasion or promise of demise, very much in the sense the religious etymology of scandal points to, as that which causes to fall.<sup>111</sup> François appears here as the fictional embodiment of Bernanos to whom Nimier lends 'la vertu de scandale' which points to a sense of individual responsibility and confirms his superiority and otherworldliness. Nimier (1975, 18) observes in an allusion to *Scandale de la vérité* (1939) that '[Bernanos] savait que cette vertu n'était pas donnée à tout le monde, il savait que ce n'est pas facile, il connaissait le vrai poids de ce travail.' At a narrative level, the fact that François is also the narrator of the novel can – in hindsight – be read as a warning addressed to the reader to prepare for a final scandal. In effect, the mention of the word 'scandale' alerts the reader to a threat, at the same time it momentarily diverts our attention from it (the uncle's literal understanding of 'rafraîchissant' leads to a digression on the fiancée's 'embonpoint'), before it is eventually carried out behind closed doors at the very end of the novel.<sup>112</sup> The reader is then left with the shock of the announcement of Claude's murder in the last line of the

<sup>111</sup> In his *Dictionnaire*, Furetière defines scandal as 'Dans les Ecritures, ce qui est l'occasion de tomber dans l'erreur ou le péché.' He distinguishes 'scandale actif' and 'scandale passif' as the effect of scandal, therefore underlining the idea of intentionality in causing scandal.

<sup>112</sup> The last sentence attests to the control exerted by François as character and narrator: 'Claude est mieux morte.' (*Les Epées*, 151).

novel. The lexical presence of ‘scandale’ paved the way for the thematic and narrative scandal of the denouement. Nimier’s narrator is however not enthusiastic about all scandals, even though they function as the revelators of his exceptional personality. Reflecting on the prospect of newspaper headlines, the narrator thinks (116): ‘Demain les journaux s’extasieront sur les stupres du grand monde. Alors je me marre doucement et je reconnais que ce genre de scandales m’ennuie profondément.’ Scandal is envisaged positively when François creates scandals, and negatively when they are the expression of the populace. The plural (‘ils’), the implication that the papers have a large circulation as well as the narrator’s ironic comment on the banality of the cause for scandal in the conventional sense (‘stupres’ evokes debauchery and vulgarity) underline the rift between the narrator and the others.

The following example taken from the last quarter of *Pompes funèbres* in which the narrator seeks to describe the first encounter between Erik Seiler and Riton in the Metro illustrates the aristocratic characteristics associated with scandal already identified in *Les Epées*: ‘Le bruit de ses scandales amoureux, autrefois, l’avait satisfait, mais parce qu’ils l’empêchaient de s’écarter de son destin singulier.’ (*Pompes funèbres*, 239). His ‘destin singulier’ is confirmed by his fame (‘il savait que la foule connaissait l’existence d’Erik Seiler, Erik Seiler que lui seul pouvait être’) and appears to be protected by the very ‘bruit de ses scandales amoureux’, the echo or *fama* of his sexual prowess back in Berlin. Scandal is there the expression of his unique destiny which prevents him ‘de s’écarter de son destin singulier’; the image of the abstract road that underpins the collective representation of destiny conjures up the etymological sense of scandal as a ‘stumbling block’, a ‘pierre de scandale’ that blocks the path and forces one to take a detour. ‘Scandale’ functions as a complement to the noun ‘bruit’, which, by way of a metabole, plays on the auditory dimension of scandal (an ‘esclandre’ is the sound of scandal), thus enriching the sensory and sensual dimension of scandal as taste



(in *Les Epées*) and sound (in *Pompes funèbres*). The phrase ‘le bruit de ses scandales amoureux’ reveals a poetic reworking of the usual order of the sentence (that would conventionally go as follows: ‘le scandale de ses bruits amoureux’) to underline the narrator’s fascination with the enigma that Erik represents. This also serves to signal the scandal of Erik’s (homo) sexuality, euphemistically hinted at through the adjective ‘amoureux’.

The next example from *Les Epées* is reminiscent, although somewhat differently, of the etymological origin of scandal as a stumbling block: ‘Cette lacune me fait trouver scandaleux qu’un inconnu puisse se transformer en martyr parce qu’on le fusille’ (*Les Epées*, 76). This time, it is the aristocratic qualities that the narrator denies to the martyr. François reflects here on what he sees as the fine line separating a coward from a martyr, figures who are conventionally at opposite ends of the moral spectrum. He feebly acknowledges that his failure to understand this may be due to his self-perceived lack of concern for other human-beings (‘cette lacune’), a view that echoes the scandalous last sentence of *Le Hussard bleu* (433): ‘Tout ce qui est humain m’est étranger.’ It is the mutation of a man with no qualities – an ‘inconnu’ – into somebody worthy of public honours owing to the fact that he died in certain circumstances, that causes indignation on his part. Death not only marks the passage from one state to another from an organic point of view but also a linguistic transformation by way of a poetic and political promotion. The sense of scandal felt by the narrator also signals his inability to understand how this poetic promotion works: the intellectual stumbling-block points to a more serious, sincere crisis of meaning as one signified (the person) becomes designated by two altogether different signifiers and connotations (the ‘inconnu’ and the ‘martyre’).

The sense of diffuse threat inherent in scandal is explicitly represented in *Pompes funèbres* with Erik Seiler deliberating within himself as to whether he should let Riton

go or press his crutch further against his back: ‘Même si cela lui déplâit, parce que je suis allemand, il n’osera pas faire de scandale’ (*Pompes*, 236). Erik resolves that the possibility of an outburst of scandal in the Metro is impossible for Riton to contemplate. The power struggle and the scenario of the Occupation (with the spatial domination recast at the level of the Metro carriage) is replayed from the national to the individual level. The public or theatrical dimension of scandal is evident with the passengers sending him dark looks; the dramatic tension contained in scandal is perceptible in the construction of the scene, from their encounter to their exit from the Metro station Parmentier. The scandal is prevented by the conjunction of three factors or, rather, by three aspects of Erik’s personality: ‘Le mâle, le soldat et l’Allemand le dominaient.’ The passengers’ cowardice is also a determining factor: ‘C’était Jaurès. Des voyageurs descendirent’ can be read as coincidental or perhaps evidential of their impotence to step in and provoke a scandal. The complicity of the two characters in a situation of scandal is made explicit in the sentence: ‘Par le fait d’un accord déjà noué, ni Riton, ni le Fritz ne se dérangèrent.’ This example testifies to a typical scenography of scandal, one that is to be found in various forms throughout the corpus: two protagonists and an audience, a unity of action (a sex act), space (the carriage) and time (two stops), all pointing to a minimal narrative of scandal, a narrative of scandal in miniature.

The theatricality or, in this case, cinematic quality of scandal is even clearer in the following passage from *Les Epées* (69): ‘Tout cela m’est repassé devant les yeux: le scandale provoqué chez les gentilshommes du marché noir par mon uniforme [de la Milice], la salle de cinéma où je me suis demandé si j’avais envie d’elle.’ Scandal appears in a vision, as a memory, and the sentence follows the chronological movement of François’s settling down in the cinema. The uniform acts as a signifier of scandal and becomes the spectacle itself, even challenging what is shown on the screen. The

dramatic tension played out on the screen is echoed in the cinematic representation of the ‘milicien’ in *Pompes funèbres*. It is scandal as a moment suspended in time, a moment of palpable narrative tension (thanks to an attention to punctuation and delaying techniques) that succeeds in transforming a non-scandal into an actual (narrative) event. The description and narrative staging of (quasi) situations of scandal reflects what is specific to the fictional narrativization of scandal, namely the possibility of them occurring either at the level of the énoncé or at that of the énonciation thanks to narrative interventions.

‘Erik sourit, et, devant ses camarades blagueurs, il reconnut l’aventure de la nuit. Aucun scandale n’eut lieu. Ils rirent un peu et s’égayèrent en silence en regardant le gosse dont la beauté soudainement leur fut révélée’ (*Pompes funèbres*, 278). In this passage, the audience is composed of Erik’s fellow soldiers rather than the Parisian crowd, the atmosphere is more relaxed (‘camarades blagueurs’) and the narrator notes that ‘[a]ucun scandale n’eut lieu’. Interestingly, if a scandal is linked to the ex-position of a state of affairs, here, it is the beauty of the ‘gosse’ that constitutes the revelation. It is my contention that the narrative representation of situations of scandal, whatever their degree of maturation (be they developing, aborted, full-blown, etc.) and their chances of being ‘felicitous’ to use Austin’s terminology, attest to a commitment to scandal as the ultimate manifestation of narrative tension. Contrary to real-life scandals, the narratorial authority allows scandal to break out between the lines; whatever happens at a diegetic level, scandal is inscribed on the page, for the reader to become a witness of.

Scandal is only possible where values can be shaken and perturbed, thus implying a tacit admission of values, as Dampierre (1954, 331) notes that ‘les valeurs reçues doivent être, au moins dans l’idée du public, acceptées par l’auteur du scandale lui-même’. But if ‘le cours des valeurs morales’ is no longer important, the possibility of scandal ceases to exist, as Monglat argues in *Uranus* (128): ‘il y a tant de saloperies

dans le monde que le monde se fout du scandale à présent.’ After Monglat’s refusal to intervene on his behalf, Léopold resorted to desperate tactics and threatened Monglat to denounce his shady dealings during the Occupation and after the Liberation. This sentence demonstrates that for scandal to break out and be heard, it requires some sense of adhesion in both senses of the word, adherence and allegiance: a scandal needs to stick, to find some kind of grounding to flare up and find an echoing chamber, a following, people committing themselves to denouncing it. The perception of a transgression of an unspoken rule or conventional values, the necessity to speak out and constitute a ‘cause’ appear as three indispensable elements in the creation of a scandal.

In Aymé’s texts, scandal appears mostly in the negative and the conditional. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* the third-person narrator says that Antoine felt that ‘la vie sous l’occupation allemande lui paraissait normale. Les hauts prix et la difficulté de subsister ne le scandalisaient pas’ (*Le Chemin*, 769). The negative form of the verb ‘scandaliser’ shows that Antoine is at odds with the general feeling of injustice regarding what is perceived as the scandal of privation. Martin appears as Antoine’s counterpart in ‘Traversée de Paris’ (903): ‘Martin, lui, ne voyait rien d’immoral ni de scandaleux dans le trafic clandestin et ses bénéfiques réputés exorbitants.’ The past participle ‘réputés’ further emphasises Martin’s distance from what is usually thought about the black market, therefore alluding to an intertext dominated by the denunciation of the conditions of the Occupation. If for Martin ‘le vol et l’illégalité étaient à ses yeux choses distinctes’, Professor Jourdan’s Marxist defence of Rochard’s ‘condition d’exploité’ in *Uranus* belongs to the same vein: ‘Alors quoi, j’irais me scandaliser d’un homme qui veut secouer son joug, qui a pris conscience de l’ignominie de sa condition d’exploité?’ (*Uranus*, 1093) Arguably, Martin’s sense of order and justice is presented as more serious than Jourdan’s, whose stance is debunked by Gaigneux who reminds him that Rochard took advantage of farm products sent to him by his family during the

Occupation. The pronominal form of the verb ‘se scandaliser’, in the conditional form, makes the possibility of scandal a distant prospect while at the same time the parodic use of the Marxist terminology ridicules Jourdan’s position and Communists at large.

The sense of scandal is however not altogether absent from Aymé’s texts. Grandgil’s threats towards Jamblier in the cellar infuriate Martin, which points to a relation between scandal and (social) disorder (in an already disorderly state). Indeed, the discovery of Grandgil’s scam relying on the pretence that he was ‘un homme laborieux’ like Martin, led to his violent death. Faced with Martin’s outrage the narrative voice takes over:

Martin, ne te fâche pas. Je vais t’expliquer... Grandgil aurait voulu se laver du crime de dilettantisme, le plus scandaleux, le moins pardonnable au sentiment d’un homme laborieux, exagérément conscient de l’importance de ses gestes, sinon de sa fonction. (‘Traversée de Paris’, 924)

Dilettantism is presented in the superlative form (‘le plus scandaleux’) which the symmetrical construction ‘le moins pardonnable’ further underlines. Grandgil’s amateurism and fraudulent scheme was proleptically envisaged – although confusingly – in Martin’s suspicions (‘Martin, mal à l’aise, cherchait en vain à expliquer ou à concilier ces contrastes.’, ‘Traversée’, 908).

Scandal not only brings about social unrest and moral confusion but also turmoil and inner disorder. In *Les Epées*, Fleuve’s revelation that Claude slept with him on their second night together on the beach in Nice in August 1945 leads the narrator to reflect upon deception, death and scandal:

Claude avait tué son côté angélique, un soir – et cependant elle ne pouvait s’avouer cette mort. Elle avait un rien de dégoût. [...] Elle retrouvait souvent le ton de notre complicité. Pour toutes ces raisons, pour cette confusion, cette ambiguïté, le scandale régnait en elle, mais j’étais le seul à le voir. Je ne pouvais que détester ces mélanges. (145)

Interestingly, Fleuve is close to the ‘fine fleur de la réaction’ (62), a group nostalgic for order. Scandal is here associated with treachery, ambiguity and ‘mélanges’ as the title of the second part of the novel (‘Le désordre’, 97-151) indicates. Scandal is therefore on the side of the heterogeneous and is perceived as deadly, as the following sentence makes it clear: ‘Claude ne m’a pas trahi, elle s’est trahie.’ (151). Scandal appears as the absence of truth to oneself, an untruth that took her over and became sovereign (‘régnaît en elle’). If she suddenly became scandalous, the narrator confesses that he is ‘le seul à le voir’; François appears as simultaneously witness, judge and executioner, as her eventual murder confirms. If this example seems to contradict the notion of scandal as a necessarily public event, it is evidence of the all-controlling presence of the homodiegetic narrator who chooses to reveal Claude’s murder in the last line. More generally, this demonstrates that the study of scandal in fiction is complicated – and made particularly interesting – by the intermingling of narrative levels.

The semantic specialization of the word ‘scandale’ for sexual matters in Genet’s text was announced earlier – although indirectly and in miniature – when the narrator saw the watches belonging to Jean D.’s mother and Erik as material indicators of their scandalous intimacy: ‘J’avais peut-être eu tort de supposer que ces deux montres dos à dos sur une table de chevet trahissaient une intimité scandaleuse’ (*Pompes funèbres*, 45). Again, the euphemistic presence of sex in the text with the word ‘intimité’ (this time between a French woman, mother of a martyr, and a Nazi soldier) confirms the sexual and political dimension of scandal in Genet’s text. It is the political dimension of sex and the dimension of social judgement in the most intimate areas of human experience in which scandal is potently treated in *Pompes funèbres*.

‘Scandale’ appears as part of an enumeration along with treachery and cowardice in François’s observation about Claude’s deception: ‘Les trahisons, le scandale, la lâcheté parfois, nous aident à penser que la fin du monde viendra.’ (146). The plural ‘trahisons’

points to minimal forms of treachery and deception and evacuates the more serious dimension of the generic singular which would designate what is widely regarded as the most serious crime in times of war. If ‘trahisons’ and ‘lâcheté’ signal the qualities – or the lack thereof – of a person, the central position given to scandal in the sentence appears as a declaration of faith on the part of the narrator. Scandal seems to be on the side of the negative, which in the narrator’s system of values makes it automatically desirable: ‘Simplement, j’adore la fin du monde’, the narrator adds. Scandal is therefore an element that announces the end of time.

Thematically, scandal conjures up the idea of provocation and questions collective perceptions of morality and is used as a threat to (social, political, sexual) order. Narratively, the word ‘scandale’ is present throughout the corpus but tends to appear in critical moments, often towards the end of the novels, mostly through the intervention of the narrative voice. Stylistically, scandal appears in a variety of forms, from the passive to the active sense, in the affirmative and the negative form, which indicate an ambivalence towards scandal in the corpus. This first stage in the analysis of what scandal entails in narrative fiction does not cover all the aspects pertaining to scandal. Insults are a crucial pragmatic entry-point into scenes of disputes as they can be seen as the most obvious, efficient and economical mode of exposition of a scandal. It is the capacity of insults to articulate an accusation, allude to and contest a prior narrative and constitute a cause that I will seek to investigate in the next section.

## **B. Insults as ‘shifters of scandal’?**

What are the swear words of the period? Are they harbingers of scandal or do they act as derivatives of civil war? Should what Derrida calls ‘insultes-réflexe’ be treated as performing speech-acts? The word ‘insult’ dates back to 1380 and describes an upheaval, a sedition, thus pointing to a political dimension of the subject within society,

in the Latin sense of ‘injuria’ which, in the words of Lagorgette (2012), constitutes ‘une atteinte à l’honneur, une injustice, une violation du droit’, or, according to Loraux (1997, 3; quoted in Azoulay, 2014), ‘l’antichambre du désordre séditieux’. In an article examining the legal differences between insults, slander and defamation, Lagorgette notes that ‘l’argumentation [est] une composante intrinsèque de l’insulte’, a view that places the study of insults in the larger discussion of their function in discourse and more specifically in narrative texts. In fiction, insults are generally uttered in direct speech (or in free direct speech), thus introducing discontinuity in the diegesis but also indirectly revealing the space left by the narrator to his characters.

The illocutionary force of insults signals an instant dichotomy between a ‘scandalisé’ and a ‘scandalisant’, a ‘scandalee’ and a ‘scandalized’, an ‘insulteur’ and an ‘insulté’ (Aymé 1938, 149). It is in this sense that Judith Butler, after Althusser, speaks of insults as modes of ‘interpelation’, literally, of ‘[being] called a name’, Goffman (1974) as ‘stigma’ and Genet as ‘profanation’ (*Pompes funèbres*, 105). In his *Saint-Genet*, Sartre (1996, 98) makes the derogatory interpellation of ‘voleur’ the primitive scene of Genet’s literature, the origin of Genet’s self-narrative and subsequent narrative reconstructions in *Notre-Dame-des-fleurs*, *Pompes funèbres*, *Miracle de la rose* and *Journal du voleur*. But if the argumentative dimension inherent in insults is potent enough to inform the rest of Genet’s life, they are not stable signs, capable of ‘spoiling one’s identity’ (Goffman). In *Pompes funèbres*, the narrator explains the importance of circumstances in the reaction to an insult, thereby differentiating between a mere insult and a profanation:

si l’on prononçait à son égard une phrase inoffensive en soi, mais vulgaire d’expression, par exemple: “Il est mort, il ne pètera plus”. J’y verrais une insulte et plus qu’une insulte, une profanation et je casserais la gueule à l’insulteur [...]. J’eusse admis qu’on l’insultât vivant, s’il ne pouvait entendre. Et s’il entendait, qu’il se défendît! (105)



Genet confesses to the vulgarity of insults, thus pointing to insults as belonging to a register rather than to an arsenal; the enunciative conditions of an insult can transform an insult into blasphemy, with the categories of ‘insulté’ and ‘insulteur’, reproducing the theological representation of scandal as active and passive. As Simonin (2008, 14) showed with the stigma of ‘indignité nationale’, insults, as any linguistic sign, are unstable, and, as such, need to be studied pragmatically, as part of a wider rhetorical strategy to determine if they can efficiently function as ‘embrayeurs’ or ‘shifters of scandal’. Insults are of interest in the study of scandal inasmuch as they represent moments of ‘collective effervescence’ since they economically exp(lose) an accusation, thus creating public disorder at various degrees and need to be analysed as ‘institutionalizing forces’.

Insults are the emotional expression of a perceived injustice and by breaching the peace, can potentially operate as rallying cries. The reactions they elicit, from dismissive laughter or mockery to verbal condemnation or violence and retaliation have in common the capacity to solicit some form of public support. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Coutelier’s protestations against Malinier’s Nazi stance are directed towards the other characters who suddenly become witnesses of the argument; but the support that Coutelier sought to obtain from Tiercelin, Antoine and Yvette only leads to laughter and the failure of his ‘cause’. Coutelier’s old-fashioned references to Racine or his idealistic patriotism as well as his pathetic family plight are telltale signs of his ineptitude and inability to generate interest.

The most frequent insults (‘salaud’, ‘crapule’, ‘charogne’, ‘cochon’, ‘traître’, ‘Tartuffe’, ‘fasciste’, ‘mauvais français’, ‘assassin’) relate to the opprobrium of collaboration which falls into the generic category of the ψόγος (psogos) or blame, what Angenot (2013) calls the ‘étiquetage réprobateur’ of the word ‘fasciste’: ‘L’antifascisme d’avant la Deuxième guerre mondiale a légué à la gauche d’après 1945 une catégorie

nébuleuse en perpétuelle expansion, un ‘fascisme’ sans rivage qui allait devenir “l’injure suprême” semée à tout vent.<sup>113</sup> The following scene from *Uranus* when Alfred, the hairdresser, is targeted by three other customers at Léopold’s café, is exemplary of the prevalence of the *psogos*: “‘Charogne, on te butera. Tu m’entends, on te butera. [...] Les Boches, tu étais assez content de leur couper les cheveux et de leur envoyer des sourires. Fumier, on l’aura, ta peau. [...] A coups de talon dans la gueule que je veux que tu sois buté’” (*Uranus*, 1065). The accusation of being friendly (‘envoyer des sourires’) to the ‘Boches’, called ‘Fridolins’, ‘Frisous’ or ‘vert de gris’ elsewhere in the corpus, is echoed in *Pompes funèbres* (42): “‘C’est un Boche, diraient-ils! Cochon! Vendu! Traître! C’est lui qui l’a tué.’” La foule me lyncherait. Ses cris déferlaient en moi, montaient du fond de moi jusqu’à mes oreilles qui les entendaient à l’envers’. Here, the narrator’s anticipation of the crowd’s fury is expressed through a string of insults which rhythmically conveys the threat of a public lynching that the conditional (‘diraient-ils’) fails to ease. Arguably, the narrator’s vision of the collective wrath can be seen as a fantasy in the same way that ‘l’argot est la phonétique du désir’ (Impellizzeri 2010, 93) in *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* or *Miracle de la rose* where insults and slang are used more extensively than in *Pompes funèbres*. Indeed, if some critics have noted Genet’s predilection for the word, his ‘désir du mot’, insults function narratively as what could be deemed ‘kernels of desire’. The comparative limited use of insults in *Pompes funèbres* needs to be envisaged in the context of a more restrained use of direct speech compared to his other texts of the same period, but may also signal a more general phenomenon that I have identified in this corpus and that will be developed later.

In ‘Traversée de Paris’ Grandgil’s rant against the customers in the café has, in retrospect, when his duplicity is revealed, all the characteristics of an actor’s

<sup>113</sup> He adds that ‘Ensevelir l’adversaire sous la réprobation générale est la plus douce et la plus complète victoire éristique.’ and after Machefer (1974) that ‘En France, on est toujours, ou l’on a été, le fasciste de quelqu’un.’

performance or an exercise in style: ‘Racaille, va, saloperie. Je te foutrais tout ça en prison, moi...Voyous, anarchistes, mauvais Français.’ (911). If direct speech also serves to convey the vindictive tone and primitiveness of the female spectator at the cinema in *Pompes* (‘Les salopards, il faut leur-z-y crever la panse!’), 51), insults are the constituents of a wider system of scandalization overseen by the narrative voice.<sup>114</sup> In *Uranus*, the narrator takes the liberty of interrupting the flow of the speech of one of his character’s speech by summarising both the tone and general content of his insults: ‘de plus en plus excité, il remuait des pensées et des mots amers: hypocrisie nationale, tartuferie, cancer, mensonge, cafarderie’ (1058).<sup>115</sup> The frequent narratorial interventions also affect how insults appear in the text, mostly on a non-serious mode in the case of Aymé, in a serious mode in Nimier and in a fantacized mode with Genet. These frequent narratorial interferences, combined with the relative rarity of insults, suggest that sudden public outbursts are represented as few and far between in the context of the Occupation and the transition to peace.

Crucially, the infrequency of insults may be envisaged as a strategy to avoid direct confrontations and the potential disclosure of a locatable, identifiable source of blame. The examination of insults as harbingers of scandal poses a key question that has to do with the representation of free speech at the level of the characters and that of the latitude given to them by the narrative voice. It is my contention here that the scarcity of insults in the corpus points to a more complex narrative construction of scandal, at the level of the diegesis, and to the representation of individuals, family cells and society at large as lethargic and fearful. Conversely, the scarcity of forbidden words (*απόρρητα*,

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<sup>114</sup> Offerlé (1998, 122-123) suggested the phrase ‘strategies of scandalization’ to account for “actions qui cherchent à faire scandale” (grèves de la faim, [...] suicide, etc.); à celles qui consistent à “énoncer qu’il y a scandale” en prenant la “parole indignée” au nom de la cause que l’on défend, “en la décrivant, en la montrant, en la photographiant, en la télévisant”; à celles, enfin, qui visent à trouver les moyens de “faire dire et de faire croire que le fait, la situation sont bien scandaleux”. Ainsi entendues, les stratégies scandaleuses seraient l’une des formes d’action les plus efficaces dans nos sociétés pour faire exister publiquement une cause [...].’

<sup>115</sup> *Tartuffe* and *Talleyrand* are two figures of duplicity and deception whose fortunes in the post-war period are represented in Sacha Guitry’s film *Le Diable boîteux* in 1948.

aporrhèta), pertaining to the defence of the nation (ρίψασπις, rhipsaspis), familial harmony (μετραλοίας, metraloias and πετραιολας, patraloias) or the stain of murder (ἀνδροφόνους, androphonos) can be accounted for by the fact that social consensus during the Occupation and after the Liberation may have been stronger than often thought (Azoulay 2014). In other words, is the scarcity of the insults evidence of a strong social consensus or, conversely, the sign and symptom of a society whose cohesion is too weak to actively mobilize against what some individuals perceive as unjust? In *Uranus*, Fernand Galien's beating in front of the crowd assembled to welcome the prisoners returned from Germany generates a scandal (Watrin's intervention and vocal protestations) but fails to move the crowd in both senses of the word, emotionally and physically. If Aymé's depiction of the crowd's cowardice has been identified as evidence of his pessimism and spite, the narrative treatment of the dispute in this scene points to an interesting representation of France, here microcosmically represented in the town of Blémont, as hypocritically consensual.

## **2. Disseminations. Rhetorical strategies.**

The 'détour nominaliste' (Kalifa 2007, 200) of this chapter established the lexical presence of scandal in the corpus and its limits pointed to a more elaborate narrative construction, a more complex 'mise en forme scandaleuse' (de Blic 2006) that insults which appear as minimal units of scandalization or 'precipitates of scandal' only partially complements. The main purpose of this section is to analyse more extensively how language is affected by scandal and propagates scandal. I will first demonstrate that language is undermined at the level of the sentence, which reveals a deeper distrust for language in general, before showing how language is deployed, strategically attributed, distributed and confiscated by an all-powerful narrative voice. Genet's narratorial intervention to display Paulo's in-competence and the need for the narrator to compensate for his lack of reflexivity is clearly stated: 'Je n'ai pas dit que ce petit

voyou pensât toutes ces choses' (*Pompes funèbres*, 148), thus asserting the control exerted by the narrative voice over the characters, an observation that can be extended to the whole corpus.

### A. At syntactic level

Firstly, the abundant considerations on language attest to a sense of unease as to what language can convey. There seems to be an obsession with finding the right words ('maréchalistes, ce n'est même pas le mot', *Uranus*, 1055) to turn around some words before eventually discarding them: 'Je l'ai regardé sous toutes les coutures – sa peau plus blanche que le suif. Non – pas le suif, pas le suif... J'ai tourné quelque temps autour de ce mot. Dès lors, j'ai été sûr de ne pas rêver. J'ai senti que je devais étrangler ce type.' (*Les Epées*, 127).<sup>116</sup> The failure to find the right word is illustrated here as are the very tangible and deadly consequences to do so. I will extrapolate from this example to show that language is scandalized from the inside. Words come to haunt the characters, signifiers seem to be detached from their signified; in *Pompes*, the narrator reflects on the word 'la courante' (24). 'Pourquoi fallait-il que ce mot me revînt...?' (24-25), therefore making it explicit that the word is at the origin of his narrative project. Bachelard's perception of words as 'petite huttes' and 'petites maisons avec cave et grenier' (1961, 174) appears particularly apt to describe the importance of the word in Genet's poetics, making it a space within which Genet can feel at home and go back to.

Language reflects the confusion and difficulty to ascertain and state a definitive meaning once and for all. In the following passage, Genet reflects:

Je dis ou je ne dis pas? Si je dis, après? Après? Après, c'est l'envahissement sentimental auquel j'échappe en ce moment par ma préoccupation d'un équilibre à garder. Ma situation est inconfortable mais elle est propre. Elle est propre tant que je peux dire ou ne pas dire, encore que durant cette

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<sup>116</sup> Earlier, Archambaud is described as: '[...] ne parvenait pas non plus à trouver le mot convenable pour désigner le sentiment auquel ils avaient pu obéir' (*Uranus*, 1051).

hésitation j’ aie choisi de ne pas dire puisque je ne dis pas et pourtant que je ne dise pas n’a pas la stabilité du fait, le ‘je ne dis pas’ est encore mourant, tremblant: ‘je peux dire’. (132)

The ‘hesitation’ between saying and not saying, his ‘preoccupation d’un équilibre à garder’, the sense of ‘inconfort’ integral to what he refers to in a spatial metaphor as a ‘situation’ that is characterised by a seesaw movement between the affirmative and the negative, saying and not saying, finds echoes throughout the corpus. A key question emerges from Genet’s treatment of language: what is it that is said through, beyond, or beneath often amphigouric structures? In Furetière’s *Dictionnaire universel* (1690), a ‘construction’ ‘se dit de l’arrangement & du regime des mots suivant les regles de la syntaxe. [...] L’obscurite du discours vient d’un mauvais arrangement des paroles, & d’une construction louche, & equivoque.’ In Furetière’s sense, clarity of meaning relies on good grammar; conversely, obscurity can be explained by unclear syntax and what he calls ‘constructions louches’. Applied to Genet’s use of syntax, this definition can be related to a more general practice (stylistic, lexical and thematic) of the ‘louche’ as a stylistic device conveying ambiguity at the level of the sentence.

In all the texts of the corpus, instability and uncertainty are stylistically conveyed at the level of the sentence. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, Michaud’s inability to find a satisfactory analogy to obliquely encourage Loliver to send his son to a psychiatrist descends into farce: ‘Il compara l’homme à une marmite, à un enfant de chœur, à un fer à repasser, à une lampe pigeon, à un moteur d’auto, et l’équilibre moral à celui d’un cycliste’ (756), but may more seriously suggest the inadequacy of analogical reasoning in the circumstances of the Occupation represented in *Le Chemin*, and signal the impossible creation of a stable world. Moreover, Michaud’s failure to offer a vision of mankind (‘l’homme’) through an attempt at substitution (Ricoeur 1975) has ethical consequences that Aymé’s narrator refuses to treat on a serious mode. Instead, the narrator seems to generally relish distracting his characters from serious conversations

(the mouse functions narratively as a diversion), interrupting or cutting them short. My contention is that analogies fail to convey the ambiguity of the Occupation (and admittedly of the Liberation) and that other stylistic devices are used at the level of the sentence to express the ambivalence of the period. In other words, the language of ambiguity is spoken at less obvious levels.

The main stylistic device of the 'louche' can be found in the various rhetorical figures conveying equivocation. Catachreses, hendyadises, syllepses, zeugmas, hypallages and oxymorons pervade the corpus, although admittedly more frequently in Aymé's texts where they operate surreptitiously to destabilise the apparent serenity depicted at the level of the *énoncé*. The concatenation of concrete and abstract central to these figures produces a distancing effect by constantly bringing back abstract reasonings, metaphysical and moral questions to concrete, mundane considerations. Language seems to be constantly sliding between abstract and concrete, at the image of Michaud's meditation on 'le rasoir ébréché, la vie mal pavée' at the beginning of *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* (706). The sense of the mock tragic of everyday life, the disproportionate importance given to minor domestic events, seems to suggest an artificial relation between the individual and the collective, and the effect created is that suspicion imbues all interpersonal relations, at the level of the *énoncé* and between narrative voice and characters.

According to Leo Spitzer (1970), 'les antithèses trahissent un manque d'équilibre, d'harmonie, l'opposition n'est pas aplanie, l'absurdité garde son acuité'. Asyndetons and anacoluthas stylistically display a 'constatation de l'illogisme' (Spitzer), an observation which could be applied to the following sentence: 'Ils ont levé les yeux vers les immeubles et ils sont descendus, tous les cinq, avec cette crâne insouciance française dont, etc.' (*Les Epées*, 42). The interruption of the narrator's own *récit* makes it manifest that the Liberation holds no interest for him. Oxymoric or paradoxical

structures can also reconcile oppositions for comic effect, as is the case in the following example in which the narrator describes Yvette: ‘[...] s’acquittant de sa tâche de femme avec une habileté nonchalante, une sorte d’acharnement paresseux, un dévouement économe, une volonté un peu diabolique qui s’employait languissamment au bonheur de la famille [...]’ (*Le Chemin des Ecoliers* 772). Tautological structures but more clearly disjunctive structures contribute to create a deficit in meaning that is often inversely proportional to the saturation and syntactic complexity of the sentence (‘Il n’est pas sûr que Juliette entendît. Il n’est pas sûr qu’elle n’entendît pas’, *Pompes*, 214; ‘Elle est très laide ou très belle, ce détail ne compte guère’, ‘[u]n tableau de Picasso, ni bon ni mauvais, sur un mur beige pâle’, *Les Epées*, 31; 92) and create confusion if not nonsense. The rules of common logic or rhetoric are also commonly flouted (‘[s]a secrétaire vous regarde sans méchanceté, bien qu’elle soit laide’) to produce acerbic comical effects; the recourse to false explicitations (‘[o]n est tranquille, c’est-à-dire sincère, c’est-à-dire heureux, c’est-à-dire presque rien’) further demonstrates that language is undermined from the inside and that the transparency of language is made impossible. (*Les Epées*, 27; 104).

Approximations such as ‘le fils du boucher possédait une mitraillette presque vraie’ (*Uranus*, 1175), or ‘elle savait mieux que personne apprécier les dons de son fils un peu préféré’ (*Le Chemin*, 732) point to a representation of the world in which truth is nothing but shades of grey. Indeed, adjectival reinforcements (‘vrai/faux’), operating alongside ‘le si et le tant d’affirmation forte’ (Spitzer) suffuse the texts with artificial reassurances of one’s sincerity or, on the contrary, function as indices of hidden or latent realities. In Aymé’s and Nimier’s texts in particular, expressions such as ‘son vrai sang’, ‘bureau en faux citronnier’, ‘du faux dix-huitième’, ‘meubles faux de Lina’ and the ‘fauteuil de cuir volé à une banque juive’ (*Pompes*, 102) all point to the disturbing realities behind respectable appearances, here represented in the serenity of bourgeois



settings. Lexical displacements disseminated throughout the corpus organise what resembles an obstacle course through which the reader is forced to adopt what Ricœur (1996) termed a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’, to be vigilant to the narrative tricks played on them. Spitzer’s analysis of ‘épithètes de réprobation définitive’ as responsible for charging ‘l’instant d’une grave inquiétude morale’ through the anticipation of a ‘fait accompli’, thus alluding to the possibility of moral decline, can be applied to the more general phenomenon of lexical displacement that can be observed at minimal level or as a case of contamination of the structure by the motif and of which ‘Traversée de Paris’ is a prime example.<sup>117</sup>

Uncertainty seems to seep through the interstices of sentences. Cixous’s observation that Genet’s style is characterized by perpetual shifts can be generalised to the whole corpus:

Il n’affirme rien, il hasarde. Il glisse tout ce qu’il pense sous si, un si prêt à se tourner en non, et si ce n’est pas sous si c’est sous ‘peut-être’ ou bien ‘il me semble’. Il simule l’indécision? Ou bien c’est que sous son goût provoquant pour les maximes se niche (non pas se cache) un dégoût pour l’autorité, la suffisance, le crédit. (2011, 68)

What Genet negotiates systematically is to smuggle in other linguistic potentialities, to stylistically convey simultaneous possibilities, through epistemic modality, to present a *total simul*. Epistemic modality is rife among the characters and is aggravated by the distrust and irony of the narrators concerning their own characters’ judgements and actions.<sup>118</sup> Genet’s style functions laterally and can be seen as folding and unfolding, as would a ‘pli’ (Deleuze 2013) or a spiral; the baroque elements of his style (Fredette, 2001) produce an aesthetics of the chiaroscuro, a non-linear narrative progression, of which digressions are the most evident sign. Sartre (Genet 1952) noted the confusion

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<sup>117</sup> See IV. 3. C, 237-239 for a study of the mechanism of narrative deception in ‘Traversée’.

<sup>118</sup> Gnomonic modality will be analysed in Chapter IV.1. B.

and the ‘tourniquet’ effect of his spiralling narrative, which make it possible for the possible and the impossible to co-exist:

Il faisait nuit. A moins qu’il eût fait continuellement jour. Je crois même qu’il n’y avait pas de nuit, ni de jour, au sommet de la haute maison. En plein jour on était quelquefois en pleine nuit, c’est-à-dire que tous les moments révélèrent une activité nocturne. (*Pompes*, 285)

## B. At episodic level

The analysis of insults showed that they do not necessarily signal the beginning of the deployment of a scandalous phase/ phrase and it is my hypothesis that other strategic uses of language such as gossip, rumour and denunciations can show how scandal works in narrative fiction of the immediate post-war period. Dampierre (1954, 333) argued rather sensibly that ‘le scandale est fonction de la diffusion de l’événement scandaleux’, thus pointing to the public as an essential component in the emergence of a scandal.<sup>119</sup> Scandal disrupts habitual configurations of the public space and upsets thought and belief patterns: indeed, ‘c’est le propre du scandale de se créer un public ou des publics’ (Dampierre). From a narrative point of view, studying scenes of scandal and ‘strategies of scandalization’ makes it necessary for us to analyse all outbursts of scandal – from mere tiffs to wider controversies, trials to violent forms of social interaction, including beatings or executions – their temporality (how they begin, develop and find a resolution), the spaces in which they take place, how a ‘cause’ is constituted or fails to find a credible form to gain the support of public opinion and may consequently fail to graduate to the level of an affair. I will seek to track the deployment of speech in more anonymous forms of expression which necessitate longer durations and allow actants (institutional or individual) to conceal their identity (the source of scandal-mongering) to protect them from retaliation.

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<sup>119</sup> De Blic (2000, 160) recently explored the ‘difficiles mobilisations’ around the financial scandal of the Crédit Lyonnais, underlining the necessity of a public mobilization in the denunciation of a scandal. See Dobry (1986) for a sociological study of mobilization in political scandals.

Rumours run high as Lolivier's apparently anecdotal mention of a connection in the Vichy government indicates: 'Sous les auspices du président de la République turque, une conférence secrète venait de s'ouvrir à Ankara entre Gœring, Eden et Molotov' (*Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, 718). The narrative voice stresses the grotesque possibility of the leak in adding: 'Certes, l'information était des plus douteuses, pour ne pas dire absurde, mais il était intéressant de faire semblant d'y croire.' (718). All in all, the unreliability of the newspiece 'qui lui était arrivée la veille de Vichy par le canal du cousin d'un attaché de cabinet' reflects the unreliability of the source of the leak (the uncertain family connection of the 'cousin') and, indirectly, the incompetence of Vichy officials; it is irony at two levels that the narrator deploys here. The connection between the unreliability and uncertainty at individual level reiterates the uncertainty of the role of Vichy and its competence at national or international level. Anecdotal though it may seem, this rumour is at the basis of the narrative development of *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* and functions as a reminder of the narrative origin of the novel. Indeed, it is M. Puget's departure to Vichy which made Michaud and his cynical alter ego, Lolivier, the interim managers at the 'Société de gérance'. The temporariness of the situation is underlined in Michaud's following confession to Lina:

Je ferai l'impossible pour étirer les délais, mais je ne suis pas seul et d'ailleurs, Lolivier et moi, nous ne sommes que les gérants. [...] Il ne pouvait dire à Lina que M. Puget, le propriétaire, lui avait envoyé un émissaire pour lui ordonner de mettre à profit tout occasion de l'expulser de l'appartement. M. Puget paraissait craindre que sa qualité de Juive, si elle venait à se découvrir, ne fût pour lui une source de complications et trouvait en outre que cette femme pas très propre et d'allures plutôt singulières dévaluait son immeuble. (741-742)

Michaud represents himself as inhibited by different sources of pressure, Lolivier ('je ne suis pas seul') and a more remote one, M. Puget ('le propriétaire), the 'émissaire' and arguably himself and his own lack of courage to stand up to them both. It appears clearly in this passage that M. Puget uses his knowledge of Lina's Jewishness as a

discretionary blackmailing tool. The Vichy regime is therefore present subterraneously, in the narrative and functions as an occupying force.

Rumours of Marechalist allegiances after the Liberation are represented as sufficient to receive punishment as Galien's public beating and eventual imprisonment strikingly exemplifies in *Uranus*. The opportunism of Charles' pseudo recollection (retrospective narrative) of Galien's Vichyist sympathies during the family meal is underlined by free indirect speech:

Charles expliqua que, après l'armistice de 40, il avait flairé le complot qui se tramait contre la nation sous les auspices du Maréchal. Malheureusement, beaucoup de ses compagnons s'étaient laissés prendre aux mensonges de Vichy, trop nombreux même étaient ceux qui avaient persévéré dans une erreur criminelle. Mais lui n'avait jamais été dupe et n'avait du reste pas caché ses opinions. (1223)

The verb 'se tramait' ironically evokes Charles' alleged awareness of a 'trame', a narrative in the making, which takes the form of a national Petainist plot against the nation and to which he allegedly refused to adhere. The narrator then switches to direct speech: 'J'avais tout de suite compris que la clique maréchaliste se réjouissait de la défaite de la France et chercherait à l'enfoncer de plus en plus. J'ai tout de suite dit: de Gaulle. "Naturellement, dit Archambaud. C'est comme moi.'" Marechalists are here represented as a 'clique', a gang of bandits and the narrative organization of the scene and the passage from indirect to direct speech in particular (Galien at first, and then Archambaud) exemplify the consequences of rumours on the narrative.

Suspicion and distrust pervade all areas of life: the cramped living conditions and the proximity of the Gaigneux make it difficult for Archambaud to harbour the collaborator Loin ('Une imprudence, une distraction, et tout est perdu. Et le voisinage des Gaigneux n'arrange rien', *Uranus*, 1064). Marital, filial and general suspicion is rampant which is made even more acute owing to the fact that in Blémont: 'La densité de la population y ayant presque triplé, l'animation était beaucoup plus grande

qu'autrefois et à l'heure du matin où les Blémontois se rendaient au travail, la rumeur d'une foule pressée emplissait le quartier.' In a context where instability, collusion and rapidly changing conditions are key, when 'la fiction de l'unité s'écroule, la loi de la jungle reprend son empire' (Motier 1947, 18). In this situation, gossip, rumours, threats, denunciations and general suspicion (Linhardt 2001) become efficient strategies of scandalization. De Blic's distinction between rumour and gossip as ordinary forms of indignation in contrast to scandals as extra-ordinary forms of social disgruntlement finds a resonance in the corpus (de Blic 2005, 3-7). Indeed, if gossip may feed scandal, it is not harmful in itself as it primarily serves to transmit information and is a mode of basic social interaction, even though in 'Le Faux policier' it is suggested that Martin's activities are only made possible thanks to Justine's network of female friends from whom she gathers information which she passes on to her husband. All rumours are not however correct as the alleged affair between Watrin and Marie-Anne, Archambaud's daughter even though the imagined illicit sexual relationship to some extent gives body to the vague, inarticulate intuition on Gaigneux and Jourdan's part that illegitimate activities are taking place around Archambaud. In *Les Epées*, François reflects on 'bavardage', elsewhere referred to as reassuringly banal 'papotage':

J'aime assez le bavardage, parce qu'il ne change rien à l'ordre des choses. La parole, les plaintes, les cris, avec leur prétention de modifier le monde, je les déteste. J'adore les balances, leur précision rigoureuse. Voilà, les choses sont pesées, éternellement ressemblantes. (*Les Epées*, 26)

The image of the scales and the allusion to other forms of 'parole' make gossip the privileged discursive form of harmony. It even has a salutary function in 'L'Indifférent' in the sense that it is the very triteness of the narrator's conversations with his victims that is experienced as a mode of compassion. This intersects with the idea that gossip, unlike scandal, does not constitute a public denunciation per se, but rather 'an exercise

in tolerance’, a ‘forme tronquée, oblique et humiliée d’accusation publique’ (Lemieux 2007, 376-78).<sup>120</sup>

Denunciations (or the threat of) and calomny (κακολογία, diabolè/ kakologia), as a mode of social interaction – and denunciators as a category – are often understood as being one and the same, although for Aymé (1938, 36) a distinction needs to be made: ‘[La menace du scandale] joue comme un régulateur et un compresseur, à l’inverse du scandale lui-même qui est une libération.’ The threat of denunciation casts a shadow over the characters in *Pompes funèbres*, with the narrator wondering if Erik might be afraid to be denounced by him (‘Il me parlait très doucement. Peut-être craignait-il que je ne le dénonce à la police.’ *Pompes*, 30), or deliberating within himself whether he should denounce Jean: ‘Il ne se méfie pas de moi. Je pourrais le dénoncer’ (*Pompes*, 131), in an echo to Juliette’s hesitation to denounce Jean D. to her *milicien* lover. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* it is the news of the denunciation of the black market chief dealer that accelerates the rhythm of the narration and precipitates Antoine’s return in his family. The disappearance of some characters after probable denunciations, as in the case of Betty’s boyfriend are disseminated in the corpus: ‘Quelques jours après s’être querellé avec lui, un garçon qui tenait de près à la peau de vache avait disparu et, sans pouvoir fonder autrement ses soupçons, elle accusait Médé de l’avoir donné à la police.’ (‘L’Indifférent’, 882). Rumours of denunciation can also be found in Archambaud’s account of Loin’s escape from his previous hideout. The indirect interrogation (‘‘A-t-il été vu ou dénoncé, on ne sait pas. Toujours est-il qu’hier soir, on est venu l’arrêter chez les gens qui l’hébergeaient.’’ *Uranus*, 1063). In ‘Le Faux policier’, Martin wonders if he should denounce his wife for bad-mouthing the Allies before being arrested after a probable denunciation. In *Les Epées*, François is betrayed by Louisiane but also

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<sup>120</sup> As Lemieux (2007, 381) notes about gossip: ‘Il suffit [...] que cette transgression ne soit critiquée et rapportée aux autres que dans la forme du commérage et de la rumeur: alors, l’accusation demeure toujours flottante et tolérante, et la confrontation publique (celle où un accusateur et un accusé se font face devant un public) n’a jamais lieu.’ See also ‘Gossip, Rumour and Scandal’ in Thompson (2000, 25-28).

denounces his sister to their father and Saint-Anne is betrayed by Rita in *Le Hussard bleu*.

The spectre of denunciation is perhaps nowhere more dramatically staged than in ‘Traversée de Paris’ and all the more so in Jean Gabin’s incarnation of Grandgil in Autant-Lara’s film ‘Tu mériterais d’être dénoncé, pour t’apprendre. J’en ai bien envie tiens’ (910-911), and never so extensively represented than in *Uranus*. Indeed, Loin is constantly threatened with denunciation – and will eventually be by Archambaud’s son, even though this will not cause his eventual arrest. Léopold, in a long blackmailing scene, also threatens, this time explicitly, to denounce Monglat for black marketeering. Rochard is depicted as being a prolific denunciator during the Occupation (‘[il]a dénoncé à tour de bras’, *Uranus*, 1194), and is later accused of being a denunciator (‘C’était la première fois qu’un habitant de la ville risquait une allusion malveillante à ses exploits de tortionnaire’, 1194) which marks a sea change in the collective perception of denunciation. Rochard’s ‘exploits’ evoke what Motier (1947, 56-57), after Babeuf, calls ‘mouchardage comme service public’, the patriotic dimension of ‘délation’.

In *Pompes funèbres*, denunciations are represented as a form of ethical hygiene or ascetic practice: ‘[...] j’eus le courage admirable [...] de livrer à la police mon ami le plus martyrisé. J’amenai moi-même les policiers au logement où il se cachait et je tins à recevoir, sous ses yeux, le prix de ma trahison’ (*Pompes*, 81-82). Pierrot’s character is then used to give a more dynamic and detailed representation of the process of denunciation (*Pompes*, 220-222; 228-234; pp. 243-244). Pierrot sheds light upon the mechanism of denunciation and the peculiar circumstances of the Occupation which made it possible for denunciations to become such powerful instruments. The narrator underlines Pierrot’s ingenuity by arguing that ‘[il] crut qu’on vérifierait ses

dénonciations' (233). This demonstrates that the collapse of the justice system allowed denunciations to thrive.

In *Uranus* it is the institutional mechanism of denunciation, rather than the psychological analysis of calomny that is depicted more extensively – and exemplarily – than in any other narrative of the corpus. Rochard's calomnious denunciation of Léopold develops almost uncontrollably throughout the novel. The administrative and political inferno of a system seemingly controlled by dark forces, what Aymé (1938, 12) calls 'puissances intéressées' on the one hand and Léopold's helplessness to constitute a cause for himself on the other are, rather than the slanderous accusation, the main focus of the narrative.

Léopold's scandal can be fruitfully examined by a cross reading of Edgar Morin's *La Rumeur d'Orléans* and Aymé's *Silhouette du scandale* as both provide us with the analytical tools to study the propagation of rumour and the production of scandal. Firstly, an 'événement catalyseur' which is banal in essence but attests to a 'rupture in unanimity' which, in this case, can be found in Rochard's 'histoires de femmes' ("Voyez par exemple Rochard, celui que j'ai failli corriger tout à l'heure. Il louchait sur la veuve d'un contremaître.", *Uranus*, 1067) and which Rochard explains as a 'coup de colère' (1075). Then follows a period of 'incubation' (Morin, 31), which is relatively short and contained, spanning five pages and concluding the fourth chapter, after Professeur Didier's lesson on Andromaque: 'Léopold, les gendarmes sont là. Ils viennent perquisitionner' (*Uranus*, 1070). The 'perquisition' opens the fifth chapter and it is revealed that the gendarmes are looking for Maxime Loin. Léopold complains that 'Suffit que le premier venu me dénonce et vous n'en demandez pas plus long. Pourtant, l'homme qui m'a dénoncé, vous savez ce qu'il vaut. Seulement, vous avez peur de lui' (1071). His denial is repeatedly welcomed by mockery, by the gendarmes at first, and then by his customers. As Aymé (1938, 20) writes, 'il n'est pas indifférent pour la



réussite de la pièce que le sujet en soit attrayant, spectaculaire, émouvant, ou tel qu'il prête à la raillerie'. Arguably, Léopold's hubris complicates the construction of a credible cause; the gross injustice of being accused of something he did not do (hide Loin) is problematically only made possible by the fact he was known for serving German soldiers during the Occupation and being involved in black marketeering. Moreover, his central position in the social life of the town makes him a 'sujet attrayant' even though his exploits as a 'loueur de foire' in his youth hardly help him to be portrayed as weak and therefore deserving support. Indeed, as Aymé (1938, 22-23) underlines, 'la personnalité de l'acteur, un tempérament singulier, peuvent quelquefois beaucoup pour le développement du scandale. Certaines figures sollicitent plus que d'autres l'intérêt, la curiosité, parce qu'elles semblent mieux ajustées à leur rôle'. This poses the question of Léopold's chances of emerging unscathed from what is in the process of becoming 'L'Affaire Léopold'.

Léopold's cunningness or 'competence' in pragmatic terms is illustrated during the apparently informal conversation with the gendarmes when he manages to obtain the confirmation of the identity of his denunciator. 'Toute son attention se concentrait sur l'étrange conduite de Rochard dont la perfidie venait de lui être confirmée par les gendarmes' (1072). In indirect speech, Léopold's hypotheses are revealed and the danger presented by Rochard is acknowledged: 'Ce Rochard était bien capable d'avoir flairé quelque chose' (1072). This 'quelque chose' is unclear enough to be an ingredient in the recipe for scandal (Aymé 1938, 19) as '[u]n scandale ne doit pas être trop nourri, au moins au début. [...] il n'est pas mauvais non plus qu'il s'entoure d'un certain mystère propre à éveiller la suspicion.' An 'inquiétude multiscalair' (Morin, 21) begins to develop at this stage. Léopold's initial concern that his denunciation might concern his black market activities allows Aymé to surreptitiously insert a black-market intrigue. Léopold then goes on to find Rochard in the café des Voyageurs and physically threaten

him: '[...] Léopold prit ostensiblement un marteau et un grand clou de charpentier, de la longueur d'une main' (1074). After making him confess to the content of his denunciation and making him rehearse his declaration to the gendarmes (*Uranus*, 1075), the resolution appears complete when they leave together, 'bras-dessus bras-dessous' (1075).

The second stage of 'propagation' or publicization marks a decisive step. Aymé (1938, 20) underlines the importance of three factors: 'en premier lieu la matière du scandale ou si l'on veut le sujet de la pièce; puis les acteurs et l'éclairage; enfin et surtout, le public. [...] le public joue un rôle déterminant.' In the café, Léopold warns Rochard's colleagues of his doings:

Alors, lui, pour se venger, il file à la gendarmerie et il me dénonce comme quoi je cachais chez moi le nommé Maxime Loin, vous savez le collaborateur. [...] Enfin, il a tout avoué, tout. Et maintenant, on va finir de s'expliquer à la gendarmerie. Qu'est-ce que vous en dites? (1075-1076)

Léopold's direct question falls flat, which signals Léopold's inability to create a scandal: 'Il se mit à rire et, voyant que les chemins de fer et les camionneurs gênés, n'avaient pas réagi en présence de Rochard, il entraîna celui-ci au-dehors' (1076) which resonates with Aymé's remark (1938, 31; 20) that public opinion 'même quand elle est libre d'être libre [...] sait très bien fermer les yeux et les oreilles et faire avorter le scandale en se donnant de bonnes raisons'.<sup>121</sup> The propagation of the rumour to the wider community is marked by him parading 'son prisonnier' throughout Blémont and relating his story (*Uranus*, 1077). What Léopold seeks to achieve is the denunciation of Rochard's actions to the Communist party: 'Il était en droit d'escompter que l'histoire de la perquisition, par ses soins répandue, ferait déborder le vase' to expose 'le caractère politique de la dénonciation' (1077).

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<sup>121</sup> The mention of the expulsion of the Jaclins serves as a warning sign of the public's apathy: 'leur expulsion avait fait du bruit dans la ville et l'on n'avait pas manqué de dire tout bas [...]' (*Uranus*, 1076).

The incubation phase is short and the propagation phase works against Léopold's interests: his failure to mobilize a cause for himself, to 'monter en généralité' (Lemieux 2004) is represented twice (at the café and in the street) and is only confirmed by the gendarme's refusal to become involved in 'histoires entre vous, qui ne regardent pas la gendarmerie' (1077). The peculiarity of provincial scandals according to Aymé (1938, 70-71) is that '[l]a police, la municipalité, le patronat, la finance ne sont pas des puissances lointaines ou anonymes.' Léopold's subsequent account of his 'mésaventure' is rendered difficult by the asymmetry of his audience, divided into a contingent one ('buveurs') and a more focused one formed of Gaigneux and Jourdan:

Enfin, lorsque leur tout fut venu [Gaigneux et Jourdan], il se campa auprès d'eux et, comme il s'adressait aux autres buveurs, commença son récit [...] Au nom de Rochard, Gaigneux commençait à dresser l'oreille et avertissait le jeune professeur Jourdan qu'il eût à écouter, lui aussi. (1079)

The small size of Blémont, '[d]ans une ville de dix mille âmes, tous les habitants se connaissent et sont entre eux comme des voisins' (Aymé 1938, 69) makes it possible for scandal to be diffused rapidly.

The end of chapter V signals a third stage, that of the 'métastase' (Morin, 37) or proliferation, with Léopold becoming an object of discussion at the Archambauds', with Pierre sneakily trying to take advantage of the rumour to threaten Loin indirectly at the dinner table (*Uranus*, 1080). A short interval of twenty-odd pages or what Morin (98-99) calls an 'entracte' is ended by a discussion between Gaigneux and Jourdan about the threat to the party's reputation. Their failure to reach a consensus at the end of the chapter is doubled up by Léopold's failure to interpret their discussion from a distance as the sign of his imminent 'absolution' (*Uranus*, 1104). Léopold's respite is short-lived however as Rochard soon comes to warn Léopold against the imminent danger he faces (1105-1106). Accusor and accused come together to anticipate Léopold's imprisonment in what Boltanski (2011, 173) calls a case of *philia* (*Uranus*, 1106; 1145).

The entirety of Chapter IX the action of which is meant to last for half an hour depicts Léopold's initial attempt to coax Monglat into helping him and finally trying to blackmail him and obtaining from the latter the reluctant promise of intervening in Paris on his behalf in the vague conviction that '[t]outes les grandes affaires dégoûtantes se résolvent à Paris, cerveau, cœur et dépotoir de la nation'(Morin, 127-28; Aymé 1938, 77). On the same day, Léopold is arrested after Sunday mass, at a time when 'collective effervescence' is supposedly at its highest: 'Les fidèles sortaient de la messe et, avant de se disperser, s'attardaient en groupes sur la place Saint-Euloge' (*Uranus*, 1113). The interpolated clause ('avant de se disperser') signals the passivity of the crowd and the ultimate failure of Léopold's cause.

After the interruption of chapter X, Watrin and Archambaud try to plead Léopold's cause before Gaigneux but it may be Watrin's unconvincing tone that can account for the failure to turn the scandal into an affair: 'En tout cas, dit Watrin, si vous pouviez faire quelque chose pour Léopold, je vous en serais vraiment reconnaissant.' (1124), before trying again later in chapter XVI, this time more forcefully (1163-1164). The meeting with Maître Mégrin reveals that the

dossier est insignifiant : trois lettres anonymes qui vous accusent d'avoir caché Maxime Loin chez vous et le procès-verbal d'une enquête de la gendarmerie, accueillant de vagues échos sans consistance. En fait, il s'agit d'une mesure administrative. (1150-1151)

The lawyer confirms the absence of a political mobilization: '[les socialistes] ont l'air de protester contre l'arbitraire de votre situation, mais plutôt timidement. Pas assez pour ameuter l'opinion et suffisamment pour durcir les communistes à votre égard.' (1151). Ledieu attempts to gather support but Gaigneux 'répugnait à s'entretenir des rebondissements de l'affaire Léopold' (1176). In fact, the affair is characterised more by its interruptions than by its 'rebondissements'. Léopold's disbelief at his liberation is followed by his going towards the 'zone cyclonale' of Blémont, his own cafe, on the

Place Saint-Euloge: ‘Vos de Gaulle et vos Thorez et les autres Monglat, et vos tordus de la foire d’empoigne, je les aurai en descente de lit!’ (1197-1198). His nighttime public denunciation of dark forces further acts as a breach of the peace and aggravates the promise of his fall. Boltanski (2011, 333-344) argues that for a cause to be generated, a ‘dé-singularisation’ or ‘montée en généralité’, a ‘mise en équivalence’ with other causes needs to be achieved: ‘La cause qu’il défend enferme une prétention à l’universalité. Partant d’un cas singulier mais exemplaire, elle concerne tout le monde [...]’ (Boltanski 2011, 301). The ‘opérateurs de montée’ used by Léopold, significantly in the plural (‘vos de Gaulle, Thorez’, etc), evoke what Boltanski (2011, 300) calls ‘synecdoque d’abstraction’ and only result in making him appear abnormal and further isolate him within Blémont (Lemert 1967). In fact, as noted earlier, what this episode shows is at the heart of the distinction between scandals, causes and affairs in which case ‘l’accusé ne rencontre jamais personne qui prenne sa défense – lui-même ne s’y aventurant guère’ (Offenstadt 2007, 10). Indeed, it appears that Léopold himself gave up on his own cause and further aggravates his ‘incartade’ (1209) by refusing to keep a low profile: ‘Telles étaient [...] les dispositions de Léopold qui passait par des alternatives de révolte et de découragement.’ (1208).

The return of the prisoners provides a proleptic denouement (thematically but also lexically with Galien’s ‘exécution’, 1214) to Léopold’s affair. The apathy of the crowd is conveyed throughout the episode in terms of ‘inerte’, ‘attentive et silencieuse’, whilst the mayor is described as ‘décidé à ne rien voir’, the sous-préfet ‘détourna la tête’, the local doctor ‘s’effaça derrière un chapeau melon et resta muet’ (*Uranus*, 1214-1216). Individuals appear, like Archambaud, as ‘molécule organique de la foule’ (1216). In spite of the embarrassment and irritation of some individuals in the crowd, only Watrin decides to be ‘cet homme-là’ (1215), the one who steps in to help regardless of the fact

it is deemed to be none of his concern (“Ce n’est pas votre affaire”, coupa le commissaire d’une voix irritée’ 1217).

Another interval temporarily defuses the narrative tension and seems to have made the necessity to scold Léopold less probable; Ledieu and Monfort’s chat with Rochard two days after the incident (in Chapter XXIII) provides a short-lived respite as two gendarmes soon arrive at daybreak with a warrant in the last chapter. Léopold’s death does not bring a definitive resolution to the scandal; the evocation of powerful dark forces, what Morin (47) calls the ‘repli de la rumeur sur un soupçon insistant, qui s’exprime sous deux formes fatidiques: “On nous cache quelque chose”, et surtout “Il n’y a pas de fumée sans feu”’. In *Uranus*, the decision to arrest Léopold a second time has reportedly been investigated by Ledieu who recounts that: “J’ai été voir le lieutenant de gendarmerie, dit Ledieu. Il ne m’a pas appris grand-chose. A ce qu’il paraît, c’est la préfecture qui a tout déclenché. Mais sûrement que derrière le préfet, il y a quelqu’un de Blémont.”’ (*Uranus*, 1233). All in all, Léopold’s affair reinforced the belief in the institutional corruption of post-war society which continued to benefit from the black market resonates with Boltanski’s analysis that ‘[l]e scandale c’est ainsi toujours la conspiration, c’est-à-dire l’alliance secrète pour un intérêt particulier’ (2011, 36), be it between Monglat and the préfet or higher in the hierarchy. The sense of threat contained in Gaigneux’s formulation (“Il faudra bien qu’on sache d’où vient le coup, prononça Gaigneux. On fera cuisiner le préfet.”, 1233) also indirectly further confirms the peril posed by the Communist party in post-war local and national politics.

*Uranus* can be seen as a narrative depiction of calumny, the narrative elaboration or fleshing out of Aymé’s theoretical observations in *Silhouette du scandale*. Léopold’s inability to find a ‘relais public pour soutenir sa cause’ (Lemieux 2007, 11) serves to shed light more generally on the ‘dispositifs socio-politiques d’ostracisme’ (Boltanski 2011, 433) preventing the emergence of a social space and public opinion (Morin, 12).

It is in this sense that Léopold's organisation of his own defence, although admittedly rudimentary and inadequate, can be seen as evidence of the breakdown of the justice system. Indeed, the powerlessness of his solicitor, Maître Mégrin, to halt the administrative process and seek a fair trial, can be read as an indictment of the subservience to and collusion with the judiciary to economic and political forces, already explored in *Le Moulin de la sourdine* and announcing the fierce charge of *La Tête des Autres*.

Trial scenes can be found in more or less elaborate or conventional forms throughout the corpus.<sup>122</sup> In 'Traversée de Paris', the narrator unconvincingly advances elements that could be used for Martin's defence, which Martin refuses to concern himself with ('Mais tout ça était l'affaire de l'avocat', 929). Aymé's distrust of the legal system: 'La vie et la mort du prévenu dépendent du talent de chacun des deux orateurs et tout ce qui se passe, en définitive, comme si on jouait sa tête aux échecs, le meilleur joueur entraînant la conviction du jury' (Aymé; quoted in Lécureur 1985, 102, see also Lécureur 1996, 45-47) is expressed similarly by a 'type' in *Les Epées* (77): 'On ne juge qu'un personnage de papier et le sort de ce personnage dépend de l'arrangement de certains mots. La timidité d'un conditionnel peut le sauver quand un impératif le tue. Je ne vais pas me mettre en peine pour mon avenir quand cet avenir dépend de la grammaire.' Justice is made a by-product of oratory. As Boltanski (2011, 163-72) reflects:

La justice n'en demeure pas moins une dispute, mais une dispute qui substitue, à la dispute en violence, une dispute en justice. [...] [La justice] peut, au moins un temps, canaliser la dispute en la soumettant à son ordre. Elle est impuissante à l'arrêter. Pour arrêter la dispute en justice, il faut donc aller chercher autre chose que la justice. C'est ce qui confère à la justice son caractère relativement arbitraire, souvent dénoncé et intuitivement connu de tous. Car la question centrale reste celle de l'arrêt, et tout paraît bon alors

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<sup>122</sup> Tafta (2000, 205) noted about Genet that: 'Il y a maintes scènes de procès, tantôt réels tantôt fictifs, minés, parodiés, imaginés, mais vécus avec gravité, dans la plupart de ses livres.'

bon qui arrête. Est preuve suffisante ce qui arrête la dissémination du procès [...]. (167)

This provides a reminder that justice is primarily a mode of resolution of disputes which, as opposed to vengeance (Boltanski 2011, 301), seeks to settle, within the space of the tribunal and through the careful presentation of arguments, relies on language and for that reason incurs the same kind of criticism about its alleged arbitrary character.<sup>123</sup> It is indeed a scandal of language that the collapse of the justice system displays. References to summary justice (the ‘tribunal expéditif’ in *Pompes funèbres*, 244) or the swiftness of the proceedings (‘Le procès fut sans histoire.’ in ‘Le Faux policier’, 986) point to the magistrature’s manipulations of the judicial process, as appears clearly in the following example from *Pompes* (207): ‘En soulignant le mot nuit, l’agent ajoute à ce mot, un sens qu’il n’a pas philologiquement. Parce que le mot nuit est souligné, il devient aggravant, infamant. C’est ce sens qui conduira Cramaille aux Assises.’ Of particular interest for this thesis is the importance given to testimonies and narratives in the production of evidence (Lévy-Bruhl 1964), particularly in François’s trial in *Les Epées* and in Cramaille’s denunciation of the prison insurgents, which in both cases, lead to the execution of the accused. In *Les Epées*, the spectacular reversal of Louisiane’s position from accuser to accused following François’s testimony attests to the importance of narrative credibility in all trials. This may be achieved by ‘aligning the representation of events with rhetorically advantageous “masterplots,” [namely] familiar skeletal narratives with an established cultural authority’ (Walsh 2007, 14). It is precisely in this sense that the portrait made by Février’s grandfather allegedly ‘[...] a satisfait les plus difficiles, à commencer par moi’ and ‘impressionna la Cour’ (68) or that François succeeds in suggesting the execution of Louisine. Indeed, François’s succinct description of Louisiane as ‘plus intelligente que Février, donc plus coupable’

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<sup>123</sup> Ricœur (1995, 192) similarly underlines the justice as a disputing process: ‘C’est cette juste distance entre les partenaires affrontés, trop près dans le conflit et trop éloignés l’un de l’autre dans l’ignorance, la haine ou le mépris qui résume [...] les deux aspects de l’acte de juger [...].’



(71) manages to conjure up the established cultural representation of the shrewd female traitor, a Mata Hari figure of the Occupation. It appears clearly that the narrative dimension is at the heart of what is perceived as the ethical scandal of the Occupation and the Liberation. The representation of scandal is constructed at the levels of the *énoncé* and the *énonciation* to convey the ambiguity and oddness of the Occupation and the Liberation and their repercussions on truth, justice, individual freedom and social cohesion. The next section will extend these findings by considering minimal (lexical) and intermediate (syntactic and episodic) levels and offering a case study focusing on the black market in order to explore the relation between motif and structure in the creation of scandal.

### **3. Contaminations. A structural analysis.**

The black market is ‘the concrete economic link between the literal darkness of the blackout and the moral and political obscurity in which the Parisian population, in particular, found itself’ (Hewitt 1989, 203). The black market represents a common experience of the Occupation, and as such, lends itself to an exploration of how it functions, not only as a motif but also as a structuring element. My contention is that scandal is constructed narratively by a process of linguistic, thematic and axiomatic contamination. At his trial for the attempted assassination of Darnand, François confesses to ‘quelques incartades de jeunesse’ among which the black market is mentioned: ‘Ayant avoué quelques incartades de jeunesse aux policiers (marché noir sur la pâte dentifrice, avortements, etc.), ceux-ci ne me cachaient plus leur estime.’ (*Les Epées*, 67). A triple observation can be made here: the black market is represented as an activity that is only marginally illegal or taboo in the sense that it ‘was always an easy target for licensed satirists who celebrated the ingenuity of dealers’ (Lloyd 1996, 185). Secondly, the black market relates to a range of activities, from the supply of everyday goods to abortions. The fact that the black market should be mentioned in a parenthesis

attests to François's provocative stance, which enables him to deride the seriousness of his crime by equating it to minor ones. Thirdly, the confusion of legality and illegality, the scale of the corruption within the police, and by extension, the justice system and the whole of French society is made evident by the reaction of the police officers. The black market therefore appears here as a motif which is meant to serve provocatively as evidence of the extent of the moral contamination of society at large.

*Le Chemin des Ecoliers* which Hamel (2006, 132) takes to be 'une apologie du marché noir et de la débrouille sous l'occupation' opens onto a breakfast scene where the presence of butter on the table elicits a timid objection to the black market from Michaud.<sup>124</sup> But the context in which it is mentioned (absent mother and food deprivation) mitigates a potential scandal at the breakfast table and at the beginning of the novel: 'Le père alarmé, redevint sérieux. Du beurre pour les petits déjeuners, je ne sais pas ce que votre mère en penserait, mes enfants. Hier, justement, elle s'inquiétait de ce qu'il allait nous manquer. Et le marché noir, c'est très joli...' (708). The fatherly tone ('mes enfants') and the displacement of any potential judgement onto the absent mother ('ce que votre mère en penserait') show that Michaud's remark is nothing but token disapprobation and that the black market supplies complement what he is unable to provide. In other words, the scandal of the black market is neutralised in this scene, only to be exploited more generally at the level of the narrative. In fact, it is in the opening scene that Antoine's involvement in black market activities is alluded to and that the reader is given a first indication or clue to guide them through the narrative. If *Le Chemin* is not sensu stricto a 'polar', the dissemination of clues is nonetheless reminiscent of the genre.

In the breakfast scene, Antoine seeks to reassure his father by pretending he exchanged an American novel for butter and chocolate:

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<sup>124</sup> Robert and Lioret (1958, 174) see *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* less severely as giving 'l'image d'une vie caractérisée par les soucis d'argent [...] qui porte la marque de l'Etat et de l'administration, surveillés par l'occupant'.

J'ai fait un échange, expliqua-t-il d'une voix posée. Tiercelin voulait m'acheter un roman américain qui est interdit. Moi, j'ai préféré un échange et j'ai eu une livre de beurre avec un petit sac de chocolat en poudre. Ce nom de Tiercelin, la famille commençait à l'avoir dans l'oreille. (708)

Antoine's purported refusal to sell a banned American novel to his friend (which is implicitly seen as unjustly prohibited), and exchange, as a more legitimate form of commerce, is meant to serve as a valid explanation for the presence of the chocolate on the table. His brother, Frédéric, takes Antoine at his word, and casting doubt on the very possibility of an exchange between things of different values, Antoine answers: 'Mais non, il paraît que ça valait beaucoup plus. Tiercelin lui-même en est tellement persuadé que pour me dédommager, il voudrait m'emmener à la campagne pendant les vacances de Pâques' (709). Antoine, not content to offer the lie of an exchange, goes as far as saying that Tiercelin offered to take him to the countryside as a way to compensate him ('dédommager'). From the point of view of the structure, it is remarkable that the first domestic scene hinging around suspicions of black marketeering, with Tiercelin as the keystone, serves to introduce what is admittedly an equally prominent narrative thread, that of Antoine and Pierrette's affair and the lives of a generation too young to engage in combat. This example shows how the black market insidiously permeates the social fabric through the family cell. Antoine's lie appears as the microcosmic, or the representation in miniature, of the hypocrisy of the black market at national level. The function of this episode is to set the whole narrative in motion and organise the separation of Antoine from his family, or the division (and later reunion) of the narrative into two main threads, reflected in the alternation of chapters and the clear separation of the two worlds, at least until Chapter X.

If Tiercelin and Antoine's work relations are friendly, the relationship between Médéric and the narrator of 'L'Indifférent' (888) reveals darker undertones where the fear of being swindled pervades all interpersonal (criminal) relations. If the black market operates on the basis of competition, references to morality are not altogether

absent, as Antoine's self-imposed discipline not to eat outside of family meal times or Martin's reluctance to take advantage of his situation attest. Innocence and ingenuity are unproblematically associated with the black market:

Pour les enfants, il va de soi qu'aucun d'eux ne soupçonnait le genre d'activités auquel se livrait leur père. Les chers petits anges mangeaient en toute innocence de la côtelette à trois cents francs le kilo et des tartines de beurre à deux cents francs la livre et, il faut bien le dire, leurs joues devenaient roses et rebondies. ('Le Faux Policier', 976-977)

A conspiracy of silence settles in among those who benefit from the black market. The narrator's lexical insistence on the children's innocence, ironically conveyed by the anteposition of the two adjectives 'chers' and 'petits', and the adverbial quality of the phrase 'en toute innocence', establishes a contrast between the goods, wrongly acquired in the black market, and Martin's altruistic intentions. The end, namely, the 'joues roses et rebondies' denoting good health and satisfaction, seems to eventually justify the means.

Black-market dealings, past and present, are prevalent in all situations, as the narrator's speculation about Rochard's motivations to denounce Léopold confirms:

Peut-être avait-il aussi escompté que les gendarmes, en allant chez lui appréhender Maxime Loin, mettraient le nez dans quelque pot aux roses du marché noir et, à vrai dire, le calcul se fût trouvé juste si la perquisition avait eu lieu, par exemple, la veille ou deux jours plus tard. (1072)

Admittedly, the main reason for Léopold's accusation, arrest and eventual killing may be, although wrongly, found in his continuing shady deals. The black market seems to have long-term consequences for the characters who never stop being threatened by the implicit and tacit collective knowledge and ready-made, easily accessible narrative that would expose the scandal of their prosperity. Structurally and ethically then, the black market functions subterraneously throughout the whole narrative.

The privation of food makes the characters fantasize about quantities. In ‘Le Faux policier’ the Liberation is pictured as the return of trainloads of goods:

De toutes parts, des trains de beurre, de cochon, de vin rouge et de volaille vont se mettre en route pour Paris. [...] Souviens-toi de nos bonheurs d’avant-guerre, disait Martin. [...] Nous étions pauvres et les enfants mangeaient à leur faim, ils avaient des vêtements chauds et des souliers. (978)

The cornucopia represented in the quotation above evokes the deprivation endured in urban areas during the Occupation. The instantly mythical view of the Liberation as the return to an idyllic pre-war life is not shared by Martin’s wife who talks him into resuming his activities. She argues that:

Je nous vois du pain sur la planche, disait-elle un peu vulgairement. Bien sûr, le marché noir durera ce qu’il durera, rien n’est éternel, mais je crois quand même qu’on en a pour un petit bout de temps. [...] Le marché noir, on n’est pas près d’en voir le bout. En plus de ça, les Français n’ont pas fini de se détester, ni de se tirer dans les jambes et tant qu’il y en a qui auront peur... (980)

In the first part of the quotation, Martin’s wife plans to cash in on the slowness of the transition from the Occupation to the Liberation. The inclusive pronoun ‘nous’ alludes to the micro-organization of the black market at the level of the couple. The second part of the quotation illustrates her bad faith and the potentialities of exploiting the fear and wariness of their fellow citizens. The black market is therefore not only possible during the Occupation, but also in periods of transition. The representation of a wilful exploitation of her fellow countrymen runs counter to the image of a France spiritually reunited on the day of the Liberation. Vast quantities of food and the possibility of making large sums of money as a result of a basic mechanism of short supply and high demand is key to the representation of the black market. In ‘Traversée de Paris’ (899) Grandgil’s blackmailing strategy exploits the artificiality of price-fixing: ‘Jamblier, 45

rue Poliveau, articulait Grandgil. Maintenant, c'est deux mille francs.' It is after all the first sense of the plural noun, 'affaires'.<sup>125</sup>

Cigarettes are very often sought out in the black market, throughout the corpus. Once again the representation of penury and the subsequent supply of cigarettes serves to expose the moral corruption of characters. The facade of sincerity and familial harmony is debunked in the second scene of *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*:

Il alluma une cigarette. Cinquante francs le paquet. Quinze cents francs par mois. Dix-huit mille francs par an. L'opération d'Hélène en coûterait douze mille, peut-être davantage et il n'avait pas encore réuni la somme. A la maison, il se plaignait qu'on dépensât trop et, la semaine passée, il avait fait la sourde oreille à une demande de souliers. Avec dix-huit mille francs, il aurait pu faire beaucoup pour les pieds de la famille. (710-711)

This passage is constructed as a vignette, an evocative description of Michaud's lack of sincerity. It starts with what may appear as a simple pleasure which soon gains an allegorical quality however: the cigarette consumes his family's hopes of buying new shoes and generates tension (of his own making) within the family ('il se plaignait'). The narrator's final statement functions as a moral at the end of a tale. These examples demonstrate that the narrator consistently aims to differentiate intention and behaviour, what is seen by the other characters (*énoncé*) and what is really happening (supposedly represented more faithfully at the level of the *énonciation*). In this respect, Médéric's claim that he is no longer in business is immediately challenged by the narrator ('Médéric se moquait de moi. Je voyais son unique petit oeil briller de malice pendant qu'il me racontait ces foutaises' 'L'Indifférent', 879).

Black humour is tightly connected to the black market. In *Les Epées* (90), François describes his 'chouine-gomme' – which he bought at the black market – as an essential accessory of the Milice: 'Mon visage, sous le sympathique béret du milicien,

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<sup>125</sup> 'Grosse affaire, petite affaire, affaire de fesses, affaire de femmes': interestingly, all these expressions are represented more or less elaborately in the narratives of the corpus.

n’y est pas ignoré. On m’a vu monter la garde en mâchant du chouine-gomme que je payais un prix fou.’ The Vianesque francization of the English spelling becomes here exemplary of the ‘banality of evil’, understood in this context to designate the connotative contamination of seemingly unremarkable objects. Indeed, the verb ‘chouiner’ is thematically consistent with the Milice’s practice of interrogations and torture during which suspects may understandably be heard screaming or whining. Earlier, François mentioned that: ‘[o]n nous apportait des policiers fautifs [...]. En moyenne, j’étais dégoûté trois fois par jour.’ (82). The black market and torture are therefore linguistically and thematically linked to each other.

The morbidity inherent in black market tradings culminates in the selling of coffins:

“J’ai justement besoin de chocolat. Etienne m’en a réclamé hier.” “- Autre chose, j’ai cinq mille cercueils à vendre. Si tu veux, je peux t’en passer la moitié.” “- Des cercueils? Franchement, je te dirai... Et, comme Yvette lui allongeait un coup de pied sous la table, Antoine se reprit: Je ne sais pas ce que ça peut donner.” “Le cercueil, il paraît que c’est très bon, dit Yvette.” “Evidemment, on sort un peu du chocolat et des délices de Madame, mais je crois que c’est à essayer.” “Mais comment veux-tu que je place des cercueils? demanda Antoine. Bien sûr, il ne s’agit pas de vendre au détail. C’est à liquider en bloc.”(792)

The non-sequitur quality of this dialogue is stressed by the expression ‘autre chose’ that makes Tiercelin and Antoine (on the impulse of Yvette) move from ‘délices de Madame’, that is petty crimes and low-key trade, to wholesale death or death on an industrial scale. The deadly overtones are lexically inscribed within the expression ‘éliminer en bloc’ which also means ‘liquider’, to execute. The hygienic connotations render the whole business even more worrying in the context of the mass murder that was the ongoing Holocaust, and even more so in light of other allusions to mass

massacres elsewhere in the corpus ('Mille cadavres ou un seul, c'est pareil.' *Pompes*, 270).<sup>126</sup> The coffins are said to have been sold out by Ozurian's later in the narrative:

“Dans la soirée d’hier et la matinée d’aujourd’hui, Ozurian a déjà revendu le lot entièrement et il a dû se sucrer confortablement, je le connais. Demain, au plus tard après-demain, tous les cercueils seront enlevés et l’argent nous sera versé aussitôt.” (792)

Brought to reckoning by his father in the last domestic scene of the novel, Antoine explains the ‘affaire de cinq mille cercueils’ in accounting terms: “Paul m’en a passé la moitié et comme j’avais entendu parler d’un homme qui cherchait justement des cercueils, j’ai pu lui vendre les miens avant même de les avoir payés.” (858) The simplicity of the whole process as explained by Antoine is echoed by his mother’s reaction in *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* (858): “Nous vivons une époque si extraordinaire qu’on ne peut plus s’étonner de rien.” which is instrumental in making her husband use this money in spite of his initial misgivings. In the penultimate chapter, Hélène takes the role of narrator to rehearse an acceptable account of the *histoire* and prepare a plausible story that could be told to the rest of the family:

“Avec ces sept cent cinquante mille francs, Lolivier et toi pourrez monter une affaire qui te permettra de rendre plus tard à Antoine ce qui est, en somme un simple prêt. Antoine n’aura fait que placer son argent dans ton affaire. [...] Tu verras qu’il n’en ouvrira même pas la bouche à ses frère et sœur.” (860)

This passage appears as the mirror image of one of Michaud’s statement at the beginning of the novel:

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<sup>126</sup> Coffins are central objects in *Pompes funèbres*, providing a material basis to the narrator’s meditation on death and to the funeral rites performed during the religious service, and by extension, in the space of the novel which is conceived as a tribute to his lover. Allusions to the quality of the coffin disseminated throughout the text (22; 76) operate as leitmotifs of death, reinforcing in the process Genet’s exploration of morbidity.



“Je me conforme aux usages de ma profession. Mais je me refuse à faire du marché noir. Le marché noir, lui aussi, est devenu un usage de la profession [...]. Nous ne sommes pas en affaire avec les locataires. La cuvette des vécés sera vendue à un juste prix et je m’en occuperai moi-même. La société de gérance ne sera jamais une officine de marché noir. Tu me comprends bien?” (716)

The contrast between the moral high ground and the subject of dispute (‘cuvette des vécés’) is proleptically indicates that Michaud will relinquish or flush out his principles at the end. Thematically, *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* presents the climatic example of the black market as constitutive of French society during the Occupation and hints at the ill-earned prosperity of the post-war bourgeoisie, an observation which makes Lolivier’s pragmatic position at the beginning an almost prophetic one (‘le porte-tirade du *Chemin des Ecoliers*’, Ory 1985, 99) and echoes Lloyd’s analysis (1996, 221) that ‘the black market has not only triumphed over Michaud, it has revealed itself as the only authentic experience of the class to which he belongs’.

As is evident in ‘Le Faux Policier’, the Occupation enabled some characters to move from poverty to fortune. In *Uranus*, Léopold’s failure to blackmail Monglat (129) can be accounted for by his ignorance of the proportions and ramifications of Monglat’s high-level involvement:

“Vos copains qui vous protègent, ils sont bien loin d’imaginer la vérité. Ils vous prennent pour un trafiquant comme il y en a des centaines de mille. [...] Mais le jour où ils apprendront que vous avez gagné dans les six à huit cents millions, ce jour-là, Monglat, je vous en souhaite! Les copains, ils auront tôt fait de vous piquer le pognon et quand il n’en restera plus, ils vous feront coffrer.” (1108-1109)

Unlike the narrator’s father in ‘L’Indifférent’ who ended up in prison for ‘une grosse affaire de marché noir’ (880), Monglat shielded himself more efficiently. Monglat’s portrayal appears as a fictionalization of Joseph Joanovici who supplied iron to both the occupier and the Résistance and whose personality and alliances with the Nazis and the Soviet Comintern made him the embodiment of the ‘gros poisson du marché noir’ and

managed to remain free until 1949. The relative impunity from which black market profiteers benefited is clarified in 'Le Faux Policier': 'Par la suite, il devait constater fréquemment cette collusion du marché noir, comme de toute espèce de trafic frauduleux, avec les services constitués pour leur répression' (977). Monglat's influence extends to the de facto control of the local economy:

Il faisait allusion au prochain changement de la monnaie et à la nécessité pressante qui en résultait pour Monglat de convertir en marchandises le plus possible de billets de banques. Le distillateur avait chez lui une quantité de papier si considérable qu'il ne pouvait se permettre d'en échanger seulement la dixième partie sans déchaîner contre lui le contrôle fiscal et alerter en même temps l'opinion publique de Blémont. (1168-1169)

Monglat's control over the currency – probably in an allusion to the first devaluation of the Fourth Republic decided by Pierre Mendès-France and implemented on 6 September 1944 – makes him the unofficial regulator of Blémont's economy.

Scandal is in the detail. This formulation is inspired by Ginzburg's study of clues (1979, 183) at the end of which he concludes that a change of paradigm in nineteenth-century criminology can ultimately shed light upon Renaissance painting. Indeed, the replacement of a macroscopic method by a microscopic one focusing on the detail is of direct relevance for this thesis. Ginzburg's investigative practice can be fruitfully adapted to the study of scandal in the sense that a microscopic analysis of the mechanism of scandal needs to replace, or at least complement, a more common macroscopic or thematic analysis of scandal. The paradigmatic change in the study of scandal inspired by Ginzburg's study of clues seeks to give a better understanding of what scandal is in fiction and how it works in the space of the novel.

### III. Chronotopes of scandal

As scandal does not take place in a vacuum, the study of time and space is essential to locate where and when scandal takes place in the narrative, how they constitute its very conditions of possibility and, conversely, how scandal shapes space and time to its image. In ‘Forms of Time and Of the Chronotope in the Novel’, Bakhtin (2001, 84) writes:

We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, ‘time space’) to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. [...] Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. [...] [The chronotope] emerges as a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel.

The artistic chronotope is said to ‘concretize representation’ by appealing to *a priori* knowledge and experience outside the work of art, which means that narrative time and space are prosaicized as much as everyday time and space are literarized. In his article on the criminal spaces of the Parisian Belle-Époque, Kalifa (2004, 131) also notes the circulation of criminal chronotopes between fiction and reality and argues more generally that spaces ‘contribuent aussi à rendre le crime intelligible’; similarly, one could contend that scandal (whose associations with crime are numerous) is made intelligible through the narrative categories of time and space. Time appears to be routinely envisaged in terms of space, as Bergson (1970, 34) noted in his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* of 1888: ‘Involontairement, nous fixons en un point de l'espace chacun des moments que nous comptons, et c'est à cette condition seulement que les unités abstraites forment une somme.’ Bergson’s analysis attests to the preeminence of space in our perception of the passing of time, which will be reflected in the greater importance given to space over time in this chapter.

At the level of the *énoncé*, the characters reflect on the instability of time (slowness, historical time v. individual time), move through a variety of spaces (bedrooms, shared accommodations, streets, roofs, cellars), in Paris or in the imaginary town of Blémont. At the level of the *énonciation*, the narrators frequently contemplate the characters' place in the immensity or, on the contrary, confinement of their lives. The profusion of spatial and temporal notations in the corpus may be accounted for by the fact that during the Occupation the battlefield was extended to the whole nation, exposing in the process nooks and corners, vast panoramic views, and more intangibly perhaps, dreamscapes as well as individual perceptions of time.<sup>127</sup> The novels of the corpus reveal an artistic chronotope, a tightly-knit narrative construction of time and space in which spatio-temporal notations sometimes appear scandalous in the sense in which Barthes (1968, 84) analyses the 'notation insignifiante':

tous les détails 'superflus' (par rapport à la structure), soit que l'on traite ces détails [...] comme des 'remplissages' (catalyses), affectés d'une valeur fonctionnelle indirecte, dans la mesure où, en s'additionnant, ils constituent quelque indice de caractère ou d'atmosphère, et peuvent ainsi finalement être récupérés par la structure.

Barthes's analysis is of particular relevance for my argument in this chapter as the seemingly scandalous notations are recuperated by the structure to construct scandal at different levels of the narrative. The following chronotopic analysis is designed to account more generally for the fictionalization of recent history, the processes and procedures used to understand history to 'restitu[e] la durée des métamorphoses', narrativize the repercussions of traumatic historical events into the social fabric of the nation (Ozouf 2001, 331) within the space of the novel. My method of analysis in this chapter is practically supported by Ozouf's analysis of the narrative function of Alençon

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<sup>127</sup> Florence wishes that war was spatially limited: 'Il faudrait lui trouver des limites. Par exemple, le football, on y joue dans des endroits spéciaux. Il devrait y avoir des terrains de guerre pour ceux qui aiment bien mourir en plein air. Ailleurs, on danserait et on rirait.' (*Le Hussard bleu*, 29).

in Balzac's *La Vieille fille* (1837) and *Le Cabinet des antiques* (1838), which she sees as bearing the imprint of the Second Restoration:

Tout ceci [the Second Restoration], bien qu'amorti par la torpeur provinciale, trouve sa traduction à Alençon, mal remis du séisme révolutionnaire. Ici aussi les conflits s'exaspèrent, même s'ils se traduisent par la lutte que se livrent, pour prêter leurs bras à Rose jusqu'à la table du dîner, le conservateur des hypothèques et le chevalier de Valois. (Ozouf, 62)

Ozouf's example hints at how literary restitution works in times of crisis and periods of transition, how fiction absorbs historical violence and re-arranges, displaces, tones down or, on the contrary, exacerbates tensions, disputes within the space of the novel. Time and space, be it the choice of the setting, Alençon, rather than Paris for example, the variety of the spaces represented (indoor spaces, such as 'la table du dîner' and outdoor spaces), the complexity of the plot (love, political manipulations, local politics, etc), the timeline or the tempo of the narration are all decisive elements in the understanding of the strategies used by fiction to negotiate periods of transition.

## 1. Temporal indetermination: past, present and future

If the *mode rétro* sought to 'restitu[er] le climat propre aux derniers mois du conflit, cet "entre chiens et loups" de l'histoire' (Roux 1999, 36) the post-war literary production made it its task to represent a period which, in Foucault's words is 'à la limite non cicatrisée entre deux époques'. Time and space are irretrievably connected to convey uncertainty and undecidability. Reflecting on Céline and Aymé's respective 'paysages du monde', Vandromme (1984, 13-17) notes that for Céline 'la nuit était son voyage et elle autopsiait les agonies au bord de la fosse commune' whilst Aymé 'au creux des jours ordinaires, pressait chacun d'entre nous à sa minute de vérité improbable'. It is indeed in the banality of everyday settings that the experience of time, the truth of human life seem to be most accurately conveyed, perhaps not so much because of a

deliberate choice, but as Hewitt argues (1989, 210), because it may well be the only way in which ‘the strangeness of the historical situation itself may be chronicled, the only way in which the unwritable may be articulated.’

### **A. Narrative structures**

Genette (2007, 21-23) distinguishes between ‘erzählte Zeit’ or ‘temps de l’histoire’ (the narrated events) and ‘Erzählzeit’ or ‘temps du récit’ (the narrator’s time), which he deems a ‘pseudo-temps’. A further distinction between ‘histoire’ and ‘récit’ is made along three axes: ‘ordre’, ‘durée’ and ‘fréquence’. The first axis (Genette, 21-80) concerns the relations between the order of occurrence of the events, the ‘ordre temporel’ and the ‘ordre pseudo-temporel’; he notes the variations between the two in terms of narrative ‘anachronies’ (analepsis, prolepsis and ‘achronie’) which vary in terms of ‘portée’ and ‘amplitude’. Secondly, Genette (81-110) observes in relation to the axis of ‘duration’ that the exact coincidence of ‘succession diégétique et succession narrative’, an ‘isochronie rigoureuse entre récit et histoire’ is practically implausible, and accounts for the amplitude of the variations between the two in terms of ‘sommaire’, ‘pause’, ‘ellipse’ and ‘scène’. The third axis of narrative ‘fréquence’ (111-61) involves the study of repetition between ‘histoire’ and ‘récit’, what grammarians call the study of aspects (‘singulatif’, ‘répétitif’ and ‘itératif’).

This detour through narratology is essential to the examination of the treatment of time and the temporal variations between ‘histoire’ and ‘récit’ in texts which mimetically refer to contemporary or recent historical events. At a macrotextual level, all the narratives take place within a limited time frame, which is that of the Occupation and immediately after the Liberation, but vary greatly in terms of ‘amplitude’. *Les Epées* opens on ‘un jeune garçon plutôt blond’ who writes down the purported date of his death, 22 March 1937 and the story finishes some time after the summer of 1946.

From the point of view of structure, the first ten pages or so of *Les Epées* appear as a way of introduction to the main narrative thread which is divided into two (historically) chronological parts. Part One: 'Le Désordre' takes place during the Nazi occupation of Paris whereas Part Two: 'La Conjuración' deals uniquely with France after the Liberation. This overarching structure is then complexified by a further subdivision in two untitled chapters of uneven lengths, typographically signalled by blanks. The first chapter of Part One is devoted to the narrator's relationship with his sister Claude, and the much longer second one forms what can be seen as the main, coming-of-age narrative which describes François's shifting allegiances from the Resistance to the Milice.

To further complicate the structure of *Les Epées*, *Le Hussard bleu* functions as an insert and depicts the French occupation of Germany. Hewitt (1996, 115) regards *Le Hussard bleu* as a 'hidden period in Sanders's biography' (1944-1945), which overlaps with the timeline of *Les Epées* (1937-1945). If for Rhodes and Russell (1966), *Les Epées* and *Le Hussard bleu* form a 'single book', the 'unity is not complete' but 'accidental and retrospective' according to Hewitt. From the point of view of the *récit*, *Le Hussard bleu* takes place in-between Part One and Part Two of *Les Epées*. Narratively, as Hewitt (1996, 118) notes, *Le Hussard bleu* 'grew out of a comment to Sanders by the uncle de Grandpré' about the 'croix de guerre' (*Les Epées*, 148). However, the composition of *Le Hussard bleu* is not explicitly linear and chronological as it favours multiple voices even though the ternary composition (Part One: 'La composition d'histoire', Part Two: 'Le Château' and Part Three: 'La Distribution des prix') roughly follows a movement that is historically plausible, starting with the Liberation of Western France, before moving towards eastern Europe and settling in Germany. Part One describes the entry into Germany in the winter of 1944, the spring of 1945 and the siege of K., the Hussards' arrival at Lake Constance and the last day of

the war. The second part describes the occupation of Southern Germany while the third part depicts the German ‘maquis’, the murder of Saint-Anne and their departure from Germany. *Le Hussard bleu* can be seen as the mirror image of the Nazi occupation of France which is detected by the Petainist Colonel de Fermendidier:

On se plaint d’être Français. On se plaint des Allemands quand ils nous envahissent. Mais le Bon Dieu nous a préservés de la plus sale aventure qui puisse arriver à un peuple: être occupé par une armée française. Pas de question. Y ai souvent rêvé, d’ailleurs. Entrer à Paris à la tête de mes chars. (283)

Both these observations on structure and Colonel de Fermendidier’s remark are useful in analysing the question of representation and the status of imitation. Does the second novel merely reverse the occupier/ occupied dialectics of the German Occupation of France or does it represent something else? These remarks are of decisive importance to determine what it is the Sanders diptych represents.

Genet’s *Pompes funèbres* takes place within an even more limited time frame, the last weeks before the Liberation and a few days following it. The narrator provides the reader with information as to when Jean died (19 August), when his family was informed (29 August) and when he was buried (3 September). The reader also knows that the narrator visited the morgue two days after his death, went to see the place where he was killed (rue Parmentier), and attended the religious service at the Église de la Trinité before visiting Jean’s mother, four days after his death. The narrative goes back to the time when Jean, the narrator, and Jean D. were lovers and also repeatedly alludes to Erik Seiler’s past in Berlin. Genet’s bifurcation in a fantacised, parallel chronology allows for the representation of the French in various situations, from Jean D. the young Communist, to Erik the Nazi, Riton the ‘milicien’, and Paulo, the petty criminal turned Hitler’s lover. The constant back-and-forth movement between fantasy and reality as well as the absence of a clear structure renders the progression of the *récit* and its relations with *histoire* – and history – all the more difficult to determine.



Aymé's *Le Chemin des Écoliers* covers a four-week period, but as the footnotes make it clear, the *récit* 'se situe explicitement à un autre niveau temporel' (Lioret 1958, 171) as they prolong the action beyond the limited time frame of the novel. It takes place during the Occupation with no clear chronological landmarks, apart from Malinier's joining the Milice and the sudden acceleration of the rhythm of the narrative with the end of the black-market ploy. In *Uranus*, Watrin's numerous references to cosmic and geological time do however not erase the reference to the return of the prisoners. The time frame suggested by Lloyd (1994, 25) relies on the money conversion from 4 June to 15 June 1945 and the local elections from 29 April to 13 May 1945. Hamel (2006, 147) considers that 'Aymé situe l'histoire qu'il raconte après la Libération, mais avant la capitulation allemande, c'est-à-dire au plus fort de l'Épuration', which may account for the scathing portrayal of the Communists' role in post-war local politics made in the novel. 'L'Indifférent' takes place during the Occupation, perhaps around 1943, if we are to believe Médéric who assures the narrator that '[d]epuis trois ans, je ne m'occupe plus de rien' ('L'Indifférent', 879).<sup>128</sup>

As in *Pompes funèbres* and chapter 2 of Part One of *Les Epées*, 'Le Faux policier' spans the Occupation and some time afterwards:

Pendant près de deux mois, il vécut dans la paix de sa conscience et dans la joie de la fierté retrouvée. [...] Toutefois, il ne laissait pas se rouiller ses dons de policier et les faisait servir à des fins honorables. Enfin, après bien des débats et des déchirements, il se résolut à reprendre son activité de faux policier. (978)

'Traversée de Paris' whose unit of time and space is a night in Paris may allegorically refer to a generic night during the Occupation. The action can however be inferred to be taking place in the winter of 1942, if we are to rely on Martin's estimation of when Grandgil had his teeth replaced: "'Deux ans? Depuis l'occupation, alors?'" (913). *Le*

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<sup>128</sup> The confirmation that the Occupation is not finished comes in the following sentence: 'Ma récompense, c'est quand le maréchal nous cause à la radio.' (880).

*Hussard bleu*, *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, ‘Traversée de Paris’ and ‘L’Indifférent’ all deal with a non-specific period with no clear historical horizon, whereas *Pompes funèbres*, *Les Epées* and ‘Le Faux policier’ explicitly deal with pivotal events such as the Liberation of Paris, the representation of which is significant for understanding the relation between ‘grande histoire’ and ‘petite histoire’, pejoratively described as the concert of ‘grande infamie’ and ‘petite infamie’ (*Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, 707).

### **B. ‘Grande histoire’ and ‘petite histoire’: dates, durations and experiences of time**

All the novels organise the confrontation between social time and individual time. This absorption of history by fiction finds a perfect expression in *Pompes funèbres* where Paulo finds himself in Hitler’s room ‘au cœur même d’un des moments les plus graves du monde’ (*Pompes*, 147), thus inserting his character into history, or admittedly, borrowing Hitler for his fictional purposes.

Dates and historical events feature prominently in the corpus, especially in *Les Epées* where references to school history manuals can be accounted for by the fact François is still a ‘collégien’. Passionate as he is about history and military history, Bainville and Lavissee, whose manual was used in schools from 1884 to 1950 to narrate the construction of France’s identity (Lloyd 2003, 5), are mentioned several times, often together, perhaps because ‘[c]’est Lavissee qui accumulait les dates et Jacques Bainville qui cherchait les explications’ (Nimier 1999, 58). *Pompes funèbres* opens onto the newspaper reports of the elation of the Liberation, on which the narrator puts a dampener: ‘Les journaux qui parurent à la Libération de Paris, en août 1944, dirent assez ce que furent ces journées d’héroïsme puéril [...]. Peu de temps après, ces journaux rappelleront les massacres hitlériens [...]’ (*Pompes*, 7), and similarly, towards the end: ‘Cette beauté n’a duré qu’un moment très bref, quelques jours de danger et de foi pendant lesquels régna l’amour’ (203), before the animation receded (‘[l]a torpeur a

recouvert Paris’, *Les Epées*, 85). François ‘assiste aux dernières scènes de la comédie’ in *Les Epées* (85), while the Liberation appears as a mere interlude for Martin, the ‘faux policier’, who resumes his activities shortly afterwards, and Erik considers it is now time for him to return to Berlin. The Liberation is however consistently represented as failing to bring about radical changes, quite the contrary in fact, at least in Gaigneux’s opinion: ‘La reconstruction ne leur rendrait pas le logement où ils avaient vécu quarante-trois ans’ (*Uranus*, 1129). If Nimier generally tones down the importance of historical events, he nonetheless acknowledges the existence of events as moments of rupture:

Comme je connais bien, tout à coup, le visage d’un événement qui casse le temps en deux, un présent comme un coup de couteau et depuis, ça saigne. C’est derrière vous, à l’intérieur de vous, et ça vous regarde vivre et ça dénude tous vos gestes, et le froid ne vient plus jamais de l’extérieur, on n’est plus de nulle part, on est du moment où ça a commencé. (33)

Events are anthropomorphised (‘visage’, ‘sang’), given a life of their own (‘ça vous regarde’) and associated with violence through the comparison with a ‘coup de couteau’ (Genet similarly uses the formulation ‘couper le destin’, *Pompes*, 42) and the reference to blood. The knife-edge of the Augustinian analogy is here replaced by the blade in a literalization of the abstract typical of Nimier. This contemplation early in the novel provides a grid of interpretation for both *Les Epées* and *Le Hussard bleu*: the narrator refuses to consider the murder of the Jew on the day of the Liberation as an event, owing to the fact that he did not bleed (‘Donc, j’ai tiré sur un symbole [...]. Les abstractions ne saignent pas, du point de vue hygiénique qui ne me quitte pas, quel avantage!’ *Les Epées*, 41-42). By contrast, the hot chocolate prepared for him by his sister after his failed suicide attempt seems to correspond to his definition of an event (‘Alors, j’ai commencé à vivre’ and ‘Ma vie date de cette minute. Je suis cette minute, et rien d’autre’, 36-37). This apparent refusal to consider the Liberation as an event understood as an advent, is confirmed later in a meditation on the writing of history:

‘[...] nos mouvements de résistance m’ont paru mériter un simple paragraphe dans les manuels d’histoire. Je le voyais d’avance ce petit paragraphe, blanc et glacé, juste connu des bons élèves [...]’ (*Les Epées*, 81). François’s decision to celebrate the Liberation of Paris by shooting a Jew is motivated by his need to ‘installer sa vie entre des horizons convaincants’ (41), namely creating milestones for himself. His obsession with historical dates and beginnings can be linked to an obsession with order, also conveyed by his use of a diary and a ruler, his cleanliness and passion for accounting, measurements and all forms of calculations. More generally, this view on the status of ‘vérité historique’ (82) can be linked to a willingness to write history (‘j’ai trouvé juste et raisonnable de faire quelque chose pour la partie adverse’, 81) rather than to a mere desire to tell history from the viewpoint of the vanquished. ‘Faire’, rather than ‘dire’: this is, according to Simonin (2000), precisely the ambition of the ‘roman-histoire’ practiced by Aymé and the rest of the Opposition Nationale movement. Indeed – and this is a valid observation for Nimier as well – ‘the “history-novel” does not simply endeavor to “tell” a different History but to “do” History differently’ (Simonin 2000, 12). Simonin’s view of the historical novel as a discourse on history and historiography seems, in light of François’s description of the notion of ‘event’, more convincing than Cresciucci (2011, 195-196), for whom *Le Hussard bleu* ‘n’est pas forcément [un] roman historique mais [un] roman qui parle de l’histoire, [...] l’espace-temps d’une réflexion morale et politique’.

The revulsion François feels for the Jew’s eyes ‘qui lui dégoulaient du visage’ (41) finds lexical and thematic echoes in Genet’s description of the preparations for the celebration of the Liberation as ‘dégueulis tricolores [qui] dégoulaient de partout’ (*Pompes*, 280). Nausea imbues the description of the Liberation as the ‘première manifestation de la nouvelle France’ (*Les Epées*, 41) in both texts, which is consistent with the positive depiction of the Occupation as ‘ces jours merveilleux de la guerre, ces

mois de liberté qu'ils nous ont laissés' during which François was able to make his 'apprentissage de la paresse' (*Les Epées*, 27; 39). Genet's description of the Liberation as an 'apothéose' (*Pompes*, 196) is consistent with the notion that an event is a pure expression of the present, understood as having no duration, a moment suspended in time and as such charged with mythical if not mystical potentialities. The breaks in time caused by events single them out as unique and, as such, deserving respect and devotion. Indeed, Genet emphasises the diligence and dedication of the Parisians in the preparations for the secular celebration of the next day: 'Toute la nuit, la ville entière avait filé des aunes de cotonnades bleue, blanche et rouge' (*Pompes*, 280). The anteposition of 'toute la nuit' and the hyperbolic depiction ('la ville entière') give the image of Paris as a hive of industry suggestive of the preparations for a wedding or, in this context, the promise of a national Eucharist (an image Genet uses consistently throughout *Pompes funèbres*). The narrator further links the solemnity of the preparations ('l'activité silencieuse de la maison', *Pompes*, 280) to Riton's impending doom, the intolerable monstrosity that he and the German soldiers represent in this context (*Pompes*, 282). The depiction of the last hours before the Liberation of Paris serves to show the mystical dimension of the event of the Liberation from a reversed perspective, that is the point of view of the vanquished (the German enemies like Erik, but also the French traitor, Riton, the *attentiste*, Jean D.'s mother) and, in spatial terms, from the inside where characters seem trapped and rarely – if at all – venture outside. Arguably, the reversal of perspective produced by events and intuitively perceived by Nimier in the use of the impersonal 'ça vous regarde' is given an extensive narrative exploration in *Pompes funèbres*. Remarkably, the end of *Pompes funèbres* arranges for *histoire*, *récit* and History to be aligned to produce a masterly example of the possible fictional treatment of history.

The term ‘époque’ is most commonly used to designate the Occupation in the corpus. Genet uses it mostly in relation to the collusion of the police and criminals during the Occupation (*Pompes*, 202) and denunciations (‘La délation était familière à l’époque’, 203). Justine in ‘Le Faux policier’ insists upon the necessity to ‘vivre dans son époque ou se résigner à disparaître’ (979), whilst Watrin and Archambaud converse about what the epoch made acceptable (‘il y a des époques où le meurtre devient un devoir, d’autres qui commandent l’hypocrisie’, *Uranus*, 1056). François opposes ‘le charme de notre époque’ (*Les Epées*, 121), ‘cette époque inhumaine’ (24) to other ‘époques souriantes’ (121) and Genet views the Occupation and the immediate aftermath as ‘la plus pathétique des époques’ (*Pompes*, 190).

Stocktaking pervades the corpus, in Sanders’s image at the beginning of *Le Hussard bleu*: ‘cette sale histoire que j’ose à peine appeler ma vie, cette sale histoire a duré cinq ans’ (11), or Gaigneux about actions of the Communist Party at the end of *Uranus*, and Riton who constantly reflects on his treason (“‘Qui c’est maintenant mes potes, mes ca-ma-ra-des?’”, *Pompes funèbres*, 282). Riton’s question is emblematic of a more general sense of disorientation experienced by the characters in a period of historical confusion when past, present and future seem to become a blur. Aymé’s characters give the impression that they are more controlled by the events than they are capable of controlling them and being free, autonomous subjects. This echoes Zéraffa’s analysis (1976, 138; quoted in Lécureur 1985, 13; 23-24) that novelists, from the 1920s onwards, seemed to create characters by an ‘émiettement de la personne [...] un effacement voire un écrasement de la personnalité’. The inadequacy of the characters to live their lives in accordance – or at least in harmony – with social time is conveyed by François’s perception that ‘nous avons chacun notre siècle particulier’ (31), thus pointing to anachronisms in life, and more generally, to a flawed relation of time to

life.<sup>129</sup> The equally undistinctive states of war and peace make them second-hand experiences, abstract, purely linguistic entities: ‘On ne sait plus très bien quand l’heure des massacres est passée, ni la minute exacte à laquelle un traître reprend la peau respectable d’un honnête citoyen’ (Nimier 1975, 68). In an echo of Nimier, Saint-Anne thinks that ‘[o]n ne me fera pas croire que la civilisation est en jeu parce que le 13 mars 1945 je pataugeai dans un fossé, le long d’une route malsaine’ (*Le Hussard bleu*, 67). Nimier and Saint-Anne underline the arbitrariness or elusiveness of the relation between ‘grande histoire’ and ‘petite histoire’, between history as it is remembered in manuals and individual experiences of the war. This irreconcilability of official discourses (‘La France ferait des discours. La France. La France, toujours la France’, *Pompes*, 282) and personal experience probably finds its most memorable depiction of Guillaume in Perret’s *Le Caporal épinglé*, whom Jean Carmet personified in Renoir’s adaptation (1962) when he says: ‘L’Armistice est signée mais moi je n’ai rien signé’ or ‘Mes vaches, c’est l’armistice, les gars’.

Time and space are conflated to evoke François’s sense of confusion: ‘Mon mélange d’enfance et de vieillesse me ramène dans ces pays boiteux où l’on n’est jamais sûr de soi parce que tout passe’ (*Les Epées*, 33). Age here fails to be an indicator of experience, to serve as a barometer of one’s life experience (‘Je suis plus sérieux que la majorité des hommes, ce qui n’est pas difficile.’, 14). The phrase ‘pays boiteux’ which blends references to age and disability is exemplary of a troubled and unhealthy relation to time. This sense of inadequacy which finds its most stylistically varied expressions in Nimier’s texts is revelatory of the narrative’s relation to time which critics such as Magny (1971, 319) denounced as counterfeit and theatrical in the sense that time

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<sup>129</sup> The narrator finds historical precedents to his characters: a medieval Claude, a Regency L., François, to Andrea Mantegna (*Les Epées*, 31). If the historical references may point to a nostalgia for the past (‘pas tarder à prendre la Bastille’, ‘prendre Iéna la semaine prochaine’, ‘Ils attendent impatiemment le jour de la victoire où Condé, Vercingétorix et Daladier défilèrent ensemble sous l’Arc de Triomphe’ (40), Nimier’s ‘penchant pour l’anachronisme délibéré’ (Crescucci 2011, 195) appears perhaps more clearly in *D’Artagnan amoureux*.

appears as a ‘temps mort, sans acquêts [...] qui ne constitue ni une durée, ni une histoire – sauf dans les manuels.’<sup>130</sup> The uncertainty of the future is indeed constantly obliterated in Nimier’s texts (‘La guerre va éclater, mais l’Allemagne sera vaincue, Bainville l’a dit’, *Les Epées*, 14) to convey a sense of boredom, a pseudo-indifference which in fact more seriously points to an obsession for order, identifiable from the first sentence (‘Ça commence par un petit garçon plutôt blond [...]’, *Les Epées*, 13). Later, the use of the future tense signals the narrator’s attempt at controlling Claude: ‘Claude me dira: [...] Elle me demandera [...] Je répondrai [...] c’est moi qui gagnerai: elle ira. J’ai préparé ce piège [...]’ (*Les Epées* 28-29). This to some extent intersects with Magny’s remark about the ‘indolence’ (325), rather than the ‘insolence’ (320) of *Le Hussard bleu*, the ‘engloutissement ironique voire haineux de la nouveauté de la vie’ (328) which is expressed by the use of the imperfect to describe what is happening to them (319) and notes the general sense of passivity of characters who can only find solutions to their problems in death (Beauvoir 1972, 177).<sup>131</sup> Hubert (1996, 6) similarly notes that time does not allow Genet’s characters to grow:

Les proscrits qui peuplent ses romans, même s’ils courent d’actes en actes, n’évoluent pas. Ils tendent de plus en plus vers eux-mêmes, comme le peintre qui, à force de retoucher le trait, saisirait enfin une image idéale. Le

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<sup>130</sup> Raimond (1990, 344) also observes that if the *récit* of *Le Hussard bleu* ‘gagne en souplesse, [...] en vivacité puisqu’il est fondé sur des ellipses et des silences. [...] il perd [...] en densité, en cohérence, en crédibilité. Point d’attente, point de temporalité véritable, l’événement est relégué dans un lointain auquel le lecteur n’a guère accès, il ne se transforme guère en aventure pour le personnage.’

Balconies provide a spatial equivalent of the ‘temps sans acquêts’. Magny (2012, 111) argues that they are an ‘incarnation de sa supériorité’, reminiscent of what Kaempfer (1998) identified as the ‘tendance césarienne’ and the ‘point de vue surplombant’ of the ‘récit de guerre’, whereby ‘[I]es héros de Nimier survolent le monde, du haut de leur grandeur d’Espagne, l’incarnation de cette supériorité étant le sac de K., que Saint-Anne, Forjac, Sanders, contemplant juchés sur leurs divers balcons, sans daigner y prendre part.’ In *Le Hussard bleu*, the balcony is ‘une sorte de balconnet’ from which ‘les plus ivres venaient vomir sur leurs compagnons d’armes’ (81).

<sup>131</sup> ‘[I]ndolent’ is how François describes Gutenberg 54-12 (*Les Epées*, 126).

The future is generally approached with great wariness, except perhaps in the case of Professeur Didier who launches a Nietzschean plea for the present: ‘Les leçons du passé tirent notre jeunesse en arrière alors que, pour elle, il est grand temps d’apprendre à vivre dans l’avenir’ (*Uranus*, 1160). Central to his pedagogy is a method devised to give children a better sense of the present and the future. Didier’s view illustrates and develops Antoine’s perception that history is nothing but an ‘excrément cafardeux, bavure du passé sur le présent’ (*Le Chemin*, 721). The naivety of Didier’s radical dream is derided at multiple levels, not least because the recommendation to destroy libraries comes from a man whose Communist convictions are predominantly intellectual.



personnage romanesque connaît habituellement une maturation au fil du roman. Il n'en est rien chez Genet où il est donné d'emblée, figé dans son image comme dans la mort.

Both these observations point to the question of the freedom of fictional characters which, according to Curtis (1985, 9), has been obsessively (and pointlessly) tackled by Existentialism:

Le problème de la "liberté" des personnages est un faux problème, le type même du sophisme d'école, de l'exercice scolastique gratuit. Cela fut à la mode dans les années quarante, cinquante, parce que l'existentialisme, philosophie de la liberté humaine, était alors au zénith de son prestige.

In fact, the main criticism directed against Nimier and Genet that they, to some extent, prevent their characters from developing, and present instead a collection or succession of different states rather than a maturation, can be linked to the more general argument that their failure to create a real temporality originates in a predominantly spatial representation of time. It is arguable however that, at least in Genet's case, the characters' maturation is made impossible by the very nature of the poetic enterprise and the narrator's suicidal state of mind:

je veux cesser de vivre. Même si cette décision se détruit et se renouvelle à chaque instant, elle m'empêche d'utiliser le futur. Tout doit s'accomplir dans l'instant, puisque l'instant d'après je serai chez les morts [...]. (107)

Waiting and boredom are central experiences throughout the corpus. Everything generally takes time, from queues outside shops in *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* to the apparent deceleration affecting all areas of social life. In 'L'Indifférent' the narrator is made to wait for Médé at the bar while he and his customers engage in a 'bavardage [qui] s'éternisait sur le même propos'. In 'Traversée de Paris', Martin and Grandgil while away the day in a cafe before starting their night-time activities whilst Antoine of *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* is described as 'passif, sans réaction, l'œil éteint' (782), occupied as he is to make love and sleep all day at Yvette's. Michaud complains about

the ‘incertitude des opérations [militaires] en cours’ (*Le Chemin*, 709) whilst Grandgil and Martin’s journey through Paris feels so ‘pénible qu’il leur semblait n’avancer qu’avec une extrême lenteur’ (‘Traversée’, 902). François complains that ‘les semaines [...] traînent les pieds’ (*Les Epées*, 136) and attempts to ‘secouer le temps’ by stroking Louisiane’s legs to reassure himself that he is not an ‘esclave du temps’ (117). Florence describes ‘jours cotonneux et sales’ (*Le Hussard bleu*, 31), François evokes the ‘minutes les plus spongieuses’ or a ‘réveil pâteux’ (*Les Epées*, 45; 61). In *Uranus*, Maxime Loin waits day and night and few characters are seen to be working except the schoolmasters and Léopold – although he is admittedly more occupied to seek support for his cause – conveniently in the same space. Boredom is central to military life: Genet evokes the soldiers’ weariness, Forjac is described as having ‘une attitude de brochet endormi’ (*Les Epées* 121). In this context, it is therefore unsurprising that Sanders’s favourite expression should be ‘la barbe’. The end of the war is perceived as the return of boredom: ‘Une chose empêchera les Français d’éviter la prochaine guerre, c’est qu’ils ne se sont pas ennuyés au cours de celle-ci. Et maintenant, ils s’ennuient’ resonates with the fact that the ‘guerre [est] plus excitante que [la] reconstruction’ (*Les Epées*, 30). Characters find multiple ways to kill time by going to the cinema in *Les Epées* and *Pompes funèbres* or making love in *Le Hussard bleu*, *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* or in ‘Le Faux Policier’. Martin in fact makes love instead of killing, unlike others in the corpus: the references to ‘intervalles’ between the narrator’s expeditions in ‘L’Indifférent’: ‘Dans l’intervalle, je rencontrai la maîtresse de mon père’ (885) or the *faux policier*’s week ‘pass[ée] sans rien tuer’ (983), or in *Les Epées* (66) when François reminisces about ‘[l]e mois de janvier [qui] s’est écoulé sur ce rythme lent. Interrogatoires deux fois par semaine.’ Milestones are disseminated in the corpus to indicate a common preoccupation with getting to grips with the passing of time. The temporal and spatial sense of loss is perfectly conveyed in the description of Erik and

the narrator: '*Nous étions là. Pris dans le brouillard du monde*' (*Pompes*, 36). The certainty of 'being there' can be linked to the presence of the watch which functions as a leitmotif throughout *Pompes funèbres* and serves as much as an instrument of time as a compass. It is closely associated with the narrator's sexual encounter with Erik when the former observes: 'A mon poignet la montre volée scandait mon inquiétude' (*Pompes*, 35). The transfer of life from the heart to the wrist (or the watch) is made even clearer later in the narrative: 'Son cœur était à son poignet. Il entendait battre la montre' (71). The theft of the watch also signals the narrator's attempt to steal time, which is confirmed by the vague hope that he will be able to reverse time or, at least, stop its course ('en avouant la montre, il échappait à l'enculage', *Pompes*, 71). The watch materializes the passing of time and its double function of timekeeper and compass demonstrates the interweaving of the temporal and spatial dimensions.

## **2. 'Des aîtres et des hôtes': spatial reconfigurations**

'C'est en franchissant cette porte que je songeais au danger que représentait la boniche. Je n'en aimai que plus violemment ces aîtres et leurs hôtes. Maintenant je vis au milieu d'eux' (*Pompes funèbres*, 223). In this expression, the homophony of 'aîtres' and êtres' underlines the confusion of spaces and existence, reinforced by the imprecise anaphoric pronoun 'eux' which prolongs the semantic confusion of 'aîtres' and 'hôtes'.

The following two examples will seek to show the central importance of space in the comprehension of the mechanism of scandal in fictional narratives. In 'Traversée de Paris' the narrator comments on the setting of the café where Martin and Grandgil find refuge from the cold outside:

Martin avait hâte de vider les lieux. Avec ses murs aux plâtres boursoufflés, son plancher encrassé, son matériel miteux, cette salle étroite et basse de

plafond avait un air d'intimité exagérément sordide qui faisait penser à un décor de théâtre d'un réalisme indiscret. (908)<sup>132</sup>

The shift from 'lieux' to 'décor' underlines Martin's growing uneasiness and impatience to literally vacate the premises ('vider les lieux'), which can be explained by the perceived fakeness ('exagérément') and bad taste ('réalisme indiscret') of what appears to him as a mere theatre set ('décor de théâtre') at the end of the sentence. For Lloyd (1996, 54), this passage shows that 'the world of theatrical illusion invades the everyday' and allows him to conclude that 'Traversée de Paris' achieves the 'representation of illusion'.<sup>133</sup> If Lloyd's observation is valid, this passage is perhaps more significant from a narrative point of view. Indeed, it not only exemplifies the relation of spaces, characters and narrative voice, but more importantly, Martin's sense of discomfort in the cafe announces the later outburst of scandal in Grandgil's workshop when he – and the reader – realise that they have been played all along by Grandgil-Gilouin and the narrator respectively. It is in this sense that the reference to the theatre can be fruitfully interpreted. The cafe, banal as it may seem at first, is 'charged', de-realized or fictionalized, transformed into a scandalous setting through the sense of saturation and suffocation conveyed by the narrator's description. More generally, this example shows the function of spaces in the representation of scandal.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, as the cafe enables the meeting of Martin and Grandgil it can be seen as the primary space of scandal, which – as the narrative unfolds – extends to Jamblier's cellar and then the whole of Paris. The short story is worked by a double movement of expansion/inspiration-reduction/expiration, similar to the workings of a pair of bellows (cafe to street, cellar to street, and then again from cafe to street to Gilouin's workshop

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<sup>132</sup> The expression 'mise en scène' is used figuratively later in Grandgil's inner monologue in an attempt to justify his motives to himself: 'désir de me rendre compte et d'aller plus loin que les apparences en chambardant la mise en scène' (924). The expression 'vider les lieux' can also be found in *Pompes* (105).

<sup>133</sup> Genet's pilgrimage to the place where Jean D. was killed gives him the impression that he is a witness to a 'théâtre invisible [...] où s'était joué le drame' (*Pompes*, 39).

<sup>134</sup> War consistently appears as a theatrical set in Nimier's text: 'Le décor de guerre, patiemment élaboré à l'aide d'amants séparés, de ventres ouverts et des paysages qui bordent les chemins de fer...' (*Les Epées*, 135-136).

to street, police station and eventually prison and release from prison in a proleptic *hors-texte*). Spaces are criss-crossed, traversed by scandal, and become as much agents or characters in themselves as they provide the context to a narrative of scandal. The possessive adjectives anthropomorphically applied to the walls and the floor ('ses murs', 'son plancher') betray the equal prominence – not to say overwhelming presence – of space in the characters' environment and psychological development.

My second example is taken from *Pompes Funèbres* where the same sense of uneasiness and artificiality of a seemingly everyday space can be found as the narrator sets out on a visit to the place where Jean D. was killed. On deciphering the makeshift anonymous plaque, the narrator stumbles upon – or stammers along – the signifier of the deictic adverb 'ici':

Mon esprit s'aiguissait sur l'endroit que désignait 'Ici'. Je n'assistais même plus à un drame. Aucun drame n'avait pu se passer dans un lieu si étroit, insuffisant à toute présence. 'I-ci, I-ci, I-ci, I-ci, I-ci. Qu'on l'a tué, qu'on l'a tué, qu'on l'a tué, con l'a tué, con l'a tué...et je fis mentalement cette épitaphe: 'Ici con l'a tué.' (42-43)

The deixis 'ici' points to spatial proximity – as opposed to its correlative 'là' – but also implies temporal closeness which is, by definition, everchanging. The indefinite contours and extension of 'ici' are reflected in the narrator's obsessive repetition of the adverb, in an attempt to form new meanings which eventually results in the creation of a new, admittedly more fitting, epitaph: 'Ici con l'a tué.' Each repetition of 'ici', regardless of the short space of time between them, makes the deixis change referents, making it all the more empty.

The narrator's work on the signifier (the homophony is preserved) generates a new meaning with sexual connotations ('con', etymologically designating the female sex), a new spelling and arguably a new grammar where the noun 'con' replaces the relative pronoun and subject 'on'. This operation, which consists in expelling the signified from its attached signifier, is typical of what could be deemed Genet's cratylist

poetics: the challenge to the unicity of the signified is prompted by the perception of its artificiality or arbitrariness and leads to the formation of a more natural language. Bougon (1995a, 69) provides a thorough analysis of this passage in which he notes ‘un jeu de mots par lequel la sexualité est lisible, mais sous rature, puisqu’il est précisé que cette proposition ne fut pas prononcée, mais seulement pensée en silence’ and comments on the creation of a lexical field through the repetition (‘ressassement’) of the ‘si’ sound (ci/scie) which produces the verb ‘s’aiguissait’ immediately afterwards. The present scandal – that is the rock the narrator stumbles upon – stems from the fact that the signifier appears as empty as what it signifies, in spite of the ‘agaçante répétition des scies’; it is therefore language and its (in)ability to convey individual meaning that Genet reflects upon here. In this sense, the word ‘jeune’ written on the plaque seems absurd, hollow and completely off the mark to describe Jean D.. In spatial terms, the space where Jean D. died is viewed as ‘si étroit, insuffisant à toute présence’ (43). Both the physical space and the linguistic space are perceived as inappropriate to accommodate Jean D.’s presence and memory. Just as Marie-Anne is shocked to see Loin’s death ‘s’arranger aussi simplement et, par respect humain, aurait voulu étoffer la chose’ (*Uranus*, 1238), the narrator of *Pompes funèbres* seeks to expand, elaborate, ‘étoffer’ and prolong his homage beyond the narrow limits (tree, plaque, ‘jeune’) of the spot where Jean D. was killed.

The fact the narrator cannot ‘chambarder la mise en scène’ – to quote Grandgil’s expression in ‘Traversée de Paris’ (924)– for fear he might be lynched by passers-by, forces the narrator to keep this to himself and to proceed only mentally (‘mentalement’) to the scandalous operation. Earlier, it is this same narrowness of the coffin that the narrator noted: ‘Je regardais le cercueil étroit et le visage plombé de Jean, recouvert

d'une chair affaissée et froide, non du froid de la mort, mais de la glace du frigidaire'(22).<sup>135</sup>

It can be argued that Genet's search for alternative spaces to pay tribute to his lover – by displacement of the actual funeral service at the Eglise de la Trinité – to a matchbox in his pocket used to replicate the coffin in miniature, finds an equivalent expression at narrative level by way of his use of digressions. A number of digressions of uneven lengths can indeed be found in Genet's text, from the parenthesis on the 'courante' (24) to the longer excursus on Joan of Arc. Both devices, the reproduction in miniature of an image on the one hand, and the manipulation of the linearity of the *récit* on the other, can be understood as correctives to a sense of (spatial) insufficiency. These two examples from 'Traversée de Paris' and *Pompes funèbres* show the importance of space in the study of scandal; not only are spaces its a priori conditions, they are also its privileged expression, so much so that space appears as a central component in the construction of narratives of scandal. If scandalous literary spaces conventionally include alcoves, transitional spaces (such as the 'coche' in *Madame Bovary*), temporarily shielded from the public gaze, the texts of the corpus are evidence of a more complex chronotopic construction which relies on a double movement of saturation and desertion as well as extension and expansion towards previously uncharted and marginal spaces in fiction.

### **A. Nature, wastelands, cities and streets: an exploration of outdoor spaces**

All of my texts are set in urban settings and nature and the countryside appear as remote, exterior (physical and imaginary) borders. It is indeed as though scandal was not only spatialized but urbanized, or at least shaped and delimited by urban elements,

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<sup>135</sup> François, unable to find Claude in the cabaret, elects a narrow, confined space to wait for her: 'Si je ne l'aperçevais pas, j'irais m'installer dans un angle. Dix minutes plus tard, j'étais dans mon angle.' (*Les Epées*, 112).

or conversely, as though urban spaces were scandalized. Peripheries, transitional spaces and wastelands appear at various degrees in all the narratives, either as remote and unreal perspectives, or, on the contrary, as landscapes which are so integral to the narrative that they seem to become their quasi-natural element. Saint-Anne expresses his repugnance for non-urban spaces in *Le Hussard bleu*:

Rien n'est plus horrible que de se mélanger à la nature, rien n'est plus odieux que la terre. Elle nous attend, elle n'est pas pressée. En une seconde, je pense amoureusement aux villes, aux maisons bien-aimées, aux trottoirs, à leur douce peau goudronnée. Les villes si pudiques, si tranquilles après tout pour un garçon de mon âge. (44)

The binary rhythm of the first two sentences as well as the anaphoric structure of the first one ('rien n'est plus...') which underline the disgust and boredom that nature inspires the young Saint-Anne, stand in stark contrast with the harmonious tempo (via the abundance of adjectives and punctuation) of the last two sentences which build what reads like a eulogy of cities. The mild sexualization or femininization of cities ('bien-aimées' and even more clearly 'peau') makes urban spaces appear as desirable compared to nature which is on the side of the old ('pas pressée', 'garçon de mon âge'), the ugly ('horrible') and the morbid ('se mélanger à la terre', 'elle nous attend'). If the horror of nature and its correlative attraction for urban environments find their ultimate expression in this statement, it is due more generally to the intimate relation of scandal to urban spaces and what could be deemed the possibility of a crowd.

Nature and the countryside are not however altogether rejected: they appear as being eaten away, corrupted and contaminated by urban spaces as they provide extensions and free range for activities whose nerve centre is located in cities. At best, the countryside is remote and imaginary as Burgundy appears as a plausible Easter holiday destination in *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*. Le Havre, Strasbourg, Nice and Cannes, 'un coin perdu' (*Les Epées*, 112) are evoked in *Les Epées* whilst the 'province' (57) is mentioned generically as opposed to Paris in *Pompes funèbres* in a reference to Jean



D.'s suitcases.<sup>136</sup> These references provide little more than a backdrop for the real plot unfolding in Paris; it may be in this sense that Paris as the capital of collaboration is given a narrative representation.

But the narrative treatment of space, especially pertaining to the apparent prevalence of Paris over provincial towns, is best understood by taking a closer look at the references to the provinces that belie a more subtle handling of space. The transfer of people and activities to Vichy occupies an apparently negligible and purely anecdotal space in *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, but it is the departure of M. Puget to Vichy which makes the whole plot possible. Indeed, the changes brought about by his departure turns out to be largely beneficial to Michaud and Lolivier who find themselves de facto promoted to interim managers of the 'Société de Gérance'. It should be added that their social elevation which coincides with the defeat of France and the immediate formation of the Vichy government is never to be slowed down, as the denouement comes to confirm. The Société metonymically represents the situation of the Occupation, a narrative in miniature contained in the descriptor 'Société de Gérance', with France appearing as a mere tenant in a country effectively owned by the German occupier. If Puget's departure enabled them to become owners of their flats, they remain dependent on Vichy's orders (through M. Puget), and, by extension, Germany. The tenants give a more complete or coherent allegorical image of the situation of France during the Occupation. The chaos resulting from the imminent arrival of Lolivier in the building reads like a roundup by the Gestapo:

[Lolivier] comprit la manoeuvre [une femme dépêcha une fillette pour donner l'alerte chez elle] et, sans hésiter, prit le pas de course jusqu'à l'immeuble. [...] Le locataire, qui était en retard de trois termes, fit valoir ses deux enfants, sa femme alitée, la vie chère. [...] Il menaça le locataire d'expulsion. [...] Après avoir visité tous les mauvais payeurs de l'immeuble, il gagna l'étage des chambres mansardées. (818)

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<sup>136</sup> '[...] nous nous sommes retrouvés dans Dunkerque. Alors, nous avons compris notre malheur: nous étions en province.' (*Le Hussard bleu*, 14).

At the level of the building, Lolivier acts as the occupier and is generally identified as the enemy bringing disarray to all levels. His aggressive attitude ('prit le pas de course', 'gagna l'étage') along with his methodical precision (from the lower levels to the 'chambres mansardées'), his insensitivity and use of threats make him a credible incarnation of the enemy. On a scale of coercive measures and pressurizing methods, the threat of expulsion can be seen as a step short of a search or a denunciation, which is consistent with Lolivier joking about denouncing the Jewish character, Lina. The disturbing similarities between Lolivier and the Nazis are substantiated by two anecdotes which can help build a portrait of Lolivier: the concierges' disgust for Lolivier's vulgar manners, which are said to be nothing compared to those of M. Puget, and Michaud's accusation of Lolivier's 'sympathies pour un certain parti de l'ordre' (719) exemplify the minute narrative construction of scandal from separate elements, namely the dialogue between the concierges, the two protagonists and the seemingly anecdotal, analeptic reference to M. Puget's departure to Vichy. Lolivier's visit to the tenants provides a visual testimony, a tableau or 'concretization' of the dialectic between the occupier and the occupied. This exemplifies how the narrative invests spaces and transforms them into scandalous spaces in the process: the serenity of spaces is constantly jeopardized by potential invasions. New configurations of the urban space caused by recent historical events modify habitual perceptions and representations. In the following example, Archambaud tries to familiarize himself with the new, irrational, monstrous 'images de la ville' which affect all spaces and render them, and the people who are found there, suspicious:

[II] découvrait un aspect nouveau de la vie quotidienne à Blémont. A son esprit surgissaient des images de la ville, une rue, un carrefour, un coin des ruines, la gare, la poste, l'intérieur d'une boutique, le comptoir d'un café. [...] Quel que fût le groupe et selon son importance, Archambaud y distinguait toujours un ou deux individus ou davantage, remarquables par leurs regards faux, leurs sourires complaisants [...]. (1057)

Envisaging the future of Germany through the image of the ‘forêts dans lesquelles les jeunes Allemands d’aujourd’hui et de demain devront se promener’ Semprùn (1995, 9) points to the role of forests in collective representations of crime and secrecy. Forests have become narrative spaces, or spaces for the narrative to convey obscurity. In *Le Hussard bleu* (268), Sanders notes this recent change of perception: ‘En nous promenant dans la forêt, car maintenant, j’aime les forêts, il [Saint-Anne] m’a raconté leur entretien.’ Los Anderos admits that his newfound love for forests can be explained by the presence of an underground paramilitary life: ‘je sentais que j’aurai besoin de me retenir pour ne pas filer dans les bois avec eux’ (303). Contrary to Los Anderos, the more perceptive Forjac is sceptical about the existence of a German resistance in the woods and of the general association of forests with secrecy:

On parlait beaucoup trop à l’état-major des maquis allemands ; les âmes étaient farcies de chimères, ce n’étaient que souterrains secrets, forges de la revanche, couloirs magiques, embûches, arsenaux des mille et une nuits où Vulcain et Siegfried concertaient le IVème Reich. (140-41)

Forjac’s disbelief in an organized German Resistance is replete with mythological representations (‘Vulcain’), mythical references (‘chimères’, ‘magiques’, ‘secrets’, ‘mille et une nuits’) that are arranged to discredit any claims of the existence of an opposition. The expression ‘maquis allemands’ reveals the pitfalls of a facile analogy between occupied France and occupied Germany, and more generally the flawed perception of the French Occupation as the mirror image of the German occupation. As Jurt (1990, 297) notes about the representation of Germany in *Le Hussard bleu*, Nimier ‘montre aussi – avec ironie – combien l’imagination travaillait les esprits lorsqu’on évoquait le danger immédiat d’un maquis allemand’. It is perhaps not surprising that *Le Hussard bleu* should demonstrate a particular interest in forests, given the symbolic connection between German Romanticism and forests: ‘Dans cette belle forêt d’Allemagne, mélancolique, élégante, il est drôle de voir surgir ces barbares [hussards].’

(*Le Hussard bleu*, 315). Saint-Anne's Romantic vision of Germany is indeed heavily informed by literary representations of 'melancholy' and also points to Girardet's analysis of myths as encounters in dark places (Girardet, 1986) of which *Les Epées* furnishes a chilling example when the narrator reflects on the prospect '[faire] sauter la tête [de Février] dans une forêt des environs' (*Les Epées*, 72).

The castle as the prototypical literary space of scandal, drawing from a range of literary sources, from the Sadian castle as the enclosed, inaccessible space devoted to sensual and sexual pleasures to gothic and Romantic references, is toyed with at various degrees in *Le Hussard bleu* and *Pompes funèbres*. The Romantic intertext is clear in *Le Hussard bleu* when Sanders playfully reflects on the connection between his mood and his environment, in a characteristic Romantic inspiration underlined by the zeugma ('je change de pièce et d'humeur'): 'Le château est à moi et surtout les couloirs. Ce sont mes préférés. [...] J'ai l'impression de visiter les artères d'un immense animal ; le sang n'y coule plus pour une raison cachée. [...] Je change de pièce et d'humeur' (*Le Hussard bleu*, 250-251). The analogy of the castle with a dead mammal is evidence of an almost animistic vision of spaces. From a structural point of view, the 'château de Drecknaü' is given a third of the novel, whilst in *Pompes funèbres* the Château du Loiret appears as an avatar of the Sadian castle:

Le parc était toujours clos. [...] Le château dormait le jour et s'animait la nuit. Les rapports des cinq gars devinrent étranges. [...] Leur jeunesse, leur beauté, leur solitude, leur vie nocturne, la rigueur de leurs lois étant agissantes chargèrent à bloc ce château d'une violence qui réussit à le faire croire damné. (268)

In both narratives, there is a clear 'effet de citation' as chateaus are coloured by mythic elements sometimes pertaining to genre literature such as libertine or pornographic literature.<sup>137</sup> As Jurt (1990, 279) observes, 'les amours franco-allemands sont un thème

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<sup>137</sup> The monastery in which Genet is writing *Pompes* is reminiscent of the Sadian castle ('monastère élevé tout droit au milieu des forêts, dans les roches et les ronces.'(9)).

constant du roman d'après-guerre'; hence, Sanders' meeting with Rita appears as a topos of post-war French fiction (März, 1985). According to Jurt (279), Sanders' sadistic relations also pose the question of the state of Franco-German relations in 1946: 'Je ne lui voulais aucun mal. [...] Il n'y avait place pour aucune caresse dans ces amitiés louches. Il n'était pas entièrement faux qu'elle me détestât.' The 'amitiés louches' of Sanders and Rita are indeed evocative of Franco-German relations as represented in post-war fiction.

In 'L'Indifférent', the suburbs and the countryside are depicted as providing the space for Médéric's scam: 'Le terrain d'atterrissage était une grande prairie en bordure de la forêt dont elle était séparée par un terrain vague où se dressaient quelques pans de murs d'une ferme incendiée.' (887) Here, the rural space is directly invested by the narrative, as with a setting already containing all the indices pointing to a scandal ('quelques pans de murs'). In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Michaud's dream recurs with the regularity of menstruation ('le visitait environ une fois par mois'), thus downplaying the gravity of his vision centered on a 'terrain vague':

Il lui semblait errer dans un terrain vague aux horizons noyés de nuit, au bord d'une ville invisible qui était peut-être sa ville natale dont l'image imprécise et déformée flottait dans sa mémoire... Après avoir marché longtemps sur une lande grise qui ne reflétait rien, il commençait à perdre la notion de lui-même [...] ne trouvait devant lui qu'un terrain vague et se remettait à errer, sentant à nouveau sa conscience s'en aller en charpie dans une brume d'incertitudes [...]. (705)

But Michaud's propensity to take a tragic view of life is again debunked by the narrator. This is exemplary of the way the narrative voice organises descriptions by adopting a character's serious vision in which he inserts ironical comments. The image of the wasteland is admittedly so conducive to clichés that the narrator further derides his character:

De temps en temps, il revenait à son cauchemar et lui cherchait une explication symbolique qu'il se défendait de prendre au sérieux. Le terrain vague, c'était la vie; la porte de l'édifice en planches et la musique douteuse représentaient la mort avec promesse de paradis et de repos. (705-706)

The parodic dimension of the interpretation of dreams as popularized by Freud is replete with spatial evocations, which, by way of condensation and sublimation, produce new spaces and new representations. Müller (1993, 170) correctly notes that the strategic position of the dream at the beginning of the novel has narrative and ideological consequences:

Par le thème du rêve qui encadre le premier chapitre du *Chemin des Ecoliers*, Marcel Aymé effectue un choix non seulement au niveau narratif, par la création d'un univers métadiégétique, mais aussi sur le plan 'idéologique'. Il manifeste d'entrée de jeu sa vision de l'homme, et il met le doigt, au moyen d'une métaphore emblématique, sur le thème principal du texte: la désorientation de l'individu et sa tentative d'y échapper en établissant des rapports sociaux.

The image of the wasteland, 'terrain vague', the bleak moor or 'lande grise', evoke a sinister landscape, a naked or empty space which finds an echo in *Pompes funèbres*, although on a more serious tone. About Juliette, the narrator writes:

Et dans cette petite salle à manger, sa seule présence dépouillait tous les arbres de leurs feuilles. [...] Le ciel était bas. [...] Quand elle entra portant un plat de choux fumants, le chant grave et monotone qui sourdait de chaque geste et de l'immobilité même d'Erik sembla monter dans la lande bretonne [...]. (214)

The contamination of the characters by the landscapes works in reverse. It is Juliette who is the agent of the stripping of the trees and the leaves and of the extension to the whole of the 'lande bretonne'. Indeed, the narrator adds: 'Il suffisait qu'elle fût là pour que le paysage le plus somptueux devînt aussi désolé qu'une lande en hiver.' (214).<sup>138</sup>

The intimate relation between landscape and consciousness is further illustrated by Martin's gloomy realization that life is reflected in the landscape: 'La vie ressemble à

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<sup>138</sup> In *Le Hussard bleu* humans are compared to natural elements: 'Nous traversons des villages remplis d'une végétation craintive.' (36).

ça, dit Martin, en désignant le paysage qui semblait derrière la vitre. Quand on la regarde, la salope, elle vous fait froid jusqu'aux boyaux et encore plus loin.' (893).<sup>139</sup>

The inhospitable setting shrouded in fog is evocative of life itself in Martin's mind – a vision ridiculed by the immediate juxtaposition of Grandgil's point of view which is aligned with the narrative voice: 'Il semblait chercher dans ce morceau de crépuscule quelque chose de plus précis qu'une image de la vie.' (893). The free indirect speech used to report Martin's thoughts and the use of the mock tragic 'la salope' signals the narrator's distance with Martin and his closeness – if not identification – with Grandgil's more rational views. What the narrator warns against here is an undemanding Romantic representation of life, a disposition, which tends to confuse man and environment. But it is perhaps the abrupt conclusion brought about by the blue curtain of civil defence that is most telling of the relation between space and characters in Aymé's fiction. The sudden drawing of the curtain is said to now block out their thoughts, in a typical comic literalization of the abstract. In the same vein, Saint-Anne loses his bearings in the fog:

J'ai fait cinq cent mètres, je suis déjà perdu. Je ne distingue plus mon chemin. Il est vrai que je suis arrivé au bout du monde. Un carrefour est là, il n'y a sans doute plus rien derrière lui. [...] Je ne comprends pas cette brume, je ne comprends pas mon malheur. (*Le Hussard bleu*, 259)

In the corpus, one can identify a movement towards familiar spaces and a distancing from foreign places, which are very limited in terms of exploration. Montpellier appears to François Sanders as the place where 'les choses sont connues par cœur, les points cardinaux de chaque minute' (*Le Hussard bleu*, 26) in a conflation of space ('points cardinaux') and time ('de chaque minute'). Even *Le Hussard bleu* whose narrative is the only one to take place outside of France and, for that matter, Paris – if the imaginary Blémont is to be excepted – describes very few explorations, which

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<sup>139</sup> Vandromme (1960, 82-83) notes that 'beaucoup de ses paysages citadins sont des paysages de brume [...] et ses romans peuplés d'ombres'.

indirectly reinforces the structural symmetry with the earlier occupation of France (Müller, 255). Dambre (2008, 155) argues that Nimier is less concerned by geographical exploration than by an ideological exploration of a wide range of spaces:

*Les Epées* donnent de cet espace [celui de *L'Europe buissonnière* de Blondin, sous le signe du roman picaresque avec l'épigraphe de Don Quichotte] la version idéologique. Le cadrage temporel permet au narrateur de parcourir la gamme des engagements et d'ouvrir l'espace: Paris et la Résistance, [...]; la province et la Milice [...]. De même, dans *Le Hussard bleu*, le picaresque se situe moins dans le déplacement spatial ou social que dans la bigarrure idéologique et langagière des dix personnages qui tout à tout accèdent au monologue.

According to Dambre, Nimier differs from Blondin in the sense that the chronotopes of *Les Epées* and *Le Hussard bleu* allow him to explore ideology and language, rather than providing the backdrop of a picaresque novel; if Blondin's picaro travels the world, Nimier's desperado shuns it.<sup>140</sup>

Remote places like those mumbled by the old mariner's military campaign in 'Traversée de Paris' seem to be of no interest to anyone and are repeated mechanically as though only the (exotic) signifiers remained: 'Formose...Taiwan...Foutchéou...' (894).<sup>141</sup> Martin and Grandgil are passive spectators to the scene and it is down to the 'patronne' to ritually help him get back on track: '[...] la patronne prit dans le tiroir-caisse un morceau de papier sur lequel étaient tracés trois mots qu'elle épela péniblement [...]'. The patronne's quasi-illiteracy ('épela péniblement') is echoed by Martin's ignorant comment: 'On se demande où c'est qu'il est allé les chercher.' These place names therefore appear as a figment of the old man's imagination rather than references to real places; the patrons remain closed to the evocation of his military campaigns as none of them seeks to engage with him in dialogue. In *Pompes funèbres*, Paulo is dragged between Paris and Berlin from one set of sex parties to another (147),

<sup>140</sup> 'Or, l'Allemagne, en 1944, fut le grand lieu de rencontre des desperados de l'Europe.' (*Les Epées*, 84).

<sup>141</sup> In *Les Epées* François 'ramasse des souvenirs': 'Ce sera mon chapelet, toujours je réciterai ces minutes, avec la même angoisse.' (33).



hardly an adventure in the geographical and existential sense, while François reflects back on the Milice, lazily thinking that ‘ça promenait’ (*Les Epées*, 105), but failed to do much more.<sup>142</sup> Only everyday life and usual, familiar spaces seem credible and realistic which is perhaps the reason why Archambaud is scandalized to be stopped by F.F.I combatants despite the fact he did not deviate from the usual route he takes for his after-dinner walk.

The limitation of geographical horizons privileges short commutes whereas transportation and distance are strongly associated with danger and death. The ‘voiture à gazogène’ of Tiercelin’s father in *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* is frowned upon by Michaud, the Metro is replete with deadly associations in *Pompes funèbres* and in *Les Epées* (127-128) where François dreams of killing a ‘type’ (‘Nous nous sommes retrouvés dans le Metro. Il savait que j’allais le jeter sous les rails.’ In ‘L’Indifférent’ the scam is based on the promise of an aeroplane journey:

Moyennant une certaine somme d’argent, le patron se chargeait de faire prendre l’avion à toute personne désireuse de gagner l’Angleterre. Je conduisais le client hors de Paris, dans un lieu désert où l’avion anglais était censé atterrir et je devais lui loger une balle dans la tête. (886)<sup>143</sup>

The ‘lieu désert’ signals the scam rather than the beginning of a high-risk, secret expedition, which is confirmed by the expression ‘censé atterrir’. The horizon of expectations produced by the departure from Paris, as well as the bogus airfield, are meant to validate the scheme. Nowhere else is the connection between train travel and death made clearer than in ‘L’Indifférent’ when the narrator describes the suburban train as ‘le train de banlieue qui l’emmenait vers la mort’ (887), although trains are associated with literal death in *Le Hussard bleu* (378): ‘Un train d’enfants avait sauté

<sup>142</sup> François’ ‘longues heures d’attente’ in the Milice makes him wonder if ‘j’étais entré dans la Milice ou dans un corps de Gardiens de squares’ (76).

<sup>143</sup> What stops the narrator from executing his victims is when they start to talk about themselves; it is the realization on the part of the narrator that they are human. This echoes Genet’s remark in *Ce qui est resté d’un Rembrandt déchiré en petits carrés bien réguliers, et foutu aux chiottes*: ‘Quand un jour, dans un wagon, en regardant le voyageur assis en face de moi j’eus la révélation que tout homme en vaut un autre [...]’ (Genet 2013, 13).

sur du plastic [...] par une chance miraculeuse les seuls morts étaient des grandes personnes groupées dans les premiers wagons.’<sup>144</sup> If, according to the narrator, ultimate horror has been miraculously avoided, it does not prevent the textual inscription of the children’s death (‘un train d’enfants’), and therefore its narrative realization to a certain degree. More importantly, this example shows the complicity of spaces in the production of scandal by inserting menace and rendering movement and travel hazardous. Trains and travel are a motif which permeates inter-war and post-war fiction, from Drieu la Rochelle and his ‘valises vides’ to Blondin’s relief to find a train which finally departs at the end of *L’Humeur vagabonde*. A sense of confinement, if not imprisonment, can be felt in *Le Chemin*, ‘Le Faux policier’, ‘Traversée’, *Pompes funèbres* where characters are either immobile or move within a limited perimeter, and only on foot. Only Lina Lebon probably manages to escape but her eccentricity plays down the seriousness and possibility of her actual leaving for America. In ‘L’Indifférent’ (883), Gustave orders the narrator to prepare himself for their mission: “‘Êtes-vous prêt pour partir demain matin pour un voyage de huit à dix jours? [...] bagage à main aussi réduit que possible.’” The travesty and parodic dimension of what the ‘voyage’ entails is revealed clearly immediately after: ‘L’expédition à laquelle je pris part’, also referred to as ‘voyage d’études’ and ‘exploration’, consists ‘à piller des fermes isolées dans le pays d’Othe, après en avoir massacré les occupants’ (886-887). This matter-of-fact tone is echoed, although with less obvious ‘indifference’ or detachment, by Erik who also ‘pilla les maisons abandonnées et les boutiques françaises.’ (*Pompes*, 137) The same cynicism which saw parallels being drawn between him and Meursault in Camus’s *L’Etranger* is to be found in Sanders’s ‘aventures’ where ‘depuis les manœuvres et cette ferme abominable où j’avais failli tuer un ami malheureux’ (349) provides an alternative version to the denouement of

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<sup>144</sup> On an apparently lighter note the ‘train fantôme’ as the star attraction in funfairs is evoked by Paulo, (225).

‘L’Indifférent’ where Médéric is killed by Bette. The expression ‘ferme abominable’ is a case of what Spitzer calls ‘épithète de réprobation définitive’ already commented upon in the previous chapter, and which seems to convey the idea that the farm is in itself guilty: the displacement of the adjective which comes to modify the noun ‘farm’ points to a scandal that assails language at every level. The limitations of the characters’ horizons seem to contaminate spaces and charge them with morbid undertones. ‘The narrator of ‘L’Indifférent’ is a case in point. Seeking ‘une occupation qui me préservât contre une certaine disposition à l’indifférence – indifférence à l’égard d’autrui et de moi-même, au fond de laquelle je sens clairement une vocation de clochard’ (884), he embodies ‘l’errant, l’incertain’, a kind of ‘Ulysse moderne’ (Tonnet-Lacroix 1991, 145). The ‘clochard’ is the ultimate expression of ‘errance’, the rupture of the link between an individual and a space that belongs to him – and to which he belongs. Homelessness and social misery also loomed over Riton who decided to join the Milice after he found himself skinning a domestic cat (stolen from a concierge) in the narrow space of his room (Genet underscores the ‘exiguïté de la chambre’), desperate as he was to find some food (*Pompes*, 90-92). Tellingly, the sense of confinement and isolation are described in spatial terms: ‘Paulo était en tôle et lui-même ne trouvait plus le courage de voler. Il ne sortait presque plus de chez lui’ (*Pompes funèbres*, 90). Paulo’s arrest gradually resulted in Riton becoming a quasi-recluse. As the narrator of ‘L’Indifférent’ claims:

Il faut avoir été clochard dans sa vingtième année, comme je l’ai été, avoir promené, pendant des jours, sa faim et son ennui parfait sur les bancs publics ou parmi les foules affairées et s’être senti invisible parmi ses semblables pour saisir, dans son évidence agressive, le mensonge de la solidarité humaine. (884)

Both Riton and the narrator of ‘L’Indifférent’ (and to some extent other minor characters in the corpus) have been affected by ‘errance’, which is given as a

justification of their behaviour.<sup>145</sup> The narrator of ‘L’Indifférent’ who gives to the short-story the name of his predisposition, namely his need to find an occupation that would prevent him from being bored and Riton’s enrolment in the Milice as a desperate way to find a form of sociability together represent an evident lack of social cohesion. Juliette is described as having begged with her mother in the Bois de Boulogne, a portrayal which will consistently inform the narrator’s description of her as ‘pauvre petite’ and other expressions evoking her pathetic condition. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, Eusèbe’s ‘paresse de sous-alimenté’ (714) makes him vulnerable to Solange’s teasing and, admittedly, leads to his premature death.<sup>146</sup>

Towns and cities provide a critical mass which is essential to the emergence of scandals. The narrator of *Pompes funèbres* mentions: ‘Dans la nuit, la moitié de Paris construisait en silence le frais bûcher des sept mâles et du même’ (179), echoing François’s account of the Liberation in *Les Epées*:

La foule, sage et contente, se massait dans la rue. Libération de Paris, Chapitre V: Le châtement du traître, épisode mélodramatique avec attente, hurlement des spectateurs: ‘Le voilà!’ et chute sur le trottoir. Spectacle gratuit sous le patronage de M. le Préfet de Police et de Mgr l’Evêque du IXème Arrondissement. (92)

The hybrid style of the account, mixing the concision of telegrams, journalistic shorthand notes and speedy narrative style, convey the idea that ‘la foule’ (designated as ‘la moitié de Paris’ in the previous example) at first ‘sage et contente’ soon mutates into a noisy mob. But it is the transformation of the indefinite mass from a crowd to a mob, the change from passers-by to spectators, and from events into a spectacle, that is most

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<sup>145</sup> The narrator concedes later that if ‘[c]’est la faim qui l’avait fait milicien, mais la faim n’eût pas suffi.’ (*Pompes*, 249).

<sup>146</sup> Tony Lolivier is described as ending up in a cellar with a prostitute and an Algerian man who is her pimp. Less tragically, food deprivation causes Colonel de Monboquin to lose his moral compass, at least according to his wife: ‘Depuis les restrictions, il a un caractère très difficile.’ (739).

striking.<sup>147</sup> Girard (2011, 26) explains this sudden transformation of the crowd into a mob in terms of collective persecution:

la foule tend toujours vers la persécution car les causes naturelles de ce qui la trouble, de ce qui la transforme en *turba* ne peuvent pas l'intéresser. La foule, par définition, cherche l'action mais elle ne peut pas agir sur les causes naturelles. Elle cherche donc une cause accessible et qui assouvisse son appétit de violence.

Indeed, the isolated 'traître' constitutes the 'cause accessible', whilst the reference to the 'sept mâles' seems to play on the mythological connotations inherent in persecutions. Paris plays a central role in the representation of the Liberation. Roux (1999, 107) argues in relation to Modiano, whom he sees as a 'romancier de la ville', that the city offers a pattern onto which moral careers can develop: 'le paysage cadastral devient l'équivalent du parcours moral des protagonistes.' This attests to the fact that morality and scandal in particular may be mapped out in spatial terms.

If in 'Traversée de Paris' the names of the streets provide directions to the narrative by indicating the stages of the two men's 'parcours' across Paris, in Genet's text, the references to specific streets and metro stations signal a semantic and poetic system of representation. Indeed, rarely have street names been more appropriate than in *Pompes* as they become recharged in meaning as the narrative advances. The narrator's journey to the place where his lover was killed is precisely logged:

C'est presque à l'angle de la rue de Belleville, en face des numéros 64, 66 ou 68. [...] Il y a une charcuterie. Je ne connaissais pas la saveur de la chair humaine, mais j'étais sûr de trouver à toutes saucisses et pâtés, un goût de cadavre. (39)

The discovery of a 'charcuterie' close to the scene of Jean D.'s murder, roughly indicated by his Communist friends, is immediately interpreted by the narrator as a clue to the exact spot where he was killed. At this moment, the suffering he keeps alluding to

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<sup>147</sup> Nimier describes these 'petits épisodes de guerre civile' or individual scenes of a larger and more serious crisis (*Les Epées*, 89); 'Paris ne pouvait sourire. [...] D'une fenêtre à l'autre, ils s'insultaient, ils se mesuraient du regard.' (*Pompes*, 28).

is given body or symbolic meaning as it is integrated to a culturally-consecrated chain of meaning (sacrifice-food for banquet). If Antoine-Augustin Parmentier was indeed linked to the meat business, it is the complicity of the area's inhabitants with the business that is underlined:

Je vis, effroyablement seul, désespéré, dans une société vorace qui protège une famille de charcutiers (le père, la mère et trois gamins, sans doute) criminels, dépeceurs de cadavres, nourrissant la France entière de jeunes morts, et qui se cache dans les profondeurs d'une boutique de l'avenue Parmentier. (39)

Owing to their proximity to the scene of crime, the members of the family are accused of being criminals, as is France in general which is represented as a 'société vorace'. The linguistic and symbolic saturation of the space (Jean D.'s blood, 'charcuterie', avenue Parmentier) triggers an anthropological meditation on the part of the narrator. Names appear as clues pointing to an enigma, which is not solved at the end of the passage. The 'profondeurs d'une boutique' point to an enigmatic, mysterious and darker reality. The station Parmentier later reappears between inverted commas when Riton and Erik first meet on the Metro and decide to get off together (238): 'Sans se concerter, ils descendirent. C'était la station "Parmentier."' <sup>148</sup> The rhythm of the two sentences further underlines the literal connotations of an imminent slaughter. Street names not only reconnect with their historic origins but come to build a semantic network, whose value is all the more significant as their enigma remains unseen by the majority of Parisians. The 'rue des Martyrs' seems to be prompted by the earlier mention of Parmentier: the martyrdom of Saint-Denis, the Bishop of Paris, who allegedly carried his head under his arm, triggers new associations with food through references to blood, flesh and death.

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<sup>148</sup> In *Les Epées*, Metro journeys are also propitious to sexual encounters (in this case, announced or postponed to three years later) as Fleuve's narration of his meeting with Claude attests: 'Claude, je l'avais aperçue une fois à Paris, dans le métro, il y a trois ans. Mon vieux, jamais je ne l'ai tant aimée qu'entre les stations Chaussée-d'Antin et Madeleine' (134).

Urban settings also appear as inherently scandalous as the density of the buildings and their details become the setting of improvised but carefully scripted spectacles mushrooming across Paris. The city provides existing delimitations and obstacles for the narrative to negotiate through them. In *Uranus*, the main road provides a convenient demarcation of the city: ‘le carrefour, là où la route nationale coupait la ligne de partage entre la ville détruite et la ville debout’ (*Uranus*, 1154). The ‘ville détruite’ and the ‘ville debout’ are clearly separated by a preexisting urban element, the ‘route nationale’. Urban elements make the narrative stumble or improve the flow of the narrative; they are complicators or facilitators of the narrative journey:

Rien n’était visible sur les toits, pourtant on sentait chaque rebord, chaque balcon recéler un danger, la face de chaque cheminée capable d’être le bouclier d’un soldat et l’autre face celui de son ennemi. (*Pompes*, 296)

It is in ‘Traversée’ that the urban space and the narrative are most tightly interwoven. The very title of the short story stresses the transience of the space; it is the crossing, the functional movement from one point to another that constitutes the heart of the narrative. The fact that only one of the two characters reaches the final destination shows how costly (financially, emotionally and eventually humanly) spaces and movements can be. Spaces and crossings carry a risk coefficient: ‘Passé les boulevards, on a une mauvaise diagonale à remonter.’ (‘Traversée’, 919). The concept of the ‘mauvaise diagonale’ reveals a remapping of Paris in geometric terms as in a grid plan, with ‘zones dangereuses’ clearly delimited: ‘les valisards entraînent dans une zone dangereuse. Il fallait avant tout éviter le voisinage de certains immeubles réquisitionnés par les services de l’armée allemande et dont la police gardait les abords.’<sup>149</sup> The impersonal form ‘il fallait’ reinforces the similarities between their expedition and a military operation in a de facto battlefield where rational choices are supported by careful observation and knowledge of the field.

<sup>149</sup> Kalifa (2004, 133) also notes ‘la proximité paradoxale des lieux du crime et de ceux de la répression’.

Everyday spaces are invested by new forces and the narratives use these new references as elements that announce, warn, disrupt, delay or trick the characters and readers into anticipating what is going to happen. The risk of speed is balanced out by the risk of being caught, which is why cyclists are not a realistic option for Jamblier in 'Traversée de Paris'. Time and effort are central to the characters' experience of spaces: the ascent of Montmartre to Caulaincourt is, in this respect, a metaphorical effort, as much as it is a physical one. The speed of the movement is underscored: 's'enfoncer au pas de chasseur toute la traversée de Paris en plein noir, huit kilomètres au raccourci avec la montée de Montmartre en finale, et partout les flics, les poulets, les Fritz...' (891).<sup>150</sup> The constant risk of meeting 'les flics' (915) is verified by the encounter with the policeman 'avec un accent du Midi très prononcé' (927) but also by the constant reminders of their presence as with the arrival of the Jewish girl in the cafe which makes them fear 'quelque déploiement de police entre inspecteurs français et allemands' (910).<sup>151</sup>

Time and space are irretrievably connected: indeed light and shade close up, or on the contrary, open up territories ('les rues transversales coupaient la nuit d'un trait de clarté' or 'au bord de la coupure d'ombre', 'Traversée de Paris', 912; 927). Once again in 'Traversée', (927): 'Dans les rues désertes de Montmartre, la clarté de la lune durcissait la solitude. Les zones d'ombre ne recélaient que le désespoir.' The 'zones dangereuses' mentioned earlier now take on even darker undertones, mixing the literal and the figurative ('zones d'ombre'). Roundabouts and places are invested with supernatural qualities (927): 'Au centre de toutes les rues sans vie dont elle était le

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<sup>150</sup> The inscription of the title of the short-story in this sentence underlines the fact that the title is descriptive in essence. The absence of a determiner ('la' or 'une') gives the 'traversée' an almost surreal or metaphysical dimension.

<sup>151</sup> Genet mentions the 'risque d'être descendu dans une rue solitaire' (*Pompes*, 79).



départ, la place semblait distribuer à l'infini le vide et le silence.'<sup>152</sup> The reversal of perspective from the beginning when Martin only wished for empty streets, to his later despair and utter panic (927), ('Défaillant de peur, il lui sembla qu'il allait trouver sur la place Pigalle ces présences humaines dont il avait besoin.'), the subsequent appeasement by way of a summary ('La solitude et le silence des rues, qu'il avait si souvent affrontés au cours de ses expéditions nocturnes, ne recélaient plus de menace. Il ne craignait plus rien') and his final arrest points to the importance of space and movement during the Occupation (929).

From a structural point of view, Paris is central to the plots of *Pompes funèbres*, *Les Epées*, *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, 'L'Indifférent', and of course 'Traversée de Paris', thus mimetically representing the key, and, in many respects, unique position occupied by the capital during the Occupation and the Liberation. Paris appears as the quintessential expression of the French urban environment and provides a visual and spatial representation of scandal. Notations on the Parisian landscapes are numerous:

Mais depuis l'Occupation, toute cette région de Paris était d'une tristesse béante. La nudité des rues découvrait des perspectives sinistres où les passants et les groupes fluets paraissaient à la merci d'un courant d'air. Les rares voitures qui brûlaient le pavé [...] avaient l'air de fuir une ville condamnée. (*Le Chemin*, 712)

The Occupation seems to be to blame here for the 'tristesse' and 'nudité' of this quartier renowned for its usually buoyant atmosphere. Passers-by seem to be equally affected, as if lost in a city, traffic has become rare and a crushing sensation seems to literally weigh on Paris. What was observed earlier regarding Juliette's effect on the landscape functions in reverse here: the sullen, gloomy cityscape dehumanizes people. These transitional everyday spaces become abysmal, closed in on themselves and sinister, in a word, shadows of their former selves. Paris which was declared an open city on 14 June

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<sup>152</sup> Kalifa's description of Paris at the Belle-Epoque can be applied in the context of scandal: 'ses ruelles, ses lacis, ses chicanes façonnent les contours du récit, commandent son imbrication narrative, ses plots, ses embranchements et ses impasses successifs.' (Kalifa 2004, 149).

1940, is referred to as ‘condamnée’, a destiny reminiscent of long-disappeared cities as the following quotation suggests:

Dans ces rues sans vie qui ne leur apportaient plus de sève, les grands immeubles d'affaires faisaient déjà penser à des forteresses déclassées [...] Michaud rêvait parfois aux vastes cités englouties dans les siècles, aux orgueilleuses Babylone où la vie découragée avait perdu ses habitudes et renoncé enfin à disputer l'espace aux palais éboulés. (712)

This description of the capital provides an incremental change to the catastrophic vision of Paris. Paris takes on mythical qualities ‘forteresses déclassées’, ‘vastes cités englouties’ in Michaud’s hyperbolic vision. Paris appears to be de-humanized because it is disheartened and has now all the traits of a ghost city. The prominence of the urban space is now disproportionate to the presence of humans, which points to a gradual appropriation of the space by the inert. Jean D.’s face is for instance described as ‘friable’ (*Pompes*, 13) in a recurrent analogy with the ‘ruines and décombres’. Spaces threaten to eat away those who used to people them. To the ‘engloutissement’ of Paris in *Le Chemin* corresponds the evocation of a ‘ville condamnée’ and an ‘immeuble marqué’ in *Pompes funèbres*:

L’immeuble était marqué. On dit qu’un visage, un destin, un garçon sont marqués. Un signe de malheur devait être inscrit quelque part, invisible car il était peut-être au bas d’une porte dans l’angle gauche, ou sur une vitre, dans le tic d’un locataire. [...] La maison sentait la mort. [...] La maison était minée. Elle glissait vers un abîme mortel. (178)

The characters’ powerlessness perceptible in Michaud’s depiction is aggravated by a sense of doom in this passage from *Pompes*. Indeed, the house is thought to be ‘minée’, literally in the sense of a sabotage and figuratively, by hatred (‘la maison minée par la présence, à tous les étages, de Français haineux [qui] feront sauter l’immeuble’, *Pompes*, 172) and the soldiers in the flat prepare themselves for their downfall which will take the form of a ‘glissement’ or slip down into the abyss.

## **B. Between confinement and verticality: the relocation towards indoor spaces**

The pervasive sense of entrapment is expressed spatially via a gradual relocation towards indoor spaces, both public and semi-public such as cafes and cinemas, flats, bedrooms and beds.<sup>153</sup> The vulnerability of these spaces and their occupants can be detected in the gendarmerie's mandate to search Léopold's cafe: "Vous avez une cave? Un grenier ? Une cave, oui. Le grenier a été réquisitionné pour des sinistrés." (*Uranus*, 1070). The reduction of Léopold's living space announces his later imprisonment and more generally the progressive limitations of his possibilities. In *Uranus*, the council's decision to relocate disaster victims in Archambaud's flat creates a reduction of everyday spaces, which can be seen as the primary ingredient of the dramatic tension in the narrative. The difference in tone between *Le Chemin* and *Uranus*, if usually accounted for in ideological terms, could alternatively be explained as an effect of the spatial reduction and an accompanying growing tension between the characters who, to make things worse, belong to different social milieus and have irreconcilable political views. The overcrowding of the flat is compounded by the accumulation of unused furniture which makes circulation virtually impossible:

il réfléchit à une disposition des meubles qui eût laissé plus d'espace pour se mouvoir. Par exemple, la desserte et le bonheur du jour sur le secrétaire. Pour les chaises [...] il imagina de les suspendre à des crochets glissant sur un câble tendu à quelques centimètres du plafond. (1047)

Archambaud's resourcefulness verges on absurdity here and amply demonstrates spatial saturation and the ensuing sense of passivity and dormancy which suffuses the novel. It is not so much the ideological tensions between the Communist Gaigneux, the accomodator Archambaud and the collaborator Loin, which generate narrative tension

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<sup>153</sup> Sanders comments on the fact that 'le monde entier n'était plus qu'un immense lit trop peuplé' (*Le Hussard bleu*, 134) and later: 'Troublante réunion, sur ce lit, entre une Allemande et moi, de Hitler, de Benjamin Franklin et du Maréchal de Mac-Mahon.' (371).

and advance the action than the spatial constraints imposed on them and that the narrative emphasises. The new arrangements to the shared indoor space evoke the setting of a play: ‘Partagée en diagonale par un assemblage de paravents, Marie-Anne en occupait le côté Ernestine [impasse], Pierre le côté des ruines’ (*Uranus*, 1137). The invasion of private spaces is paradoxically never so intense than after the Occupation and during the Parisian insurrection. Windows, ‘lucarnes’ and other openings present considerable danger; in ascending order, Archambaud hides from view to avoid being seen by Mme Séguin, Loin keeps away from windows, Paulo enters Hitler’s alcove, Riton, Erik and the other soldiers, Pierrot and the mutineers risk being shot by the soldiers outside if they can be seen at ‘lucarnes’ or by the ‘insurgés’ respectively.

In *Pompes funèbres* the soldiers occupy empty flats and open cupboards and drawers: the discovery of the tenants’ intimacy and, in this case, shameful habits finds a climactic expression in the following example:

Sans les rechercher, nous découvrons les habitudes intimes des bourgeois, et je peux dire que j’ai trouvé au fond des tiroirs, des slips merdeux, des chaussettes recroquevillées dures et sèches, qu’en les dépliant on libérait de leur triste parfum. (277)

The narrator insists on the innocence of his searches ‘sans les rechercher’, as if to mitigate the unnerving discovery of what are literally the ‘dessous des bourgeois’. Bachelard (1961, 101) notes that drawers and chests are ‘solidaires de toutes les cachettes où l’homme, grand rêveur de serrures, enferme ou dissimule ses secrets’.<sup>154</sup> Genet could appear as an accidental ‘poète des meubles’ in that ‘il sait d’instinct que l’espace intérieur à l’armoire est un espace d’intimité, un espace qui ne s’ouvre pas à tout venant [...] c’est le chaos rangé’ (Bachelard, 105).<sup>155</sup> The abandoned Parisian flat where the German soldiers and Riton are waiting for the final assault echoes the image

<sup>154</sup> In *Les Epées* François opens his drawer: ‘J’ai regardé un tiroir plein de lettres: au feu, ces lettres. Défense de laisser des traces’ (60).

<sup>155</sup> Léopold is described as relieved to have been spared an inventory by the gendarmes. The interest in the relation between drawers and secrets is evident in Aymé’s last novel, *Les Tiroirs de l’inconnu* (1960).

of ‘urban dystopia’ that French noir writers exploited to the full. As Gorrara (2012, 28) notes, ‘the most recurrent metaphor for such a vision of defeated France in these early fictions is the abandoned house.’ The image of the empty flat suddenly deserted by its occupants and as though fixed or suspended in time strongly evokes the temporary refuge of Erik and his comrades.

In *Uranus*, cafes not only serve as temporary classrooms but also as the main place where the Blémontois socialise, and occasionally argue.<sup>156</sup> The cafe constitutes the nerve-centre that crystallises social and personal tensions. In ‘L’Indifférent’, the narrator goes straight to a bar after his release from prison: ‘Le lendemain de ma sortie de prison, par un après-midi de juillet, je me présentais au Bar de la Boussole, un établissement miteux sur le côté passant du Boulevard Rochechouart.’ (877) The opening sentence to the short-story sets the ‘Bar de la Boussole’ as an ironical reference to the dubious moral compass that is to be used throughout the narrative. It is also thematically reminiscent of the name of the insurance company called ‘La Bonne Étoile’ where Yvette’s husband worked before being made prisoner in Germany. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* ‘La Pomme d’Adam’ bears the promise of promiscuity as the episode with Yvette and the German officer, and the meeting of Michaud and Tiercelin at his bar-brothel confirm. In *Uranus*, it is the destruction of the café ‘L’Universel’ of which François is a patron which ironically signals the death of humanistic and universal values; the fact Léopold’s ‘café du Progrès’ survived the bombings provides yet another ironic, incongruous sign of the meaninglessness of it all.

Intermediate spaces are uncovered, especially cellars and attics or ‘souterrains’ as Jamblier’s cellar, that of the farm in ‘L’Indifférent’, the attic where Sanders is beaten up in *Les Epées*, thus pointing to a hollowing out of everyday spaces.<sup>157</sup> Indeed, and

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<sup>156</sup> In *Pompes*, the school is transformed into barracks (87).

<sup>157</sup> ‘Alors on nous a tabassés et on nous a traînés dans des souterrains’ (*Les Epées*, 62).

perhaps all the more so in the final days of the Liberation, private spaces represent a token protection. In *Pompes funèbres* Jean D.'s mother says:

Vous ne savez pas la vie qu'on vit ici. Moi je fais dire que je ne suis pas bien et je ne descends plus. [...] Si seulement on peut se sauver une nuit... Lui (elle montra Erik) il voudrait partir, il sent bien qu'il est en danger, mais pour aller où? On arrête tout le monde. (150)

The sense of entrapment and diffuse danger is reinforced by the indefinite pronoun 'on' and the expression 'tout le monde', pointing to anonymous, random arrests and raids but simultaneously made pathetic through the allusion to a clichéd Romantic escape or elopement at night. The image of the trap is a recurrent one throughout *Pompes funèbres* ('piège à rats', 'piège à loup') and resonates with the analogy of the rats in the sewers (*Pompes*, 12). Kalifa (2004, 141) underlined the 'stéréotype de la nation souterraine et de la contre-société des bas-fonds [...] les bas-fonds ne sont jamais que l'envers de l'endroit, la doublure inversée de ce qui fait Paris'.<sup>158</sup> A dialectic opposing high and low to the detriment of intermediate spaces can be seen to be at work in the spatial construction of scandal.<sup>159</sup> In the final days of the Liberation, life seems to reorganise itself equally on roofs, cellars or sewers, along a vertical axis:

Riton songeait aux soldats allemands qui s'étaient enfuis par les égouts. Ils menaient dans une autre obscurité une vie qui était la réplique souterraine de sa vie en plein ciel. Ils étaient quelque chose comme nos reflets au fond des étangs bourbeux quand nous sommes sur la rive. (140)

The idea of the 'réplique' and the 'reflet' demonstrate the parallel conditions of those in the sewers and on the rooftops. The world in-between is in effect rejected: it is therefore a spatial reconfiguration that the narrative operates. 'Votre monde à vous' as Genet deems it, may therefore first and foremost be understood as the literal, spatial

<sup>158</sup> 'Paris fut habité par une ville étrange, qui était à l'ombre de la ville libre, son enfer, son double honteux, au sens exact, ses bas-fonds.' (*Pompes*, 256).

<sup>159</sup> As Bachelard notes 'La verticalité est assurée par la polarité de la cave et du grenier. Les marques de cette polarité sont si profondes qu'elles ouvrent, en quelque manière, deux axes très différents pour une phénoménologie de l'imagination. En effet, presque sans commentaire, on peut opposer la rationalité du toit à l'irrationalité de la cave.' (45)

expression of an abstract moral differentiation. ‘Dans les égouts s’organise sans qu’on y prenne garde, une vie merveilleuse qui va durer plusieurs jours’ (256). The notion that some spaces may be charged with connotations of ‘merveilleux’ resonates with de Forjac’s dismissal of the French generals’ fantasies of a reorganisation of the German resistance mentioned earlier.

The mystical dimension of the threat puts spaces on the side of the abstract:

Les soldats allemands et Riton étaient remontés sur le toit. Il se sentaient poursuivis moins par les locataires de l’immeuble que par la peur. Ils fuyaient devant la peur. Lentement, suivant les versants les moins exposés des toits, ils gagnèrent en plein jour une encoignure formée de trois cheminées. La cachette était étroite, elle pouvait à peine les contenir bien qu’ils se serrassent accroupis dans une sorte d’agglomération d’où la notion d’individu disparaissait. Aucune pensée ne naissait de cette masse armée, mais une somnolence, un songe dont les thèmes principaux entremêlés étaient les sentiments du vertige, la chute, la nostalgie du Vaterland. (*Pompes*, 295)<sup>160</sup>

The description of their final relocation on the roof takes the characteristics of a mountain ascent (‘versant’). The immateriality of their fear underlines the evolution that spaces have experienced throughout the narrative (from concrete to abstract) and the motif of spatial narrowness is to be found again here (‘la cachette était étroite’). As with *Les Epées* where the German soldier finds his last shelter on the roof, Riton and his comrades’ presence on the roof, this ‘espace insuffisant à toute présence’ simultaneously marks the soldier’s demise and the end of the narrative. Survival is conditioned by their becoming inert elements, parts of the roof; the characters become spaces themselves, absorbed as they are by their environment to become a shapeless mass (‘une sorte d’agglomération’, *Pompes*, 95). The description of the shadows Erik and Riton form confirms the abstract dimension of the scene: ‘Alors, sur le ciel sombre,

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<sup>160</sup> In *Les Epées* the ‘Schleu’ is spotted by the people in the street: ‘Il m’a semblé l’apercevoir derrière la seconde cheminée. Ils ont tiré à nouveau dans cette direction. Ils ont un fusil-mitrailleur, ils l’auront.’ (95) Genet’s vocabulary is dominated by an opposition between high and low as the following example attests: ‘L’institution nazie ne cherchait qu’à se dresser orgueilleusement dans le mal, ériger le mal en système et hausser tout le peuple, et soi-même au sommet de ce peuple, jusqu’à la solitude la plus austère.’ I italicize (217).

au sommet du toit, deux bras nus se découpèrent d'abord. [...] Ce dessin d'affiche de deux bras tendus, noués pour une aide virile et fraternelle faillit se déchirer, crever le ciel' (63).

Spatial metaphors and verticality in particular are used to convey scandal. But it is, although perhaps less evidently, the saturation of everyday spaces that is most conducive to the narrativization of scandal. In 'L'Indifférent', 'La Centrale' is mentioned whilst in *Uranus*, the 'vieille mercière' who protected Maxime Loin is said to be dreaming of going to prison:

Son rêve était d'aller en prison. Logée dans une cave et n'ayant presque plus de moyens d'existence, la prison représentait pour elle une espèce de paradis. C'était le pain assuré et, derrière les barreaux, le droit à la lumière du jour. (1082-1083)

In 'Traversée de Paris' Martin envisages a night at the police station as a safe haven: 'Martin se voyait assuré d'un havre où, jusqu'au lendemain, il serait abrité du silence, de la solitude, des regards de sa concierge et de ses amis' (928). The eponymous *faux policier* is caught and 'condamné à deux ans de prison et cinq ans d'interdiction de séjour' but these years in prison are not anticipated as problematic: 'Tout porte à croire que cette mésaventure lui aura servi de leçon et qu'il saura retrouver plus tard le bon usage de ses dons de faux policier.' ('Le Faux policier', 986).

It is in chapters XIV and XX of *Uranus* and in the last third of *Pompes funèbres* when Pierrot is sent to prison that the narratives seek to explore the space of the prison, which is emblematic of spatial confinement. In *Uranus*, what is presented as Léopold's unlawful arrest leads him to the same cell as a murderer, a satyr and a Vichyist doctor, as well as with two other prisoners denounced for 'menées anti-françaises'. In *Pompes funèbres* (221) it is the mutiny at the prison that takes centre-stage, arguably giving a larger perspective on the situation of prisoners vis-a-vis the rest of the world and offering a representation in reduction of the civil war within society at large. Prison



therefore represents a warring society in miniature which is a privileged space of scandal, never so clearly perhaps than for Genet. According to Lozier (122), prison belongs to the ‘marges et l’inframonde’, a version of the ninth circle of Dante’s hell, wherein treachery occupies a key role. As Lozier (124-125) notes: ‘La prison de Genet et les espaces qui lui sont connexes (l’inframonde souterrain des hors-la-loi) sont ainsi construits sur le modèle de l’enfer dantesque’. Genet (1986, 203) explains his taste for the margins in political terms: ‘Cessant d’être jacobine, quoiqu’elle en dise, toute personne s’approchant de la frontière devient Machiavel, sans oser affirmer que la marge demeure cet endroit territorial où la totalité est possible, il serait peut-être humain d’étendre territorialement les marges.’

If the model of the literary space of scandal is by tradition that of the bedroom or the alcove, it appears with the corpus here under discussion that spaces have been contaminated by scandal in the sense of a vertical and horizontal extension of the criminal spaces. The narratives of the corpus are saturated with spatial indicators and they seem to be a part of a more complex system of representation which connects motifs and themes to the overall structure.

### **C. Miniatures: thematic extensions and narrative intentions**

Miniatures or representations in reduction are evidence of an attempt to multiply images, what Bachelard (181) sees as typical of the work of the imagination which ‘cherche un prétexte pour multiplier les images’. Uniforms signal commitment, belonging and allegiances. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* the presence of German officers in the café upset Antoine as they signal their alien character. The visual and optical dimension of the uniform is stressed in Malinier’s uniform of the L.V.F: ‘Tournant la tête, il poussa un cri en découvrant que Malinier portait l’uniforme allemand.’ Uniforms are consistently represented as the providers of new identities. In *Les Epées* the narrator

observes that it is not before he wore the Milice uniform that he really joined their ranks: ‘Je ne suis vraiment entré dans la Milice qu’au moment où j’ai revêtu le coquet uniforme bleu-marine, le grand béret qui vous fait la mâchoire dure et le regard plus dense. Ma jolie mitraillette sous le bras, j’ai étonné les populations’ (58).<sup>161</sup> The dark blue uniform, the beret and the rifle are the signifiers directly associated in collective consciousness with the Milice as repressive force. Sanders can therefore reflect on the subterfuges of the uniform: ‘Je me suis demandé si j’étais simplement un milicien ou un résistant camouflé en milicien. Ou encore un fasciste qui jouait à la résistance sous un uniforme bleu marine.’ (76). The multiplicity of identities or the ambivalence of the uniform as coherent and stable sign is contemplated here. The first two stages of the sham are experienced by the narrator in *Les Epées*. Uniforms are of primary importance in what Genet calls ‘l’art de la guerre costumée’ (*Pompes*, 216). The metaphor of fancy dress is echoed in *Les Epées* and conveys the idea that war is nothing but a farce. ‘J’ai même été revoir mon oncle de Grandpré qui a blêmi légèrement; puis il a réagi en murmurant qu’un déguisement en valait un autre, mais qu’en 1910, au cours des bals costumés, on préférerait les seigneurs Henri III’ (75). Both Nimier and Genet detail the fascination and the ‘coquetterie’ of the uniform of the Milice which can be understood as follows: ‘the desire for the black shirt recaptures the alterity of the other under the very uniformity of its otherness’ (A. Hewitt 1997, 139) Arguably, François’s disappointment with the Resistance can be understood from the point of view of uniforms; the absence of recognisable costumes prevents him from having a stable identity and makes him defect to the Milice.

Uniforms are also the entry points to an understanding of identity as shown by the function of the uniform in the understanding of Erik: ‘je m’efforçai de remonter le courant de sa vie, et pour plus d’efficacité, je rentrais dans son uniforme, dans ses bottes, dans sa peau’ which echoes the beginning of the subsequent digression: ‘Je chaussai les

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<sup>161</sup> ‘Riton portait, avec beaucoup de coquetterie, le costume bleu sombre’ (*Pompes funèbres*, 75).

bottes allemandes' (32). Saint-Anne, unsure as to whether or not he is yet a hero, resolves: 'En attendant, je me déguise en hussard' (34): the uniform here appears as a simulacra of identity, a temporary ersatz of identity.<sup>162</sup> Sanders' uniform includes buttons from the American army and a belt from the French army (371), indirectly evoking these 'vies [...] fracturées' (*Pompes*, 49) that Genet seeks to integrate to his own.

The narrative focus on uniforms can also be interpreted as a way of demultiplying meaning and can be examined in the context of a more general obsession with props and accessories. If fabric appears as a privileged material constituting a layer of identity, stripes can be viewed as the prototypical metonymic reference to the new order: 'J'ai donc ramené en France notre escadron tandis qu'O'Reish passait chez de Gaulle ainsi qu'au Grand Bazar d'Alep pour acheter, à tout hasard, quelques centimètres supplémentaires de galon d'argent' (*Le Hussard bleu*, 79-80). The distribution of honours which constitutes the second part of *Le Hussard bleu* is compared to a bazaar where everything can be bought and sold. The bazaar's pejorative connotations of a market selling miscellaneous goods of little value and where haggling is key is proof of the corruption of values. Merit is rendered trivial by way of objectification ('quelques centimètres de galon' are more important than bringing his squadron back to France). The disproportion between the negligible amount of fabric ('centimètres supplémentaires') and the long trip to Alep is indicative of the importance of being seen to be close to de Gaulle at the time of the Liberation. In *Uranus* the arrival of the prisoners in Blémont is warmly welcomed by all but corruption seeps into and engulfs all the respectable signs. The example of Archambaud's best suit is a case in point:

Archambaud sortit son complet le plus neuf, un bleu foncé fileté de blanc, celui qu'il s'était fait faire au marché noir en 43, et qu'il réservait pour les cérémonies, les voyages à Paris, les repas chez le patron de l'usine ou chez

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<sup>162</sup> 'L'uniforme m'en a donné l'aspect, et, en quelque sorte, je suis maintenant un homme.' (424).

d'autres notables. En le prenant dans le placard, il lui souvint de l'avoir porté pour la première fois lors de la venue du Maréchal à Blémont. Le vieux avait été reçu à l'hôtel de ville et les ingénieurs et chefs de service de l'usine figuraient en corps à la cérémonie. Au-dehors, la foule avait envahi la place et débordait dans les rues avoisinantes et une grande clameur de tendresse montait vers le balcon de la mairie. Archambaud songea qu'il allait se trouver tout à l'heure en face de cette même foule prête à soutenir de ses acclamations les paquets d'injures que ne manqueraient pas de prodiguer les orateurs à l'adresse du Maréchal. (1205)

This example illustrates the instability of signs as the signifier 'suit' is unchanged and one may even assume that Watrin only wore it on two occasions, when the Maréchal visited Blémont and on the day of the return of the prisoners. The signifieds are multiple but what they have in common is the need to convey respectability ('les repas chez les notables'). But it is precisely the multiple signifieds, the shifting meanings the suit assumes that makes it a sign of mock respectability.

The metonymic and allegorical use of fabric to represent the instability of the characters' commitments is most evidently present in Genet's leitmotif of the curtain, which is reminiscent of a baroque aesthetics as a multiplicity of folds in Deleuze's interpretation:

Par un geste de prudence inutile il tint devant son corps l'un des double-rideaux de velours rouge. Il resta ainsi quelques secondes puis il se retourna sans lâcher le rideau, si bien qu'il se trouva enveloppé dans ses plis, presque complètement, et que j'eus l'image d'un des jeunes hitlériens qui défilaient à Berlin, le drapeau déployé sur l'épaule et eux-mêmes enveloppés dans les plis de l'étoffe rouge battue par le vent. (*Pompes*, 19)

The curtain functions as token protection for Hitler here; the thickness (double) and sexual connotations of the red velvet pave the way for the vision of a military parade. The vision is contained within the folds of the curtain and created by them; Deleuze (2013, 9) explains that 'le dépli n'est donc pas le contraire du pli, mais suit le pli jusqu'à un autre pli.' The motif of the curtain is reprised later to describe the flag in the office of Juliette's lover as 'un drapeau dont l'étoffe de soie était lourde étant double, brodée et frangée d'or' (48), elsewhere 'double, lourde, immobile' (256). The sense of threat and

implacability inherent in this description underlines the danger of denunciation by way of displacement unto the motif of fabric. When thinking of the possibility of denouncing Jean to her lover, Juliette feels the need to ‘m’accroche[r] à quelque chose de solide, d’existant, et qui ne fût pas moi-même, et c’est alors que je fis un geste pour saisir le gland du rideau que j’empoignai, à pleine main’ (131). The motif of the curtain seems to have prepared this confusion between the everyday object and the sexual associations of ‘gland’ by the apposition at the end of the sentence (‘à pleine main’). The necessity to hold onto something solid and ‘existant’ finds an echo with François who counters the sliding of time, the ‘minutes les plus spongieuses’ when he is ‘rassuré, enchanté par la présence de ces choses compactes, un mur, un arbre, une porte. Ces éléments durs et permanents forment mon univers amical’ and later dreams of being ‘une sorte de bloc inaliénable’ (*Les Epées*, 45; 128).<sup>163</sup> Solidity and compactness tell the same story of the characters’ need to cling to objects which can reassure them and reassert their own presence in the world. Time and space are therefore represented as an ever-sliding universe which jeopardizes the characters’ presence.

Simulacra, microcosmic representations of reality and displacements from the major to the minor abound in the corpus in what can be seen as attempts to demultiply meaning. In the second chapter of *Uranus* Archambaud is intrigued by children playing war in the ruins. The lexical field of military combat pervades the description of this short scene perceived through Archambaud’s eyes (‘surpris à découvert’, ‘rafale de mitraillette’) and for all the pretence (‘comme blessé à mort’) is given a serious interpretation (*Uranus*, 1051). Indeed, according to Archambaud, ‘[c]es recherches de réalisme s’appuyaient vraisemblablement sur une expérience vécue du bombardement qui avait fait plus de trois cents victimes’ (1051). In this scene, the wounded soldier is killed off with a fake wooden gun in a rehearsal of the murder of the boy in *Pompes*

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<sup>163</sup> François feels ‘un peu pierreux comme une balustrade. Une balustrade sur laquelle personne ne s’appuie’ (26).

*funèbres* who, as the child who ‘venait de s’affaisser sur un tas de pierres’ (122), ‘tomba comme on tombe dans ces cas-là’ (*Uranus*, 1051). Both executions appear as the operations in miniature, the practice and reproduction of other murders (the murder is said to be ‘mon premier meurtre’). The execution of the young boy in *Uranus* takes on serious connotations after the comic chastisement of Maria Gaigneux by her husband in the first chapter. After being dragged out of the kitchen by him, the narrator describes the remaining characters as ‘témoins de l’exécution’ (1049). In *Pompes funèbres*, Paulo ‘subit un simulacre d’exécution’ (90) during which he was taken outside, heard gunshots before being taken back to his cell.

At the level of the narrative, the twenty footnotes used in *Le Chemin des Écoliers* are of particular interest in the examination of the role of miniatures in the wider system of representation of the ambivalence of the Occupation and the Liberation. Three main categories can be distinguished from the footnotes. Firstly, those who died violently (the four German foot soldiers (711), Captain Von Holberg ‘pulvérisé par un obus de marine’ (789), Malinier’s execution (821), the unlucky ‘homme chauve’ who was arrested by mistake and executed (837), Capitaine Hatzfeld who plotted against Hitler and ‘pendu à un croc de boucher, qu’on lui enfonça dans la gorge’ (842); Gérouard, the accidental ‘Resistant’, hanged by the Gestapo (856), the young René Tournon who died of anxiety two months after denouncing his father for his activities in the Resistance (780) and those who died of chagrin (Eusèbe in a sanatorium, 863-864). Secondly, those who escaped a catastrophic end but went on to live pathetic lives such as Professor Gustave Bon (720). And thirdly, those for whom the war did not change much or who found themselves happier after the war: the tenants who denounced their old uncle to the Gestapo are still alive (714), M. Puget has safely returned from Vichy (735), Clémence Robichon is now engaged to the son of a judge (761), M. Rigoulet who, after being deported, can dream of becoming a député (774), the industrialist condemned to

five years in prison and only ten years of ‘indignité nationale’ (785), André Caseneuve, the former STO worker who after trying to stay in Germany was sent back to his family ‘après de longues et plaisantes vacances’ (818). On two occasions, the footnotes only complement the information given about characters in the main *récit* without providing an ending or a conclusion to the lives of the characters: the narrator suggests a factual correction to Yvette’s narrative about his father (782) and in the final footnote of the novel, reports a discussion between Michaud and Lolivier (873). Interestingly, the first and third categories (violent deaths and unperturbed lives) dominate the footnotes.

Nimier (1965, 44-45) analyses these footnotes as the

tragique du livre. C’est une dizaine de petites notes, en petits caractères, placées au bas des pages. A propos d’un personnage épisodique, tout son destin est ramassé en dix lignes. La brièveté, ici, nous touche plus qu’un récit. On se heurte à des cadavres vivants: heureux dans le texte, ils sont torturés, pendus dans les notes.<sup>164</sup>

In narrative terms these notes point to sequels or prequels and, as rightly observed by Nimier, they sometimes end up in death or some other catastrophic demise.<sup>165</sup> For Genette (2002, 321) footnotes are ‘un élément de paratexte’ which he defines as ‘un énoncé de longueur variable (un mot suffit) relatif à un segment plus ou moins déterminé du texte, et disposé soit en regard soit en référence à ce segment’.<sup>166</sup> It could also be added that these footnotes are ‘infrapaginales’ and not numbered sequentially; the excursus (Genette) which they represent is often minimal as they are not added to the end of the novel, therefore acting as an incentive for the reader to read them systematically. If, in theory, footnotes are ‘statutairement de lecture facultative’ Aymé can be said to play with the usual digressive nature of footnotes which offer

<sup>164</sup> These textual cadavres may be seen as the cadavres which are not left in the streets as noted by François: ‘Le plan des nazis est de dissimuler la terreur et de ne pas laisser traîner de cadavres dans les rues’ (*Les Epées*, 55).

<sup>165</sup> In Lord’s words, ‘Through them, the reader participates in a sort of God-like prescience and thereby knows the future and fate of many passers-by whom the main characters have hardly noticed, or have misjudged’ Lord (1987, 33).

<sup>166</sup> ‘The footnotes only appeared in the Gallimard edition of 20 May 1946 as an afterthought after the serialized publication in *La Bataille* from 31 January to 16 June 1946.

supplements to the main *énoncé*; but what is notable in *Le Chemin des Écoliers* is that the footnotes often change the contents of the text and do not merely serve ‘un rôle confirmatif’ (Genette, 326; 334).<sup>167</sup> In fact, they may be a way to negotiate the block or the impossibility of efficiently dealing with the banality and the linearity of human life that Aymé seeks to overcome by using fictional footnotes. But arguably, these footnotes seal the destiny of the novel’s characters and justify their status of furtive secondary characters in the main narrative. They are similar to what Genette calls

modulations du texte, guère plus distinctes que ne serait une phrase entre parenthèses ou entre tirets. Les notes fictionnelles, sous le couvert d’une simulation plus ou moins satirique de paratexte, contribuent à la fiction du texte, quand elles ne la constituent pas de part en part [...]. (344-45)

Rather than constituting a central element of the narrative they are conceived of as narratives in their own right, so much so that they could reasonably be read independently from the text. They can in this respect be seen as ‘exempla’ in the sense Foucault (1994, 237) gave them in his study of infamy:

ce sont des exemples qui portent moins de leçons à méditer que de brefs effets dont la force s’éteint presque aussitôt. Le terme de “nouvelle” me conviendrait assez pour les désigner, par la double référence qu’il indique : à la rapidité du récit et à la réalité des événements rapportés ; car tel est dans ces textes le resserrement des choses dites qu’on ne sait pas si l’intensité qui les traverse tient plus à l’éclat des mots ou à la violence des faits qui se bousculent en eux. Des vies singulières, devenues, par je ne sais quels hasards, d’étranges poèmes [...].

Foucault insists on the singularity of these lives, the speed of the narrative and their effect on the reader, which he later describes as ‘physique’. In his book, Foucault intends to expose the victims that society smothered (‘étouffé’) and, in the case of Aymé, the constraints imposed on the genre make it difficult for the novelist to give these men a voice. Indeed, the footnotes of the Gallimard edition can be viewed as a response to the perceived threat to the writers in the aftermath of the execution of Brasillach on 6

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<sup>167</sup> Hewitt (1996, 118) analyses Aymé’s footnotes as a way to ‘disculpate his characters’.



February 1945. But the main difference with Foucault's infamous archives is that Aymé's are fictional notes and more importantly perhaps, that they are controlled by the narrative voice; indeed, the narrative voice seems to unleash its wry humour even more than in the main text. This is Robert and Lioret's view (172) that 'dans les notes, l'auteur emploie un humour très "noir" que l'on ne trouve guère dans le récit principal, à l'exception significative des épisodes qui ont pour héros Tony Lolivier'. They rightly add that the heterodiegetic narrator sometimes morphs into a homodiegetic narrator 'pour signaler sa présence et son engagement dans l'univers de l'énonciation' which tends to 'défictionnaliser son univers romanesque par endroits'. This is however not to say that the main narrative does not bear any traces of the narrator's intervention since Aymé patiently invades the narrative through subtle changes in focalization.

Footnotes are also present, although, rarely in Nimier's texts: After uttering "Merde, je reste" (*Les Epées*, 87), the narrator adds a footnote: 'C'est une âme sans idéal qui parle' while the author adds a short note: 'Décidément!' (*Le Hussard bleu*, 15) to comment on an allusion to Marlene Dietrich to whom the narrator referred to in the opening of *Les Epées*: this 'note de l'auteur' provides tonal continuity between the first novel and *Le Hussard* by soliciting his reader's complicity and is reminiscent of Stendhal's to provide ironical commentaries on his characters (Genette, 336).

This chronotopic analysis has revealed that time and space cannot be merely taken as a priori transcendental categories in the Kantian sense, namely as receptacles or repositories of prototypical representations chosen from a repertoire of scandalous spaces in literature or simply borrowed from reality, but rather as narrative categories central to the production of scandal, and as such, deserving to be analysed at different levels (stylistic, thematic, symbolic and structural). It now appears clear that all the texts of the corpus represent a flawed relation to time which takes the form of a perceived incompatibility between historical time and individual experiences of time. This, I

attempted to show, poses serious challenges to the representation of the process of transition and the possibility of social cohesion in the aftermath of the Occupation in particular. Moreover, the Occupation and the Liberation are represented as having profoundly, if sometimes indistinctly, altered the relations between people, space and time. The deceleration caused by the Occupation indeed precipitated reconfigurations of everyday spaces (the desertion of outdoor spaces such as streets and the saturation of private spaces) and rhythms (slowness followed by bouts of activity) which the Liberation only partially – if at all – corrected. This shows that the transition to peace, envisaged from the point of view of an analysis of time and space, is primarily a process of reconstruction (the references to the ruins in *Uranus* are testament to this) which cannot be confused with the sole event of the Liberation of Paris. The tempo of the *récit* has also been shown to be directly affected by these reconfigurations. Finally, this chronotopic study of scandal has shed light on the links between scandal, crime, illegality and secrecy more generally which are of decisive importance for the understanding of the nature, scope, frequency and modes of expression of dissent within the space of the novel.

## IV. Scandals of morality, authority and identity

The first chapter established that scandal has become the privileged discursive mode and method to deal with the Occupation and its immediate aftermath. Chapter II explored the narrative construction of scandal at different levels, while Chapter III examined chronotopes of scandal, the temporal and spatial conditions of scandal and the effects it has on the narrative. Chapter IV will explore thematically how scandal can be further envisaged as a test to morality, authority and identity. Morality, or rather disruptions to morality in the conventional sense, pervade the whole of my corpus and could be represented in an ‘arbre du scandale’ inspired by Barthes’s ‘arbre du crime’ (Barthes 1980) in which treachery and ‘malhonnêteté à soi-même’ would be the most serious crimes (Lloyd, 2003, 13-14). If *Pompes funèbres* undoubtedly represents most forcefully a ‘folie [ou] cécité morale’ (Dichy 1988, 267), the question of responsibility, that of the relation between active and passive scandal is thoroughly represented in all the narratives of the corpus. The question of morality is explored and represented explicitly or hinted at, through murders, torture, physical violence, psychological violence (threats), anger and minor disputes affecting society at all levels, from the family cell to the whole nation and for which civil war is admittedly the ultimate expression of a lack of consensus.

Authority is regularly challenged and threatened at the level of the family cell by inner divisions along the lines of gender and generation. These disruptions are to some extent replicated and aggravated at the level of society, notably in the confusion of the forces in charge of law and order. These perturbations at individual and collective levels

can in turn be linked to inner disorder, which appears as an ultimate form of scandal expressed through constant allusions to doubles, duplicity, duplication and replication.

## 1. The scandal of morality: turpitude and infamy

Turpitude evokes depravity, wickedness and baseness and finds a literalization in the imagery of mud. At the beginning of *Pompes funèbres* Genet exploits the imagery of the marsh (or ‘trouble’) to justify the fact that the funeral scene in *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* was not a mere prefiguration of the one to be found in *Pompes*:

La vie apporte ses modifications, et pourtant un trouble (mais qui naîtrait paradoxalement de la fin d’un conflit – par exemple quand les ondes concentriques dans un étang s’écartent du point où la pierre est tombée, s’éloignent et s’atténuent, en marche vers le calme, l’eau doit éprouver, quand ce calme est atteint, une sorte de frisson qui se propage plus dans sa matière, mais dans son âme. (9-10)

The stone generating the trouble in the marsh may be seen to metaphorically designate a ‘pierre de scandale’ which produces ‘ondes’, swirls, eddies and shockwaves in the water, and, by extension, society. The ‘trouble’ is described as originating in the end of a conflict, a period of transition to peace, and dissolving into immateriality (‘une sorte de frisson qui se propage [...] dans son âme’). The parenthesis, which incidentally is never to be closed, points to the trouble relating to the end of a conflict when disorder, ripple effects and other phenomena of propagation are difficult to fully assess. Water (and admittedly life and the text itself) bears traces of the conflict, after-effects which signal longer durations. If the ‘frisson’ or rippling of water, the ‘remous’ or eddy are no longer perceptible, they have however not altogether disappeared. While the narrator admits that ‘le grand remous étant passé, je suis calme’, he promptly adds: ‘L’enterrement de Jean D. ramène dans ma bouche le cri parti d’elle, et son retour me cause ce trouble qui est dû à une paix retrouvée’ (10). Again, the return to peace is the trigger-point of another form of trouble, paradoxically generated by his newly found

peace. More generally, one may infer that the transition from war to peace, and the event of the Liberation in particular, ushered in a new form of pain or trauma in the sense that after the initial sense of relief it brought about, it eventually destabilised what appeared perennial and steady.<sup>168</sup>

Reflecting on his cowardice and fear of commitment in the last scene of the novel, Archambaud deplures the state the war left him in: ‘N’empêche que je marine dans un bain de saleté et que je me sens sale jusqu’au fond de moi-même. Quand je pense aux saloperies et aux crimes auxquels je me suis associé’ (*Uranus*, 1240). The image of the ‘bain de saleté’ and ‘marine[r]’ resonate with Genet’s image of the marsh and turbid water. Again, the link between troubled waters and the soul is here exemplified.<sup>169</sup> Contemplating the soldiers’ life in the sewers, Genet notes that ‘[i]ls étaient quelque chose comme nos reflets au fond des étangs bourbeux quand nous sommes sur la rive’ (140); the image of the ‘étang bourbeux’ is reprised in the context of Juliette’s description as ‘une lande grise en hiver’ (214) and appears again when the narrator dreams of imprisoning Jean in a chastity belt and throwing away the keys in a ‘torrent de boue’ (229), the turbulence of which exacerbates the confusion conveyed by the mud.

In ‘Le Faux policier’ Martin’s pardon of his wife’s criticism of the English is commented upon in terms of ‘bourbier’ by the narrator: “‘C’est bon, soupira Martin. Puisque tu te repens, il n’en sera plus question.’ Repentir bien facile, absolution expresse, justice dérisoire, mais Martin pataugeait déjà en plein bourbier’ (983). The

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<sup>168</sup> Genet writes: ‘Les journaux qui parurent à la Libération de Paris, en août 1944, dirent assez ce que furent ces journées d’héroïsme puéril [...]. Peu de temps après, ces journaux rappelleront les massacres hitlériens [...]’ (7). The brief respite and interlude of the Liberation would soon (‘peu de temps après’) lead to the revelation of the massacres committed by the Nazis and the French.

<sup>169</sup> The image of the muddy pool of water is used later in the text: ‘Chacun se voyait, seul, dépourvu, transparent, réduit à une idée de soi-même et flanqué d’une image déprimante de sa solitude: une flaque d’eau entre deux ornières [...]’ (*Uranus*, 1147). The image of the face as a ‘marécage’ can also be found in *Les Epées* when the young narrator feels a sense of confusion: ‘Elle me parle et je lui répons avec clarté. Cependant mes paroles me semblent embrouillées, mon visage me paraît changeant – une sorte de marécage’ (34). The image of the rock in the marsh is also present in *Le Hussard bleu* (288).

narrator's choice of images ('patauger' and 'plein borbier') is indicative of a sense of moral confusion and suggestive of a loss of direction which are ironically to be found in Martin's newly found clemency.<sup>170</sup> In *Les Epées*, the imagery of mud is also present and the narrator uses it to dismiss Parreneuve's disinclination to enter the L.V.F. because of the uniform: 'Le véritable uniforme du soldat, c'est son idéal et son idéal, en général, est couleur de boue; on n'y peut rien, la nature est comme ça' (75). In *Le Hussard bleu* Bernard's military experience in Indochina is described in the passive form, thereby emphasising the docile if not mercenary nature of the soldier for whom the uniform provides a superficial cover for his general lack of morality: '[...] on le mélange à la boue, on le promène dans un climat de tortures bien mal faites pour son caractère' (147). The 'trouble' or test understood as the main propriety of scandal is given thematic body by the dialectics of the pure and the impure, and metaphorical consistency through the image of the mud and a variety of other stylistic and rhetorical devices used throughout the corpus.

### A. 'Un défi à dix mille ans de moralité'<sup>171</sup>

In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Paul Tiercelin's father coins the expression 'crise de la moralité' in a diagnosis of the epoch's 'trouble':

J'aime la jeunesse sérieuse, appliquée. Malheureusement, la guerre lui a fait du mal. Il y a en ce moment une crise de la moralité que bien du monde ne soupçonne pas et je suis d'autant plus heureux que le meilleur ami de Paul soit un garçon comme le vôtre. (838)

In a conversation which strays on to how to educate their sons, Tiercelin, admittedly the arch-corruptor in the novel, seeks to reassure Michaud about Antoine's behaviour.

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<sup>170</sup> 'Ayant épargné sa femme, il épargna d'autres coupables, tant par paresse et par manque de temps [...]' (983).

<sup>171</sup> *Pompes funèbres*, 234.

Michaud however finds a moral fault with Tiercelin's casual approach to parental authority:

D'un seul coup vous effacez la distance mystique qui le séparait de la tentation et vous la réduisez à une simple comptabilité des inconvénients physiologiques. D'un problème moral, vous faites un problème d'hygiène dont la solution pratique n'est pas forcément refusée à l'enfant. (839)

Notwithstanding Michaud's obvious uneasiness with Tiercelin's parenting methods, his moral high ground is debunked by an earlier allusion to his conception of education and aggravated by his eventual surrender in Olga's arms.<sup>172</sup> In fact, seriousness and loftiness pave the way for their contradiction and are evidence of the fact that generic terms such as 'crise de la moralité' can only fail to grasp the reality of the moral corruption represented in the corpus. Aymé's and Nimier's texts are interspersed with constant attempts at discrediting conceptualisations and intellectual reasonings whereas Genet's text is marked by a constant movement towards generalisation which gives away Genet's desire to make of *Pompes funèbres* a general reflection on morality.<sup>173</sup>

Exploring the disruptions to morality implies a wish to determine the contours and limits of what is represented as just, acceptable and normal. Firstly, how is morality represented, who are its guarantors and those who oversee that it is respected? Concierges, although minor characters, have a key moral function in the corpus. Immediately after murdering Grandgil, Martin thinks about his concierge: 'Sa première pensée fut pour sa concierge. Il imagina son visage réprobateur et prit conscience qu'il était devenu un objet d'horreur pour la société' ('Traversée de Paris', 926). The concierge appears here as an extension or abstraction of her role of porter; her 'visage' and her look ('réprobateur') are decisive elements in Martin's realization of the moral

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<sup>172</sup> Earlier in the narrative, Michaud meditated upon the 'valeur morale du coup de pied au cul' (802). Olga is used as a strategic tool to compromise Michaud, as is apparent in Tiercelin's prediction: '[...] j'ai l'idée que d'ici une semaine et peut-être moins, le papa Michaud sera un peu moins sévère pour son fils' (842).

<sup>173</sup> 'Archambaud répugnait naturellement à s'égarer dans les généralités' (*Uranus*, 1116).

and social consequences of his crime.<sup>174</sup> She is not only representative of French society as a whole, but the heart and core ('noyau') of a society in miniature:

Elle formait le noyau d'un groupe où il reconnaissait des voisins de palier, des commerçants de la rue de Saintonge, des parents [...] Ils disaient entre eux: 'On n'aurait jamais cru ça de Martin.' Sur ces figures d'un univers familier où il cherchait habituellement le reflet de sa propre personne, il découvrait son visage d'assassin et entrevoyait son châtement. [...] Entre sa concierge et lui surgissaient d'infranchissables distances. ('Le Faux policier', 926-927)

The specularity of the movement, namely seeing one's crime through the eyes of somebody else's ('il découvrait son visage d'assassin'), makes the concierge a necessary medium and intermediary for all matters of morality. It is notable that even prior to his crime, Martin was used to looking at his concierge ('habituellement') to see 'le reflet de sa propre personne'. The concierges' critical role (in the diffusion of gossip and, in this case, false rumours) is confirmed by the game played on them by children: 'Des enfants de douze ans, pour s'amuser, prévenaient leur concierge de l'arrivée des Américains à Versailles' (*Les Epées*, 85). The treatment reserved for them by landlords is also telling of the perception of their social importance: 'La loge, meublée par le propriétaire qui avait assigné à chaque objet une place définitive, ressemblait à une cabine de luxe transatlantique' (*Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, 734).<sup>175</sup> Concierges appear as character witnesses in the trial scene of *Les Epées*: "'Votre concierge est ici, mademoiselle [Louisiane]. Elle pourra peut-être nous fixer.'" La concierge m'a regardé quelques minutes, puis a conclu: "Ce serait plutôt celui-là.'" (*Les Epées*, 70). The pivotal role of the concierge in the trial is however soon undermined by the pressures exerted upon her by the judge:

<sup>174</sup> Discussing with Masoulier about his future, François thinks of his concierge: 'Je lui ai dit que si [...] je pensais à ma concierge, je crois qu'elle préférerait encore l'uniforme de la Milice à celui de la Vèremarte.' (*Les Epées*, 73).

<sup>175</sup> Their loyalty to M. Puget is confirmed immediately after which invites to interpret their faithfulness as an effect of his attentiveness, (735).



Le Président a regardé la concierge bien dans les yeux en la priant de réfléchir et de donner une réponse satisfaisante. Elle a hésité encore une minute, puis elle a déclaré qu'elle ne savait pas, que d'ailleurs on l'avait amenée de force et que tout ça lui paraissait une drôle de justice. (71)

Thus intimidated, she ends up retracting her initial statement, thereby underlining the vulnerability of concierges and the status of truth in the novel more generally.<sup>176</sup>

If indeed there seems to be a crisis of morality and concierges are the most visible guarantors of its preservation, what is then represented as immoral and, conversely, what have the exceptional conditions of the Occupation and the Liberation rendered acceptable? In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Lolivier reflects on the despair in which his son's sadistic behaviour left his family: 'En temps de guerre, le malheur qui ne doit rien à la guerre, qui n'a pas de référence nationale, est déjà un peu honteux. Le nôtre l'est donc doublement' (*Le Chemin*, 866). The necessity of the 'référence nationale' in individual hardships makes Tony's crimes socially unacceptable and their suffering incommunicable. In this context, prisoners of war appear as a topos of the corpus, especially in *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, which deals with the everyday experience of the Occupation in Paris. If female infidelities are seen as commonplace in times of war, they are nonetheless morally condemned, as the examples of Malinier and Antoine acutely demonstrate.<sup>177</sup> Overall, Antoine proves more morally-able than his father who, according to Lolivier, fails to write to his friend imprisoned in Germany, thus highlighting the inconsistency between his principles and his acts, an admission that Michaud readily makes:

Quand je dis que je souffre pour les prisonniers, c'est un mensonge. J'y pense cinq minutes par jour, tout au plus, et je me laisse effleurer par un sentiment de mélancolie qui m'est d'ailleurs assez agréable, parce qu'il m'aide à croire à ma dignité. (758-759)

<sup>176</sup> François's concierge is however not so easily inhibited as François surmises that 'Quitte à désobliger ma famille, le concierge écouterait la voix de l'honneur et me livrerait à la police' (93).

<sup>177</sup> Antoine's sense of morality or duty and uncharacteristic firmness with Yvette attests to the sensitivity of the subject of the prisoners (725).

In these two passages, the respect due to prisoners is met by women's infidelities, men's forgetfulness and only occasionally compensated by a parody of morality and a travesty of dignity.<sup>178</sup> The social stigma of adultery, or any flirtatious relationship for that matter, is used by Solange to expose Eusèbe's alleged perversity: 'Penser à des cochonneries dans une époque comme la nôtre. Quand la France est envahie. Qu'il y a plus d'un million de prisonniers qui souffrent là-bas' (861-862). In a context where considerations regarding the 'époque' are numerous and uncertainty is key, morality appears to be on the side of the victors:

Lolivier, lui, considérait la morale comme le code de la force victorieuse. "Les adversaires ne se gênent d'ailleurs pas pour nous le dire: la meilleure doctrine sera la plus efficace. En attendant, la morale est en suspens" (718).<sup>179</sup>

This idea of a moral *epoché* (ἐποχή) causes the categories of good and bad to be destabilised and allows lies to become quasi-virtues in a context of general circumspection. It is in this sense that Archambaud tells off his wife for preventing their daughter from lying:

"Voyons, Germaine, dit-il à sa femme, pourquoi empêches-tu cette petite de mentir? [...] Bien sûr, tu aimerais te laisser aller à tes souvenirs d'enfant de Marie. Si nous étions seuls dans la vie, tu pourrais le faire sans inconvénient. [...] On frémit de penser qu'ils ont grandi dans la religion de l'honnêteté, de la vérité et de la pureté. Il est grand temps..." (1044)

Honesty is presented as belonging to the past ('tes souvenirs d'enfant') and Archambaud insists on the urgency of changing their habits ('il est grand temps') as hypocrisy seems to be imposed by the epoch itself: '[...] il y a des époques où le meurtre devient un devoir, d'autres qui commandent l'hypocrisie' (1056). Characteristically,

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<sup>178</sup> Coutelier's genuine respect for the prisoners is expressed through a pathetic rhetoric, only to be met by Yvette's indifference (824). François, on the other hand, rejoices in the fact that his father was made prisoner (*Les Epées*, 39).

<sup>179</sup> The exceptional moral conditions of the Occupation are underlined in a discussion between Watrin and Didier "Je suis d'une époque où l'on ne transigeait pas sur le devoir patriotique. Intransigeance à éclipses, répliqua Watrin. Rappelez-vous, sous l'Occupation" (*Uranus*, 1166).

Archambaud refuses all manners of generalisation such as political interpretations of the situation of France after the Liberation:

Mais l'aspect politique du problème ne l'intéressait que médiocrement. Il était plus attentif aux inconvénients que pouvait comporter pareille situation dans la vie quotidienne et aux déviations morales et psychologiques qui en résultaient. (1058)

The political interpretation of the problem is replaced by an assessment of what is euphemistically described as 'inconvénients' and 'déviations morales'; but when Archambaud reflects on the situation of France, his agitation, amplified by the use of indirect speech, becomes evident and contradicts his earlier refusal to envisage the problem in political terms:

Cette vague d'hypocrisie, qu'il croyait voir déferler sur la France, prenait maintenant à ses yeux des proportions grandioses. Que la presse feignît d'ignorer qu'il existait des millions d'individus tenant pour telle opinion ou en réduisît le nombre à quelques dizaines de milliers d'imbéciles et de vendus, il y avait là, songeait-il, un mensonge colossal. (1058)

The monumental image evokes the scope and proportion ('grandiose', 'colossal') of the falseness ('feignît') and bad-faith ('imbéciles et vendus') of the press on the subject of collaboration.

After meeting a member of the L.V.F., Tiercelin for whom '[l]a sincérité avait toujours été son grand souci' (790), reflects that : 'Pas de doute, il est un peu cinglé, mais il m'a fait l'impression d'être sincère, direct et de ne jamais chercher à se faire passer pour ce qu'il n'est pas' (833). Sincerity is envisaged as an essential quality, which explains Watrin's suggestion that Loin should be rewarded for his sincerity:

Que voulez-vous, puisque c'était son sentiment, on ne peut que le louer de l'avoir exprimé honnêtement. Ce n'est pas si courant. Comme Jourdan flétrissait les paroles du fasciste, Watrin demanda avec une feinte naïveté: "Vous croyez qu'il n'était pas sincère?" (1181)

The displacement from morality to sincerity, although strategically performed by Watrin, effectively sends Jourdan away. The epigraph of *Les Epées* borrowed from *The Brothers Karamazov* emphasises the importance of staying true to oneself: ‘Surtout ne vous mentez pas à vous-même’ can be read as a moral code of conduct or warning to the reader on the threshold of the text.<sup>180</sup> The insistence on the imperative of remaining true to oneself (the reflexive pronoun warns against a personality split), regardless of circumstances or commitments, is emphasized by the place of the intensifier ‘surtout’ at the beginning of the sentence. That eternal life (the subject of the dialogue between Zosime and old Karamazov, from which the epigraph is taken) should be of consideration for *Les Epées* is in itself remarkable as death imbues the whole novel, from murder, suicide, executions and massacres to death wishes, but here more probably signals the narrator’s presence and his taste for aphoristic formulations.

Sincerity seems to allow incompatible commitments to be reconciled, at least up to a certain point as the example of Michel Monglat attests: ‘Il essaya de surmonter son trouble. D’habitude, il conciliait très bien sa fierté de résistant et le souvenir de son intimité avec l’officier ennemi. Jamais il n’y avait eu dans sa tête le moindre heurt à ce sujet’ (*Uranus*, 1173). The idea of a ‘trouble’ or sudden disruption of moral certainties (from arrogance to self-doubt) appears clearly here. As mentioned earlier regarding Genet, it seems that the ‘trouble’ paradoxically emerges at a time of pacification or imminent resolution. Treachery is widely treated as the most scandalous aspect of *Pompes funèbres* and it is tempting to view it, in the wake of Bersani (1994, 6-7) ‘as a straining toward literary originality’ or ‘ethical kitsch’ overshadowing the more subversive aspect of the representation of homosexuality as a scandal of morality.

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<sup>180</sup> If Dostoyevsky is almost confidentially cited (‘D.’) as the author of the chosen epigraph, the reference and tribute to Dostoyevsky is rather transparent: ‘Above all, avoid falsehood, every kind of falsehood, especially falseness to yourself. Watch over your own deceitfulness and look into it every hour, every minute’ Dostoyevsky (2009, 66). See McCabe (2013, 188-238) for a more general perspective on the importance of the reception of Dostoyevsky in the immediate post-war years in France.

As Lloyd (2003, 14) noted, treason is a ‘ubiquitous and slippery notion in the context of state conflict and warfare, all the more unavoidable when war becomes civil war [...]’. He further remarks upon the fact that ‘it is a common stratagem of collaborators and their apologists to equate the excesses and atrocities committed by the Resistance and their allies with those of the Germans and their collaborators, thereby denying any objective moral responsibility’ (Lloyd, 16). Objective moral responsibility is thus denied at various degrees by Michaud, Archambaud and Watrin. Relativity and optimism underpin Watrin’s view of humanity which is admittedly oblivious to the most horrific crimes:

On ne peut rien penser de plus beau, de plus doux que les hommes. [...] Mais leurs guerres, leurs camps de concentration, leurs oeuvres de justice, je les vois comme des espiègleries et des turbulences. [...] Rien n’est mauvais en nous, rien. (*Uranus*, 1087)

This realization of the preeminence of man (the individual) versus humanity (the general) is reflected in Jourdan’s encounter with another consciousness:

L’homme était là devant moi, en chair, les manches retroussées avec du poil sur les bras. Ah! ces bras poilus, je ne pourrai plus les oublier. Il était si peu “politique” et tellement homme, tellement différent du schéma auquel j’avais pensé. (1195)

The hairs on Rochard’s arms metonymically refer to humanity; ideology and political commitments now appear secondary to him and he confesses to his ‘trouble’ in terms of ‘fondrières’ or potholes, heat and cracks (‘fissures’) which operate a variation on the metaphor of mud. (1196).

In ‘Traversée de Paris’, Jamblier, whose actions are not devoid of dishonesty and opportunism, provides, through the mediation of the narrative voice, a framework for the relation between virtue and turpitude: ‘Comme tout le monde, il savait d’expérience que les hommes sont assez portés sur la vertu pour la transporter à l’intérieur même de leurs mauvaises actions et asseoir leurs turpitudes sur des bases honnêtes’ (901).

Similarly, in *Uranus*, Watrin blurs the contours between the pure and the impure: ‘Vous ne prétendez tout de même pas qu’un honnête homme, dans ses activités les plus honorables, obéisse à des mobiles parfaitement purs?’ (1116). He proceeds to a reversal of Jamblier’s argument by pointing out that seemingly good actions can conceal reprehensible motives, in an attempt to disqualify Archambaud’s reservations about helping Maxime Loin.

### **B. Axioms: locating the moral agent**

Sontag (2012) repeatedly describes axioms as ‘rogue ideas’, expressing an aristocratic and pessimistic point of view; it is their ethically and narratively problematic status and function, their self-sufficiency or virtual autonomy from the rest of the text as well as their fundamentally self-reflective quality that makes them surrogates of responsibility. Similarly, according to Magny (1971, 319), general truths in *Le Hussard bleu* are ‘éteignoirs’ in the sense that they appear as stylistic tricks making it impossible to locate the one who expresses himself or herself.<sup>181</sup> The spectacle of scandal they furnish, in the theatrical and optical senses of the word, hinders the localization of the source of scandal and morality. Feeling the need to impress the resisters, Sanders sets out to develop axioms which he conceives of as an exercise in seduction: ‘Je me suis amusé à développer les maximes les plus exaltées. Comme je faisais toujours à la Milice devant les hésitants’ (63). Axioms are envisaged as a rhetorical trick to win over the circumspect ones.

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<sup>181</sup> Magny notes that in *Le Hussard bleu* ‘les maximes sont souvent ici l’expression de l’individu qui les exprime’, thus pointing to an aesthetics of the mask (318) which echoes Sontag’s view that aphorisms are masks of scorn and superiority. The reluctance to act and the fascination for death which Beauvoir (1955, 177) sees as of an aesthetics of right-wing literature can admittedly be seen as conveyed by aphorisms and axioms. Nimier’s taste for axioms is detectable in his style (short sentences, impatient interruptions, etc.), whereas in the case of Aymé, his moralist tone is more evident. Sontag (2012, 188) indeed identifies ‘the hypocrisies of societies, the vanities of human wishes, the shallowness and deviousness of women; the sham of love; the pleasures (and necessity) of solitude; the intricacies of one’s own thought processes’ as the main themes of aphorists.

From a moral viewpoint axioms operate as a distancing technique and are the contrary of improvised stylizations, to paraphrase Lolivier in a rebuff of Michaud's attempt to make him admit to what he sees a harsh treatment of the tenants: 'Tu choisis toujours des mots excessifs. Tu stylises à chaud' (*Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, 715). For Michaud, Lolivier's seemingly reasonable stance evokes that of an 'abbé de cour', an expert at resolving moral dilemmas with rhetoric; axioms may therefore help to consider things coldly ('à froid'), without any 'mots excessifs' through the often ironic provision of generalizations. Expressing the particular in general terms poses ethical problems in the sense that the latter is at risk of being suppressed. Axioms, proverbs, aphorisms, witticisms and set expressions are used extensively throughout the corpus and it is no coincidence that they should appear more frequently in the texts where the question of morality is most pressing and authority is at its most unstable. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Lina's prophetic tone is supported by axioms ('Vous avez raison, Pierre, chien abandonné, il doit s'attendre à des coups' or '[m]ais une fois quitté, on retourne pas, même un Warschau' (742-743). Her imperfect command of the language paradoxically gives some sort of ancient wisdom to her assertions, a form of unrehearsed disregard for social conventions. In *Les Epées*, after François's botched suicide attempt, the dialogue between Claude and François can be read as an attempt to restore their complicity:

Comment pouvez-vous mettre tant de sucre? dit-il. Vous allez vous écœurer. Oh, on ne mange jamais trop de sucre. Il n'y a rien de meilleur pour la santé. Et la santé, c'est le bonheur! Le travail aussi. On ne vit pas d'eau claire. De mon temps... Il faut regarder les choses en face. Ils parlent très vite, presque en riant, mais pas très loin de la tristesse et ce rire est la petite écume du chagrin qui remplit leurs yeux. (19)

The consumption of sugar at a time of food deprivation gives a somewhat provocative tone to the axiom, which almost sounds like a slogan for good health. The first proposition follows a ternary rhythm ('On ne mange jamais trop de sucre/ Il n'y a rien

de meilleur pour la santé/ Et la santé, c'est le bonheur!'), which underpins an idiosyncratic logic. Interestingly, these axioms, if not related to one another by their meaning, form a coherent dialogue. The axiomatic accumulation is meaningful in excess (like sugar), and points to a saturation of meaning, which by way of indigestion, become empty, meaningless and uncommunicative. In this sense, axioms expose the emptiness of these words ('de mon temps...'), heard and spoken by others and mechanically repeated by Claude and François in an attempt to make their artificiality spectacular, to reinforce their complicity and to regain control over their adult-free world and seal a pact against adults. Axioms expose the social order underpinning relationships and indicate the status of language in the corpus. In his analysis of the 'maxime' and the 'fragment', Barthes (2002, 232) notes the ethical specificities of the axiom:

Il rôde dans ce livre un ton d'aphorisme (nous, on, toujours). Or la maxime est compromise dans une idée essentialiste de la nature humaine, elle est liée à l'idéologie classique: c'est la plus arrogante (souvent la plus bête) des formes de langage. Pourquoi donc ne pas la rejeter? La raison en est, comme toujours, émotive: j'écris des maximes (ou j'en esquisse le mouvement) pour me rassurer: lorsqu'un trouble survient, je l'atténue en m'en remettant à une fixité qui me dépasse: 'au fond, c'est toujours comme ça': et la maxime est née. La maxime est une sorte de phrase-nom, et nommer, c'est apaiser. Ceci est au reste encore une maxime: elle atténue ma peur de paraître déplacé en écrivant des maximes.

'Nommer, c'est apaiser'; axioms operate as the correctives to inner 'trouble' and the apparently cold, reasonable and formulaic quality of the axiom in fact conceals an essentially emotional reaction to life. François's rejection of the authority of adults is often expressed through axioms, as in the following description of his father: 'Cette voix râpeuse, ces gestes qui décident de la fin du monde comme on coupe le pain à table...' (25).<sup>182</sup> The father's despotic authority is aptly described with an axiomatic

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<sup>182</sup> The association of axioms with swiftness and violence serves to describe the Germans' cruelty: 'Je ne veux pas parler de leur férocité, dont ils se servaient mécaniquement, comme on ouvre ou comme on



formulation, which emphasises the one-sidedness of his decisions. Describing the young, boring engineer he sits next to, François says: ‘Des confidences lui coulent des lèvres. Il raconte sa vie (laborieuse). Ingénieur à 23 ans. [...] Aimant la vie. La vie c’est. Parce que. Et il n’y a qu’à.’ (29-30).<sup>183</sup> The narrator provides a contrast to the engineer’s logorrhea (‘coulent des lèvres’) by describing him in a telegraphic style. His pretensions are echoed in the aborted definition of what life is (‘la vie c’est’), explained in an equally short but revealing ‘parce que’ and an obsessional sense of duty contained in the expression ‘il n’y a qu’à’. Predictability and invariability are inherent in axioms: ‘Les soirées sont aussi libres que les taxis. On ne s’occupe pas d’elles. Elles vont toujours au même endroit’ (*Les Epées*, 100).

In Aymé’s texts axioms are either markers of class (axioms and set expressions are felt to be more widely used by the less educated) or more commonly permit deceit and an evasion from personal responsibility. In ‘Traversée de Paris’, Grandgil’s use of axioms can indeed be linked to his attempts at appearing modest; speaking about older people’s memories he says: ‘[...] c’est comme le vin, plus ils sont vieux, plus ils sont bons. Et quand ils sont frais, souvent, on en a gros cœur’ (894). The banality of the comparison of older people to wine can be interpreted as Grandgil’s attempt at staying true to the image he has of ordinary men and ordinary language, which is admittedly more successful than his attempts at dressing himself for his gangster role.

In ‘Le Faux Policier’ axioms are used consistently as guarantees of morality and alibis for murder: ‘Il faut vivre avec son époque, disait-elle, ou se résigner à disparaître.’ (979) The impersonal form ‘il faut’ stresses the urgency and necessity of making a choice, which presents ‘vivre avec son époque’ as sufficient to serve as an alibi for

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ferme un robinet’ (50). Interestingly, violence is evoked through the indefinite pronoun ‘on’ in *Pompes funèbres*: ‘la beauté qui vous crève les yeux on lui coupe la tête’ (52).

<sup>183</sup> Axioms and impersonal forms are used expertly by Sanders to violate banalities: ‘Un dimanche après-midi, il ne se passe jamais rien.’ (19). Or ‘D’ailleurs, Avril ne doit pas être un très bon mois pour se tuer.’ (*Le Hussard bleu*, 307).

Martin's defence. It is thus a very loose sense of the term 'époque' that Justine advocates:

Je nous vois du pain sur la planche, disait-elle un peu vulgairement. Bien sûr le marché noir durera ce qu'il durera, rien n'est éternel, mais je crois quand même qu'on en a pour un petit bout de temps. [...] Bien sûr, mon chéri, mais tout le monde ne fait pas comme toi. Le marché noir, on n'est pas près d'en voir le bout. En plus de ça, les Français n'ont pas fini de se détester, ni de se tirer dans les jambes et tant qu'il y en aura qui auront peur... (980)

Personal concerns transpire through impersonal phrasings and she uses flattery to coax Martin into continuing his job; this passage exemplifies the opportunistic use of axioms to exonerate oneself from one's crimes. The pessimistic picture she gives ('on n'est pas près d'en voir le bout', 'se tirer dans les jambes') along with her feigned hopes for a better situation ('rien n'est éternel') make her the inspiration behind Martin's crimes.

La guerre peut bien détruire les églises comme elle détruit les conditions nécessaires à l'exercice de la vertu. Dieu n'en est pas moins immortel et toujours présent parmi les ruines du temple. [...] Il n'y a pas besoin d'être grand clerc pour comprendre que le principe importe beaucoup plus que les œuvres. L'eau du ruisseau n'est jamais troublée que pour un moment si la source est restée pure. (978).<sup>184</sup>

The image of God subsuming material and human constructions ('le temple'), of generalities ('principes') being more important than the detail ('œuvres') serves as a justification of everyone's practices.<sup>185</sup> Impersonal, axiomatic statements put Martin's deeds in perspective and mitigate the gravity of his crimes. Axioms and wisdom are ridiculed in 'L'Indifférent': 'Plaisanterie à part, écoute-moi. Le labeur honnête, celui qui fatigue la bête, ça donne bien des satisfactions aussi. [...] Sans compter qu'on ne fera jamais assez pour l'artisanat' (880). After proposing to look for a place as a sexton, the narrator carries on deriding Médéric's self-confessed change of trajectory in life. In the

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<sup>184</sup> 'Un fleuve ne s'occupe pas de savoir si les nageurs qu'il transporte sont beaux ou laids' (*Les Epées*, 100).

<sup>185</sup> 'A la réflexion, son cœur s'était ouvert à l'indulgence et il avait excusé la vénalité des vraies inspecteurs qui manquaient à leur devoir professionnel. [...] Ils ont voulu gagner un peu plus, mais au fond, ce sont de braves gens' (977).

last scene, Médéric argues that he sought to defend the narrator's interests against Betty's indiscretion: "“La justice c'est quand même la justice, prononça-t-il. [...] Le labeur du père doit profiter d'abord à ses enfants. Aujourd'hui on ne respecte rien”" (888). In a pleonastic expression which undermines what justice is, by way of a repetition and the adjunct of 'quand même', Médéric pretends to give value to inheritance and the need to respect legal procedures.

In *Pompes funèbres*, axioms are isolated, usually between inverted commas, to provide a spectacle of language.<sup>186</sup> The resurgence of axioms in the text seems almost accidental and provides the verbal expression to situations in which the characters seem trapped in. Axioms emerge in the text as lexical and narrative traces, detached from the narrative itself and anterior to it and symptomatic of what could be termed the momification of language in Genet's text. For instance, Jean D.'s mother is worried that Erik might smell wind she let out and refuses to let him enter the room: 'Elle l'entendait dire: "On tombe comme des mouches."' (211). The scene she pictures in her mind finds its verbal expression in the set expression 'on tombe comme des mouches', which arguably paralyzes her more than the smell.

The enigmatic quality of axioms is illustrated in Martin's repetition of 'On ne fait pas ce qu'on veut' in 'Traversée de Paris' where both the vagueness of the meaning and its repetition towards the end of the short story gives it all the more rhetorical force (925; 926; 929). In *Le Hussard Bleu* Sanders manages to summarise his shifting commitments in a paragraph: 'Les Anglais allaient gagner la guerre. Le bleu marine me va bien au teint. Les voyages forment la jeunesse' (15-16). The proverb 'les voyages forment la jeunesse' enables the narrator to render his change of allegiance harmless

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<sup>186</sup> Barthes (1994, 1340-1341) distinguishes the 'fragment' from the 'maxime' with the former relying on a 'fermeture du sens' and orientated towards a spectacle of language permitted by the 'pointe': 'C'est, si l'on veut, la maxime constituée en spectacle; comme tout spectacle, celui-ci vise un plaisir [...]; comme tout spectacle aussi, mais avec infiniment plus d'ingéniosité puisqu'il s'agit de langage et non d'espace, la pointe est une forme de rupture.' Similarly, for Blanchot (1990, 187-88): 'L'aphorisme, c'est étymologiquement l'horizon, un horizon qui borne et qui n'ouvre pas.'

and to ironically allude to the dimension of a 'Bildungsroman' and is prepared by the seemingly harmonious tempo of the ternary rhythm (arguably nine feet each: Les An/glais a//laient ga/gner la/ guerre/. Le/ bleu/ ma/rine me/ va/ bien/ au/ teint/. Les/ vo/ya/ges/ for/ment/ la/ jeu/nesse/), sustained by link words, ('D'abord... Alors... Un an plus tard... Mais...') which casually summarises Sanders' war experience. The taste for axioms in *Le Hussard bleu* is indirectly evoked in Fermendidier's question to the 'intellectual' Saint-Anne:

Tu connais un nommé...Vauvenargues? Il épelle le nom sur le volume qu'il tient à la main. Ce nom ne m'est pas inconnu. A tout hasard, j'en dis grand bien. Pas du tout, fait le colonel de sa voix zozotante et fâchée. C'est un p'tit merdeux, ton Vauvenargues. Veauvenouilles, oui! Ha, ha! Il paraît consolé par sa plaisanterie. (325)

If Saint-Anne did not read Vauvenargues, La Rochefoucauld's influence can be found just before in a dialogue between Saint-Anne and Isabelle about his so-called 'bêtise': 'La plupart des gens sont bêtes, il vaut mieux leur ressembler' (312). The 'effet de citation' (Barthes) produced by axiomatic expressions and impersonal forms produces a scandal of morality whereby the moral agent cannot be located and a scandal of authori(al)ity provoked by the impossibility of locating the source of authority. Axioms are a powerful example of the mechanism of scandal at the level of the sentence, how scandal seeps into language, transforming propositions into half-truths or one-and-a-half truths, to gloss Karl Kraus' title (1990).

## **2. The scandal of authority: domestic and social upheaval**

A vision of history that underlines its irrelevance and does not recognise its use for the present can be seen as the corollary of a problematic relationship to authority. In all texts, the question of authority features prominently, through the disintegration and dilution of the influence of paternal authority, which can in turn be linked to the demise of authority at the level of the couple (man and woman), the family (parents and children), law and order (police and criminals) and the nation (Vichy France and Nazi Germany). The family appears as the microcosm of society, whose conflicts of authority are emulated or reproduced by the latter. The decline of masculinity and paternal roles does not make women any more influential or powerful but only makes them the visible auxiliaries and inspirations to men's crimes, more than they are directly complicit in them; in other words, female characters seem to function as hidden motors of the narrative inasmuch as they push their husbands, partners, sons or brothers into directions the narrator then reveals in describing.<sup>187</sup>

Similarly, if there seems to be no reversal of authority from man to woman, there is no transfer of power per se between the forces in charge of law and order and criminals. In this sense, there is no systemic nor systematic subversion and substitution of lesser forces, but rather disruptions of order with no attempt at replacing it. The scandal of authority has thus perhaps more to do with an anarchic dissemination of authority rather than with any concerted dispersal of it; disruptions to authority are usually tentative and individual as they do not seek recognition nor acknowledgement. An analysis of scandal as a moment of destabilization rather than a process of transgression appears

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<sup>187</sup> The return to their pre-war condition is reminiscent of Gubar's analysis of the feminine condition in times of war and the return to male domination and violence after a time of 'gender disorder' marked by the departure of men to the war front, see Gubar (1987, 227-259).

particularly relevant here. This section will seek to provide a panoramic view of the relations of authority at the level of the characters (familial, social and institutional) and the role of the narrative voice to provide a clear view of who, where and when authority is at its most stable, when it is threatened, disposed of or, on the contrary, reasserted.

### A. Gender and generation

‘Ce qui a été vécu par le corps des pères ne peut plus être vécu par le nôtre.’ It is in these terms that Pasolini (2006, 280) underlines the importance of the generational divide between fathers and sons, which often seems to substitute itself to debates on ideology in the corpus. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* the change of focus from ideology to age in the scene opposing the liberal schoolmaster Coutelier to Malinier emphasizes the evident difference in age between the two:

A côté de ce personnage éclatant, le vieux était si vieux, son col était si dur qu’il était difficile de l’aimer. [...] On le trouvait ennuyeux et on aurait eu plaisir à lui river son clou. Quand Malinier parlait de châtrer les Juifs ou d’employer les poètes à des travaux de vidange, les jeunes gens riaient. (822)

Malinier’s disrespectful stance vis-a-vis Racine seduces Antoine, Tiercelin and Yvette and sends them into hysterics. By association with his daughter who married a Jew, Coutelier appears to take all the characteristics of the Jew as described in Fascist literature. As Berman (1986, xx) noted, it is not incidental that Jews should have been represented as old and Fascists as young: ‘Cipher of the old religion, he stood in for the older world against which fascism as the movement of youth rebelled; hence the standard fascist caricature of the Jew as aged.’

In *Les Epées*, the glittering military career of the narrator’s father is derided by François in a conflation of the paternal and military figures: ‘Avec notre père, il fait

partie de la glorieuse armée des grandes personnes' (*Les Epées*, 39).<sup>188</sup> Colonel Sanders is discredited in three ways: firstly, the probable automatic promotion from colonel to general ('Les généraux en chef de 1918 étaient colonels en 14. Cette aventure pourrait lui arriver.' (15)), his capture by the Germans can be seen as proof of his poor military judgement, and thirdly, his arbitrary decisions render his authority tyrannical, thus not respectable. François attempts to destroy paternal authority by using Claude as an unaware auxiliary and by attempting suicide.<sup>189</sup> Notably, these attempts are always made from a distance, whether temporal ('Il y aura des tâches sur le tapis: cela augmentera la fureur de mon père [...]') or spatial ('Chers Allemands, chers guerriers blonds, fermez bien vos cages', *Les Epées*, 15; 39).<sup>190</sup> Admittedly, if as children he used to be controlled by Claude in their Achilles and Briseis' role-play, he looks to revert to a traditional mode of relation whereby she would be submissive to him. (24). In fact, her murder at the end of the novel can be interpreted as his failure to do just this and as confirmation of the illusory freedom she enjoyed before. François's denunciation of her relationship with Bernard is testament to the narrator's opportunism in destabilizing authority.

More generally, paternal figures are weakened or absent, as in *Pompes funèbres* where Paulo and Jean D. are deprived of a father, which bears direct consequences for their commitments. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Tiercelin's temptation to join the L.V.F. is hindered by the necessity to obtain his father's authorization, which indirectly shows the consequences of the absence of a father figure: 'L'ennui, c'est que pour s'engager dans ces formations-là, il faut probablement l'autorisation paternelle et je sais que mon

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<sup>188</sup> 'le fils d'un homme célèbre' (15); 'Sa Terreur le colonel Sanders', 'S.T le colonel Sanders' (17).

<sup>189</sup> 'J'insistais: "Votre père serait tellement furieux s'il apprenait que vous faites du théâtre. Il ne faut pas gâcher une telle chance"' (28-29).

<sup>190</sup> This idea of the murder of the father is also expressed by Besse: 'Chaque fois que je tirais, je tirais sur la connerie de mon père. [...] Tu comprends, à force de tuer mon père tous les jours, le poignet me faisait mal' (*Le Hussard bleu*, 354). The distant destabilization and rejection of paternal authority is reminiscent of Crozier's analysis of the 'horreur du face à face' which he analyses as a key component in relations of authority in France, see Hoffman (1974, 69-71).

père ne me la donnera pas, tandis que pour rejoindre les autres, je n'ai besoin de la permission de personne.' 'Rejoindre les autres' alludes to the Milice for which no paternal consent is necessary and can therefore be viewed as practical rather than ideological. In psychoanalytic terms, the absence of a paternal figure paves the way for a life at the margins, as Paulo's career as a robber and Riton's marginality attest. Their lack of integration to society, and arguably to themselves, as the psychoanalytic 'integration' points to, is seen as central to their commitment to the Milice. The social origin is represented as central to their commitment: 'Le recrutement se fit surtout parmi les voyous, puisqu'il fallait oser braver le mépris de l'opinion générale qu'un bourgeois eût craint'. This account corresponds to Giolitto's description:

il y a [...] tous les mauvais sujets, "paresseux", "noceurs", "sournois", dévoyés, tous ceux qui ont eu maille à partir avec la justice, les petites frappes minables, les voleurs sans envergure, les souteneurs besogneux, à qui la Milice permet de se refaire une virginité, et parfois d'échapper à la justice et à la prison, tout en continuant à se livrer aux mêmes excès, ou presque, mais en toute impunité cette fois. (2002, 162)

This sociological description finds textual echoes elsewhere in the corpus. At the trial in *Les Epées* Février's grandfather testifies that: 'Après son service, comme il n'était pas capable de travailler à la terre, il a tourné au vrai banditisme, la L.V.F., la Milice, et tout le bataclan.' His laziness and general inability makes this 'vrai fils de la glèbe' socially inadequate to perform everyday jobs, those Genet literally calls 'vauriens'. As François notes: 'Presque tous venaient de la zone nord; fils de famille en rupture d'idéal, ouvriers fascistes tuberculeux, bretons amateurs de chouannerie et quelques repris de justice – le sel de la terre, comme on dit' (58).<sup>191</sup> In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Michaud's authority (or lack thereof) over his son Antoine (and Frédéric too who hid his Communist commitment), his wife Hélène, who consistently seems to be aware of what needs to be

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<sup>191</sup> If the Milice usually welcomes society's outlaws, some characters such as Paulo appear as twice removed from normality. Both Genet and Nimier's narrator insist on the sense of social and moral depravation of the 'miliciens' which makes them profess their affection and pride (*Les Epées*, 78; *Pompes*, 79).



done, is prolonged by the later revelation of Lolivier's poor control over his own family. In the short scene where Colonel de Monboquin is introduced, Michaud is forced to step in to arbitrate in a row between the Colonel and 'la colonelle', as she seeks to prevent him from going to a reception at the German Institute for fear it might forever tarnish his reputation. Only she can be heard and Michaud seems to be unable to oppose her directly and quite the contrary in fact as he cowardly shows her support during a heated discussion. (*Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, 736-740). It is only after leaving the flat that the narrator reveals Michaud's hidden thoughts ('regretta de n'avoir pas su prendre parti pour lui contre la vieille toupie'); Michaud's late reaction is symptomatic of a crisis of authority at the level of the family cell, to the neat, comic advantage of the wife.<sup>192</sup>

The crisis of masculinity is reflected in the feminization of men and acts of courage as the Joan of Arc complex identified by François attests:

J'ai vu qu'un fort courant se dessinait chez eux pour retirer à un débauché de ma sorte la gloire de tuer un Schleu. Pour combattre le complexe de Jeanne d'Arc qui les travaillait, j'ai passé ma main sur mon front en ajoutant que mes déclarations n'avaient aucune valeur, que ce sont des choses qui se disent pour se rendre intéressant. Mais en réalité, je suis comme vous : un juste et loyal Français, désespéré, viril, noir et tragique. (53)<sup>193</sup>

The two anteposed adjectives 'juste et loyal' before the noun 'Français' are reminiscent of the vocabulary favoured in girls' history books recalling France's past (*Les Epées*, 721). The Joan of Arc complex at work in the Resistance also points to two equally problematic dimensions, that of a group of anachronistic heroes who want to save

<sup>192</sup> Towards the end of the novel, Michaud's infidelity comes to further weaken his already limited paternal authority (871). In *Uranus* Archambaud's understanding and control over his family is limited, his wife ends up cheating on him and his children generally fail to obey him.

<sup>193</sup> François earlier confessed that he was only looking for an easy life: 'Mais un bon et véritable Français, dans mon genre, ne songeait qu'à des amours faciles et quotidiennes, à un juste sommeil et à quelques romans policiers [...]. Alors, ils ont relevé les yeux qu'ils avaient plein d'une généreuse ardeur et ils m'ont dit que non, la France ce n'était pas ça et que non, la vie ce n'était pas se royaumer comme je le croyais' (52). The free indirect speech here reveals the Résistants' childishness and echoes the mythical self-representations of the Resistance: 'On nous répétait depuis le premier jour que nous étions de purs héros, les descendants de Jeanne d'Arc et de Bayard' (50).

France from invaders, and femininity, virginity and sexual inexperience.<sup>194</sup> Riton focuses on the voices rather than the Resistance model she represents: ‘J’entends des voix. J’suis comme Jeanne d’Arc’ while the narrator recomposes her image around references to her virginity and sacrifice (*Pompes funèbres*, 99-100). The blood on her dress becomes menstrual blood in the following evocation in *Pompes funèbres*:

Pour être Pucelle, on n’en a pas moins ses règles. [...] Lasse, épuisée, affolée par ce sang versé lors d’un drame où l’assassin et l’assassinée demeurent invisibles, elle se coucha sur la paille [...] Jeanne d’Arc monta au bûcher et resta exposée avec cette rose rouillée à la hauteur du con. (100)

Later in *Pompes funèbres* the narrator recalls that caricaturists used to depict Hitler as Joan of Arc:

Avant la guerre les humoristes caricaturèrent Adolf Hitler sous les traits bouffons d’une Pucelle ayant la moustache d’un pitre de cinéma. “Il entend des voix” disaient les légendes... Les humoristes sentaient-ils qu’Hitler était Jeanne d’Arc. Cette ressemblance les avaient touchés, ils le marquaient. (184)

The ambiguity of Joan of Arc as a cult of Vichy and an image of the Resistance against the invader is exemplified in the last two examples.<sup>195</sup> The reference to Joan of Arc resonates with Kaplan’s interpretation of Brasillach’s Fascist subjects, who are:

virile, phallic, their devotion to the language they learn is total, boundary-less, and the language itself is maternal. In order for the state to generate a whole new type of man [...] it has to be female. [...] There are many potential substitutions going on here: if fascist authority is feminine, the leader is a woman of sorts. (1986, 10)

Testicles, which metonymically refer to manhood and virility, are mocked in *Uranus*. Maître Frévière who was blown away in the bombing could only be identified by his

<sup>194</sup> Their inadequacy and immaturity for combat is reflected in the expression ‘petits garçons’ and their Romanticism: ‘Et ce nom invraisemblable, Louisiane, tellement déplacé. Seulement j’étais dans un groupe de résistance et j’oubliais que le romantisme est toujours féminin’ (47).

<sup>195</sup> Genet’s fascination for Joan of Arc, canonised in 1920 is visible here, see *Le Magazine Littéraire* (1981) and Atkin’s analysis of the ambivalence of her figure (1985, 265-268).

testicles, but no formal confirmation of his identity is mentioned, somehow hinting at Frévière's improbable virility:

La mort de maître Frévière avait un peu égayé la détresse des Blémontois, le bruit ayant couru qu'on avait retrouvé les testicules du notaire sur le plateau du pick-up où sa femme serait allée le lendemain les identifier. (*Uranus*, 1126)

In *Les Epées* the description of Parreneuve's massacre mentions his 'couilles' as a predictable target in the act of violence of which he was a victim.<sup>196</sup>

## B. Law and order

If according to Weber (1946), a state can claim the monopoly of the use of legitimate violence it makes the question of violence, legitimacy and monopoly highly problematic in the context of a foreign occupation. Indeed, if the Vichy regime can be considered as the auxiliary of the Nazi regime, at least on certain questions, the hierarchy of forces is necessarily made more complex, as is the field of action made more confused with several forces performing the same tasks, or rendering one or several altogether unnecessary. Frontiers of the legal and illegal are blurred, making the category of the paralegal emerge from the confusion. Fuligni (2009) underlines that since the Consulat and in spite of the Loi Darlan of April 1941 which transferred the control of municipal police forces to , the 'préfecture de police' remains what he calls 'un Etat dans l'Etat'. 'Le Faux Policier' for example suggests the advantages of impersonating a police officer to enter people's homes under false pretences and rob them (as a kind of Mr Verdoux of the Occupation), but also signals the commonality of such a scam as Martin is described as being in competition with corrupt real police officers. The instability of the categories of the legal and the illegal is what makes it possible for anyone to transgress ('on ne s'étonnera pas'):

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<sup>196</sup> 'Ils lui avaient esquiné le visage avec des pierres, cassé les épaules, le sternum, et écrasé les couilles, bien entendu. C'était maintenant une sale petite loque blonde et sanglante' (80).

L'époque nous a habitués à de si rapides transformations de gangsters en policiers et vice-versa qu'on ne s'étonnera pas en apprenant que l'un des fossoyeurs, après avoir joué, sortant de sa poche un revolver, braquait la fille, tandis que l'autre, qui jouait depuis un moment avec la paire de menottes, la lui plaqua aux poignets. (*Pompes*, 202).

This confusion of the legal and the paralegal is precisely what Berkvam (2000, 299-300) finds fault with in 'Traversée':

Whether it was Aymé's intention or not, he puts in the same sentence a reference to the French police and to German military patrols, showing their complicity. [...] with no commentary or condemnation, Aymé merely indicated the close connection between the French police and the German military, a constant theme in the story as the occupier and the occupied work together to maintain order and to arrest Jews. [...] It is in this respect that Aymé demonstrated some measure of his pro-collaboration sentiments by what he did not say, finding apparently nothing wrong with this Franco-German cooperation.

Gangsters and 'voyous' bring about their competence and skills to the police. The transformation from 'voyous' to 'policiers' is however not a smooth transition but, rather, a metamorphosis that continues to carry the mark of its transformation:

Si la Milice était une stupéfiante association de voyous, lâches presque toujours, menés au pillage [...], elle était aussi une police puisqu'elle arrêtait [...]. Sa fonction de police, elle ne pouvait l'accomplir qu'avec excès, avec ces excès même qui la magnifièrent. Ivre d'être enfin la police, elle agit dans l'ivresse [...]. (*Pompes*, 256)

In *Les Epées*, the narrator describes the *miliciens*' actions as 'une sorte de contrepolice, il ne nous passait entre les mains que des mouchards, des agents véreux, des déserteurs...' (43). The Milice is thus described as running counter to the police and chasing these 'policiers égarés', 'ces policiers français qui sentaient l'ail et le vin rouge' (46), a pejorative description pointing to the lack of professionalism and sense of purpose that the Milice can be seen as seeking to make up for. If the policing functions of the traditional police and the Milice overlap, they are nonetheless irretrievably different according to Genet:

Si la police servant l'ordre, et le désordre la Milice, on ne peut socialement les comparer, il reste vrai que la seconde faisait aussi le travail de la première. Elle était au point idéal où le voleur et le policier se rencontrent, se confondent. Elles aboutissent à cet exploit : combattre le flic et le voleur. Ainsi la Gestapo. (*Pompes*, 250)<sup>197</sup>

Manipulations by the police are commonplace during the Occupation as can be seen in 'L'Indifférent': 'Gustave fit arrêter par la gendarmerie quelques jeunes gens réfugiés dans la forêt, gaullistes ou communistes, dont la présence en ces parages risquait de nous compromettre' (885). Even after the Occupation, the police seems to be at the beck and call of the wealthiest people of Blémont. Monglat in *Uranus* generalizes the use of the police that is made by powerful men:

Moi le gros dégueulasse, le vendu numéro un, je suis considéré, le préfet à mes bottes, les sourires de monsieur la ministre. C'est pour moi qu'on fusille les miteux, les plumitifs, les subalternes, pour rassurer la grosse épargne. J'en suis très touché. (1229)

The secret operations of the F.F.I. after the war seem wild and lacking in direction in *Uranus* when Archambaud is wrongly arrested during one of his after-dinner walks; the threat and disproportionate violence of the F.F.I. youth evoke the general climate of violence of the aftermath of the Liberation. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, Yvette's idea of using Malinier's enrolment in the L.V.F. to deter Antoine's parents from pursuing their investigations any further testifies to the potential instrumentalization of the police by citizens.

'La Milice était une organisation de gars armés dont l'Allemagne avait permis à la France la création, à condition qu'elle fût dévouée au gouvernement français imposé par l'Allemagne et d'abord dévouée à l'Allemagne' (*Pompes funèbres*, 79). The complex web of interrelations and dependence is reflected in the near chiasmatic structure of the sentence ('Allemagne', 'France', 'français', 'Allemagne') imitates the

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<sup>197</sup> Villaner evokes the transmission of authority from the Milice to the Gestapo (*Les Epées*, 78). François' spontaneous decision to spare the prisoner torture reminds one of Genet's argument that the *miliciens* are unable to deceive altogether (*Pompes funèbres*, 256).

circumvolutions and intricacies of the power struggles within the Vichy regime (between Darnand and Pétain) and between Vichy and Nazi Germany.<sup>198</sup> The word order exhibits the ambivalent position of the Milice as a French organization close to Hitlerism within an overarching French system, itself imposed by the Nazis. This sentence represents the Milice at the heart of a series of interlocking pieces.

Maréchal Pétain's most common representation in the corpus is that of the 'Vainqueur de Verdun' but it is mostly his old age that is evoked in Aymé's and Nimier's novels. There are no mentions of Pétain in Genet's novel, which may be accounted for by a difference in the narrative focus of *Pompes funèbres* which is mainly concerned with miliciens and the Nazi occupier. It is perhaps unsurprising that it should be in the more historical and military novel, *Le Hussard bleu*, that Pétain as a legitimate chief and commander is mostly evoked, although almost exclusively by the 'fanatisé' Fermendidier, in the three chapters in which he is entrusted with the narrative voice. The fanaticized Colonel Fermendidier enjoining the 'chefs de corps de la Z.F.O.A' (183) to exert their influence to demand the liberation of Pétain ('Je vous prie de vous unir les premiers, vous qui tenez les clefs de cette armée, pour exiger la libération immédiate du glorieux soldat' (224)) attests to a misreading of the power relations, between the French and the Germans as well as to his own inadequacy as colonel when he thinks he single-handedly beat the Nazis.<sup>199</sup> In Sanders' words, Pétain is described as follows: 'Quant au vieux cul, les Schleus l'avaient épinglé, de peur qu'il n'embrassât de Gaulle et Sieg Heil, d'un seul coeur pour Jeanne d'Arc et les images d'Epinal, nach Berlin' (85). Pétain is here designated derogatively as the 'vieux cul', portrayed as being kidnapped ('épinglé). The low register combined with the use of the subjunctive and German phrases ('Sieg Heil', 'nach Berlin') make Pétain irretrievably connected to

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<sup>198</sup> Lloyd (2003, 22) makes it clear than within eighteen months of the dismissal of Laval on 13 December 1940 Pétain is 'marginalised, reduced to the status of a symbolic figurehead.'

<sup>199</sup> Dambre (2008, 149) identifies a 'superposition des catégories des [militants] fanatisés et marginalisés dans *Le Hussard bleu*' of which Fermendidier and Frédéric are the key representatives.

the Nazi regime but only as the puppet of the Nazis. ‘La seconde proclamation est destinée aux troupes. Elle ne sera pas lue mais affichée dans les dortoirs, salles d’études, réfectoires, garages, écuries et tinettes du régiment’ (183). As readers, we are justified to expect any of Fermendidier’s recommendations to (physically and metaphorically) disappear in the ‘tinettes’, or toilets in military slang.

There are many fools in *Le Hussard bleu*, many of whom are Petainists. The aptly named Casse-Pompons irritates his fellow Hussars by taking pride in the alleged superiority of the ‘garde à Pétain’:

deux ans encore dans la garde à Pétain et pour le maniement d’armes, les Ostrogoths et les Amerloques y peuvent la ramener [...] j’ai entendu dire ... que les Schleus comme les Angliches, y z’avaient une peur bleue de l’armée française, même après l’armistice, vu que la garde à Pétain elle faisait un maniement d’armes comme on n’en avait jamais aperçu sur la surface de la terre... (*Le Hussard bleu*, 152)

According to him, rumour has it (‘j’ai entendu dire’) – thus making whatever he says even more dubious – that Pétain’s guard is greatly feared. The confusion of the Ostrogoths, the English, the Americans and the Germans as well as his poor command of linguistic and rhetorical skills contribute to represent him and Petainists in general as uneducated, gullible fools.

The relation between Pétain and Darnand, and by extension Petainists and Darnand’s *miliciens*, is represented in *Les Epées*:

Les autres ajoutaient à cette expression le mot “con”, ce qui était peut-être tendre mais moins respectueux. Ceux-ci rêvaient déjà de tueries quand les premiers ne parlaient encore que de répression. Naturellement, je me suis rangé parmi ceux qui donnaient aux choses leur vrai nom, et je crois que la Milice m’est redevable, dans l’hiver 43, de cette mode d’appeler Pétain : le vieux cul, expression qui courut les camps. (59)

The affectionate nickname ‘le vieux’ becomes ‘le vieux con’ in François Sanders’s mouth. From a strictly semantic point of view, one may wonder what ‘le vieux cul’ adds to ‘le vieux’ and ‘le vieux con’. In argotic terms, ‘cul’ comes to replace ‘con’, which

may be a way of suggesting Pétain's impotence. The affectionate connotations of 'con' disappear in the satirical 'cul'. It is also his old age that is represented in this mock dialogue between Darnand and Pétain:

La justice française cherchait à s'emparer de l'affaire, alléguant que Darnand était un haut fonctionnaire et qu'il ne pouvait décentement régler ses comptes en chef de bande. Le bruit courait même, dans la caserne de Versailles, que le vieux cul aurait pris Darnand à part en lui disant: "Brouf, brouf, on a voulu attenter à votre vie, mon brave, brouf, brouf, va falloir sévir. Oh, aurait répondu Darnand, pas la peine, monsieur le Maréchal, pas la peine. Si, si, Darnand, justice sera faite. Tous ces gens-là méritent la prison, etc." Le "pas la peine" de Darnand me faisait froid dans le dos pour Février. En effet, la Milice tenait à conserver cette affaire. Etat dans l'Etat, elle jugeait que tout ce qui se passait sur son territoire lui appartenait. (66-67)

The onomatopoeia ('brouf, brouf') mimicking the chronic coughing typical of old people along with Pétain's promises to clamp down on those who attempted to kill Darnand, resonate as an old man's promises that he is unable to keep. But this is the rift between the old and caring Pétain and the young and ambitious Darnand that is most striking in this passage. This representation is in keeping with what historians have shown: Darnand and the Milice increasingly representing an 'Etat dans l'Etat' or rather a summary justice system that even Pétain was only partially aware of.<sup>200</sup> Authority is thus destabilized at generational, sexual and national levels.

### **3. The scandal of identity: estrangement and the spectre of heteronomy**

'Nous vivons dans une époque historique qui se caractérisera peut-être un jour par là: le temps des hommes doubles'.<sup>201</sup> The figure of the double appears as a recurring motif and structure throughout the corpus and it is the dissolution of identity that can arguably

<sup>200</sup> Pétain's feminization is lexically alluded to through the verb 's'étaler' which appears as a lexical leitmotif in *Les Epées* ever since the description of Marlene Dietrich's face described as 's'étal[ant] devant lui' and to describe Claude's position in front of the fireplace. Represented on the first page of a newspaper with '[s]on visage courageux s'étalait (modestement) sur la première page.' (88-89). The oxymoronic proximity of the monumental presence of 's'étalait' and the timid 'modestement' borrows from the feminized and sexualised lexical field developed from the first page of the novel.

<sup>201</sup> The businessman, Quesnel, reflects on his epoch in Aragon (1972).



be the ultimate form of instability and indetermination. Along with the moral corruption and contagion of authority, characters appear two-faced. The narrator of *Pompes* alerts the reader to the confusion between Jean and Jean D. while Grandgil appears as a sort of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* of the Occupation; all characters are to some extent threatened by heteronomy, contradiction, bestialisation, devirilization and femininization or more generally the invasion by the other. Boltanski (2011, 67-68) (2011) argues that Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* introduced the paradigm of the 'roman policier', whereby 'le personnage qui se présente précisément comme le plus inoffensif, celui qui est par excellence moralement respectable et, par là, le plus insoupçonnable, se révèle être aussi le plus amoral et le plus criminel. [...] il est à la fois [...] – en soi – la charmante vieille dame et l'empoisonneuse, le clergyman austère et l'escroc sans scrupules [...]'. The 'polar' template, especially in the case of 'L'Indifférent', is helpful in understanding the question of identity and the seriousness of the threat to social order posed by crime.

The destabilization of identity sheds light on the wider problem of social unrest and civil war, *stasis* (στάσις). During his ritual evening walk Archambaud reflects on the duplicity of his countrymen:

Dans toutes les provinces de France, dans tous les villages, dans les grandes villes et les petites, il voyait grouiller ces gens à double visage, reconnaissables à une attitude un peu gênée et composée, au ton doucereux de leurs propos, à l'art d'utiliser les silences dans la conversation, à leurs sourires conciliants et légèrement serviles, comme s'ils étaient des inférieurs. (*Uranus*, 1057-1058)

Archambaud's remark on the duplicity of his countrymen can be extended to the whole nation; *Uranus* more generally provides a unique outlook on the social climate in the immediate post-war period. 'Franchissant les frontières de Blémont, il considéra la question à l'échelle du département, puis de la nation toute entière. Les hypocrites se chiffraient maintenant par millions' (1057). Archambaud serves at the starting-point to

these considerations: ‘Tous les Archambauds de la ville, tous les nobles coeurs et les belles consciences avaient assisté, le coeur un peu mou mais le menton approbateur, à la mort de cet autre petit salaud de Laignel [...]’ (1060). Archambaud’s reflection favours the theory of a national conspiracy; indeed, the verb ‘grouiller’ evokes rats, the contagion from a disease identified as duplicity and metonymically referred to by the expression ‘double visage’. Be that as it may, attacks on the face, verbal, physical or symbolic are as many potent examples of the prevalence of the face in a society traumatised by war (scarring) and the Occupation (when silence is a virtue). In *Les Epées*, François reflects metonymically on people by evoking their face: the impression made by a face is said to be more durable than a page from a book: ‘Je les [les autres] regarde pour la première fois. Un visage se tourne moins vite qu’une page. Il sont plus poisseux: voilà l’ennui.’ (101).<sup>202</sup> If society at large is affected by this duplicity the family cell is representative of this larger tendency:

Leroi était un jeune ingénieur sorti de Centrale pendant l’occupation. L’un de ses deux frères, déporté, était mort à Buchenwald, l’autre était journaliste à Paris. [...] Dans un autre temps, aucun de ses collègues ne l’aurait pris au sérieux, mais il avait derrière lui le mort de Buchenwald et le journaliste de Paris, et ses moindres propos sonnaient comme les trompettes de la Résistance. (1050)

The undeserved promotion of Leroi to the direction of the factory is presented as typical of the postwar period. By association with his more deserving brothers, one who died in Buchenwald and the other who is a journalist in Paris, Leroi’s access to posts of responsibility is granted. In *Pompes funèbres* Genet writes about a strange episode during which he drew symbols on Jean’s face. The narrator himself is not sure of the reason why he decided to do so (‘afin de ramener un peu d’émotion parmi nous, ou peut-être par cruauté, pour me venger de sa lucidité’: the disjunctive ‘ou’ underscores the narrator’s hesitation between these two reasons). To literally add insult to injury,

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<sup>202</sup> The anonymity of certain people makes them the necessary extras of tragedies: ‘Ces Français crevés le long des trottoirs ne sont que des figurants de la tragédie’ (95-96).

Genet used Jean's blood: 'je passai mon index entre ses fesses, le retirai sanglant et traçai en souriant, sur sa joue droite une faucille avec un marteau rudimentaire et sur sa joue gauche une croix gammée.' (61) The meaning of the inscriptions not only testifies to the essentially double nature of the face (two cheeks) but also to the element of undecidability there is in their couple and the two possible commitments, Communism and Hitlerism.<sup>203</sup>

Language bears traces of duplicity, divisions and disruptions to oneness. Expressions using doubles, halves or symmetries consistently crop up in the texts, indicating an esthetics of the double, half-measures, the almost and the not quite which prolong the effect of indistinction already observed in the predilection for metaphors of darkness and rhetorical devices such as the zeugma. The putting of Jean D.'s coffin into the catafalque triggers reflections on the absurdity and futility of such a process:

La mort de Jean se dédoublait en une autre mort, se rendait visible, se projetait sur un attirail aussi sombre et laid que les détails dont on entoure les enterrements. Elle me paraissait un acte doublement inutile, niais, comme la condamnation d'un innocent. (25)

The association of pointlessness and silliness ('niaiserie') is central here; the sensation that Jean died twice is rendered apparent by the religious ceremony.<sup>204</sup> In the following passage Los Anderos describes Sanders as having two voices:

Ce putain de Sanders, il avait deux voix. C'est rien de le dire, mais c'est vrai. Une voix de Eftépé, mâle et avec les mots à leur place. Et une voix de petit con des Forces combattantes (y porte les deux ailerons depuis quelques temps. Je lui pose pas de question. Il répond pas). (291)

Interestingly, it is Los Anderos, whose foreign name not only points to his own difference within a Hussar platoon but to his utter otherness. Sanders's double sense of

<sup>203</sup> In fact it is the narrator's blood rather than Jean D.'s that he used: "Qu'est-ce qu'il y a? On saigne?" The indefinite pronoun ('On saigne?') turns out to be a kind of sexual Eucharist. The confusion of their individual identities in the sexual act produces other expressions of an unstable identity.

<sup>204</sup> 'Des actes sans résonance, sans prolongement, vides, reflétaient la même désolation que la mort se reflétant sur les chaises drapées de noir sur le catafalque petit coquin, le *dies irae*.' (25)

belonging is signalled by his wearing the ‘ailerons’ from the F.T.P and ‘Forces combattantes’ but his two voices make him paradoxically all the more silent and twice as more charismatic at the same time.

In ‘Traversée de Paris’ the card players are said to be interested in the ‘valises elles-mêmes dont ils paraissaient supputer le contenu avec une lueur malveillante dans leurs yeux de demi-affamés’ (908). The narrative voice is tainted by Grandgil’s judgement on the other customers, as his later outburst confirms: ‘Ces machins-là, c’est pas pour les pauvres’ (909). The ‘pauvres’ and ‘demi-affamés’ may refer to their possible recourse to the black market (which makes them only half-famished rather than altogether hungry). The card players seem to be consistently characterized in terms of halves, for example when they are seen exchanging words in a low voice: ‘En défilant lentement devant le comptoir, leurs regards allaient des deux buveurs aux quatre valises à propos desquelles ils échangeaient à mi-voix des paroles d’une ironie amère’ (908-909). ‘Mi-voix’ and ‘demi-affamés’ come to point to an esthetics of half-measures, which are yet another expression of duplicity, dishonesty, and undecidability. Soon after, Grandgil shouts to the café tenants: ‘Cinquante ans chacun. Cinquante ans de connerie. Cinquante et cinquante deux mille cinq.’ (911). Their ages are added as if they were part of the same person and shared a single body. Consequently, the elements of the couple, their indistinctiveness (of origin, milieu and character) are rendered all the more patent by way of this addition. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, if Hélène Michaud’s relationship with Antoine is repeatedly described as exceptional, the narrator ironically comments on the ‘ententes à demi-mots’ and the fact she ‘avait presque compris les amours de son fils un peu préféré.’ (731) Indeed, Hélène’s understanding of what was going on in Antoine’s life, if not entirely misguided, is at least very partial. In *Pompes funèbres*, Paulo is introduced as Jean’s stepbrother (‘demi-frère’), his ‘frère à peine plus âgé’ (21).

## A. Symmetries or the threat of the double

In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* the narrator comments on the implications of Tiercelin's break-up with his girlfriend Flora: 'D'autre part, Antoine se trouvait singulièrement visé par cette rupture. Outre les raisons alléguées, il existait entre les deux couples une symétrie menaçante' (781-782). Antoine's reactions to this are described as 'stupeur' and confusion. The symmetry or pattern of relation between the two friends extends to their black market activities but in the duo they come to form Tiercelin consistently seems to hold the upper hand. Antoine appears as the imitation of Tiercelin, the paler version of his friend. Tiercelin's overwhelming influence on Antoine gives the symmetry more potency, makes it more menacing than any other consideration, such as his personal opinion. Interestingly, Antoine protests against Tiercelin's decision, arguing Flora's fragility: 'Mais c'est une folie. [...] Flora t'adore, je suis sûr qu'elle va tomber malade. Elle est capable d'en mourir' (782). If the logic of symmetry is maintained, Antoine identifies with Flora, the weaker element of the couple, and by way of displacement and unbeknown to himself, could die from it. This interpretation of the powerful figure of the symmetry in the narrative can be confirmed by the fact *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* ends with Antoine's de facto separation from Yvette, when Chou tells him that her mother is now seeing somebody else: 'Son tour était passé. Maintenant, c'était le soldat qui collait sa bouche à celle de maman' (874). In the last paragraph of the novel, it is Chou's point of view which can be detected in the description she gives of scenes of a sexual nature: 'Son crâne rasé, parsemé de piquants blancs, rougissait brusquement et ses doigts s'accrochaient au corsage ou à la jupe comme des pattes d'araignée. Maman était contente tout de même.' The symmetry between herself and her mother continues this sense of repetition or reproduction (if not of a disturbing feminine coming of age) on the same pattern:

Antoine l'ayant soulevée dans ses bras, Chou lui passa ses bras autour du cou et, appuyant ses lèvres aux siennes, lui fit un regard de vache triste. Il sourit à travers ses larmes, mais n'eut pas cet air abruti qu'il prenait avec maman. Elle n'en fut d'ailleurs pas très déçue, se doutant bien qu'elle n'était pas encore d'âge ni de taille à jouer aux yeux d'abrutis. (874)

In spite of Chou's supposed realization of her (present) inability to compete with her mother, the suggestion by the narrative voice (which moved from Chou in the penultimate paragraph to the narrator in the final paragraph) that Chou did envisage her position to Antoine in terms of romantic or physical love (alluded to in her lips touching his) closes the novel on yet another potential symmetry. The scandal of morality is aggravated by the threat of instability brought about by the symmetry. These two examples from *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* show that the relations between the characters function within the narrative, at more or less obvious levels, with a more or less direct narrative voice pointing to symmetries, around the figure of the double (exact double or reflection in the case of Antoine and double in the making in the case of Chou).

If symmetry etymologically denotes what measures together and fits harmoniously, chaos appears created by a lack of symmetry, which is yet another way to envisage the double. The double may present the possibility of a mixture, of being one and the other at the same time. Discussing Maxime Loin's personality with Watrin, Archambaud tries to weigh his arguments: 'Tout bien pesé, je ne regretterais pas de sauver la vie à un homme qui serait à la fois coupable et victime d'une erreur' (1115). In a later episode, it is the manifest presence of the double that needs to be revised. The young Communist teacher Jourdan accidentally enters Watrin's room and meets Maxime Loin. According to the narrator, the realization of their resemblance was immediate: 'Après avoir fait connaissance, le communiste et le fasciste s'étaient un peu reconnus l'un dans l'autre' (1178). There follows an enumeration of the things they both dislike, ranging from 'gras-double' to 'la terre mouillée' which eventually ends with the realization on their part that they are superior to each other, that the 'parenté'

between them starts with sympathy and ends with ‘agacement’.<sup>205</sup> If the subject of their conversation then switched to politics and started to feed their growing hostility towards one another, it is only when Loin mentions Jourdan’s mother, to whom he writes passionate letters that they engage in a fight: ‘Irrité de découvrir un hitlérien dans un homme qui lui ressemblait peut-être, Jourdan ripostait avec âcreté’ (1179). The possibility of being like Loin (‘lui ressemblait peut-être’) serves as a repellent to Jourdan but even when engaged in a fight, their fighting styles bear more similarities than differences.<sup>206</sup> Their resemblance is further emphasized in Watrin’s compliments to the two men:

Vous étiez superbes, dit-il. On voyait bien que vous aviez raison. Vous étiez transfigurés et il y avait de quoi. Avoir raison, c’est penser toujours à soi à travers les autres et c’est être avec soi et rien qu’avec soi. (1180)

The enigmatic explanation or definition of what it is to be right should not eclipse the fact that the compliment is paid to both men at the same time. Both were right, which points to Watrin’s conception of morality that does not make any clear division between right and wrong. Admittedly, Jourdan’s rage against Loin is more due to the fact that he initially thought he was alike him: ‘Qu’est-ce que c’est que cet olibrius? demanda Jourdan lorsque Loin fut sorti’ (1180-1181). ‘Olibrius’ attests to Jourdan’s total incomprehension of what appears to him as Loin’s otherworldliness.

In *Pompes funèbres* Jean D.’s mother is caught in the invisible and complex workings of symmetry. With her son’s sudden death, it is the unforeseen realization that she has become Juliette’s double which occupies her thoughts. In an inner monologue she reflects on her present situation:

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<sup>205</sup> ‘Maxime Loin avait beau se préférer à Jourdan, il ressentait ces supériorités et, tout en leur attribuant un caractère purement superficiel, ne pouvait s’empêcher de les lui envier’ (1179).

<sup>206</sup> Archambaud himself, after the scare of an arrest, is tempted to relate to Loin: ‘Archambaud fut violemment ému par cette figure d’homme traqué et, encore sous le coup des impressions désagréables qu’il venait d’éprouver lui-même, se représenta vivement les tranches par lesquelles le fugitif avait dû passer. Aussitôt, il essaya de se ressaisir et se raidit contre la tentation de céder à un mouvement de pitié’ (1061).

“Avant c’était Juliette, aujourd’hui, c’est mon tour.” Il y a quatre mois, Juliette avait perdu un bébé de quelques jours et qu’elle l’ai eu avec son fils, avait enragé sa mère. Elle les avait maudits, ridiculisés, et voici qu’elle était elle-même une enfant éplorée en face de la mort de son fils.’ (*Pompes*, 20-21)

The mother’s realization is made striking by a rare occurrence of direct speech in *Pompes funèbres* but also because it expresses the awareness of symmetry in the character’s own words; the image of the ‘tour’ is used to convey the idea of a circular repetition. The insistence on the temporal dimension (the apposition of ‘aujourd’hui’ contributes to isolate it and give it a deeper resonance) is reproduced by the choice of the tenses on the narrator’s part (pluperfect and imperfect). The repetition of the same pattern (losing a child) caught Jean D.’s mother off-guard by putting her in the same situation as Juliette. The association of ‘enfant’ and ‘éplorée’ casts a new light on the set expression ‘veuve éplorée’. The symmetry here works not as a mere reversal but puts her in the position of being a child, her son’s child. The narrative voice complexifies the mechanism of symmetry perceived by the mother (she is now like Juliette) in favour of an even more unstable perception and reality. She is her son’s child, thus dying twice in the logic of the symmetry. Daviron (2007, 135-137) argues that all ‘les femmes veuves ou seules représentent quasiment toutes les femmes de l’univers génétien’ and that ‘l’amour maternel chez Genet est extrêmement rare voire inexistant dans le sens mère-enfant’ and only exists in death.<sup>207</sup> It could also be argued that the power of the curse and more widely of language is illustrated here: the curse is so powerful that it can spring back and operate a full circle before hitting back the person who cursed first (conjuring up the image of the boomerang). The mother’s initial despising of Juliette can be said to invalidate Juliette’s mourning: as she is in her place,

<sup>207</sup> Daviron adds that: ‘Sans ce deuil, il est probable que jamais la mère et le fils ne se seraient rapprochés. [...] La mort du fils sert uniquement à la gloire de la mère’ (142). In Genet’s words: ‘Jamais elle n’aima Jean dont la mort soudaine exaltait cependant sa conscience maternelle’ (*Pompes funèbres*, 11). The narrator’s double sexual identity (what Derrida calls ‘personnage varginal’ characterized by the simultaneous presence of a vagina and a penis or ‘verge’) can be envisaged as a compensation for the failure of women and mothers in particular (who, in the case of Juliette, fails to give birth to a viable being and Jean’s mother for being incapable of loving her son).



she is now replacing her. It is the perception of an injustice done to her that scandalizes Jean D.'s mother: 'C'est bien la peine... dit-elle encore' (21). The enigmatic quality of this second remark in free direct speech is explained by the narrator: 'La phrase s'acheva par un soupir immense, et, bien que je fusse loin d'ici, je compris qu'elle voulait dire: "Bien la peine que je sois la patronne."' The position of the mother in society or rather in the more confined space of her own flat is emphasized here, thus pointing to her wish to be an aristocrat. Daviron observes that: 'Sa mort [celle de Jean] lui permet d'exploiter certains ressorts de la tragédie, comme des gestes, des parures de deuil qu'elle tenait enfermés, exactement comme Ernestine. Ils lui permettent aussi d'accéder à une aristocratie imaginaire: elle devient une reine endeuillée' (2007, 138). The shift in narrative voices allows one to re-draw the contours of what symmetry may entail at the level of the narrative; the narrative seems to stumble across or be haunted by the spectre of repetition or otherwise explore the possibilities of symmetry in the variety of its forms. Significantly, it is the narrative voice which takes over after the mother's intervention in direct speech. The narrator's control on the conduct of the narration is evident as he pitches in to add information about the mother's enigmatic intuition and rapprochement of herself with Juliette.

More generally, Juliette is doubly evacuated from the narration: she is denied a position by both the mother who sends her away to run errands and the homodiegetic narrator who takes advantage of her absence and describes her from the outside (*Pompes*, 11; 129). In psychoanalytic terms, the mother's aggressive stance towards Juliette could be interpreted as baby envy. The symmetry between Juliette and the narrator does not escape Genet, especially when he compares the nature of his love and relationship with Jean, but it is true nevertheless that Juliette is depicted or referred to despondently, as a weak and almost faceless victim (only her eyes were nice). It is most apparent before the funeral service commences: 'J'étais enceint d'un sentiment qui

pouvait, sans que je m'en étonne, me faire accoucher dans quelques jours d'un être étrange, mais viable, beau à coup sûr, car la paternité de Jean m'était un fier garant' (27).<sup>208</sup> If the narrator describes the birth of a new friendship between Jean and himself after his death it is in the imagery of the pregnancy that he chooses to do so. The delivery of a viable being, unlike the child Juliette gave birth to, signals the narrator's ascendancy over Juliette and the limits of the symmetry between the two.<sup>209</sup> The first mention of a symmetry between the narrator and Juliette can be found at the very beginning of the novel where Jean's fiancée is confined to a parenthesis:

Quand je revins de la Morgue, où sa fiancée m'avait conduit (C'était une petite bonne de dix-huit ans, orpheline depuis l'âge de douze. Près de sa mère, elle mendiait alors dans le bois de Boulogne, offrant aux passants avec un visage fade où seuls les yeux étaient beaux, quelques chansons sur une voix de pauvre. [...]) Elle était si désolée, si morne, qu'on voyait en toute saison, autour d'elle les joncs rigides et les flaques d'eau pure d'un marécage. Je ne sais où Jean l'avait pêchée, mais il l'aimait). (8)

Her story is concentrated in a single sentence and it is her sadness and helplessness ('visage fade', 'voix de pauvre', 'pêchée') that are outlined and all possibilities of symmetry are annulled by the mention of Juliette's unfaithfulness to Jean: 'Elle [the mother] aussi savait que Juliette avait eu son gosse non de Jean, mais d'un ancien adjudant de l'armée régulière et alors capitaine de la Milice' (47). If this confession evacuates the symmetry between the narrator and Juliette, it can only reinforce that of Jean's mother and Juliette who are respectively sexually involved with a Nazi and a milicien respectively. Thus freed from the spectre of the double the narrator can act as a witness to the hatred between the two women:

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<sup>208</sup> 'La femme se révèle être l'antithèse de l'amour. L'homme au contraire porte en lui cette graine puissante' Daviron (2007, 142-143).

<sup>209</sup> As the narrator thinks: 'La pauvre petite ne pouvait pas songer à sa fille qui n'avait jamais été qu'une sorte d'excroissance de chair immonde et rougeâtre détachée du corps de sa mère. Morte à quinze jours... Elle n'avait pas vécu pour elle' (129). The phrase 'excroissance de chair immonde' describes the baby as a mere growth of its mother, not viable enough to be adequately referred to as a human being.

Elle me regarda sans rien dire, sans expression. Pour ouvrir la porte, elle avait dû soulever une tenture usée qui la cachait, et sa main frôla la main de la mère de Jean qui eut un mouvement de recul et dit, à propos d'une chose si peu grave: "Fais donc attention". (47)

The narrator puts himself in the position of commenting on the lines of symmetry between the mother and the maid, which allows him to reclaim centre-stage in Jean's life. Doubles threaten the stability of individual identity by agitating the spectre of heteronomy or plurality in oneness, the foreign in the familiar.

### **B. Palimpsestic reality and prismatic illusion**

Symmetry can also be explored through the analysis of the mechanisms of reflection, refraction, diffraction, superimposition and prismatic illusion. Many episodes in the corpus function as prismatic decompositions or optical illusions, which are eventually resolved in the narrative. In 'Traversée de Paris' after completing the delivery to Montmartre on his own, Martin slowly regains consciousness, or rather 'une conscience à moitié lucide':

Précis, un souvenir remontait à la surface de sa mémoire, s'imposait à son esprit. C'était celui du soldat turc éventré d'un coup de couteau en 1915. Du cadavre frais, allongé sur le côté droit, les jambes recroquevillées et les mains crispées sur son ventre trempé de sang, Martin retrouvait l'image la plus nette, la plus vraie qu'il en eût jamais ressaisie. [...] Il regardait le mort. De temps à autre, le cadavre de Grandgil se déboîtait du cadavre turc et se perdait aussitôt. (925)

It is only when the expedition is over, and after Grandgil's murder that Martin can let his mind ramble. The superposition of Grandgil's corpse to that of the Turk as well as the image of the dislocation ('déboîtement') and the deletion ('effacement') evoke an optical process at work and reproduce the obliterations of consciousness. The early evocation of the Turk should have been interpreted by the reader (and arguably Grandgil) as a clue of what was to come. The evocation of Martin's war in the Dardanelles was triggered by the old mariner's own military campaign which was not

perceived by Grandgil nor the reader as an allusion to a possible chain of symmetries (894).<sup>210</sup> In structural terms, the function of this scene, set apart from the main story, can be understood in hindsight as the prefiguration of a symmetry. In other words, the structure of the short story reveals its tight-knit construction after Grandgil's murder, which comes to confirm the symmetry with the first death and the elliptic description of the murder further corroborates this interpretation.<sup>211</sup> Admittedly, 'Traversée de Paris' can be seen as the necessary narrative entreprise to realise a circular movement and for Martin's life to come full circle. Both Martin's trajectory and that of the narrative merge to achieve his liberation. As a matter of fact it could be a way of interpreting the quasi-obsessional repetition of 'On ne fait pas ce qu'on veut', mentioned earlier. Martin's newly-found calmness and faith in human solidarity concludes the short-story ('Jamais il n'avait eu une foi aussi entière en la vertu de ses semblables', 'Traversée', 929). From a structural viewpoint, the seemingly unimportant description works subterraneously to complete a circle and liberate Martin from his obsessive visions of the Turk (and incidentally, the trouble he had with his wife). From the point of view of Martin, the symmetry can be said to have been waiting to happen: the symmetry gives the character coherence and the story manages to rework the idea of the same, both as motif, theme and structure. The symmetry between the two deaths, in combat during the First World War and as a result of criminal activities during the Second World War, is however ethically problematic. If Grandgil's murder had anything to do with the war it would only be by the potency of the initial trauma. Interestingly, the image of the corpse appears to him as 'la plus vraie' but is actually an illusion of truth or rather of a truth seemingly more true than truth itself ('a truth-and-a-half'), a situation Martin himself is

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<sup>210</sup> Grandgil's indifference and reluctance to ask questions to Martin triggers a silent recollection on Martin's part.

<sup>211</sup> 'Pendant qu'ils se battaient, la sirène se mit à sonner la fin de l'alerte et Martin n'entendit pas la plainte que poussa son auxiliaire quand la lame du couteau lui entra dans le ventre. [the Pléiade edition then leaves a double space] Le boucher lui proposa un repas froid, mais Martin ne voulut accepter qu'un verre de vin' (924).

(half) aware of: ‘Martin, vaguement conscient de sa supercherie, profitait de cette superposition pour excuser son crime: C’était la guerre. Je n’aurais demandé qu’à le laisser vivre’ (925). The ‘supercherie’ or sham designates the comfort of the double (‘Le cadavre était seul [...]’), which allows one to play down the seriousness of his crime and find a temporary arrangement with his conscience:

Mais, peu à peu, le cadavre se dédoublait. Telle une image en surimpression, le corps de Grandgil ne fut d’abord qu’un reflet incertain sur celui du soldat, puis s’en détacha lentement. Parfois, d’un effort d’absence, Martin réussissait à remboîter les deux silhouettes l’une dans l’autre, mais celle de Grandgil reprenait aussitôt sa place. Les deux têtes, puis les deux bustes, devinrent distincts. Enfin, il y eut deux morts couchés l’un à côté de l’autre [...]. Grâce à la présence du soldat, sa mort semblait participer de la fatalité de la guerre. [...] Soudain, le cadavre du Turc recula jusqu’à l’horizon de sa mémoire et se perdit. (926)

The insistence on the process of detachment which follows the slow process of awareness (‘peu à peu’, ‘lentement’, ‘enfin’) gives the sentences a chronophotographic quality as they seem to be trying to decompose otherwise quasi-invisible movements.

The second story elaborates on the first one and eventually concludes it:

Soudain, les pieds sur lesquels butait son regard semblèrent s’envoler. Dressé sur le bord de l’escarpement, le sergent [...] tombait dans le vide à la renverse. A sa place, surgissait une haute silhouette grise dans laquelle Martin Eugène, né à Paris rue des Envierges en 1894, plantait son couteau jusqu’au manche. (895)<sup>212</sup>

The term ‘surimpression’ denotes a duplication, uncovers an almost palimpsestic quality to the first story; the double therefore appears as a structuring element in the short-story, controlling and destabilising the narrative at the same time. Scandal seems to be situated in the numerous optical effects which constantly threaten to destabilize the narrative. If the characters seem to be controlled by the narrator, Genet’s confession that he does not know why Erik should commit murder complicates the critic’s interpretative task:

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<sup>212</sup> A number of similarities exist between the two stabbings. Even the background sounds (‘les canons de la flotte’) echo ‘la sirène qui se mit à sonner la fin de l’alerte’ (895; 924).

Je ne sais pas pourquoi il est nécessaire ici qu'Erik accomplisse un meurtre. Les explications ne sembleront pas d'abord valables. Pourtant [...] je dois indiquer que cet acte d'Erik vient ici, à cet endroit même parce qu'il s'impose à moi. (118-119)

Genet points to internal necessities that cannot be made any more transparent to the reader, a declaration which can be taken to enigmatically refer to the logic proper to the conduct of the narrative. Genet oscillates between exerting a total control over the narrative and acknowledging that he is not fully aware of what goes on in his text. In the first pages of *Pompes funèbres* the narrator reflects on the fact that if it may appear that writing on the third burial in his third book may not be a coincidence he anticipates simplifications of his work ('le troisième enterrement de chacun de mes trois livres'): 'Le premier ne fut pas exactement la préfiguration du second' (9). Genet's awareness of the recurrence of the theme of death triggers the following thoughts: 'Il est troublant qu'un thème macabre m'ait été offert il y a longtemps, afin que je le traite aujourd'hui et l'incorpore malgré moi à un texte chargé de décomposer le rayon lumineux, fait surtout d'amour et de douleur, que projette mon coeur désolé.' (9). Genet describes as 'étrange' the fact that he seemed prepared to offer a theme that was to become so integral a part of his work from very early on ('incorporated', thus becoming its very material, 'prenant corps'). Genet's poetic work seems to be beset by a 'thème macabre' which appears as a stumbling-block, an obsessive motif, theme and structure which works its way through the text without the (homo-diegetic) narrator knowing ('malgré moi'). The text becomes agent, with a mission of its own ('un texte chargé de décomposer'). The text is described as working prismatically ('décomposer le rayon lumineux'); the image of the light ray and the verb 'to decompose' encourages de-constructions, de-figurations, de-gradations and conversely re-compositions and re-figurations. The analogy with the prism allows one to view Genet's text as the diffusion

and dissemination of colours in different directions.<sup>213</sup> If this optical analogy is anything to go by that may be a decisive tool in analyzing scandal because scandal is prismatic in nature.

Transitory periods are intrinsically linked to the emergence of a problematic relation to symmetry and Michel Monglat's trajectory in *Uranus* is exemplary of this. The confrontation between his father and himself is motivated by a growing awareness of the dangers inherent in the double. The fear of resembling his father is precipitated by the Liberation and the necessity of distancing himself from his father appears of paramount importance to Michel. In the final chapter of the novel, Michel confronts his father and wants him to commit suicide: 'Pour laver l'honneur de notre nom et pour que la justice s'accomplisse. [...] Mais je ne veux pas perdre mon temps à discuter avec un individu de ton espèce.'<sup>214</sup> It is precisely Michel's individuality that Monglat Senior questions: 'Tu te crois peut-être quelqu'un?' and later 'Apprends à te connaître un peu' (1230). According to him, Michel is his spitting image ('Le portrait de ton père tout craché' or 'Regarde-toi bien, tu n'es qu'un salaud comme moi').<sup>215</sup>

The process of atomisation from what appears one (Martin and his two corpses, Michel and his identity crisis) is presented as part and parcel of Genet's poetic work. 'Sublimation' comes to replace the 'surimpression' in this explanation of his poetic enterprise:

Après ce travail – encore à moitié fait – qui m'a coûté tant de sacrifices, m'obstinant toujours plus dans la sublimation d'un monde qui est l'envers du vôtre, voici que j'ai la honte de me voir aborder avec peine, éclopé, saignant, sur un rivage plus peuplé que la Mort elle-même. (204)

<sup>213</sup> Erik is generated by distortions of other images which is typical of Genet's approach to detail and totality, see 'ERIK' (67); see also the description of a 'grimace' (195).

<sup>214</sup> 'La vie m'étant devenue insupportable, j'ai décidé de mettre fin...' (*Uranus*, 1228).

<sup>215</sup> In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Tiercelin confesses that he looks up to the German officers and would not mind being like them: 'De tous les hommes qui sont ici ce soir, ce sont probablement les plus propres, ceux que j'aimerais le mieux fréquenter. Je dirais même que j'aimerais assez leur ressembler' (790) Tellingly, Tiercelin establishes a sense of progression between 'fréquenter' and 'ressembler', which indirectly underlines the fact that he remains different from them.

The sublimation echoes another formulation of his poetic project as ‘la recherche avide des voyous qu’il méprisait’, the search for the ‘double honteux’ (105). Genet not only seeks the mirror image of the reader’s world (‘l’envers du vôtre’), but plans to make it the core of his poetic enterprise. Genet’s conception of his own poetic work presupposes the possibility of symmetry and inversion. His work is said to be only half completed because the process of sublimation takes time as Pierrot’s first poetic experience attests (117).<sup>216</sup> The process of sublimation is essentially that of the poetic creation or poietics, the creation of a new object by way of ‘spiritualization’: ‘Ainsi la forme la plus spiritualisée de Jean donnait un asile ouaté aux amours d’un bourreau berlinois et d’un jeune hitlérien. Allons jusqu’au bout’ (72). The poetic adventure takes the form of a commitment that engages both author and reader (‘allons’) to the extreme (‘le bout’) about which Genet seems to have a precise idea of what it entails (‘travail à moitié fait’). It is an almost chemical if not transcendental experience that is performed in the narrative: ‘la forme la plus spiritualisée’ indeed referring to an ultimate stage of inversion, purification or essentialization. The paradox of spiritualization or sublimation lies in the fact that it cannot be further remote from the original form; symmetry involves in this sense a variety of transformative processes that are as many reminders of the image of the prism. Consequently, what seems too close to the original escapes the qualification of a double: the narrator readily corrects his initial error of judgement when he mistook the *maquisard* for Jean’s transfigured, sublimated creation.<sup>217</sup> If the double carries the hope of regeneration Jean and the *maquisard* are too close to one another to make a reconciliation possible. The esthetics of the double is fundamentally an esthetics of scandal because it presupposes the disruption of order (the same and the other). The double is experienced as a threat at the level of the characters and the

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<sup>216</sup> Sublimation is evoked later more generally: ‘La poésie ou l’art d’utiliser les restes. D’utiliser la merde et de vous la faire bouffer’ (190).

<sup>217</sup> ‘Donc ce maquisard arrêté là [...] n’était pas, bien que je l’eusse espéré un moment, ce que la mort avait obtenu de Jean. Ce n’était pas Jean transformé, défiguré et transfiguré, sortant de sa vieille écorce, ayant fait peau neuve [...]’ (44-45).



narrative itself and its optical analogies open up other more threatening potentialities of disruption which can be envisaged as dark counterpoints to reality.

### C. Counterpoints of reality

Towards the end of *Pompes funèbres*, as the Liberation is imminent, Genet reflects on the German soldiers' escape towards the sewers:

Quelques milliers de soldats allemands s'y étaient réfugiés et bientôt Paris fut habité par une ville étrange, qui était à l'ombre de la ville libre, son enfer, son double honteux, au sens exact, ses bas-fonds. Cette ville avait ses lois, ses règles, ses coutumes. (256)

'Au sens exact' points to several meanings of the double: geometrically and symbolically, these thousands of Germans created a new city on the same model as ground-level Paris. Metaphorically, this is its inferno or hell in both a mythological and Christian sense. This parallel city takes on the scale of a universe and is as much characterized by its strangeness as it is by its social cohesion. What makes this passage central to the understanding of how the narrative exploits the figure of the double is that it is at the moment of the Liberation that this double came to exist; there is an evident coincidence between the materialization of the emergence of the double and the event of the Liberation. In *Le Hussard bleu*, as Sanders whiles away the time in Rita's company, he 'rêvassai[t] sur de vieux disques, en regardant des photographies. Elles m'offraient l'image inversée de la France: la France déguisée en pays envahi; elle ne manquait ni de grandeur ni de charme' (394). The photographs provide a visual counterpoint to Sanders's experience in occupied Germany. Rita's indirect involvement in the Occupation of France through her brother Frédéric is echoed subtly here. As with Genet who revelled in the beauty of underground life (257), Sanders enjoys this reversed image

of occupied France. The interchangeability of the situation of France and Germany preempts any claims to moral superiority from France.<sup>218</sup>

There are more names than characters in the corpus, which signals a problematic relationship of names to identity. However, the attempt at finding identity through the materiality of a name is recurrent throughout the corpus; at the same time as it is arbitrary it is the expression of what a being primarily projects that makes names so problematic. It is only after the narrator's fourth visit at Erik's that he realizes the narrator and Jean D. share the same name:

A demain neuf heures, Djian. [...] Le geste de surprise qu'il venait d'accomplir en découvrant cette analogie des deux noms, colla le pantalon contre ses fesses et les mit en valeur. [...] J'essayai d'imaginer ses rapports avec Jean, qu'il détestait, et qui le détestait. (31)

The sudden realization that both bear the same name is evoked by a bodily reaction (the movement of his trousers is mimetic of the rhetorical effect of the analogy in the sense it brings together two independent realities). The analogy of the two names comes to blur the two individuals into one. Erik's remark is echoed further down in the text when the narrator reflects on what his book attempts to achieve: 'Ce livre est sincère et c'est une blague. Je le publierai afin qu'il serve la gloire de Jean, mais duquel?' (194). The conflation of the two Jeans is made complete here: the sameness, obvious to all, enables a further degree of communion and intimacy between them. Genet's fascination with names is nowhere more apparent than in his contemplation of the suicide of his name: 'Supposons que je tue à l'instant Jean Genet et qu'aussitôt de ce mort naisse Jean Genet... Je coupe ici ma vie. C'est fait. Je ne saurais regretter un futur qui ne sera pas' (201). Genet only imagines the suicide or murder ('Supposons'), which is confirmed by the immediate rebirth of a new Jean Genet (a life cut as is a lizard's head). The virtuality

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<sup>218</sup> Quite the contrary in fact as being occupied by France is seen as a curse by French officers in *Le Hussard bleu*. 'On en reverra bientôt des maquisards. Ils nous guetteront dans les bois. Alors on ne trouvera plus ça honnête du tout. [...] L'honneur national, ça nous est réservé' (139).

of the murder is made evident by the survival of the narrative voice, which carries on speaking after its death ('C'est fait'); it is undoubtedly the death of the name of Jean Genet that the narrator toys with here. In 'Traversée de Paris' as Martin and Grandgil find themselves in his workshop, Grandgil is hurt by Martin's indifference to his work: "Tu préfères peut-être Grandgil à Gilouin? Je n'insiste pas. Tu finiras par me répondre que tu te fous de Grandgil comme de Gilouin, et moi, j'aurais de la peine." (921).

The revelation of Gilouin's use of a pseudonym to carry out the expedition (Grandgil) does not suffice to make Martin realize the scam:

Martin s'assit dans un fauteuil. Resté seul, il essaya de faire le bilan de ses impressions et de ses griefs [...] Dans sa rancune entraînait aussi une part de curiosité irritante à l'égard de cette ironie soutenue où se retranchait Grandgil et de ce mystère de duplicité qui se trouvait dans la double personnalité du peintre. (922)

In short, the two names are the visible expression of Grandgil's duplicity, which is replicated by the polysemy of the word 'painter' (Grandgil let Martin believe he was a house painter), thus forming a continuum between common names and proper nouns. (897) The final stage of Martin's full realization of the scam occurs when he overhears Grandgil's phone conversation with Louise. The similarities in terms of sonorities between Gilouin and Grandgil (which arguably is more fitting to his imposing stature) as well as the deadly outcome to Gilouin's experiment as a 'gangster [...], au méchant, à l'anarchiste, au dur intégral' (923) signal the dangers of dilettantish experiments with double identities.

Aymé seems to appreciate the comic effects of changing a character's name to give him an almost identical one. In 'Le Faux policier' Martin says: 'Inspecteur Martin, dit Martin en exhibant sa fausse carte' (985). The relation of the identity card to real identity (which in this case is transparent) problematizes the question of identity on a comic mode. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers*, Pierre Tiercelin's change of his birth name is said to have been influenced by 'esprit swing': 'Fils d'un restaurateur de la rue de la

Rochefoucauld, le barman du sous-sol, dans un esprit swing l'avait surnommé Paul à cause de son prénom de Pierre, et il était Paul pour son ami Antoine Michaud.' (721)

The logic behind the change from Pierre to the equally ordinary name of Paul was apparently motivated by the 'esprit swing' which can be seen as literally consisting in twisting names, operating unnecessary distortions, unlike in *Les Epées* where François Sanders's change of identity is motivated by a sense of urgency; it is the risk of being recognized as a zealous milicien that may have motivated the creation of a new identity.

Je sors de ma poche la carte d'identité qu'on m'a donnée. Je regarde le nom par curiosité. Je m'appelle Louis Rouillot, je suis né à Louveciennes. Une vie nouvelle s'ouvre devant moi – mais je préférerais plus de pudeur, c'est ma nature. [...] Je m'aperçois que j'ai ma carte d'identité dans ma main. Louis Rouillot. Décidément, c'est un nom d'inspecteur de police, ce n'est pas fait pour moi. Je la déchire soigneusement en petits morceaux. (94-95)

The indefinite pronoun 'on' emphasizes the fact that Sanders has not sought nor requested this new identity. The grammatical pronoun 'je' bears a problematic relation to the narrator's actual identity ('Je m'appelle Louis Rouillot'). Sanders is curious to know what name he will have been given and it is precisely because he finds the name unsatisfactory, unevocative and banal that he decides to terminate Louis Rouillot's life by tearing apart his identity card. The idea of a 'nom (pas) fait pour moi' is central to this analysis inasmuch as it seems to determine, to a certain extent, the characters' trajectories. In Sanders's case, the French sonorities of 'Rouillot' are at odds with the American ones of his birth name; his contempt for a name evocative of that of a (French) police officer reiterates earlier statements of his revulsion for them.<sup>219</sup> In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Eusèbe is the name the secretary Solange gave to the errand boy, judging it more fitting:

Eusèbe, le garçon de courses, un adolescent maigre et privé, au regard éteint entra justement sur ces paroles de menace. Solange, estimant que son

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<sup>219</sup> 'Car tout bien pesé, je ne veux pas tomber entre les mains de ces policiers français qui sentent l'ail et le vin rouge' (46).

véritable prénom d'Alain était au-dessus de sa condition, lui avait donné celui d'Eusèbe dont l'usage s'était imposé dans la maison. (714)

In changing Alain's name to Eusèbe, Solange asserts her authority as well as her seductive powers on the young Alain. In Uranus the play on grammatical categories (between proper noun and adverb) saves Loin from Jourdan's denunciation. Watrin reassures Archambaud that Jourdan will have understood 'Loin' as an adverb, rather than as a noun: 'Tranquillisez-vous. Il aura entendu Loin comme un adverbe' (1182).

If Aymé seems to favour the repetition of the same names (Martin in 'Traversée' and 'Le Faux policier'), Nimier and Genet represent acts of renaming repeatedly.<sup>220</sup> Genet explains the birth of Riton in a parenthesis: 'Je veux aimer Riton. (Je ne puis dire pourquoi, *spontanément*, j'appelle Riton ce jeune milicien inconnu)', *Pompes*, 51). The italics underline the spontaneous process of naming the actor, Riton, which surprises the narrator himself. Riton becomes Jean's exact opposite: 'Tous les gestes de Riton tuaient ceux de Jean, tuaient Jean.' (53). Riton is after Erik and Paulo the third character created by Genet. Paulo or Paul Cramaille, whose surname conjures up banditry and ruthlessness, may have been created by successive derivations: 'canaille' and 'chamaille' (with the adjunct of an 'r' sound which adds a sense of insecurity and peril) proleptically indicates Paulo's arrest and trial for the break-ins and thefts he committed.<sup>221</sup> In *Le Hussard bleu* Saint-Anne seeks to find meaning in the materiality of the names: 'Il y a de Berçac, il y a Sanders, il y a de Maximian. Leurs noms que je connais mal les rendent plus mystérieux qu'ils n'ont besoin de l'être, pour m'impressionner.' Indeed, their names are all either aristocratic or nicknames which

<sup>220</sup> The materiality names generates meditations on the pronunciation of his name by Jean D.'s mother. "M. Genêt [sic] dit-elle, en minaudant, et en tendant sa main blanche, molle et potelée, voici mon ami." (11) or 'Il prononçait 'Djian', en laissant tomber sèchement le "an"' (30).

<sup>221</sup> Describing Paulo and his status and function among the other characters, Genet writes: 'C'est mon désespoir ayant pris corps' (49).

point to a perceived connection with their personality.<sup>222</sup> Saint-Anne then adds: ‘Avec passion, je me demande si le plus orgueilleux des trois s’appelle Berçac ou Maximian, cherchant dans les syllabes une vérité qui n’existe pas, cherchant à traduire’ (43). If a translation process seems to spontaneously impose itself upon Saint-Anne, he is fully aware of the arbitrary of the sign (‘vérité qui n’existe pas’), which is perhaps all the more evident with names. Saint-Anne’s remark echoes Sanders’s reflection in the second part of *Les Epées* around the summer of 1946:

Alors j’ai fait la chose défendue, une sorte de retour sur moi-même, ce sale regard qui poisse et qui dénonce. François Sanders, ces syllabes qui me servent de prétexte...Ton pays me paraissait à vomir [...]. Alors que tous les autres sont victimes de je ne sais quelle conjuration de leur mollesse et de leur avidité, François Sanders a su ce qu’il voulait. [...] Est-ce ma faute, si, à douze ans, son nom me remplissait le coeur de joie? (105)

The absurdity of the combination of certain syllables rather than others (‘ces syllabes qui me servent de prétexte’) is nonetheless meaningful when it comes to fate as his name separated Sanders from the others from the outset. Later, Saint-Anne’s interest in a young woman is sustained by the fact he is trying to find her a name:

Il fallait lui trouver un prénom. Il n’est pas venu tout de suite. J’ai voulu compliquer les choses. Je la nommais Lili. C’était à la fin janvier. J’avais entendu parler d’une femme ou d’une chanson qui s’appelait Lili Marlène. [...] Au début du mois de février, elle avait trouvé son vrai nom. Il n’était pas allemand. Il ne venait pas non plus de ses cheveux. Mais il était doux et simple. Pour ce que j’avais à en faire, il fallait mieux rester dans la douceur et la simplicité. C’était donc Isabelle. (249-250)

Saint-Anne’s recounting of the finding of her name (‘C’était Isabelle’) spans a few weeks between late January and February. He did not seek to discover her real name but strived to find her an adequate name. This passage provides an insight into the relation between names and identity; the belief a person should have a certain name (‘Il n’était

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<sup>222</sup> Names such as Fleuve, Saint-Vérace, Aspirant Vérité, Los Anderos, Casse-Pompons, de Fermendidier make Saint-Anne reflect: ‘Avec vos noms à courants d’air, le peloton, c’est le bordel qu’il est en train de devenir.’ (*Le Hussard bleu*, 23-24).

pas allemand’) reveals violence on the part of the French occupier; it is the control over life and death that is subtly displayed in this passage.

Heteronomy is all the more menacing when the reflection is not human; the image of the monster is indeed a recurrent motif in the corpus. In *Le Chemin des Ecoliers* Lolivier’s son, Tony, is presented as a psychopath from Chapter V onwards:

S’étant offert à la saigner, Tony avait pris soin de la plumer vive et de lui brûler les yeux au fer rouge. [...] Blême, Lolivier considérait le monstre avec plus de colère encore que d’horreur, car l’idée ne l’avait jamais effleuré que son fils pût être dégénéré et sa responsabilité restait entière à ses yeux. (750)

The description of Tony’s mental illness seems clearer to the reader than it is to his father: the pleasure and enjoyment Tony feels in torturing a mouse is out and out sadistic. Significantly, Lolivier hits his son calling him a ‘sale bête’ and later ‘le monstre’. (750) After Lolivier kicked his son out of the family home it appears that Tony found people of his kind and lived like a rat (‘J’habite depuis une semaine dans l’une des rues les plus sordides de Paris, une espèce de cave’ (819)). Tony’s monstrosity is confirmed by his villainous crime which renders him all the more incomprehensible to Lolivier: ‘L’Arabe et lui, ils ont tué la fille et ils l’ont vendue par quartiers, comme viande de boucherie. C’est en essayant de vendre les morceaux qu’ils se sont fait prendre’ (864; 885). The monstrosity of Tony and the Arab (whose strangeness is conveyed by their living in a cellar, their unconventional *ménage à trois* and their means of existence which rely on the black market. The visual quality of this scene, recounted by the concierge, appeals to the voyeurism and scopophilic desire of Michaud:

Il voyait la cave, l’Arabe affairé, la fille éventrée, et l’enfant pour le quel il avait eu tant de soucis [...] s’appliquant à couper un membre, peinant sur les tendons et les jointures ou jetant dans un baquet une brassée de boyaux tièdes. (865)

On first meeting Erik the narrator is told by Jean D.'s mother that Erik is shy, which triggers this thought:

Il s'habituerà. Je ne suis pas un monstre. Le mot "monstre" dut être éveillé par l'écho du mot "habituerà". Était-il possible que j'accepte sans déchirement, dans ma vie intime, un de ceux contre qui Jean avait combattu jusqu'à en mourir? (13)

In 'Traversée de Paris' the narrative construction of a horizon of heteronomy is carefully built from the first sentence of the short story. The narrative plays on the reader's anticipation of an actual massacre: 'La victime, déjà dépecée, gisait dans un coin de la cave sous des torchons de grosse toile, piqués de tâches brunes.' (889). The focus is put on the victim and Jamblier's attitude can only add to the tension and intensify the anticipation:

Parfois, il s'arrêtait court, un peu de sang lui montait aux joues et le regard de ses yeux inquiets se fixait sur le loquet de la porte. Pour apaiser l'impatience de l'attente, il prit une serpillère qui trempait dans une cuvette d'émail et, pour la troisième fois, lava sur le béton une surface encore humide afin d'en effacer les dernières traces de sang qu'avait pu y laisser sa boucherie. (889)

The mention of the blood and the obsessive cleaning of the floor to make the blood disappear install a worrying atmosphere which is made all the more bizarre with the possessive adjective '*sa boucherie*'. Only after the introductions does Jamblier take the two men towards the 'forme indécise': 'Suivi des deux visiteurs, il se dirigea vers le coin de la cave où les torchons blancs recouvraient une forme indécise. Débarrassé de son linceul, un cochon apparut au jour de la lumière électrique.' The reader's expectations are played with in this opening scene: the fascination for death finds its ultimate and most clear expression in the word 'linceul' which usually covers a corpse. But identity continues to be problematic:

L'animal était découpé en une douzaine de quartiers soigneusement rapprochés de façon à reconstituer le porc qui se présentait le ventre béant,



vidé de ses entrailles. Le patron s'effaça et laissa aux deux compagnons le temps de se rendre compte que la bête était entière.

If the 'forme' has all the appearances of a whole pig, they find themselves in front of a dismembered pig cut into twelve parts, without its innards. The spectre of a divided identity, an illusion of it serves as a motif throughout 'Traversée de Paris'. Indeed, the 'uncanny' felt by the reader as the scene progresses towards the revelation of the pig is paralleled by Jamblier and Martin's incomprehension of Grandgil's attitude.<sup>223</sup> The linguistic and ethical contamination by the pig is immediate: 'Un peu en arrière, immobile, Grandgil considérait les deux hommes d'un air de calme indifférence, mais ses petits yeux de porc continuaient à sourire dans sa face de bélier frisé' (890). His 'petits yeux de porc' have come to replace the pig's soul; his whole face now takes on all the pig's characteristics ('face de bélier frisé').<sup>224</sup> In fact, Jamblier has doubts as to whether Grandgil has anything human in him: 'Avec une attention aiguisée par la peur, il l'examina de nouveau, cherchant une intention précise sur les traits de Grandgil [...]. Les vêtements de l'individu le rassurèrent un peu, au moins quant à son état' (892). Jamblier's fear of Grandgil is instinctive and almost feline. The animalization of Grandgil leaves him estranged from humanity ('Martin y voyait même autre chose d'étrange et de presque inhumain', 'Traversée', 898). It is Grandgil's unpredictability that is central to the two men's fear. (902). A semiotic reading is unsuccessful at first; it is an interpretative aporia that the narrative seems to propose to the reader, before resolving it towards the end of the short story. The image of the dice in the first few pages of 'Traversée de Paris' places the whole enterprise under the sign of undecidability and randomness: 'Le patron eut un geste court, comme s'il jetait les dés,

<sup>223</sup> Freud (2003) defines the uncanny or 'unheimlich' as 'what was once *heimisch*, homelike, familiar; the prefix 'un' is the token of repression . [It] proceeds from something familiar which has been repressed' (152). In the wake of Ernst Jentsch, Freud notes 'the uncanny effect' of dolls, automatons or other objects for which there are 'doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate' (135) which is close to the reader's experience of the encounter with the pig.

<sup>224</sup> His animal instinct seems to make him stare at 'un garde-manger au-dessous duquel pendaient un jambon et un saucisson' (900).

et acquiesça d'un soupir.' (900) Grandgil's utter strangeness is reflected upon by Martin in terms of a mask:

Cette étrange figure était à la fois hermétique et transparente. [...] Les morts ont parfois sur le visage cette lumière d'ironie qui paraît émaner des paupières fermées, mais le masque de Grandgil rayonnait en même temps une espèce de franchise sommaire, indécente. Martin, mal à l'aise, cherchait en vain à expliquer ou à concilier ces contrastes. (908)

His being one and the other ('hermétique et transparente', 'ironie' and 'franchise sommaire') makes Grandgil a puzzle to decipher ('expliquer ces contrastes'). The image of the contrast is echoed in Genet's idea of contradiction. The narrator examines his own inner contradictions on seeing the young milicien on the screen:

Pourtant je dois confronter en moi cette honte ['de n'être pas avec eux, épaulant mon fusil et mourant à leurs côtés'] que je sentis à mon visage dans l'obscurité d'une salle de cinéma, quant aux actualités je vis partir en chantant pour le front russe les premiers volontaires français sous l'uniforme allemand. J'essaierai d'expliquer cette contradiction. (133-134)

The initial sense of shame indirectly signals the threat to the stability of identity. The attempt at explaining (in the future, so only as part of a project) the contradiction can be viewed as a will to come to terms with all the threats posed to the individual's identity. In *Pompes funèbres* the reference to the Tiergarten may serve as a decisive element to understand how the animal or the process of animalization (that is contamination rather than de-humanization) works. Riton's killing and eating of the cat may put him at risk of becoming one. The threat of assimilation is constant: 'Il sentait dans sa chair la présence d'un chat, à lui-même si bien assimilé qu'il craignait parfois qu'on entendît des miaulements ou son ronron' (140). It is a reworking of the digestion process that instead of consuming, the meat becomes meat itself. The 'ronron' provides a variation on the comforting and harmless experience of a cat innocently purring to manifest its contentment. Here again the crisis of humanity seems to be expressed by a crisis of the sign (with the purring signifying something else than satisfaction). On the same mode,

the temptation to devour a human being can be interpreted as fittingly describing Genet's poetic entreprise to let Jean D. speak through his mouth and live through his body.

(j'eusse pu porter son corps, et pourquoi les pouvoirs publics ne l'accordent-ils pas? le découper en morceaux dans une cuisine et le manger. Certes, il resterait beaucoup de déchets [...] mais la chair pourrait s'assimiler à la mienne) [...]. (27)<sup>225</sup>

The magical assimilation of the 'jeune héros' is reminiscent of the 'opérations de sorcellerie' that Genet performs throughout *Pompes funèbres* and of which the prismatic composition is an example:

J'allais partir sur cette idée, [mouvement de la montre au poignet qui devrait appartenir à Paulo] et de plus en plus je m'apercevais que Riton complétait Paulo, mais pour mon oeuvre de sorcellerie, j'avais besoin d'une attention parfaite et de tout employer pour ma réussite. (52)

The image of 'emboitement', with Paulo complementing Riton finds its climactic expression in the communion or orgy of all his characters: 'je partagerais mes amours avec Erik et Paulo embrouillant eux-mêmes leur ventre avec la boniche et la mère, dans une chambre présidée par le souvenir de Jean' (31). This represents the ultimate expression of the 'opération de sorcellerie'; transformation, assimilation and animalization contain the process of metamorphosis (from animal to human or vice versa), which is represented clearly in the reversal of functions. As Riton is given handcuffs by the Captain he moves from prisoner to 'sacrificateur'. The ambiguity on his identity is short-lived: 'Pour la première fois la victime tenait et s'en effrayait le couteau du sacrificateur. Cette ambiguïté ne dura pas' (251).<sup>226</sup> Identity uses guises and disguises to perform operations of transformation and metamorphosis. The numerous

<sup>225</sup> 'Manger l'adolescent fusillé sur les barricades, dévorer un jeune héros n'est pas chose facile' (14).

<sup>226</sup> 'S'il venait de recevoir une investiture ce signe surtout le métamorphosait en son propre ennemi. Il était devenu celui qui peut s'arrêter et encore celui qu'on ne peut arrêter, puisqu'il est lui-même l'arrestateur' (252).

references to disguises, uniforms and camouflage thus take on a whole different dimension:

Etait-il vrai que chaque enfant, fillette, vieille femme, dans Paris était un soldat déguisé? La peur saisit Erik d'être seul avec ses armes loyales au milieu d'un peuple de monstres armé mystérieusement de couteaux et de charmes, connaissant un art du camouflage qui rendait enfantin celui dont usaient les soldats allemands pour se déguiser en lézards, en zèbres, en tigres, en tombes verticales et mouvantes conservant un frais, un agile cadavre blond au regard bleu. (215)

The fear of finding oneself not only cheated, but alone among a majority of people, whose allegiance is not evident is experienced by Erik at the Liberation of Paris. Disbelief and fear are expressed through the question ('Etait-il vrai?') as if a mere confirmation rather than an open question was asked. The Parisians are referred to as a 'peuple de monstres armé', which points to the variety of the fighters (and weapons) involved in the fight against the Germans. Genet then adds: 'La dissimulation, l'hypocrisie (en termes techniques le camouflage) se perfectionnèrent au point de donner à la France l'air calme et ami d'un jardin de curé.' (216).

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate in thematic terms that scandal proceeds to the destabilization of morality by representing a range of behaviours which contravene tacit, inherited and conventional rules governing morality (violence, murders, executions and allusions to genocides) and question the very possibility of ethics at a time of individual and national turmoil. Morality or 'la morale selon vous' is consistently questioned in *Pompes funèbres* and leads the narrator to explore evil further, while Nimier's and Aymé's narrators treat morality as inherently dependent upon historical circumstances. I have attempted to show stylistic devices such as the recourse to axiomatic expressions as being symptomatic of the delocalization or displacement of the moral agent in an indefinite 'on' and impersonal structures. This then led me to analyse the disruptions to order and authority at the level of the family cell (adults/ children and men/women) and at national or state level (conflicting and

tautological power structures). In a third section, I explored the question of identity which, rather than merely designating a series of troubles with identity at individual level, sought to examine symmetries, diffraction and other analogous structures and effects at the level of the *énoncé* and the *énonciation*.

## Conclusion

The fundamental questions explored in this thesis are what a literary scholar could bring to elucidate mechanisms of transition, why novels provide the most fruitful object of study and what methodologies can be developed to account for the representation of instability, ambivalence and ambiguity. The upheaval created by the experience of a foreign occupation, the circumstances of the Liberation itself, and the Epuration that followed shaped the fictional production of the immediate post-war period in France. Here, defining, identifying and analysing representations of scandal offers a telling snapshot of the state of the social consensus in the five years following the Liberation: it is one which challenges conventional understandings. This study explores how the novel provides a space to test the limits of what could be said and done by individuals, groups or institutions in French society between 1945 and 1950.

This study of scandal in prose fiction has attempted to refine and supplement the understanding of the narrative dimension of scandal to prose fiction as identified by the likes of Gluckman and Dampierre, and more recently by pragmatic sociology. It has also shown how literary studies can in turn benefit from such developments in sociology which provide critical tools for assessing the intensity of disruptions to social order. By recasting the fictional production of the immediate post-war period as a field of controversies and disputes, it has demonstrated how the literary field in general and fiction in particular were not an accidental terrain of disputes and controversies, but on the contrary, scandal was a central component in the process of national regeneration.

Harnessing the understanding of scandal as a public act of denunciation of a perceived injustice, has enabled the observation that the immediate post-war literary field manifested deep-rooted dissent and disagreements about a wide range of subjects,

from the behaviour of the French during the Occupation, the events of the Liberation, the violence of the Epuration and the role of grand narratives and their relation to individual experiences. Exploring scandal thus has elucidated the terms of the dispute within the post-war literary field and made a less monolithic picture of the post-war literary field emerge. Indeed, if the discovery of their 'être social' during the Occupation was to inform the Existentialists' post-war stance and insistence on the social role of fiction, a vision that makes their opponents the heirs of Théophile Gautier's 'l'art pour l'art' misinterprets the debate on literary commitment. As Beauvoir (1972, 171) observes of Jacques Laurent's *Le Petit Canard*: 'Le fait est que les adversaires les plus acharnés de la littérature engagée s'y laissent eux-mêmes entraîner dès qu'ils se risquent à faire une œuvre positive.' This flags up often unseen complexity in the question of commitment. The thesis has also attempted to show the potential for refining Boltanski's analysis of the debate between *littérature engagée* and *littérature déagée*, opposing the 'cité inspirée' (where the work of art requires imagination and originality to be valued as such) and the 'cité civique', which places collective interest at the heart of the debate (Boltanski 2011). The years 1945-1950 saw the debate about the recent past and the role of literature and the novel in particular extend from the narrow, if symbolically crucial, literary field, into the political field, temporarily devoid of a vocal opposition.

This study makes a contribution to ethical criticism in literature, reflecting on the novel as ethical space. Martha Nussbaum and Richard Rorty have differently expressed the view that literary texts may articulate moral points of view. With this in mind, the thesis has sought to reconcile aspects of a structuralist or narratological and pragmatic approach to literary texts and ethical criticism. It has been designed to be read as an attempt to analyse the representation of morality in literature, in the process reconciling structuralism with its apparent obliviousness to moral issues and its

concurrent sacralisation of the text, and ethical criticism, too often discredited and derided for making fiction the pretext for moralising discourses. This thesis seeks to avoid what according to Martha Nussbaum (1992, 169-72) gives ethical writing about literature a bad name in part due to the ‘neglect of literary form’ by some of its practitioners, a tendency to ‘translate’ literary works into ‘propositional’ theses or reducing novels to thematics (Leypoldt 2008). It reflects how such a disregard can be avoided by paying attention to how ‘form and content shape one another’ in order to permit a successful ‘ethical turn’ in literary theory (Booth 1989; Todd Davis 2001). The dynamic, pragmatic approach of texts underpinning the ‘sociologie des épreuves’ – here used for the first time – can arguably allow a balance to be struck between what can ultimately be seen as a French tradition of critical reading inaugurated by the post-war development of the ‘sciences de l’homme’ under the banner of structuralism and a more recent, Anglo-Saxon critical tradition of ethical criticism developed in the mid-1980s.<sup>227</sup>

In this study, I have tried to harness a pragmatic approach to texts, heavily indebted to French narratology and inscribed in a French tradition of sociology, whilst also acknowledging the importance of questions pertaining to morality in order to renew the current methodological approach of literary texts, both in France and in the United Kingdom. Considered thus, the concept of scandal, at the crossroads of ethics, politics and aesthetics – can help gain a better understanding of periods of transition when values are at their most unstable. The importance given by pragmatic sociology and the ‘competence’ of actors in situations of disputes, making them moral beings rather than agents, is central to the understanding of the variety and scope of controversies within the space of the novel (Boltanski 2011, 64; 74). Understanding how fiction can represent disputes and controversies can further help to envisage the capacity of literature to respond to historical events, the status of representation and the limits that

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<sup>227</sup> An attempt at introducing ethical criticism into the French landscape of literary criticism has been made by Jouve (Jouve 2001).



the novel allows one to explore (in terms of the extent and variety of the situations represented – at the level of the *énoncé*) and those it is confronted with (the interventions and silences at the level of the *énonciation*). My study seeks to approach the narrative forms of scandal rigorously and at many levels. It shows how the word ‘scandale’ seems to appear more frequently in the *récit* rather than in dialogues at moments of tension which is indicative of the overbearing presence of the narrative voice in all the texts of the corpus. An examination of insults opens up to an exploration of explicit scandal at the level of the characters, arguing that insults economically and efficiently show opposition, dissent, disagreement, but also operate to solicit public support. The relative scarcity of insults provides the impetus to localise scandal at other levels of the narrative. At the rhetorical and syntactic levels, the analysis shows how ambiguity and oddness are conveyed by a number of recurrent rhetorical figures, such as zeugmas, hypallages, oxymorons, paradoxisms, repetitions, double negatives, failed metaphors and analogies, all pointing to a sense of imbalance between language and reality, and inadequacy in seeking to express it. The relationship between the characters and narrative voice are analysed to assess the critical competence of the fictional actors. This is achieved by identifying all the scenes of scandal, from mere tiffs between brothers and sisters and their rapid resolution (within the same scene), to disputes involving violence, imprisonment or death and taking place at varying levels (different episodes in different spaces, different or similar actors, modes of resolution). This analysis at the level of the episode shows how strategies of scandalization, such as the use of rumour and denunciation, were essential components in the narrative production of scandal. Identifying numerous narratorial interventions (through the use of indirect speech or footnotes) demonstrates how narrative voice may be viewed as the most stable element among an otherwise generally unstable reality. My formalist approach to the study of time and space inspired by the Russian Formalists allows a chronotopic

analysis of scandal revealing new coordinates for the novel of the immediate post-war years. Deserted spaces are shown to have become suddenly populated (roofs and cellars) and, conversely, previously busy or saturated spaces gradually have become literally, and arguably, symbolically deserted. Léopold's failure to transform the scandal of his denunciation into an affair can be envisaged in spatial terms as evidence of the fact that Blémont's town centre has become 'éthiquement énucléé' (Morin, 81). This points to the crucial finding that scandal in post-war fiction is inseparable from the modern city. Adopting a thematic approach, the final chapter tracks the causes and consequences of the destabilization and instability of the Occupation and the transition to peace. These observations can to some extent be generalized to other novels written and published in the period. The sense of urgency which emerges from the publication of novels in quick succession by Aymé, Genet and Nimier between 1945 and 1950 in contrast with their subsequent silence could indeed attest to what Louis-René des-Forêts (1946) called 'garrulité', a sense of urgency and necessity to talk and write, be it about one's own need to write.

The focus of the thesis is deliberately limited to 'romans à chaud', to novels of the transition, written and published during the 'long Liberation', the five years or so before the first amnesty of 1951 and prior to Jean Paulhan's *Lettre aux directeurs de la Résistance* in 1952, at the height of Existentialism, and before the beginning of the decade of the Hussards, and the progressive exhaustion of the theme of commitment in the mid-1950s. The second criterion governing the choice of the corpus is the explicit reference to recent historical events which, of course, places the question of representation at the centre of my investigation. It is now clear that thematic and stylistic connections can be made between Nimier (here liberated from his association with the rest of the Hussards, the 'Niblorent' label (Frank; quoted in Dufay 2010, 52) often conveniently grouped together in spite of their differences), Aymé (freed from the

convenient label of ‘écrivain de l’ambiguïté’), and Genet. They can be identified as different by the representations of scandal, but can also be made a part of post-war literature among – and alongside – others.

This thesis also seeks to bridge what can be perceived as a methodological deficit in the study of post-war fiction. The concept of ‘ambiguity’, widely used to account for the intermediary status of Aymé (albeit altogether different from Maurice Bardèche, Lucien Rebatet and the neo-Vichyist vein of post-war writers) nonetheless offers an unflattering portrayal of the French experience of the Occupation in his post-war novels by way of a trivialization of all forms of commitment), here is supplemented with analysis or clarification of the range of attitudes represented within the space of the novel. The thesis proposes a critical tool which can account for the sense of instability brought about by the Occupation and the Liberation, which at once refines understanding of the period and invites applications to larger corpora.

My contention is that the literature of the immediate post-war years may be viewed as part of a period of transition rather than the first phase of the construction of a national memory of the Occupation. This study challenges Rousso’s representation of these years by questioning its validity for the study of the literary production of 1945-1950. If the ‘unfinished mourning’ may be relevant to portray the film industry (which is his point of focus) and the *mode rétro* (as part of his analysis of the ‘retour du refoulé’), his periodization and metaphorical apparatus fail to adequately describe what is going on in the literature of these years. Instead, the notion of transition, if rarely used in French literary studies in a metropolitan context allows for fruitful exchanges between history and literature and more specifically sheds light on the sense of urgency and uncertainty peculiar to transitional periods and their fictional and narrative expressions.

Crucially, the decisive role of literature in the cultural and intellectual regeneration, if partly inherited and prepared by the growing prominence of writers and intellectuals ever since Emile Zola's intervention in the Dreyfus Affair, can be pertinently recast in the light of a more general debate on Humanism. It is in this sense that the reference to Sade, the theoretical and methodological debates on the very possibility of its textual existence need to be viewed as more than tangential evidence to the significance of these years in the understanding of the changes to the writing and critical practices as well as reading habits of the second half of the twentieth-century, at least until the *Tel Quel* group. Indeed, the focus on the written word or the text as a medium in the comprehension of more general questions, such as evil, truth or history, is indicative of the opening of a round of soul-searching which took a detour through literature.

Post-war intellectuals used scandal as a horizon and hermeneutic instrument to make a diagnostic of culture and society in the aftermath of the war, as Deleuze's observation in his *Presentation de Sade-Masoch* (1967, 13) seems to encourage us to think: 'La littérature [...] se constitue aussi comme diagnostic de ce qui affecte l'homme, en isolant les symptômes et en désignant les cadres.' Medical metaphors interestingly seem to pervade all post-war discourses on history, literature and memory as Deleuze (1993, 14) makes even clearer in *Critique et Clinique*: 'L'écrivain comme tel n'est-il pas malade, mais plutôt médecin, médecin de soi-même et du monde?' The relations between scandal and literature as illustrated by Sade can be accounted for by the tension he, himself, and his text represent. It is what can be indirectly understood from Foucault's explanation of his interest in Sade:

je dirais que je vois plus chez Sade le dernier témoin du XVIIIe siècle (il l'était aussi grâce au milieu dont il était issu) que le prophète de l'avenir. [...] je m'intéresse à lui avec une certaine constance justement en raison de la position historique qu'il occupe, intermédiaire entre deux formes de pensée. (2001, 373)

It is Sade's position of mediator, his problematic historical status ('entre deux formes de pensée') that makes him the screen onto which a generation could project its dilemmas pertaining to historical violence in particular, negotiate what could be deemed an Hegelian turn, and question their representations of history and its relations to evil. In this sense, Sade appears as an improbable remedy, a literary text coming to the rescue of the ethical aporia of philosophical essays, for a generation versed in Hegel, especially through Alexandre Kojève's influential inter-war reading of the dialectics of the master and the slave.<sup>228</sup> The precedent found in Sade, and through him, the trope and pattern of the Restoration period superimposed onto the Liberation, also served strategic objectives of legitimisation (Simonin 2008, 585-682). The unprecedented interest in scandal shown during the immediate post-war period, be it through new critical practices and philosophical debates or the confirmation of a taste for scandal among the reading public further testifies to the importance given to scandal in the analysis of French history and, in particular, the relations between ethics, politics and literature.

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<sup>228</sup> Sartre followed Kojève's seminars between 1933 and 1939 in Paris. Descombes (1989, 69) views the post-war period as characterised by 'un hégélianisme noir', whilst Marty (63) envisages Sade as 'un moyen pour une génération de se sortir de Hegel'; see also Judt (1992, 76-77).

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