

THE RHETORIC OF RAPE

A Critical Mapping of the Discursive Landscape in France

LA RHÉTORIQUE DU VIOL

Une recension critique du paysage discursif français

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Pour le soupir




...et le sourire.



Je dois répéter plusieurs fois ma déposition,
redire encore et encore ce calvaire,
avec des keufs qui rentrent et sortent sans arrêt du bureau.
L'un mange son sandwich, un autre demande devant moi:
'C'est quoi, l'affaire?' Et puis suivent des questions du genre:
'Combien de temps, la fellation? Qu'est-ce qu'il te disait?
Et toi, qu'est-ce que tu faisais? T'es sûre de ce que tu dis?'
Je n'ai pas de certificat, plus de bleus pour prouver ce que je dis.
C'est donc ma parole contre la sienne.



SAMIRA BELLIL, *DANS L'ENFER DES TOURNANTES*



And so, when the time comes, you have to turn to him,
the maniac's sperm still greasing your thighs,
your mind whirling like crazy. You have to confess
to him, you are guilty of the crime
of having been forced.



ADRIENNE RICH, 'RAPE'



ABSTRACT

The Rhetoric of Rape: A Critical Mapping of the Discursive Landscape in France comprises three theoretically distinct, but thematically contiguous essays, each of which touches upon the highly contentious topic of 'la tournante'. From the expression 'faire tourner', meaning something like 'to hand, or to pass (something) around; to share', the word has taken on an additional, specialized, and more sinister sense: that of gang-rape. In place of the politically polarized lens through which 'la tournante' has been seen, *The Rhetoric of Rape* offers an alternative set of theoretical, respectively phenomenological (Maurice Merleau-Ponty), linguistic (John Langshaw Austin), and psychoanalytical (Sigmund Freud) perspectives from which the practice and its discursive conditions of possibility - its underlying *archaeology* - can be mapped. This triangulation of views reveals how certain political (*pouvoir*), epistemic (*savoir*), and erotic (*plaisir*) strategies mobilize rape and its rhetoric.

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Chapter 1. Sociology, Phenomenology, and the Bodily Experience of 'la tournante'



Figure 1. Fadela Amara, co-founder of Ni putes ni soumises, speaking in Asnières, 4 March 2003.

[L]a vérité n'est pas libre par nature, ni l'erreur serve, mais que sa production est tout entière traversée des rapports de pouvoir.¹

Before December 2000, when Fabrice Genestal's *La Squalle*² was released, talk of 'la tournante' was, in the words of the French sociologist Laurent Mucchielli, 'médiatiquement quasi inexistant'.³ It was Genestal's film, '[un] film témoignage, entre fiction et documentaire',⁴ that sparked an explosion of discourse, an unprecedented outpouring of moral indignation. As news of the sexually violent practice spread, increasingly vociferous cries could be heard: at the Sorbonne, they came together, 'femmes vivant dans les quartiers de

¹ Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, 3 vols (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976-1984), 1: *La Volonté de savoir* (1976; repr. 2001), pp. 80-81.

² *La Squalle*, dir. by Fabrice Genestal (Fox Pathé Europa, 2000) [on DVD].

³ Laurent Mucchielli, *Le Scandale des 'tournantes': Dérives médiatiques, contre-enquête sociologique* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2005), p. 16.

⁴ Frédéric Chambon, 'La Squalle, une fiction militante pour alerter l'opinion', *Le Monde*, 29 November 2000.

banlieues', to declare that they were 'ni putes, ni soumises', and in their shared determination to counter 'le machisme des hommes', an eponymous movement was born.⁵ The plight of two young women — Samira Bellil and Sohane Benziane — galvanized opinion. Corroborating many of the themes explored by Genestal, the publication of Bellil's autobiographical account was highly publicized, and her courage in the face of incalculable 'violences et souffrances'⁶ gained her widespread recognition. Just days before the official release of Bellil's 'livre-témoignage',⁷ Benziane was burnt alive by Jamal Derrar, 'un jeune caïd',⁸ allegedly because '[elle ne s'est pas pliée] aux normes de fonctionnement de la cité, à la loi du plus fort'.⁹ On 1 February 2003, six young women and two young men marched from Vitry-sur-Seine, where the odious crime had taken place, against 'des barbares qui sèment violence et terreur dans les cités'.¹⁰ Five weeks later, on International Women's Day, Safia, Christelle, Ingrid, Farid, Loubna and Olivier reached Paris, having visited twenty-three towns and cities along the way. As they processed from 'la place de la République à celle de la Nation',¹¹ they were joined by thirty-thousand others, men and women, including representatives from leading human-rights (Amnesty International, Ligue des droits de l'Homme), anti-racist (SOS Racisme, Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples), and feminist (Planning familial, Chiennes de garde) organizations. That morning, standing on the steps of Matignon, the delegation, led by Fadela Amara, was met by Jean-Pierre Raffarin, the then prime minister: the consensus of opinion against sexist violence in *les cités* appeared to be strong — almost unanimous.

⁵ Cf. Chérifa Benabdessadok, 'Ni putes ni soumises: De la marche à l'université d'automne', *Hommes & migrations*, 1248 (2004), 64-74.

⁶ Samira Bellil, *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2003; repr. 2009), pp. 251-252.

⁷ 'Samira Bellil avait brisé le tabou des "tournantes"', *Le Parisien*, 8 September 2004.

⁸ Tomas Ludovic, 'Droit de suite. Sohane, morte brûlée vive', *L'Humanité*, 22 September 2003.

⁹ Fadela Amara and Sylvia Zappi, *Ni putes ni soumises*, 2nd edn (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2004; repr. 2009), p. 6.

¹⁰ Claude Patrice, 'Malek Boutih le desillusionniste', *Le Monde*, 13 June 2002.

¹¹ Emmanuèle Peyret, 'Ni putes ni soumises, toujours mobilisées', *Libération*, 10 March 2003.

When considered ‘objectively’, however, ‘[ce] symbole du succès et de la reconnaissance politique de cette marche’¹² was the corollary of ‘[une] rhétorique politique manichéenne’ whose insidious logic contributed to the demonization of ‘les jeunes [garçons] “Arabo-musulmans”’.¹³ Thus, from Mucchielli’s point of view, rather than bringing about ‘une “libération de la parole des femmes”’,¹⁴ Genestal’s film, Bellil’s book, the march, the demonstration and the entire debate served to circumscribe the possibilities of dialogue between young men and young women in *les cités*. Indeed, construed as the correlate of ‘[une réalité] qui est construite par les médias et par les forces politiques qui agissent sur eux’,¹⁵ one would be inclined to believe that the practice of ‘la tournante’ exists only in this virtual mode; and yet, talk of ‘la tournante’ continues to circulate freely as ontologically grounded fact, this being the ‘scandal’ to which the title of Mucchielli’s book refers and the fabrication which he laments. Whilst his express purpose to expose the fallacy that young men of immigrant and, more particularly, of Muslim origin are culturally predisposed to sexualized forms of violence against women is legitimate, by denying that ‘[l]es tournantes, ça existe’,¹⁶ Mucchielli’s discourse — like the racist style of thought which he decries — has an ‘epistemically significant impact’,¹⁷ serving to de-authorize the speech of those whom he regards as objects of knowledge rather than as knowledge-producing subjects. Because of the oppositional nature of his synthesizing operations, which present the confused and complicated mass of things written and things said about

¹² Charlotte Rotman, ‘À Matignon, deux façons d’être femme’, *Libération*, 10 March 2003.

¹³ *Le Scandale des ‘tournantes’*, pp. 6-7, 90-95.

¹⁴ Bernard Alidières, ‘Face à l’insécurité et aux violences faites aux personnes de sexe féminin en banlieue: Éléments pour une approche géopolitique des représentations’, *Hérodote*, 136 (2010), 56-75 (p. 58). Cf. Nathalie Bajos and others, ‘Les violences sexuelles en France: Quand la parole se libère’, *Population & sociétés*, 445 (2008) <http://www.ined.fr/fichier/t_publication/1359/publi_pdf1_pop_soc445.pdf> [accessed 17 March 2013].

¹⁵ *Le Scandale des ‘tournantes’*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁶ Frédéric Chambon, ‘Une fille qui se fait tourner dans le quartier, c’est elle qui l’a cherché’, *Le Monde*, 24 April 2001.

¹⁷ Linda Alcoff, ‘The Problem of Speaking for Others’, *Cultural Critique*, 20 (1991-1992), 5-32 (pp. 6-7).

'la tournante' as evidence of 'une xénophobie croissante dans la population française',¹⁸ Mucchielli's 'contre-enquête sociologique' appropriates — '[pour] pouvoir analyser objectivement'¹⁹ — the voices of female and feminized Others only *to negate* their credibility as victims of, or witnesses to, men's violence. What is more, the 'objective' reality which Mucchielli claims to describe is, in fact, only 'la "réalité" telle que le sociologue peut essayer de la restituer et de la comprendre' (9-10); and hence, even though his claims are presented throughout as definitive by virtue of their objectivity and value-neutrality, Mucchielli betrays his own conscious, but concealed *partiality*. In this chapter, I propose that this all-too-familiar rendering of rape is emblematic of dominant epistemologies which posit an ideal or optimal epistemic perspective from which it is possible 'to reconstitute the *arche* or primary origin'²⁰ of rape. It is against this science- or 'sociology-has-proved' rhetoric and its considerable deficiencies that, in the second part of this chapter, I counterpose descriptions of 'la tournante' as experienced subjectively. By adopting an approach which is phenomenologically grounded, and which takes the subject's lived experiences as the zero-point of orientation, I hope to reveal that which is obscured by excessively positivistic conceptions of rape.

Sociology-Has-Proved Rhetoric

Because of the specific interpretative damage which it causes, the notion that 'le phénomène des viols collectifs' is timeless and universal is particularly worthy of the type of critical, 'case-by-case' analysis espoused by Lorraine Code and others.²¹ In an article which challenges '[la] base

¹⁸ Laurent Mucchielli, 'L'Éphémère question des viols collectifs en France (2000-2002): Étude d'une panique morale', *Logos*, 26 (2007), 9-29 (pp. 26-27).

¹⁹ *Le Scandale des 'tournantes'*, pp. 86-87. Further references to this volume are given after quotations in the text.

²⁰ Mitchell Dean, *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1994; repr. 1997), p. 16.

²¹ In 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', Chandra Mohanty censures the work of Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, author of *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* (1983), because it 'denies any historical specificity to the location of women

empirique' which underpins Mucchielli's analysis, Michela Marzano asks: 'Peut-on, finalement, faire comme si le statut des femmes n'avait pas évolué depuis le Moyen Âge'?²² In fairness to Mucchielli, he does concede in the introduction to *Le Scandale des 'tournantes'* that: '[C]e n'est finalement que dans la deuxième moitié du XXe siècle (surtout à partir des années 1970) que les femmes ont enfin conquis la reconnaissance sociale et la condamnation légale de violences masculines subies [...] depuis des temps... préhistoriques' (7-8). Despite this, Mucchielli's opening remarks and the universalizing approach which he adopts subsequently jar discordantly. By emphasizing the continuity of particular social practices across time, Mucchielli's total history elides historical differences in the interests of unifying disparate historical events. Yet, it is precisely this history — the history of the women's movement in France — that reveals the assumption of unbroken continuity to be illusory: '[U]ne telle représentation [...] ne prend pas du tout en compte une appréhension de la chronologie selon un temps plus court: celui du "combat féministe" [...] [et] celui de l'évolution des mœurs en France depuis les années 1960'.²³ Either this evolution has taken place, affirming not only the possibility of diverse historical trajectories, but the historical plasticity of social and sexual practices, or 'le phénomène des viols collectifs' is an age-old phenomenon, constant, motionless, and unchanging. Whilst these propositions are clearly contradictory, Mucchielli's argument admits of both; but what conclusions should one draw from these apparent contradictions?

By misrecognizing present-day sexual practices as familiar facsimiles of the past, and by applying abstract, ahistorical definitions

as subordinate, powerful, marginal, central, or otherwise, *vis-à-vis* particular social and power networks. Women are taken as a unified "powerless" group prior to the historical and political analysis in question. Thus, it is then merely a matter of specifying the context *after the fact*' (*Feminist Review*, 30 (1988), 61-88 (p. 68)).

²² Michela Marzano, 'Viols, tournant dangereux', *Le Figaro littéraire*, 12 May 2005.

²³ 'Face à l'insécurité et aux violences faites aux personnes de sexe féminin en banlieue', p. 65.

uncritically to other historical contexts, Mucchielli's 'presentist fallacy'²⁴ calls into question the epistemic authority of those women (and men) whose experiences do not conform with 'objectively derived, propositionally formulable, and empirically testable'²⁵ definitions of rape. Accounts of sexual violence which deviate from falsely coherent, supposedly universal definitions as established by ostensibly scientific methods of historical inquiry are liable, therefore, *to be disbelieved*. By asserting that accounts of rape are meaningful if, and only if, empirically verifiable, this *forensic* form of knowledge, which conceives of truth in terms of complementary opposites, serves to de-authorize alternative, less than ideally objective accounts of rape. Because descriptions of embodied experience do not 'transcend' the particularities of their 'location', they must not be granted 'justificatory or explanatory significance' unless purified of their subjective 'taint' by the rigours of an 'objective, disinterested process of inquiry'.²⁶ To illustrate more fully the threat posed by Mucchielli's use of false universals, I should like to draw the reader's attention to the distinction, described by Bellil, between 'les filles "bien"' and 'les "taspés [verlan: pétasses]"'.²⁷

By displaying or by being ascribed certain symptomatic characteristics, ranging from the seemingly trivial ('parce qu'elles se maquillent') to the more obviously transgressive ('[parce qu'elles] traînent dehors comme les garçons'), girls and young women in *les cités* are exposed to the possibility and the dangers of insult. Not only do derogatory terms such as 'pétasse', 'pute', ' salope', and 'suceuse' carry the charge of what Gayatri Spivak calls 'epistemic violence',²⁷ but they

²⁴ According to Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow's definition, '[i]n the presentist fallacy, the historian takes a model or a concept, an institution, a feeling, or a symbol from his present, and attempts — almost by definition unwittingly — to find that it had a parallel meaning in the past' ('Interpretive Analytics', in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 104-125 (p. 118)).

²⁵ Lorraine Code, 'Taking Subjectivity into Account', in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 15-48 (pp. 18-19).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18, 27.

²⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271-313 (pp. 280-281).

identify certain individuals — (social) women — as deserving, desiring, or inviting sexual violence: ‘Ces filles-là, on peut leur faire n’importe quoi parce que “pas de grand frère”, parce que “sortent dehors”, parce que “traînent”’.²⁸ *Contra* Bellil, whose remarks speak to the performative force of such terms, Mucchielli argues that the distinction between ‘filles bien’ and ‘taspés’ is causally irrelevant: ‘[L]e critère pertinent les différenciant des autres jeunes filles de leur âge réside généralement dans leur situation familiale, leur isolement et leur fréquentation des groupes de jeunes connus pour leurs activités délinquantes’.²⁹ Of course, to acknowledge otherwise would be to oppose history given as continuity — and to concede, therefore, the specious unity of Mucchielli’s conceptual framework which pretends to, but which falls far below, the threshold of scientificity. In addition to the various elisions sanctioned by Mucchielli’s discourse, the grid of specification which he proposes sets ‘victims’ of ‘la tournante’ ([qui fréquentent] des groupes de jeunes connus pour leurs activités délinquantes’) against other young girls ([qui] évitent soigneusement ce genre de fréquentations’).³⁰ This moralizing device naturalizes rape by positing that certain types of behaviour, mannerisms, articles of dress or turns of phrase gesture towards women’s sexual availability, raising the ‘delicate’³¹ question of their culpability: ‘L’analyse qu’il propose ainsi du “rôle de l’attitude de la victime dans le crime” contribue immanquablement à faire porter une part de responsabilité sur la victime’.³² By separating off sexual violence from its social and discursive conditions of possibility,³³ Mucchielli’s hazardous psychologism calls the victims of rape to account, framing

²⁸ *Dans l’enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, pp. 54-55.

²⁹ *Le Scandale des ‘tournantes’*, pp. 53-54.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ This being the term which Mucchielli uses (*Le Scandale des ‘tournantes’*, p. 72).

³² Alice Debauche and Christelle Hamel, ‘Laurent Mucchielli [sic], *Le scandale des ‘tournantes’*. *Dérives médiatiques, contre-enquête sociologique*, Paris, La Découverte, “Sur le Vif”, 2005, 124 p.’, *Population*, 61 (2006), 367-369 (p. 369).

³³ This is an important point which Judith Butler makes well: ‘The displacement of a political and discursive origin of gender identity onto a psychological “core” precludes an analysis of the political constitution of the gendered subject’ (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 1999; repr. 2002), pp. 173-174).

their negligent 'attitude' as the necessary antecedent to rape. This enunciative function, 'celle de masquer l'oppression des femmes par les hommes', is shared by the '*new-look ideology*'³⁴ endorsed by Foucault; for that which both Foucault and Mucchielli discount — namely, 'la différenciation sociale des sexes' — is precisely that which sets rape apart from other forms of violence: '*Le viol, c'est une pratique oppressive exercée par un homme (social) contre une femme (sociale)*'.³⁵ So, as well as denying the historical specificities of rape, Mucchielli's naturalist discourse refutes the claim, given widespread currency by the work of second-wave feminists,³⁶ that rape is the most manifest materialization of the *power* exercised against social women by social men. To cut the matter short, the particular situation of women as the privileged objects and the potential targets of an oppressive system of sexual subordination is not, according to Mucchielli's account of 'la tournante', analytically apposite. This injurious indifference to the situatedness of women's experience is, I should like to suggest, an adjunct of Mucchielli's refusal to admit that one's location is epistemically salient; and yet, Mucchielli privileges systematically *his* point of view — the 'moral point of view', the 'view from nowhere' — over against subjective accounts which, if one subscribes to his 'positivist credo',³⁷ are contaminated by everyday ways of making sense. By negating socially situated, subjective accounts of sexual violence ('C'est donc ma parole contre la sienne'), Mucchielli's androcentric discourse reproduces the endoxal logic of this all-too-familiar rendering of rape.³⁸

³⁴ Monique Plaza, 'Our Damages and Their Compensation', *Gender Issues*, 1 (1980), 25-35 (pp. 25-26, 33).

³⁵ Monique Plaza, 'Nos dommages et leurs intérêts', *Questions féministes*, 3 (1978), 93-103 (pp. 97, 99, and 102).

³⁶ 'All rape is an exercise in power' (p. 256), states Susan Brownmiller in *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1975; repr. 1993).

³⁷ Lorraine Code, 'Taking Subjectivity into Account', in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, pp. 15-48 (pp. 16, 18).

³⁸ Although social sexing characterizes the political ontology of rape, it is the absence of consent that constitutes the 'sole illegality' ('Our Damages and Their Compensation', pp. 25, 34n. 1). Thus conceived, the explicitly political question of rape is, as well, 'un enjeu de vérité' (*La Volonté de savoir*, pp. 74-76).

In ‘Nos dommages et leurs intérêts’, as well as challenging the theoretical assertion, which she does forcefully and credibly, that only the physical and not the sexual harming of another should be penalized, Plaza alleges that Foucault lacks the legitimacy necessary to speak on behalf of — which is to say, ‘for’ — women, suggesting that he should have ‘d’abord “tourné vers les femmes” qui luttent actuellement’.³⁹ Plaza is right, without doubt, to submit both Foucault’s enunciations and the *modalities* of his enunciations to critical analysis; even so, to restrict the right to speak to only those who have direct, first-hand experience of sexual violence is to reduce ‘sympathetic others’⁴⁰ to silence — and to limit, thereby, the possibilities of building strategic coalitions across taxonomic boundaries.⁴¹ To concede that which Gilles Deleuze calls ‘l’indignité de parler pour les autres’⁴² is not, however, to absolve oneself from one’s ‘epistemic responsibilities’.⁴³ Insofar as he conceals his epistemically privileged location behind the artifice of sociological objectivity, to the extent that he accords undue authority to his and to other excessively positivistic, androcentric accounts at the expense of subjective, particularly women’s conceptions, descriptions, and interpretations of men’s violence, and because his point of view is wilfully obscured by the politics of his own location — and, hence, closed off from the possibility that his *dialectic* may have discursively detrimental effects, Mucchielli’s accountability to the empirical evidence does not extend to those for whom, or about whom, he speaks. Critically, *Le Scandale des ‘tournantes’* re-inscribes the antagonistic logic of rape which sets social women *against* social men, replicating epistemically the positional superiority (‘strength’) of men and the self-evident,

³⁹ ‘Nos dommages et leurs intérêts’, p. 103.

⁴⁰ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963; repr. London: Penguin, 1990), p. 31.

⁴¹ ‘The possibility of speaking for others bears crucially on the possibility of political effectivity. Both collective action and coalitions would seem to require the possibility of speaking for’ (‘The Problem of Speaking for Others’, pp. 11-12).

⁴² Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, ‘Les intellectuels et le pouvoir’, in *Dits et écrits*, ed. by Daniel Defert, François Ewald, and Jacques Lagrange, 4 vols (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1954-1988; repr. 1994), II (1970-1975), pp. 306-315 (pp. 309-310).

⁴³ Lorraine Code, ‘Toward a “Responsibilist” Epistemology’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 45 (1984), 29-50 (p. 47).

diametrically opposable inferiority ('weakness') of women.⁴⁴ Like the commissaire, who asks Bellil, 'T'es sûre de ce que tu dis?',⁴⁵ Mucchielli assumes that women are not equal to, or apprised of, that most masculine of privileges — the truth. Because the burden of proof is systematically weighted against social women, depreciating the value of the truth which their words convey, I should like to explore — not to restore, but *to describe* — the bodily experience of 'la tournante', both as lived experience and as experience constitutive of subjectivity. I hope to redress the analytical deficiencies of Mucchielli's positivist-empiricist orientation, which asserts the mannish primacy of the Cartesian cogito, by positing the epistemic indispensability of subjective experience, of that which Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes as 'l'expérience de la vérité'.⁴⁶

The Bodily Experience of 'la tournante'

By foregrounding the discursive means by which 'la tournante' is problematized, I posit that rape is not first and foremost but 'and also' an epistemic act. I do not mean to say that rape is that of which *ex post facto* knowledge takes hold, as if there can be no knowledge of rape except in the aftermath of rape: on the contrary, I submit that the (physical, sexual, political) struggle of rape is not subsequently, but intrinsically epistemological. Christelle Hamel's ethnographic study reveals the extent to which women's everyday ways of making sense are

⁴⁴ I am not alone in drawing attention to the oppositional (and highly problematic) terms in which Mucchielli couches his argument: 'On ne peut s'empêcher d'être agacé par le discours sur "rien ne change, donc rien à signaler" appuyé sur des séries de chiffres présentés comme le discours de la science, donc irréfutables. À cet agacement s'ajoute l'irritation qui résulte de la posture critique de l'auteur, qui se veut à contrecourant d'un féminisme moralisateur mais qui demeure très incomplète parce qu'elle reste localisée dans une seule école de pensée, actionnée par le seul ressort opposant dominants et dominés' (Élisabeth Zucker-Rouvillois, 'Le scandale des "tournantes". Dérives médiatiques, contre-enquête sociologique de Laurent Mucchielli', *Sociétés et jeunesse en difficulté*, 1 (2006) <<http://sejed.revues.org/index118.html>> [accessed 17 March 2013] (para. 10 of 12)).

⁴⁵ *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, 4th edn (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945), pp. x-xii.

deliberately and methodically negated by young men who arrogate to themselves the primacy of knowing.⁴⁷ Similarly, the domain of validity — ‘[les critères selon lesquels] on peut discuter de la vérité ou de la fausseté d’une proposition’⁴⁸ — established by Mucchielli presupposes that particular perspectives, which happen to be men’s perspectives, are optimal standpoints from which to view the epistemic terrain of rape. This myopia can be partially corrected, I believe, by bringing subjective descriptions of ‘la tournante’ to the philosophical fore. Freed from Mucchielli’s objectifying regard, the phenomenal facticity of ‘la tournante’ is exposed to view. How, after all, could one possibly grasp the sense of violation — ‘les humiliations’⁴⁹ — felt by those subjected to ‘la tournante’ without recourse to their descriptive characterizations? It is because phenomenology posits the situatedness of human experience, rejecting the ‘possibility of the disinterested and dislocated view from nowhere’,⁵⁰ as exemplified by Mucchielli’s unquestioning acquiescence to sociological generality, that I hold to the corrective potential of phenomenologically informed descriptions which take first-person accounts of lived experience as their starting point. Importantly, I do not present Bellil and Brahim Naït-Balk’s autobiographical accounts as documents to be faithfully restored. Instead, by describing the world’s mode of givenness (‘Gegebenheitsmodus’),⁵¹ ‘une certaine manière de mettre en forme le monde’,⁵² I look to the *monumentality* of their experiences. Thus, I propose to proceed by establishing how Bellil and Naït-Balk’s experiences give rise to particular ways of being in the world

⁴⁷ Cf. Christelle Hamel, “‘Faire tourner les meufs’: Les viols collectifs dans les discours des agresseurs et des médias”, *Gradhiva*, 33 (2003), 85-92.

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, *L’Archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1969; repr. 2004), p. 68.

⁴⁹ *Dans l’enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, pp. 13, 25, 35, 56, 75, 82, 135, and passim; and Brahim Naït-Balk, *Un homo dans la cité: La descente aux enfers puis la libération d’un homosexuel de culture maghrébine* (Paris: Éditions Calmann-Lévy, 2009), pp. 8, 21, 60, 70, 78, and 114.

⁵⁰ Lorraine Code, “Taking Subjectivity into Account”, in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, pp. 15-48 (p. 20).

⁵¹ Edmund Husserl: *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Karl Schuhmann, 39 vols (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973-2008), III: *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie: Allgemeine Einführung in die reine Phänomenologie* (1976), pp. 260-261.

⁵² *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. xiii-xv.

('être au monde'), and by identifying that which is phenomenologically 'proper' to the experience of 'la tournante'.⁵³

Throughout *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, Bellil catalogues the many motives which aroused and sustained her interest to write: she felt strongly the calling to bear witness; she wanted to give hope to other young girls in *les cités* that they could survive similar experiences, and to warn them, too; she hoped to set the record straight, and to confound those who doubted her. Following the publication of the first edition, Bellil tempered her aspirations, recognizing that her book would not be the terminal point of violence. She was intent, nevertheless, that her story would break the enduring, agonizing silence. As well as speaking to these various inducements, *Dans l'enfer des tournantes* gives outward shape to Bellil's sense of shame and culpability, to her feelings of betrayal and emptiness, and to her sometimes uncontrollable rage; and although this may sound somewhat trite, for autobiographical literature is always born of introspection, it is true to say that the motif of interiority is heavily woven through the fabric of Bellil's text. Because, however, '[l]a vérité n'"habite" pas seulement l'"homme intérieur", ou plutôt il n'y a pas d'homme intérieur, l'homme est au monde, c'est dans le monde qu'il se connaît',⁵⁴ I do not claim to discern by reading between the lines the latent presence of an interior essence yet to be disclosed: to my mind, the fact of interiority itself is much less worthy of note than the particular patterning of this turning inwards, and away from, the world. So, to adapt Judith Butler's phrase, '[i]n what language is [Bellil's] "inner space" figured?'.⁵⁵

As she holds down the quiescent cries which come from within, Bellil's viscera bellow and burn and twist. Affectively shut off from the outside, she labours to contain these circumfluent waves of emotion

⁵³ Whilst Todd May considers both 'the phenomenological-Marxist and the [Foucauldian] archaeological-genealogical projects' to be political, '[t]he first seeks to recover what is proper to human living, the second to free human living from the idea of the proper' ('Foucault's Relation to Phenomenology', in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. by Gary Gutting, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 284-311 (pp. 307-308)).

⁵⁴ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. iv-v.

⁵⁵ *Gender Trouble*, pp. 170-171.

which crash against and cleave through each other. Nothing from the ebullient inside is allowed out:

Au fond de moi, une petite voix étouffée essaye de se faire entendre.
Elle gueule dans mon ventre en circuit fermé. Ça hurle, ça brûle, ça se tord. Je sens des paquets d'émotions qui s'entrechoquent et se déchirent. Mais je mets toute ma force à les faire taire. Rien ne sort.⁵⁶

Yet, precisely as the inside is pushing out, the outside is collapsing in: 'L'extérieur me terrorise, je n'y ai pas ma place et m'y sens si fragile. Tout m'agresse' (246). Consequently, Bellil is caught between an uninhabitable (because torturous) inside and an ungovernable (because terrifying) outside. Distinguished by being neither within the diastolic interior, nor without the systolic exterior, Bellil occupies the empty, liminal space situated somewhere in-between. This existential void, moreover, is an enclosed, confined space: 'Je reste murée dans mon silence' (68). It is not only the sphere of enunciative action that is curtailed, however, for the field of physical possibilities is narrowed considerably, too: 'Ça ne change rien à ma peur puisqu'on essaie toujours de m'intimider pour que je retire ma plainte. [...] C'est insupportable, au point que j'hésite à sortir' (97-98). This discursively rarefied space is further circumscribed by her deeply inculcated sense of culpability: 'Si je parle, je sais déjà ce qu'on va me dire: "Tu l'as bien cherché à traîner dans les rues!"' (68). Because she strayed beyond her 'safety zone' — because, in other words, 'she was somewhere she should not have been, moving her body in ways that she should not have, carrying on in a manner so free and easy so as to convey an utter abdication of her responsibility of self-protection'⁵⁷ — Bellil must hold herself ultimately responsible: 'Je suis coupable d'avoir désobéi à mes parents. [...] Je suis coupable d'avoir fugué. Coupable d'avoir été violée. Et, pour terminer, coupable de ne pas l'avoir dit' (75-76). Concomitantly,

⁵⁶ *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, pp. 69-70. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

⁵⁷ 'Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body', pp. 55-56.

the shrinking interstitial space of subjectivity to which Bellil is confined — felt to be neither 'in here', nor 'out there', but defined relationally as the distance, as the absence, in-between — disrupts the spatial continuity of Bellil's being in the world: 'Voir des gens heureux me fait mal, je me sens en décalage avec tout ce qui m'entoure. [...] Je suis encore dans ma bulle de souffrance et elle m'empêche de profiter de ce qui se présente à moi' (274-275). In addition to the feelings of isolation, of disconnection and of culpability which arise from these various constrictions, Bellil is confronted by the frustrations which result from her failure to be motivationally disposed towards the world of historically available possibilities. Hence, far from being the 'original subject which constitutes space',⁵⁸ Bellil experiences 'here', not as subjectively directed movement towards, but as the passive assignation of place: 'Je me vois comme une poupée de chiffon, résignée et inerte, qu'on se passe de bras en bras et dont on peut faire ce que l'on veut' (149-150). Thus described, the specifically spatial dimensions of Bellil's bodily existence constitute an impediment — onerous and painfully felt — to the scope of her motility, to her inter- and intra-subjective communicability, and to her embodied sense of intentionality. If, therefore, 'the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities',⁵⁹ when considering the spatial relationship of Bellil's lived body to the phenomenal world, these are stringently limited, compulsorily imposed possibilities. Given that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology posits an expanded notion of intentionality, which can be distinguished from Cartesian intellection by its bodily orientation, I should like to augment the description of the spatially constituted aspects of Bellil's subjectivity by juxtaposing the particular modalities which characterize her motility. Which particular possibilities are materialized by the movements of Bellil's body through space?

⁵⁸ Iris Marion Young, 'Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality', *Human Studies*, 3 (1980), 137-156 (p. 150).

⁵⁹ Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal*, 40 (1988), 519-531 (p. 521).

Recumbent and touched all over, this is no longer Bellil's body — for, inasmuch as it exists, it does so only as something separate from her, recognizably her, but not belonging to her. Devoid of any intrinsic motility, and by nature biddable, her body, now an indolent object, is imperceptible to her. Despite this immanent brutality, Bellil withdraws to the transcendent sanctuary of her soul. Here, she is untouchable; here, the spark of her intentional life fades to an evanescent flicker.

Ce n'est plus moi qui suis là, allongée sur le lit, à supporter ces mains, cette peau, ces odeurs, ces souillures et cette sauvagerie, c'est juste mon corps, devenu une chose inerte, insensible. [...] Je suis coupée de mon corps, je suis anesthésiée. Je suis ailleurs. Mon corps ne m'appartient plus, peut-être est-il mort? En tout cas, ces pilleurs, ces vautours ne m'auront pas pris mon âme: en elle, je suis réfugiée, en elle, je vis.⁶⁰

As well as being defined by immanence, therefore, Bellil's being in the world is marked, however faintly, by transcendence. This bastardized conception of subjectivity is accompanied by an inhibited sense of intentionality: 'Je m'allonge, tel un automate. Je connais la chanson. Je ne résiste plus' (49). Confronted by her own mortality, Bellil is thrown back against her lived body, her instinct of protection towards which overrides, leading to the violation of, her sense-making 'I can'. The unlawful infringement of Bellil's bodily integrity is, thus, compounded by the wilful abandonment of her interpretative integrity, because of which she feels compromised and culpable: 'Des années durant, je me suis torturée avec cette pensée. Je me sentais coupable de cette allure de consentement' (31-32). This process — by which Bellil directs both intention and act towards an end which is grievously felt — destroys many of the foundational meanings which she attaches to her bodily self. It is this destruction of sense that constitutes, perhaps more than anything else, Bellil's experience of truth: 'Savez-vous qu'après cette affaire, moi qui suis la victime, j'ai pris quatorze ans dans la tronche,

⁶⁰ *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, p. 35.

quatorze ans à essayer de comprendre et de m'en sortir, quatorze ans pour me reconstruire?' (195). To be absolutely clear, the particular patterning of Bellil's turning inwards is marked by bodily fear: 'C'est terrible, la peur. Ça vous fait perdre tous vos moyens, ça vous coupe les jambes et le souffle. C'est comme une paralysie de tout l'être: le corps et l'esprit sont annihilés' (30-31). By rendering herself intentionally immobile, to the extent that Bellil wills herself to be — *and is* — still, the harmony between intention and performance is effectively maintained; but this can only be achieved, and at considerable cost, by turning that which is intrinsic to the body against itself: 'Dire que j'ai un corps est donc une manière de dire que je peux être vu comme un objet et que je cherche à être vu comme sujet'.⁶¹ Overcome by the fear of bodily harm, Bellil directs the capacities of her lived body towards the aim of reducing that body to the status of an object. This objectification does not deprive Bellil of the capacity to act, however; rather, it divests her of the ability to ascribe meaning (*Sinngebung*) to self-motivated actions, such that she experiences her body not as something intentionally disposed towards, but as something 'looked at and acted upon'.⁶² It is this ability, ultimately, that Bellil struggles to regain. I should like to consider this figuration of the body — of the body-object — by drawing the reader's attention to another autobiographical account which speaks, as Bellil's does, to the relegation of the lived body to the realm of the 'in itself'.

By drawing an analogy between rape, on the one hand, and an act of physical violence, on the other, Foucault has been widely interpreted as arguing in favour of the 'desexualization' of rape, even though he himself does not use the term, not in this context at any rate. The highly problematic nature of 'sex' is not limited to this fact, however, as English translations of Foucault's remarks demonstrate.⁶³ Supposing that the

⁶¹ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. 194-200.

⁶² 'Throwing like a Girl', p. 148.

⁶³ An early English translation of Plaza's 'Nos dommages et leurs intérêts' gives: '[W]hether one punches his fist in someone's face, or his penis in the sexual organ makes no difference' ('Our Damages and Their Compensation', pp. 27-28). Alan Sheridan glosses Foucault's comments as follows: '[T]hat there is no difference, in principle, between sticking one's fist into someone's face or one's penis into their sex'

penis of which Foucault speaks is, if not *'the sexual organ'*, at least '[one of] the sex (organs)', the relationship of subject to predicate is of commensurability, of species to genus, and not of opposition, as Foucault intends. Setting the penis apart from *'their sex'*, as Alan Sheridan does, maintains the disjunctive nature of the proposition, whilst clumsily introducing the anaphoric expression *'their'* which refers back to an unnamed, singular *'someone'*. Heedful of both fidelity and idiom, I recommend simply *'the sex'*. These unnecessary equivocations are instructive, nonetheless, adverting to the question which Plaza poses: *'[Q]u'est-ce que "le sexe"'*?⁶⁴

In the following passage, the twenty-something Naït-Balk is positioned and situates himself as *'the sex'*. His rapists close in on and penetrate him by turns. Like Bellil, he is overwhelmed by fear; like Bellil, *'[il s'est] laissé faire'*. Although, factually, Naït-Balk is the active participant, the pleasure-giver, he is figured as and feels himself to be the passive recipient, not the penis, but that which receives the penis — namely, or not, *'the sex'*:

Un soir, mes craintes ont été confirmées. Sans même que je réalise ce qui se passait, ils m'ont entouré et m'ont obligé à leur faire des fellations. J'étais terrorisé, je me suis laissé faire et, toujours selon ma technique du *'reculer pour mieux sauter'*, je me suis dit: si je leur donne ce qu'ils veulent, ils vont me laisser tranquille. Y avait-il chez moi une certaine attirance pour ce plaisir bestial et interdit?⁶⁵

(Michel Foucault and others, *'Confinement, Psychiatry, Prison'*, in Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*, ed. by Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. by Alan Sheridan and others (New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1988; repr. 1990), pp. 178-210 (p. 200)). Diana Leonard's more recent translation expands the offering yet further: '[I]t makes no difference whether one is punched on the jaw by a fist or in the sex (organs) by a penis' (Monique Plaza, *'Our Costs and Their Benefits'*, in *Sex in Question: French Materialist Feminism*, ed. by Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins (London: Taylor & Francis, 1996; repr. 2005), pp. 183-193 (p. 186)).

⁶⁴ *'Nos dommages et leurs intérêts'*, pp. 96-97.

⁶⁵ *Un homo dans la cité*, pp. 57-58.

What is more, Naït-Balk's experience of being 'the sex' feminizes him: 'Je subis des tournantes comme une fille'.⁶⁶ He is raped, therefore, as if he were 'the sex', as if he were already the woman which the act of rape 'oblige' him to be.⁶⁷ Is the forbidden pleasure towards which he is drawn that of being violated as 'the sex'? Is this the political ontology of pleasure which Foucault's proposition suggests? Is 'the sex' that which receives the pleasure of the penis as pain? Naït-Balk's strategy is to mitigate — not to magnify — the harm caused: 'Je voulais que ça s'arrête, j'ai aidé le mec à me violer pour que cela ne dure pas trop longtemps et pour ne pas avoir mal'.⁶⁸ To take Naït-Balk at his word, the act of penetration which he describes is unlawful, the circumstances coercive; and yet, it is an act towards the commission of which he himself lends his hand: 'I helped him ("the man", "the bloke") to rape me', he writes. This does not amount to an admission that Naït-Balk caused this unwarranted intrusion to happen, however. I do not concede, as Mucchielli does, that 'la connaissance du risque [...] et surtout l'attitude envers ce groupe [...] participent directement du passage à l'acte des auteurs'.⁶⁹ Whilst Naït-Balk's agentive role is characterized by the facilitation of that which he experiences as an act of violation, his intention is to minimize the potential harm of that act — and it is the realizable threat of violence, therefore, that is the *vera causa*. To construe his actions as contributing towards the bodily phenomenon of rape is to find false and unjust cause, and 'simple unanalyzed disclaimers'⁷⁰ do

⁶⁶ Hélène Kuttner and Brahim Naït-Balk, 'J'ai osé lever le tabou sur mon homosexualité', *Paris Match*, 2 February 2010.

⁶⁷ 'Thus a crucial aspect of the shame of man-on-man rape is the implicit womanizing which occurs upon the victim, who is placed in the role of the sexually submissive and helpless. He is, at that moment, a "social woman"' (Foucault, *Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body*, p. 45).

⁶⁸ *Un homo dans la cité*, p. 61.

⁶⁹ *Le Scandale des 'tournantes'*, pp. 73-74.

⁷⁰ 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', p. 25. Mucchielli writes: '[P]oser même cette question [celle de la personnalité et du contexte de vie des victimes], ne serait-ce pas reprendre l'argument classique des agresseurs sexuels consistant à présenter la victime comme "consentante", voire "provocatrice"?' (*Le Scandale des 'tournantes'*, pp. 72-73). Debauche and Hamel are highly critical, not of the legitimate question which Mucchielli poses, but because he argues that the behaviour of the 'victim' and the fact of rape are causally connected: 'S'il anticipe la critique en la renvoyant à une posture "morale", il échoue à fonder son propos scientifiquement et adopte lui-même une

nothing to lessen the damaging and inculpatory effects of such pseudo-scientifically masked moralism. To press home the point, the fact of identification (whether one identifies oneself or is identified) as ‘the sex’ is incidental to the discursive and violent means by which the sexed body is appropriated by, as if belonging quite naturally to, men through the intermediary of that which is proper to them — synecdochically, the penis: ‘Car les hommes violent les femmes dans la mesure où ils appartiennent à la classe des hommes qui s’est approprié le corps des femmes. Ils violent ce qu’ils ont appris à considérer comme leur propriété’.⁷¹ Thus, the process of social sexing which Plaza describes can be understood as the broad set of practices by which men dispossess themselves of ‘the sex’⁷² by specifying certain symptomatic properties which apostrophize to men’s entitlement to that which the distance of their imputed difference keeps apart. Man’s repudiation of the feminine is only effected, therefore, *animo revertendi* — which is to say, on condition that ‘the sex’ may be brought back, willingly or not, under his sway.

As well as being ‘built up from’ meaning (*Sinnbildung*), the manly body, the only truly lived body, gives meaning to itself and to the objective world of which it is part (*Sinngebung*) whereas ‘the sex’ cannot shape itself semiotically or otherwise, and so the sexed subject, when seen as such, is condemned to exist as an intrinsically appropriable object — manipulable only in, and never for, itself. According to Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the body, the possibility of objectification follows by necessity from the fact of embodiment; or, to put this another way, the lived body is essentially — always and everywhere — vulnerable to violence: ‘[E]n tant que j’ai un corps, je peux être réduit en objet sous

posture moraliste puisqu’il explique que certaines victimes “participent directement du passage à l’acte des auteurs” en fréquentant épisodiquement un groupe de jeunes et en ayant des relations sexuelles avec plusieurs d’entre eux. Il entérine ainsi l’idée que des “comportements à risques” sont à l’origine du viol’ (‘Laurent Muchielli [*sic*], *Le scandale des “tournantes”*. *Dérives médiatiques, contre-enquête sociologique*, Paris, La Découverte, “Sur le Vif”, 2005, 124 p., p. 369).

⁷¹ ‘Nos dommages et leurs intérêts’, p. 97.

⁷² ‘[L]e pénis est ici défini comme non-sexe’, explains Plaza (*Ibid.*, pp. 96-97).

le regard d'autrui et ne plus compter pour lui comme personne'.⁷³ Given this interpretation of the body, as defined by its ('appalling')⁷⁴ vulnerability, should rape be regarded, pace Plaza, as nothing more than an act of violence, analogous to and inseparable from any other, devoid of all and any sex- and sexually specific significance?

Whilst being raped, Naït-Balk yokes his bodily motility to the alien intentions of another. Evoking exactly the same process described by Bellil, the reduction of Naït-Balk's body to the status of an object is, because conjointly beneath his own and another's gaze, *doubly done*. In his 'Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte', Karl Marx explains how, under similarly coercive, but not sexually violent circumstances, the estrangement of the subject from him- or herself ('Selbstentfremdung') proceeds from the fact of being estranged from the thing ('Entfremdung der Sache'). Thus, it is because Naït-Balk's is estranged from the product of his labour, his own and others' sexual pleasure, that he experiences his labour as suffering ('Leiden'), as powerlessness ('Ohnmacht') — and, saliently in view of the means by which Naït-Balk is marked symbolically as feminine, as emasculation ('Entmannung').⁷⁵

Je me suis dit: 'De toute façon, je suis pédé, alors je vais la faire, je n'ai pas le choix'. Il était debout, il m'indiquait les gestes, j'étais à genoux et je m'insultais intérieurement. J'étais sûr que les autres allaient s'y mettre, mais non. Ils voulaient seulement me donner une leçon de plus, comme si faire venir un étranger au quartier allait m'humilier encore plus. Je me sentais vraiment dans la peau du sale pédé. En y repensant vingt ans après, j'ai encore cette sensation de honte.⁷⁶

Here, I am not alluding to the theoretical fecundity of Marx's theory of estranged labour, this having been amply demonstrated elsewhere;

⁷³ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. 194-200.

⁷⁴ 'Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body', pp. 51-52.

⁷⁵ Karl Marx, 'Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte (Zweite Wiedergabe)', in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Günter Heyden and others, Part 1: *Werke, Artikel, Entwürfe*, ed. by Rolf Dlubek and others, 32 vols (Berlin: Dietz, 1975-2010), II: *Karl Marx: März 1843 bis August 1844* (1982), pp. 323-438 (pp. 239, 368, 372).

⁷⁶ *Un homo dans la cité*, p. 60.

rather, the decisive point which I am making is that the objectification of the subject by the subject — that to which Marx refers as self-estrangement — is not specific to the act of rape, or to other forms of sexual violence for that matter, but is particular to any set of circumstances under which one is *forced* to labour. Unlike Marx's analysis of political economy, however, according to which the subject's relationship to the act of production is ideologically concealed,⁷⁷ Bellil and Naït-Balk are corporeally confronted by the object of their labour, the sexual pleasure of another, the active procurement of which they themselves experience as pain: “‘Tu m’fais pas bander, sale pute!’ me dit-il, et il me force à y remédier. Il pue, il me dégoûte, j’ai la nausée. Je voudrais les vomir et me vomir moi-même’.”⁷⁸ Whilst the mechanism of active alienation (*‘thätige Entäusserung’*)⁷⁹ does not distinguish rape from other forms of forced labour, the extent to which the sexual pleasure of another is experienced so proximately as pain and the degree of divergence between these experiences — which the sexed subject's sexual labour produces — are constitutive parts of the trauma which both Bellil and Naït-Balk describe. That which this analysis fails to grasp, however, and that which the reader — safely removed from the terrifying facticity of these events — might be inclined to disregard, is the unutterable (possibly because inexplicable) intensity of the suffering to which their accounts attest. Indeed, I am very much alive to the possibility that certain aspects of violence may be beyond words and sense.

Inasmuch as the impression of intellection persists, Bellil and Naït-Balk's narratives run counter to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the sexual body because, according to the philosopher's theory, the driving force of sexuality is operative intentionality (*‘fungierende*

⁷⁷ *‘Die Nationalökonomie verbirgt die Entfremdung in dem Wesen der Arbeit dadurch, daß sie nicht das unmittelbare Verhältnis zwischen dem Arbeiter, (der Arbeit) und der Produktion betrachtet [The political economy obscures the estrangement inherent in the nature of labour by concealing the direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production]’* (*‘Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte (Zweite Wiedergabe)’*, p. 366).

⁷⁸ *Dans l’enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, p. 34.

⁷⁹ *Gesamtausgabe*, II, 238.

Intentionalität'), 'celle qui fait l'unité naturelle et antépédicative du monde et de notre vie, qui paraît dans nos désirs, nos évaluations, notre paysage',⁸⁰ whereas the positions which Bellil and Naït-Balk take up are, even under the coercive conditions which they describe, deliberate acts — acts of judgement, that is. Because their experiences are subsumed under some idea, furthermore, they cannot be regarded as erotic perceptions properly construed, '[car] [l]a perception érotique n'est pas une *cogitatio* qui vise un *cogitatum*'.⁸¹ Hence, the mode of perception proper to the sexual body is overridden by the experience of rape, such that certain sensations are not simply felt, but appended to particular thoughts, assigned an associated domain of meaning. In the excerpt given above, Naït-Balk's experiences are subsumed under the sign of humiliation ('comme si faire venir un étranger au quartier allait m'humilier encore plus'), of moral taint ('Je me sentais vraiment dans la peau du sale pédé'), and of shame ('En y repensant vingt ans après, j'ai encore cette sensation de honte'), whilst elsewhere, Bellil's experiences are precisely the 'awareness of something'⁸² — something fearful and potentially life-threatening ('Je crève de trouille, je crois qu'il va me tuer'), something repugnant and physically sickening ('Il pue, il me dégoûte, j'ai la nausée'), something abject and inexorably degrading ('Je ne résiste pas, je suis une espèce d'esclave, je suis une merde, une rien du tout entre leurs mains')⁸³ — whose significance is intellectual, not erotic, not sexual. Crucially, this explains the specifically sexual damage wrought by rape, for rape *rationalizes* the affective reflexes of sexuality, meaning that 'le désir [ne] comprend [plus] aveuglement en reliant un corps à un corps'.⁸⁴ Consequently, the autonomic arc which connects stimulus and sensation is severed, perhaps only temporarily, often more durably and by degrees. It is as if representations take the place of sensations, as if erotic perception is infiltrated by the power of

⁸⁰ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. xii-xiii.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-184.

⁸² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962; repr. London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 178-182.

⁸³ *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, pp. 33, 34.

⁸⁴ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. 180-184.

representation. This is akin to the third aspect of estranged labour which Marx posits — namely, the estrangement of the subject from his or her species-being ('Gattungswesen').⁸⁵ Hence, the experience of 'la tournante' is characterized by the three-fold loss of the object (pleasure), of the activity (the touch, the kiss, the caress), and of the subject's sexual physiognomy, the eidetic structures which subtend the sexual life of the subject, due to the disturbance of which sensations (of pleasure and of pain) cease to speak directly to the body,⁸⁶ such that the subject is not caught up in and does not live through the sexual act, but conceives of the situation more or less conceptually, synthesizing sensations thematically — decontextualizing them, that is, from their intrinsic relationship to sexuality.

These idiographic accounts of 'la tournante' reveal how the bodily experience of rape bars the route to, by rationalizing, erotic perception, stripping the subject of direct ('unmittelbare') access — as though he or she were denied the key — to that particular modality of truth:

J'ai l'impression que je n'aurais pas dû, qu'on ne couche plus après un viol. Mais j'étais amoureuse, et refaire l'amour avec un garçon, doux et gentil, était sans doute le meilleur moyen de guérir ma blessure. Pourtant, je ne peux pas m'empêcher d'avoir honte de cela aussi. Ils ont réussi à faire entrer au plus profond de moi leurs principes de merde. Je suis pleine de culpabilité, je suis pleine de honte.⁸⁷

I should like to suggest that the power of rape (and of those men who commit rape) derives principally from this fact — from the fact, I mean to say, of this *alienating* imposition which causes the subject to experience the truth of his or her sexuality, not as that which constitutes

⁸⁵ 'Ueberhaupt der Satz, daß dem Menschen sein Gattungswesen entfremdet ist, heißt daß ein Mensch d[em] andern, wie jeder von ihnen dem menschlichen Wesen entfremdet ist [In fact, the proposition that man's species-nature is estranged from him means that one man is estranged from the other just as each of them is from man's essential nature]' ('Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte (Zweite Wiedergabe)', p. 370).

⁸⁶ I do not mean to say that the subject cannot reach climax; nor am I conflating sexuality and sexual pleasure (*jouissance*).

⁸⁷ *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, pp. 124-125.

'the real', not as the essence of perception, of the world as it exists before any schematization, but as an often infrangible association of sensations and of ideas, the presence of which transfigures the subject's knowledge of sex and of self. No history of rape would be complete, therefore, unless considered from the subject's analytically indispensable point of view; but what does it mean to have glimpsed 'l'enfer des tournantes',⁸⁸ from the sexed subject's perspective?

Analysis of Bellil's *Dans l'enfer des tournantes* and of Naït-Balk's *Un homo dans la cité* tends towards the following diagnosis of the harm caused: the act of rape disrupts the subject's unique way of patterning and of perceiving the sexual world. More specifically, following their experience of 'la tournante', both Bellil and Naït-Balk are affectively alienated from their sexual being, immediate access to which is interceded by the *idea* of violation — erected not in the world, but in their minds as an enduring memorial to their humiliation. To privilege psychological explanations would be misleading, even so; since such psychic manifestations are but the second-order expressions of the more fundamental disruption which has befallen the very of idea of the subject. The act of rape impairs the subject's phenomenological understanding ('compréhension') of the world by interrupting the perception of sensations, reducing the subject's affective experience of sexuality to, because mediated by, processes of cognition ('la signification intellectuelle').⁸⁹ The effect of this emotional estrangement is — or, at least, can be — to deprive the subject of his or her own *sense* of sexuality, that particular dimension of history and experience of truth which Foucault's proposition (that rape should be considered only as an act of physical aggression) would serve to conceal. What is more, the notion that the unwelcome and detrimental effects of rape can encumber, as if an effusion blocked, the subject's emotional, erotic,

⁸⁸ As well as evoking a state or place of great suffering, the word 'enfer' — derived from the Late Latin *infernus*, meaning literally 'the lower (world)' — makes reference to 'la cave', the fabled setting of 'la tournante'. The use of the term by Bellil and Naït-Balk takes in both senses.

⁸⁹ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. 180-184.

sexual sensibilities — that, in Jean-Pierre Faye’s words, ‘[c]’est alors une blessure qui peut léser la sexualité même’⁹⁰ — subverts the strategy of desexualization which Foucault endorses; for how could one advocate that only the physical violence of rape should be punished when the nature of the harm inflicted by the rapist is fundamentally *sexual*? To this degree, attempts, like Foucault’s and Mucchielli’s, to rationalize rape — which is to say, to negate the affective setting of subjectivity — perpetuate the fallacy, peddled by apologists of social positivism and others, that the womanly body belongs as if by right to the kingdom of the manly mind.

Rape, Reason, and the Question of ‘Proof’

“‘Reason’”, claims Linda Alcoff, referring to the history of Western philosophy, ‘is constitutively “male”’.⁹¹ Despite the fraught nature of these terms which, one assumes, the inverted commas are supposed to convey, such scholarly shorthand flattens the contoured topography of the politically saturated field of knowledge where the struggle of epistemic forces — or, in Foucault’s ludic language, ‘games of truth’⁹² — take place. The unfortunate effect of presenting the ‘male’ point of view as the unique and panoptic point from which the reasoned world has been and continues to be seen is to undermine Alcoff’s (otherwise) erudite and insightful analysis; for, whilst Alcoff eulogizes and Mucchielli anathematizes the use of subjective descriptions, both perspectives are simultaneously foreshortened and aligned by the binary setting of the scene: ‘To theorize rape adequately we must have recourse to the description of embodied experience, and not merely [to] the various possible and actual discursive representations of that

⁹⁰ *Dits et écrits*, III, 353.

⁹¹ Linda Martin Alcoff, ‘Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience’, in *Feminist Phenomenology*, ed. by Linda Fisher and Lester Embree (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), pp. 39-56 (p. 40).

⁹² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 3 vols (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978-1986), II: *The Use of Pleasure* (1985; repr. New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 6-7.

experience'.⁹³ On the one hand, then, there are 'description[s] of embodied experience', such as the testimonial accounts of Bellil and Naït-Balk; on the other, there are 'discursive representations of that experience' — something like the social-scientific research undertaken by Mucchielli. Between these two orders of knowledge, because individuals' experiences do not, in Johanna Oksala's words, 'seamlessly conform to the dominant discursive representations of their experiences',⁹⁴ discrepancies and conflicts of understanding are bound to emerge.

Refuting subjective, first-hand evidence to the contrary, Mucchielli attributes the explosion of discourse about 'la tournante' not to the widespread incidence of the phenomenon, but to the 'moral panic' generated by the media.⁹⁵ In the afterword to the first edition of *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, as if responding directly to this attempt to play down — 'dédramatiser'⁹⁶ — such violence, Bellil anticipates and counters Mucchielli's claim: 'Je suis fatiguée d'entendre dire qu'on exagère le problème des viols collectifs dans nos cités [...] Non, cette sauvagerie existe bel et bien, et nous sommes très nombreuses à en avoir été les victimes'.⁹⁷ Again and again, rape as representation is staged as opposition: 'L'enjeu est de taille: c'est ma parole contre la sienne'.⁹⁸ It is precisely because this *dialectic* — this antagonistic and asymmetrical

⁹³ Linda Martín Alcoff, 'Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience', in *Feminist Phenomenology*, ed. by Linda Fisher and Lester Embree, pp. 39-56 (pp. 51-52).

⁹⁴ Johanna Oksala, 'Sexual Experience: Foucault, Phenomenology, and Feminist Theory', *Hypatia*, 26 (2011), 207-223 (pp. 213-214).

⁹⁵ Mucchielli sets out his stall in 'L'Éphémère question des viols collectifs en France (2000-2002)': 'La première partie de cet article livre les résultats de l'analyse qualitative et quantitative du traitement médiatique de ces "tournantes" et permet de comprendre les mécanismes de déclenchement et de propagation de ce qui constitue un exemple de "panique morale"' (p. 10).

⁹⁶ 'Mucchielli semblerait dire qu'il n'y a pas de scandale des tournantes, car leur ampleur n'est pas si grande que les médias veulent le montrer. Le scandale des tournantes est dans la nature du phénomène, pas dans son ampleur. Dans son souci de dédramatiser les viols collectifs Mucchielli laisse entendre qu'il existe un seuil de tolérance de la violence qui cache le danger de banaliser le crime' (Rennie Yotova, 'La banalisation du viol: L'enfer des tournantes', in *Écrire le viol* (Paris: Éditions Non Lieu, 2007), pp. 75-96 (p. 76)).

⁹⁷ Samira Bellil, 'Postface', in *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 1st edn (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 2002), pp. 279-280.

⁹⁸ *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, pp. 159-160.

exchange of truth and counter-truth — typifies the discourse of ‘la tournante’ (and of rape more generally) that Bellil’s words take on an emblematic importance far beyond their intended significance. Thus, in the first and final analysis, it comes back to this: the pivotal point about which these opposing truths turn, and upon which they are hinged, is the cardinal question of ‘proof’.

Although Alcoff does not couch her critique of post-structuralist theories of experience in these particular terms, it is never explicitly clear how she justifies the epistemically elevated status which she ascribes to ‘description[s] of embodied experience’. It is not enough to assume the indispensability of such descriptions, not when the critical question remains — *why*? Situating her argument historically, Alcoff describes how, throughout history, attributes traditionally assigned to women were defined against the transcendental realm of rationality — to which, because of their mortal antipathy towards culture, women could never attain: ‘[T]he rational which belongs to mind and reason is of the masculine gender, the irrational, the province of sense, is of the feminine. Mind belongs to a genus wholly superior to sense as man is to woman’.⁹⁹ According to Alcoff, it was not until the late twentieth century, especially following the turn to structuralist and post-structuralist theory, that women began to pick apart the tightly spun threads out of which the centuries-old cloth of this masculinist orthodoxy had been woven; but the much-heralded ‘death of man’¹⁰⁰ signalled, also, the death of ‘woman’, such that the specificities of women’s bodily existence have — to an ever increasing extent, particularly in the arts and humanities — been obscured by abstract appeals to their discursively constructed ‘subjectivity’.¹⁰¹ This lofty philosophizing has, Alcoff argues, led the feminist project astray, drawing women’s — now, ‘gender’ —

⁹⁹ *Philo*, ed. by G. P. Goold, trans. by F. H. Colson, 10 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929-1962), VII (1937; repr. 1998), pp. 214-215.

¹⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1970; repr. London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 372-373.

¹⁰¹ ‘Subjects are constituted discursively and experience is a linguistic event (it doesn’t happen outside established meanings), but neither is it confined to a fixed order of meaning’, Joan W. Scott philosophizes (‘The Evidence of Experience’, *Critical Inquiry*, 17 (1991), 773-797 (pp. 792-793)).

studies away from their experiential origins towards an esoteric world of discursively generated textual effects. Hence, in Alcoff's view, 'the pendulum has swung too far toward the elimination of experience's formative role in knowledge', necessitating by way of redress 'a properly reconstructed phenomenology [recourse to which] can provide a helpful corrective'.¹⁰² Inasmuch as I have sought to expose the various elisions sanctioned by Mucchielli's discourse, and by foregrounding the terrifying facticity of 'la tournante' as experienced subjectively, the 'corrective' approach which Alcoff advocates mirrors my own. The cogency of this posture requires, however, that the principle of division established by Alcoff — the rule according to which 'discourses' are said to be distinct from 'phenomenologies' — can be logically upheld. So, what exactly does one mean by 'a properly reconstructed phenomenology', and how does one distinguish between phenomenological descriptions, on the one hand, and discursive representations, on the other?

The phenomenologist of perception recognizes that human existence has an intrinsic quality, 'the essence of perception',¹⁰³ which is separate from and never reducible to language; and although Alcoff shares this ontology, she distances herself from phenomenological epistemology, 'too wedded to the goal of establishing certainty'.¹⁰⁴ To the extent that Edmund Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's epistemology is thoroughly informed by their conception of ontology, forming two parts of an inseparable whole, this unceremonious dismissal reveals an inconsistency right at the heart of Alcoff's philosophy; for it is fundamentally the process of *bracketing* that characterizes phenomenology methodologically: 'The purity of phenomenological description is assured by a radical shift of its descriptive focus, the

¹⁰² Linda Martín Alcoff, 'Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience', in *Feminist Phenomenology*, ed. by Linda Fisher and Lester Embree, pp. 39-56 (pp. 39-40).

¹⁰³ *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. vii-viii.

¹⁰⁴ Linda Martín Alcoff, 'Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience', in *Feminist Phenomenology*, ed. by Linda Fisher and Lester Embree, pp. 39-56 (p. 48).

“phenomenological reduction”.¹⁰⁵ If the burden of rape is so heavily felt, this is because, as I have argued, it reflects the degree to which the vitality and fruitfulness of life is wrested from the psychosomatic subject, leaving him or her as if bereft of the body’s operative, ante-predicative sensitivity to erotically charged stimuli. In the cases of both Bellil and Naït-Balk, it was the painful process of writing (as remembering) that facilitated their recovery, restoring the ‘proper’ working of their affective physiognomy.¹⁰⁶ Yet, as Alcoff herself acknowledges, these accounts, like her own, are subject to the interpellations of ideology: ‘But experience itself, or the subjective understanding of one’s own personal experiences including affective experiences, is the object and site of gender ideology’.¹⁰⁷ Merleau-Ponty renders this same idea differently, signalling that all accounts of experience are interpretations — *syntheses* — of experience, not direct, authentic renderings of the real:

Le monde est là avant toute analyse que je puisse en faire et il serait artificiel de le faire dériver d’une série de synthèses qui relieraient les sensations, puis les aspects perspectifs de l’objet, alors que les unes et les autres sont justement des produits de l’analyse et ne doivent pas être réalisés avant elle.¹⁰⁸

This assertion explodes the logic of Alcoff’s distinction, since ‘subjective’ accounts of experience are not only open to — but are themselves forms of — interpretation. Indeed, the major claim of phenomenology is that, by means of the phenomenological reduction, one can gain access to that which is anterior and irreducible to reason — to the essence of

¹⁰⁵ Michael Staudigl, ‘Towards a Phenomenological Theory of Violence: Reflections following Merleau-Ponty and Schutz’, *Human Studies*, 30 (2007), 233-253 (pp. 233-234).

¹⁰⁶ ‘Sans ce récit’, Naït-Balk confesses to Hélène Kuttner in an interview for *Paris Match*, ‘je crois que je ne serais plus en vie’ (‘J’ai osé lever le tabou sur mon homosexualité’, 2 February 2010). Adopting an equally salutary tone, Bellil prophesies: ‘Ma délivrance sera un livre’ (*Dans l’enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, p. 296).

¹⁰⁷ Linda Martín Alcoff, ‘Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience’, in *Feminist Phenomenology*, ed. by Linda Fisher and Lester Embree, pp. 39-56 (p. 43).

¹⁰⁸ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. iv-v. Colin Smith translates the final phrase as follows: ‘when both are nothing but products of analysis, with no sort of prior reality’ (*Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. x-xii).

consciousness which Husserl describes as 'das phänomenologische Residuum'.¹⁰⁹ How this act of parenthesizing second-order judgements is to be conceived — or, for that matter, whether it can be achieved at all — has been the subject of much speculation.¹¹⁰ Because she rejects the eidetic reduction which offers the prospect, if nothing more, of parenthesizing ideology, whilst remaining at the same time and incongruously 'wedded' to the notion of phenomenological description, Alcoff's position appears precarious and pregnable: 'Without some philosophical reflection on the role of phenomenological bracketing, the distinction she makes between "phenomenologies of rape" and "discourses of rape" risks collapsing into a meaningless opposition'.¹¹¹ If one accepts that the purpose of the eidetic reduction ('epoché')¹¹² is to bring, by putting out of play judgements which are the synthetic products of reflection, the actual presence of the world to light, the world perceived, that is, as facts — *phenomena* — of perception, it follows that the indispensability of 'phenomenologies of rape' derives from their unique heuristic potential, from their capacity to demonstrate how the effects of rape 'disturb' the ante-predicative patterning of the subject's sexual physiognomy. If one rejects the very notion of the reduction, however, be this on the grounds of scepticism and/or of anti-essentialism, it remains legitimate nevertheless to make reference, as I have done, to phenomenologically informed descriptions. Yet, because these are not strictly speaking phenomenological descriptions, '[puisque ce genre de descriptions] sont de l'ordre du jugement, des actes ou de la prédication',¹¹³ they cannot logically be separated off from 'discursive representations', not when the former and the latter are, in the end, but forms of interpretation.

There is another possibility, however, another principle of division which may serve to justify Alcoff's distinction: 'Attempts to

¹⁰⁹ *Gesammelte Werke*, III, 193-194.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Joel Smith, 'Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenological Reduction', *Inquiry*, 48 (2005), 553-571.

¹¹¹ 'Sexual Experience: Foucault, Phenomenology, and Feminist Theory', p. 220.

¹¹² 'Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenological Reduction', p. 555.

¹¹³ *Phénoménologie de la perception*, pp. iv-v.

explain experience solely from external, macro-structural perspectives fail to take seriously or adequately [to] account for lived, personal, individual experience'.¹¹⁴ Here, rather than drawing the line between that which is experienced (phenomenology) and that which is reproduced as reality (discourse), between the phenomenal facticity of the world and its 'factually existent actuality',¹¹⁵ instead of posing the question of authenticity, in other words, of that which constitutes the essence of the 'normal' subject's unreflective experience of sexuality, Alcoff's remarks point towards another conception of indispensability, towards an epistemic theory of truth which recognizes that ideations — the images, the impressions, the ideas generated by the human mind in the form of knowledge — are necessarily perspectival: 'Because differing social positions generate variable constructions of reality and afford different perspectives on the world, the revisionary stages of this project will consist of case-by-case analyses of the knowledge produced in specific social positions'.¹¹⁶ As well as contributing towards the project of mapping the archaeological terrain of rape, I should like to subject this notion of variable construction to further interrogation: does the indispensability of subjective accounts to the historian of sexuality — and, more specifically, to this socio-historical exploration of 'la tournante' — proceed from the subject's particular 'standpoint', from the socio-political specificities of his or her relationship to patriarchy?

'No', Bellil states emphatically, 'the problem of gang rapes in the projects has [not] been exaggerated';¹¹⁷ and reports — widely circulated by the press at the time¹¹⁸ — that 'la tournante' was increasingly

¹¹⁴ Linda Martín Alcoff, 'Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience', in *Feminist Phenomenology*, ed. by Linda Fisher and Lester Embree, pp. 39-56 (pp. 51-52).

¹¹⁵ *Edmund Husserl: Collected Works*, ed. by Karl Schuhmann, 12 vols (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980-2006), II: *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. by Fred Kersten (1982), pp. 56-57.

¹¹⁶ Lorraine Code, 'Taking Subjectivity into Account', in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 15-48 (p. 39).

¹¹⁷ Samira Bellil, *To Hell and Back: The Life of Samira Bellil*, trans. by Lucy R. McNair (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), p. 204.

¹¹⁸ 'De nombreux spécialistes de la justice des mineurs constatent la recrudescence de la criminalité sexuelle en réunion dans les cités, "les tournantes"' ('L'invitée de la

commonplace were not over-estimations, nor electorally advantageous misrepresentations, but reflections of 'a reality',¹¹⁹ the truth of which corresponded to the world as seen through Bellil's eyes: 'C'est de ma propre vérité qu'il s'agit dans ce livre'.¹²⁰ Whilst Mucchielli makes reference to the problem of attrition, to the complex set of factors which explain the extremely low rate of reporting,¹²¹ he does so only cursorily and certainly not so as to undermine his argument in any way:

Dans certains cas, elles [les données policières et judiciaires] sont [...] très éloignées de la réalité. On sait depuis longtemps que ceci est tout particulièrement vrai en matière de violences sexuelles, où les taux de plainte des victimes sont très faibles.¹²²

Nonetheless, the proposition that the growing prevalence of 'la tournante' cannot be verified statistically is not incidental to — but, rather, forms the bedrock of — Mucchielli's argument, lending credence to his claim that the very notion of 'la tournante' is nothing more an expedient artifice manufactured by the French media: '[L]e mot "tournantes", désignant des viols collectifs commis par des jeunes gens de banlieue, serait une construction médiatique récente. C'est ce qu'affirme [...] le sociologue Laurent Mucchielli'.¹²³ Reverting to his positivist principles, Mucchielli turns the discrepancy between reports of rape, on the one hand, and perceptions of prevalence, on the other, to his

semaine: Laura Duchêne, animatrice du réseau "Pour un monde sans exploitation sexuelle", *L'Humanité*, 25 September 2002); 'Le phénomène des tournantes, ces viols en réunion, augmente aussi dans les cités' (Jean-Marc Leclerc and Françoise Lemoine, 'Délinquance: Le bilan catastrophe', *Le Figaro*, 29 January 2002); 'Appelés "tournantes" ou "plan pétasse" dans le jargon des jeunes des banlieues dites difficiles, [...] ces viols collectifs sont devenus fréquents depuis une dizaine d'années, soulignent des policiers' (Pierre Lanfranchi, 'L'horreur des "tournantes" de nouveau devant une cour d'assises française', *Agence France Presse*, 2 May 2001).

¹¹⁹ *To Hell and Back*, p. 204.

¹²⁰ *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*, 2nd edn, pp. 299-300.

¹²¹ 'D'après les données de l'enquête CSF [Contexte de la sexualité en France], 0.44% des femmes ont subi un rapport sexuel imposé ou une tentative de rapport dans les douze derniers mois, soit entre 50,000 et 120,000 femmes. [...] Pourtant seulement 9,993 plaintes pour viol ont été déposées en 2005, soit environ 10% du total' ('Les violences sexuelles en France', p. 4).

¹²² *Le Scandale des 'tournantes'*, pp. 55-56.

¹²³ Nathalie Guibert, 'Un chercheur analyse "l'incendie médiatique" qui a placé les "tournantes" sur le devant de la scène', *Le Monde*, 26 April 2005.

analytical advantage, reaffirming his copy-book credo that the facts of rape are meaningful if, and only if, they are scientifically knowable.¹²⁴ It is because subjective accounts are fundamentally unreliable that sociologists — who are supposedly impartial by reason of being detached from the context of discovery — are elevated to the status, accorded by the academy and other institutional authorities, of ‘surrogate knowers’.¹²⁵ Yet, can the fact of rape be known from far, as if Bellil’s experience were, under controlled, laboratory-like conditions, replicable, or as if Bellil’s and Mucchielli’s accounts were interchangeable?

I maintain that the specificities of Bellil’s socio-historical location give epistemic weight to her account, and that her proximity to the context of discovery does not detract from her knowledge but, on the contrary, enhances her credibility: ‘[W]omen’s lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on male supremacy, a vantage point which can ground a powerful critique of the phallocratic institutions and ideology which constitute the capitalist form of patriarchy’.¹²⁶ In fact, because survivors of rape are almost three times more likely to tell someone close to them — an acquaintance or a friend — than they are to report the incident to the police,¹²⁷ Bellil was exceptionally well placed to assess the localized prevalence of ‘la tournante’. To put this another way, there are important reasons, attributable to the ‘particular and privileged vantage point’ which she

¹²⁴ ‘[L]a seule statistique mobilisable sur les viols collectifs est la statistique judiciaire’, states Mucchielli axiomatically (*Le Scandale des ‘tournantes’*, p. 45).

¹²⁵ Lorraine Code, ‘Taking Subjectivity into Account’, in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth, pp. 15-48 (p. 16).

¹²⁶ Nancy C. M. Hartsock, ‘The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism’, in *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, ed. by Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, pp. 283-210 (p. 284).

¹²⁷ Although I hesitate to support my own argument statistically, I do so cautiously, and only in order to demonstrate the ‘corrective’ potential of Bellil’s account over against Mucchielli’s. ‘Pour les agressions sexuelles à l’extérieur du ménage, toujours difficiles à assumer, les victimes s’en ouvrent un peu plus facilement, quoique toujours peu dans l’absolu: 17,5 % s’adressent à la police (plaintes et mains courantes) et 12 % n’en ont parlé à personne. Quand les femmes confient l’agression qu’elles ont subie, c’est plus souvent à un proche ou un ami (47% pour une agression hors ménage, 42% dans le ménage) ou à un professionnel (19% dans les deux cas) qu’à la police’ (Lorraine Tournyol du Clos and Thomas Le Jeannic, ‘Les violences faites aux femmes’, *INSEE première*, 1180 (2008) <<http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/ipweb/ip1180/ip1180.pdf>> [accessed 20 March 2013]).

occupies, *to believe* Bellil when she claims that the extent of 'la tournante' has not been overstated — and that, in her words, 'nous sommes très nombreuses à en avoir été les victimes'. Thus, although accounts of 'lived, personal, individual experience' cannot be regarded as epistemically sufficient, they can supplement (and subvert) '[a]ttempts to explain experience solely from external, macro-structural perspectives', especially given the in-built androcentricity at the heart of much objectivist epistemology: '[F]irst-person accounts cannot reveal the absolute truth about sexuality, rape, or gender', writes Oksala, 'but they can correct some bias';¹²⁸ and it is due to the preponderance of this swaying influence that, from the standpoint of the sexed subject, the only 'proof' of rape which continues to obtain is that which passes the reasonable man's test of validity — namely, the criterion of verifiability.

Taking one thing with another, Alcoff is right to argue that theories of rape must not become detached either from the centrality to human understanding of experience, or from the perceptual aspects of that experience as lived by each individual at every moment through the matter of the body. Whilst attentive to the 'evaluative hierarchy of mind and body',¹²⁹ because her way of putting the body to work philosophically assigns both 'phenomenologies of rape' and 'description[s] of embodied experience' to latent positions of inferiority, and since these dichotomies re-actuate the hierarchy of credibility which accords 'reasonable' men the right to speak the truth (and to be heard), Alcoff's theoretical framework cannot be considered satisfactory, particularly because it implies that the credibility of those who have been violated sexually can only be established by evoking the dependent and subordinate relationship of their truth to that most authoritative of voices — *reasoned* patriarchy. Thus, if one is 'to elaborate a truth which is not removed from

¹²⁸ 'Sexual Experience: Foucault, Phenomenology, and Feminist Theory', p. 216.

¹²⁹ Linda Martín Alcoff, 'Phenomenology, Post-structuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience', in *Feminist Phenomenology*, ed. by Linda Fisher and Lester Embree, pp. 39-56 (pp. 41-42).

the body',¹³⁰ whose value as truth derives not from the body's historically subservient relationship to reason, but from the referential of that truth, the heterogeneous multiplicity of discursive and non-discursive conditions which make that truth possible, it will be necessary to look elsewhere — beyond Alcoff's attempt to devise an ideologically oriented phenomenology.

Whilst I have sought to identify which possibilities have been opened up and which have been foreclosed by exploring 'la tournante' from the vantage-point of phenomenology, I have adopted throughout an approach which mobilizes Foucault's theory of knowledge, especially his loosely structuralist archaeology, in order to demonstrate how the positions taken up by Bellil, Naït-Balk and Mucchielli can only be properly understood as they relate to the broader field of discursivity. As to the 'problematic and irreducible gap',¹³¹ between subjective/objective and emic/etic forms of knowledge, this cannot be circumvented by isolating Mucchielli's objective (because 'authoritative') sociology from Bellil's and Naït-Balk's subjective (because 'authentic') testimony, not when close analysis of these texts reveals the extent to which the former is predicated upon the exclusion — and, to be more precise, upon the negation — of the latter. According to the dualistic logic of dominant epistemology, the contours of which Alcoff sketches out so neatly, whenever these bodies of knowledge rub up against or run counter to each other, it is nearly always objective knowledge, 'as the normative referent in such a binary analytic',¹³² that carries the presumption of truth; and so it is as one leafs through the pages of Mucchielli's *Le Scandale des 'tournantes'* where the question of credibility is reduced to, and superseded by, the question of *verifiability* — of whether, on the basis of the evidence available to him, things said and things written about 'la tournante' conform with social-scientific norms of validity. In the next chapter, whilst I continue my exploration of and interest in 'la

¹³⁰ Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, trans. by Elizabeth Guild (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 8.

¹³¹ 'Sexual Experience: Foucault, Phenomenology, and Feminist Theory', pp. 218-219.

¹³² 'Under Western Eyes', pp. 64-65.

tournante' as the privileged object of an organized, rhetoricized regime of truth, I widen the analytical aperture through which the practice is seen by analysing fictional accounts of 'la tournante' and their productive, performative effects. ■



Figure II. Samira Bellil addresses the town hall in Lille, 28 February 2003.



Figure III. Brahim Naït-Balk, photographed for *Paris Match* in 2010.



Figure IV. Laurent Mucchielli appears on 'La Voix est libre', 19 November 2011.

Chapter 2. Fictions of 'la tournante' — Fallacies, Facts, and Effects



Figure V. Élisabeth Brune, author of *La Tournante*, is interviewed for the Belgian webzine *Essentielle* in 2011.

[I]t is skilled agency that brings about the convergence of material and verbal practices. Convergence engenders belief in the correspondence of representations to things in the world.¹

Before going on to discuss the contribution which Freudian psychoanalysis may (or may not) make to our understanding of 'la tournante', I should like to consider, by way of introduction, the remarks which Freud makes at the beginning of 'Über einen besonderen Typus der Objektwahl beim Manne', which was first published in 1910 and only later brought together with two other, related papers under the title 'Beiträge zur Psychologie des Liebeslebens' — 'Contributions to the Psychology of Love'. The reader may inquire, and with good reason, whether such an approach, inasmuch as it seems conflate 'love' and 'rape', is at all judicious; but the grounds for and the

¹ David Gooding, 'Putting Agency Back into Observation', in *Science as Practice and Culture*, ed. by Andrew Pickering (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 65-112 (p. 104).

analytical advantages of doing so will, I hope, become clear in due course. Presently, I propose to grapple with the question not of ‘love’, but of ‘literature’, its validity, and its value as truth. For too long, so Freud’s opening gambit goes, the discourse of love was left to — and, hence, effectively monopolized by — novelists, poets, and playwrights (*Dichter*, in the German). Whilst, in Freud’s words, ‘[d]ie Dichter verfügen auch über manche Eigenschaften, welche sie zur Lösung einer solchen Aufgabe befähigen [novelists, poets and playwrights have at their disposal many unique qualities which qualify them to carry out this task]’, the imperative to procure for their readers ‘intellektuelle und ästhetische Lust [intellectual and aesthetic pleasure]’ reduces the ‘evidential’ or ‘probative’ value of that which they have to say. ‘[Die] streng wissenschaftliche[n] Bearbeitung [the strictly scientific treatment]’ of the subject which Freud advocates is justified, therefore, on the basis that literature, unlike science, ‘den Stoff der Realität nicht unverändert darstellen [kann] [cannot represent the stuff of reality as it is, unchanged]’.² So, if Freud’s argument is to be believed, it is to science — and, more particularly, to psychoanalysis — that one must turn in order to grasp the facts of the matter called ‘love’; and yet, there are two very good reasons why one might wish to question whether this chain of reasoning is sound. Firstly, in *L’Archéologie du savoir*, Foucault warns against accepting as self-evident the obscure set of operations (‘catégories réflexives’, ‘principes de classement’, ‘règles normatives’, ‘types institutionnalisés’) by which discourse is divided up prior to any analysis of their existence as facts of discourse: ‘Peut-on admettre, telles quelles’, he asks, ‘la distinction des grands types de discours, ou celle des formes ou des genres qui opposent les unes aux autres science, littérature, philosophie, religion, histoire, fiction, etc.’.³ Foucault’s scepticism prompts careful consideration of the distinction which Freud

² Sigmund Freud, ‘Über einen besonderen Typus der Objektwahl beim Manne’, in *Studienausgabe*, 11 vols (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1969-1975; repr. 1994), v, pp. 185-195 (p. 187). I have included — and, where necessary, amended — James Strachey’s English translations of the German as they appear in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*.

³ *L’Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 32-33.

draws between science (as the discourse of facts) and literature (as the discourse of effects). An appreciation of this difference — between *facts*, on the one hand, and *effects*, on the other — is crucial not only to my argument here, but to Mucchielli's sociological enquiry which chronicles the blurring of, whilst at the same time seeking to restore an illusory integrity to, this structuring opposition: '*La squala* va bénéficier en effet d'une très large couverture de presse, les journalistes considérant cette fiction comme un témoignage direct sur une réalité cachée, une véritable révélation'.⁴ Secondly, then, the absolutist terms upon which Freud's assessment stands imply that the primary use of language is to convey meaning, and that words bear an originary relation to things. By conceiving of language in this way — as nomenclature first and foremost,⁵ this philosophy precludes analysis of the means by which, for example, fictional representations of 'la tournante' acquire, as Mucchielli's remarks intimate, all of the descriptive *force* which Freud fathers upon scientifically verified facts. Taken together, these concerns cry out against the aprioristic estimation which Freud forms of literature as the discourse of distorted or degraded ('herabgesetzt')⁶ truth, rendering necessary the type of context-specific, critical appraisal upon which I shall now embark. In light of all this, what is, or how are we to understand, and this is the question at issue in this chapter, the value as truth of Édith Wolf's *En réunion*, Élisabeth Brune's *La Tournante*, and Genestal's *La Squala*?

Authenticating Presences and Credibilizing Effects

In the opening passage of his first 'Contribution', whereas Freud speaks of 'science' (*Wissenschaft*), but never of 'scientists', he refers repeatedly

⁴ *Le Scandale des 'tournantes'*, pp. 12-13.

⁵ This is the thesis which Ferdinand de Saussure impugns in his *Cours de linguistique générale*: 'Pour certaines personnes la langue, ramenée à son principe essentiel, est une nomenclature, c'est-à-dire une liste de termes correspondant à autant de choses [...] Cette conception est critiquable à bien des égards' (ed. by Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye, and Albert Riedlinger, 3 edn (Paris: Payot, 1931), p. 97).

⁶ *Studienausgabe*, V, 187.

to ‘writers’ or ‘authors’, but at no point to ‘fiction’ or ‘literature’ (*Dichtung*). Thus, whereas science is abstract and impartial,⁷ literature is equated with, because reduced to and by, the subjective, the personal. In Freud’s view, therefore, it is the role of the author — his or her personality, moral authority, artistic sensibility, evocative or emotive qualities (in sum, ‘Eigenschaften’) — that impart literature with and yet call into question its graphic potency. In an interview published in *Le Monde*, Wolf aligns closely the value which attaches to her narrative and those factors which affect — and, more importantly, enhance — her credibility: ‘De quelle observation, ou expérience, avez-vous tiré la matière de ce livre?’, asks the journalist; ‘D’une expérience professionnelle, de professeur, de 1981 à 1990, à Sarcelles. Pendant toute cette période, j’ai vu la violence s’installer. En 1988, l’une de mes élèves a été victime d’un viol par quatre garçons, dont deux que je connaissais’,⁸ the author of *En réunion* replies. Already, furnished only with this short extract, the centrality of the author’s role to the epistemic status of narrativity is shown up in all its complexity. Firstly, by virtue of her professional status, ‘[en tant qu’] enseignante agrégée de lettres’,⁹ Wolf’s discourse is accorded particular authority, established in law,¹⁰ augmented by experience, and coincident with the intimate knowledge to which she is privy. Next, her legitimacy hinges upon the social standing of the institutional setting from which her narrative derives its origin, and whose internal organization facilitates the infinitesimal observations and the storing up of discursive facts which form the raw material of her account. Lastly, and perhaps most crucially, by harnessing the persuasive power and the voice of the Other, the events which Wolf describes are presented to the reader as *credenda* — as

⁷ This puts one in mind of the argument which Foucault makes in ‘Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?’ where, of scientific discourses, he affirms: ‘[C]’est leur appartenance à un ensemble systématique qui leur donne garantie, et non point la référence à l’individu qui les a produits’ (*Dits et écrits*, I, 799-800).

⁸ Patrick Kéchichian and Édith Wolf, ‘Dans la logique de la barbarie ordinaire’, *Le Monde*, 27 June 2003.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Décret n° 72-580 du 4 juillet 1972 relatif au statut particulier des professeurs agrégés de l’enseignement du second degré (*Journal officiel de la République française*, 7 July 1972, pp. 7071-7073).

things, that is, to be believed: '[L]a fiction, ici, ne nous éloigne pas de la réalité. Elle nous en rapproche au contraire',¹¹ Patrick Kéchichian concedes at the beginning of the article. All of these considerations speak to Wolf's function *qua* author, the idiom characteristic of which is, as I shall discuss and demonstrate further, *representational*: 'The representational idiom casts science as, above all, an activity that seeks to represent nature, to produce knowledge that maps, mirrors, or corresponds to how the world really is'.¹² Rather than detracting from, degrading, or reducing the evidential value ('Erkenntniswert')¹³ of that which Wolf has to say, this being the thesis put forward by Freud, the historically contingent rules of formation which govern the author-function are such that the attribution of the work to *this* author lends considerable credence to Wolf's account. This positivistic mode of attribution does not deny the relation of the author to the *œuvre*, but deploys the author — and such aspects of her individuality as bear upon her capacity to reproduce, as graphically as possible, the stuff of reality — as 'authenticating presences'.¹⁴ This representational modality, as we shall see, characterizes other, supposedly fictional representations of 'la tournante', suggesting, beyond the boundaries of each work, some commonality of *style*, certain sufficiently invariable so as to be describable principles of discursive unity.¹⁵

¹¹ Patrick Kéchichian and Édith Wolf, 'Dans la logique de la barbarie ordinaire', *Le Monde*, 27 June 2003.

¹² Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 5.

¹³ *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

¹⁴ Linda Alcoff, 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', in *Who Can Speak? Authority and Critical Identity*, ed. by Judith Roof and Robyn Wiegman (Champaign: Illini Books, 1995), pp. 97-119 (p. 99). This is an amended version of the article which appeared in the 1991-1992 edition of *Cultural Critique* (cf. *supra*).

¹⁵ Clinical discourse, Foucault writes in *L'Archéologie du savoir*, constitutes the system of relations which exist between various discursive elements, 'et s'il a une unité, si les modalités d'énonciation qu'il utilise, ou auxquelles il donne lieu, ne sont pas simplement juxtaposées par une série de contingences historiques, c'est qu'il met en œuvre de façon constante ce faisceau de relations' (pp. 72-73).

According to positivistic norms of scientificity, Wolf's proximity to the context of discovery ('un collège de Sarcelles')¹⁶ invokes the phantom of the 'genetic fallacy';¹⁷ but would this not be to assume that Wolf aspires to the rigours of scientific methodology — which, she tells Kéchichian, she does not? Reviewing *La Tournante*, Brune's third novel, Jacques Decker expounds not upon the story's narrative quality, but upon the approximation of its author to the ideals of objectivity: 'Elle est chercheuse scientifique de profession, et l'on sentait dans ses précédents livres [...] qu'elle a l'art d'intégrer dans ses récits des données objectivées et vérifiées'.¹⁸ Once again, and rather oddly given that the species of literature known as fiction is customarily concerned with *unreal* characters and events which have their genesis in the imagination, it is the author's capacity to bear credible witness to — 'to produce knowledge', in Andrew Pickering's words, 'that maps, mirrors, or corresponds to' — reality that is deemed to be the narrative's most salient and creditable quality. Despite Brune's protestation that, '[d]ans *La Tournante*, il n'y a rien de scientifique',¹⁹ her narrative — like Wolf's, but *a fortiori* — is situated by others within the parameters of this representational modality, to the extent, even, that the allegorical aspects of the *La Tournante* are obscured completely: 'Élisa Brune publie *La Tournante*', writes Isabelle Rüf in *Le Temps*, 'un récit sociologique qui décrit l'esclavage sexuel où sont réduites des adolescentes imprudentes'.²⁰ Why, though, would Rüf give the reader of her review to understand that the contents of *La Tournante* are sociological, and that the mode of representation proper to Brune's account is not primarily figurative, therefore, but literal?

¹⁶ Jessica L. Nelson, 'En réunion', *Le Magazine littéraire*, July 2003 <<http://www.magazine-litteraire.com/mensuel/422/reunion-01-07-2003-29095>> [accessed 21 March 2013].

¹⁷ 'Under the aegis of positivism', writes Code in 'Taking Subjectivity into Account', 'attempts to give epistemological weight to the provenance of knowledge claims — to grant justificatory or explanatory significance to social- or personal-historical situations, for example — risk committing the "genetic fallacy"' (pp. 17-18).

¹⁸ Jacques Decker, 'Brune et le roman-reportage', *Le Soir*, 29 August 2001.

¹⁹ Emmanuelle Jowa, 'La science est un roman', *La Tribune de Bruxelles*, 4 November 2004 <<http://www.tbx.be/fr/ArchiveArticle/2046/app.rvb>> [accessed 27 August 2012].

²⁰ Isabelle Rüf, 'Bruxelles à Genève', *Le Temps*, 15 September 2001.

As Alcoff writes, albeit awkwardly, 'how what is said gets heard depends on who says it, and who says it will affect the style and language in which it is stated, which will in turn affect its perceived significance'.²¹ To word this differently, the specifics of one's socio-historical location, the style of language which one adopts and the epistemic authority which others confer are bound up with, existing only in relation to, as the instrument-effects of, each other. It is not at all surprising, then, that Brune, '[qui] est titulaire d'un doctorat d'économie de l'environnement et journaliste scientifique', should bring certain elements of style — the correlates of her location — to bear upon the task of writing fiction: 'Ce que sa formation lui a apporté? L'observation, une certaine méthode sans doute'.²² Although Brune denies emphatically any connexion between *La Tournante* and science, closer analysis of the text reveals various affinities of style which are strongly suggestive of at least some resemblance. Disserting upon the logical-positivist ideals which inform much modern-day scientific inquiry, Alfred Jules Ayer hypothesizes that, 'if an observation to which a given proposition is relevant conforms to our expectations, the truth of that proposition is confirmed'.²³ By weaving journalistic accounts of 'la tournante' through the fabric of her narrative,²⁴ '[en y intégrant] des données objectivées et vérifiées', Brune offers not only an imbricated tapestry of polyphonic observations but affords the very ground upon which are built the reader's truth-bearing expectations. Thus, because by design, the factual and the fictitious in Brune's *La Tournante* appear to tally, and this correspondence seems to confirm the truth of that which Brune invents imaginatively. As well as raising the question, mooted previously, of evidence and its

²¹ 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', p. 13.

²² Emmanuelle Jowa, 'La science est un roman', *La Tribune de Bruxelles*, 4 November 2004.

²³ A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1936; repr. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1971), pp. 99-100.

²⁴ The three articles which Brune includes are: 'Onze jeunes jugés pour deux viols collectifs à Paris', *Le Monde*, 24 April 2001 (*La Tournante*, pp. 165-167); 'Quand l'ère du soupçon empoisonne une bourgade sans histoire', *L'Humanité*, 6 December 1999 (*Ibid.*, pp. 189-192); and an untitled article by Corine Goldberger published in the French edition of *Marie-Claire* in April 2001 (*Ibid.*, pp. 225-227).

demonstrability, *La Tournante* calls forth throughout the rhetorical mode of discourse least commonly regarded as literary:

On dirait que dans certaines microsociétés, fortement marquées par les rapports de force et par le sexisme, comme il s'en est formé dans les cités, les notions de réputation et de déshonneur sont redevenues des déterminants majeurs pour le statut des femmes.²⁵

If the author is, as Foucault describes her, 'un certain être de raison',²⁶ one might characterize the being of discourse brought into existence by Brune's *La Tournante*, inasmuch as it supposes the absolute necessity of empirical demonstration and cedes to the meretricious cogency of rational exposition, as the discourse, synonymous with science, of reason. This recourse to *rationality*, forming part of the fascies of relations which constitute Brune's enunciative modality, circumscribes, when reading *La Tournante*, the sphere of possible interpretations — 'affect[s] its perceived significance', that is — both in terms of its truth- and narrative value. Epistemologically, although Brune's treatment of 'la tournante' cannot be regarded as strictly scientific ('streng wissenschaftlich[en]'),²⁷ the motor which propels the narrative forward is driven without question by the workings of scientific methodology.²⁸ Whilst it is safe to say, therefore, that Brune's scientistic conception of narrativity does not satisfy the formal criteria of scientific validity, it does, nevertheless, because of its scientized style, enjoy the epistemically elevated status accorded to knowledge worthy of that name. Narratologically, however, at the same time as the novel's claims to truth are bolstered — especially by the apparent congruence between that which is invented and that which is discovered — the narrative quality of *La Tournante* diminishes, and the very stuff of fiction, to procure intellectual and aesthetic pleasure ('intellektuelle und ästhetische Lust

²⁵ *La Tournante*, pp. 136-137.

²⁶ *Dits et écrits*, I, 800-801.

²⁷ *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

²⁸ 'Ce côté méthodique est important', Brune tells Jowa in 'La science est un roman' (*La Tribune de Bruxelles*, 4 November 2004).

[...] zu erzielen'),²⁹ appears to languish away, vanishes: 'Enfin, j'ai quand même un petit regret. Trop souvent, on a l'impression de lire une étude sur un phénomène social, quelques personnages émettant des théories sociologiques, intéressantes certes, mais il ne s'agit plus alors d'un roman plutôt d'un essai'.³⁰ This analysis, it would seem, therefore, supports Freud's thesis: the closer the correspondence of Brune's text with the facts, the less productive, the clumsier ('plumper[en]'),³¹ its literary effects. Hence, if the idiom characteristic of Wolf's *En réunion* and Brune's *La Tournante* is, as I have proposed, representational, their style, 'un certain caractère constant de l'énonciation',³² is, I should like to suggest, *literal*. Supposing that this is the underlying, signifying structure which characterizes Wolf, Brune, and Genestal's function as authors, and recognizing that something is thereby both gained and *lost*, '[in diesem Fall] intellektuelle und ästhetische Lust', what else is obscured by this representational idiom, this literalizing style, this way of representing 'la tournante' which tends towards the scientific-factual end of Freud's science-literature opposition? Since it cannot be enough simply to assume the consistency of this style across the piece, however, when considering *La Squale*, are we dealing with the same drama-documentary way of representing, with the same matter-of-fact manner of speaking and signifying?

Although Genestal's *La Squale* is neither in the English nor in the German acceptance of the terms 'literary' or 'dichterisch[er]',³³ the film merits further, more thorough investigation, and this on account of two sub-considerations. The principal reason why it invites one's critical attention, and which sets it apart from Brune's *La Tournante* and Wolf's *En réunion*, proceeds from the wave of interest ('[la] très large couverture

²⁹ *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

³⁰ 'Un livre dur et dénonciateur', *Critiques libres*, 4 October 2001
<<http://www.critiqueslibres.com/i.php/vcrit/?l=1572>> [accessed 21 March 2012].

³¹ *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

³² *L'Archéologie du savoir*, pp. 47-48.

³³ *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

de presse') which the film generated upon its release.³⁴ In addition to the particular set of conditions which govern the modalities of its reception, *La Squale* deserves inclusion, also, not insofar as it should assume an epithet, that of 'literature', which does not befit it, but because, just like Wolf and Brune's compositions, it lays claim to — and, simultaneously, divests itself of — its status as 'fiction'. Indeed, the premise of Mucchielli's argument, '[que] les journalistes considér[aient] cette fiction comme un témoignage direct sur une réalité cachée, une véritable révélation', is borne out by the vast mass of documentation which sanctions and participates in the discursive divestiture of *La Squale*'s fictional, imaginary, and unreal qualities, and which — by effect of accumulation — compels belief in the film's authenticity: 'Choqué par le comportement et les propos de ses jeunes élèves, Fabrice Genestal, un ancien enseignant de banlieue parisienne, a réalisé un film, "La squale", qui reconstitue la barbarie sexuelle des bandes des cités. "Le Point" confirme ces effarants témoignages'.³⁵ Again, those elements which conduce to the film's believability are attributed directly to the author who is called upon to fulfil this truth-function. As Émilie Lanez's remarks make explicit, this particular mode of production — proper to all three of the texts under consideration — privileges the historico-philosophical project of *reconstitution*.

However ideologically aligned, however united in pursuit of this project these literary and cinematographic ways of representing 'la tournante' may be, that which differentiates Brune and Wolf's literature from Genestal's cinema is the repertoire of techniques, the set of 'literalizing procedure[s]',³⁶ available to each. Whereas Brune includes documentary evidence in her *roman à thèse*, '[son] roman-reportage',³⁷ Genestal's 'proof' has flesh and blood:

³⁴ By the end of 2001, almost 100,000 tickets had been sold at the French box-office following the film's general release on 21 November 2000 (cf. Éric Delporte, "'La Squale" à l'assaut du petit écran', *Le Parisien*, 12 December 2001).

³⁵ Émilie Lanez, 'Viol collectif: La grande peur des cités', *Le Point*, 1 December 2000.

³⁶ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987; repr. 1990), p. 48.

³⁷ Jacques Decker, 'Brune et le roman-reportage', *Le Soir*, 29 August 2001.

Comme Fabrice Genestal a présidé à la conception du scénario, le souci d'authenticité a été la règle de la distribution. Pas de vedettes [...] Presque tous les interprètes, y compris les deux rôles principaux — Esse Lawson (Désirée) et Tony Mpoudja (Toussaint) — ont été triés sur le volet [choisis avec le plus grand soin] par un casting rigoureux et soumis à six mois de répétitions-collaboration. De ce seul point de vue, le résultat est saisissant.³⁸

Thus, if *La Squalle* grips, fascinates, captivates the viewer, as André Videau claims, this is because it establishes an originary relation to reality, and Genestal's first-hand experience of living and teaching in *les cités*,³⁹ the precedence which he accords during the film's development and production to girls and young women,⁴⁰ and the weaving into its weft of their testimonial depositions,⁴¹ his decision to cast not professionally trained actors, but the natural, nascent talents of local, unschooled amateurs,⁴² the credibilizing use throughout the film of location-shooting,⁴³ the enlistment by Genestal of the female cast into the service of script-writing — all of these speak to the film's putatively unfeigned, 'true-to-life' quality, to its pre-pense authenticity, to its studiously conceived capacity 'to "describe" some state of affairs, or to "state some fact", which it must do either truly or falsely'.⁴⁴ Judging by Genestal's stated intentions and the array of literalizing mechanisms which he sets in motion, *La Squalle* is pointedly charged with the representational task of describing, reporting — *constating* — the truth of 'la tournante' in all

³⁸ André Videau, 'La Squalle, film français de Fabrice Genestal', *Hommes & migrations*, 1229 (2001), 120-121.

³⁹ Hakem Tewfik, 'Fabrice Genestal — "La squalle"', *Les Inrockuptibles*, 1 August 2000 <<http://www.lesinrocks.com/2000/08/01/cinema/actualite-cinema/fabrice-genestal-la-squalle-11219615/>> [accessed 21 March 2013].

⁴⁰ 'Le coup de projecteur: Rebelle de banlieue', *L'Humanité*, 12 December 2001.

⁴¹ Frédéric Ambroisine and Renaud Moran, 'La Squalle: Interviews avec Fabrice Genestal', *DVDrama*, 6 October 2001 <<http://lci.tf1.fr/cinema/news/la-squalle-interviews-avec-fabrice-genestal-5000374.html>> [accessed 21 March 2013].

⁴² Amélie Chauvet, 'Entretien avec Fabrice Genestal', *Comme au cinéma*, September 2001 <<http://www.commeaucinema.com/film/entretien-avec-fabrice-genestal,3077>> [accessed 21 March 2013].

⁴³ 'Le père de "la Squalle" était prof à Sarcelles', *Le Parisien*, 29 November 2000.

⁴⁴ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 1-2.

its frightening factuality, and the consistent use of this statemental or constative mode of representation gives occasion either to an interpretation of the *La Squalle* in the terms intended by the director of belief-commanding revelation, or to the opposite reading which looks upon the film as nothing but an elaborate misrepresentation:

La réalité que tente de dépeindre le film sera projetée ici comme un témoignage potentiel de ce qui est supposé se vivre dans le quartier, suscitant d'emblée une espèce de question fermée, tel un QCM [questionnaire à choix multiple]: 'Répondez par oui ou par non si cela se produit ici aussi'.⁴⁵

Given the illocutionary force of Genestal's film, however, '[its] *force* in saying something',⁴⁶ it is little wonder that *La Squalle* is most widely regarded not as an imaginatively invented, wholly fictitious dramatization, evoking unreal characters and events, but, rather, as an accurate, 'utterly realistic'⁴⁷ representation of early-twenty-first-century France, its ghettoized *cités*, and the prevalence and intensity there of gendered and sexualized forms of oppression. Hence, Genestal's *La Squalle*, Brune's *La Tournante* and Wolf's *En réunion* make the same, common, if curious claim to represent 'la tournante' in its totality — which is to say, truthfully; and to this degree, all three texts are from first to last *explicit*, '[where] explicitness, in our sense, makes clearer the *force* of the utterances, or "how [...] it is to be taken"'.⁴⁸ Ultimately, it is this

⁴⁵ Xavier Gassmann, 'À la limite de soi (À propos de *La Squalle*)', *La Lettre de l'enfance et de l'adolescence*, 48 (2002), 27-32 (p. 27). In order to promote discussion amongst those most concerned by the complex issues raised in *La Squalle*, public showings of the film were held in schools and community centres across France, most notably at the secondary school (*le collège Évariste-Galois de Sarcelles*) where the project had first been conceived (cf. Émilie Lanez, 'Viol collectif: La grande peur des cités', *Le Point*, 1 December 2000). The French psychoanalyst and clinical psychologist Xavier Gassmann attended one such event, at an unnamed location in the northern suburbs of Paris.

⁴⁶ *How to Do Things with Words*, p. 120.

⁴⁷ 'Adjiaatou [Sakho] had also been one of the female leads in the film "La Squalle". There was no one closer to the story. I met her on Day Four. The film, she told me, had been utterly realistic' (Rosie Goldsmith, 'France in shock over gang rape', *BBC News*, 26 July 2001

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/crossing_continents/europe/1456204.stm> [accessed 21 March 2013]).

⁴⁸ *How to Do Things with Words*, pp. 72-73.

explicitness, this stylistic forcefulness, that causes their accounts to be believed; and yet, this intensity of effect is achieved by postulating and giving emphasis to the accuracy of that which is narrated, to the *precision* of that which is represented, '[where] precision in language makes it clearer what is being said — its *meaning*',⁴⁹ its conformity with fact. In the next part of this chapter, I should like to problematize this particular use of language, this inwrought pattern of locutionary usage, further; for, by insisting upon those elements which are, by different definitions, constative, literal, and representational, by establishing such firm correlations between their fictional depictions of 'la tournante' and the scientific discourse of facts, Wolf's *En réunion*, Brune's *La Tournante* and Genestal's *La Squalle* conceal that which is ideological and allegorical through the efficacy of their discursive effects.

The Referential and Descriptive Fallacies: Petarding the Façade of Authenticity

The fiction- or script-writer's capacity to depict so deftly the necessary conditions for love depends, in Freud's view, upon the acuteness of his or her empathetic understanding, '[auf] die Feinfühligkeit für die Wahrnehmung verborgener Seelenregungen bei anderen [upon having the sensitivity to perceive in others the hidden stirrings of the soul]'.⁵⁰ Wolf, Brune and Genestal arrogate to themselves and are arrogated this power of penetration, the power of projecting one's mind into — and, thus, of fully comprehending — the object of contemplation:

À l'exécution de son projet [celui de la Bruxelloise Élisabeth Brune], elle ne fixe aucune limite. Son écriture ne se situe pas du côté de la morale, ne cherche pas à édifier. Seul impératif catégorique: mettre à nu les ressorts [causes agissantes] de cet acte.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

⁵¹ Jean-Claude Lebrun, 'Élisabeth Brune au cœur du social', *L'Humanité*, 25 October 2001.

This quest to map the *cosmos idios* of the mind — especially its discordant forces and faculties — is Freud's, of course, and that of the other the Ψ -disciplines (psychiatry, psychology, etc.), too. The scientific, psychoanalytic treatment which he prescribes differs from that which literature provides, however, not least because the former renounces totally the pursuit of pleasure: 'Die Wissenschaft ist eben die vollkommenste Lossagung vom Lustprinzip, die unserer psychischen Arbeit möglich ist [Science is, after all, the most complete renunciation of the pleasure-principle of which our mental activity is capable]'.⁵² It is not only against literature that science is set, therefore, but, also, against pleasure; and it follows, then, that, by siding with science, and by wrapping themselves in the mantle of rationality, the yield of pleasure ('Lustgewinn[e]')⁵³ — and, more broadly, of affect — produced by Wolf, Brune and Genestal would be less. Crucially, this renunciation heralds the disassociation of the subject (the author, the scientist, the reader, the spectator) from the object of investigation (the Other);⁵⁴ and whilst this is the alpha and omega of science, bestowing it with its much-vaunted objectivity, it runs counter to the novelistic conception of narrativity: 'Pourquoi ce choix formel des quatre discours?', Wolf is asked; 'Il fallait qu'on comprenne la logique. Elle est dans le fait que ce sont les violeurs qui parlent. On voit l'enchaînement des événements se produire parce qu'on le voit à partir de leur propre vision',⁵⁵ she explains. Thus, as understood here, science and literature embody different principles of perspective: whereas the scenographics of science disassociate the object, supposedly so as not to be affected by it, narrative enters into the subject — not only so that one may look out upon the world as though through his or her eyes ('à partir de leur propre vision'), but with the possibility of intromitting oneself *into* the emotional life of the subject (*Einführung*, in the German). Hence, as the least concerned with

⁵² *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Note that the German 'die vollkommenste Lossagung vo[n]' translates as both 'the most complete renunciation of' and 'the most complete dissociation from'.

⁵⁵ Patrick Kéchichian and Édith Wolf, 'Dans la logique de la barbarie ordinaire', *Le Monde*, 27 June 2003.

demonstrating the truth of her representational claims scientifically, and by foregrounding the first-person narrator's point of view most consistently, Wolf's *En réunion* is the most accomplished of the three texts narratively. Reviewing Genestal's *La Squalie* and Philippe Faucon's *Samia*,⁵⁶ Sylvestre Meninger spells out that which amounts to their — and, also, Brune's — narrative failure: 'Il est d'autant plus décevant de voir échouer leur projet désigné: comprendre l'Autre'.⁵⁷ At the same time as the reader or the viewer is hindered from developing fellow-feeling towards — and, in the event, an emotional understanding of — their characters, because Brune's *La Tournante* and Genestal's *La Squalie* look to things from places exterior, again 'the disinterested and dislocated view from nowhere',⁵⁸ the author's moral sensibilities are obscured from the analytical picture ('Son écriture ne se situe pas du côté de la morale'). So, as well as reducing the value of narrativity in terms of its affective-passional quality, the want of representational precision serves to conceal from view the author's moral authority. Yet, this seems contrary to that which I have argued previously — namely, that the stamp of authenticity impressed upon these texts bears the name of and gives particular prominence to the author and his or her *credibilizing effects*. These apparently incongruous propositions — that certain attributes of the author-function are disclosed when this serves to invest the knowledge produced with authority, and that authorial agency is concealed when this adverts to the insinuation into the text of the author's standpoint in matters of morality — share the same conditions of existence: 'the absolutely empty notion of a static relation of "correspondence"'.⁵⁹ It is this common locus and the deceptive, misleading arguments upon which it is predicated that I shall now bring sharply into focus.

⁵⁶ *Samia*, dir. by Philippe Faucon (Éditions Montparnasse, 2000) [on DVD].

⁵⁷ Sylvestre Meninger, 'Décidément, ces gens[-]là ne sont pas comme nous', *Projections*, 20 (2006), pp. 8-9 <<http://www.passeursdimages.fr/IMG/pdf/Projections20.pdf>> [accessed 21 March 2013].

⁵⁸ Lorraine Code, 'Taking Subjectivity into Account', in *Feminist Epistemologies*, ed. by Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter, pp. 15-48 (p. 20).

⁵⁹ William James, 'What Pragmatism Means', in *Pragmatism and Other Writings*, ed. by Giles Gunn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000; repr. 2001), pp. 24-40 (p. 35).

If one admits as articles of faith the representational claims made by Wolf's *En réunion*, Brune's *La Tournante*, and Genestal's *La Squalle*, as well those put forward and upheld on their behalf, one cannot but be persuaded that their importance, usefulness and worth reside chiefly in their value as truth: '[C]'est le fait de vouloir combler une incompréhension, une énigme, qui m'a conduite à adopter une démarche littéraire. J'essaie de construire cette réalité pour arriver à une vérité humaine et morale';⁶⁰ but upon what epistemological footing can such resolutely literary claims to truth be based? '[I]l y a des garde-fous, qui sont les faits. Ils sont tous vrais',⁶¹ Wolf affirms. The narrative mode of representation most analogous to Wolf's *En réunion* should not on this account be regarded as fictional, therefore, but — insofar as the story's primary referents are actual events which have taken place in the past ('En 1988, l'une de mes élèves a été victime d'un viol par quatre garçons, dont deux que je connaissais') — as genuinely historical, for true to fact. In the case of *La Squalle*, too, even though its respective objects of representation are different and never formally defined, they are real, objective points of reference to which the status of 'origin' is ascribed: '*La Squalle* trouve son origine dans des témoignages d'adolescents sur la pratique du viol collectif, la tournante'.⁶² Accordingly, since the truth inheres in the facts which, in turn, 'speak for themselves', Wolf and Genestal and Brune need merely report the facts in order that the truth of 'la tournante' may be revealed; and whilst such narrative descriptions may be fraught full of moral significance, this will not have been invented or implanted by the agentive role of the author, but, instead, simply found and subsequently expounded, this possibility being open — provided that one remains sufficiently distanced from, so as not to be unnecessarily influenced by, the objects of study — to any 'autonomous

⁶⁰ Patrick Kéchichian and Édith Wolf, 'Dans la logique de la barbarie ordinaire', *Le Monde*, 27 June 2003.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Frédéric Chambon, '*La Squalle*, une fiction militante pour alerter l'opinion', *Le Monde*, 29 November 2000.

reasoner'.⁶³ This cogent and familiar argument comprises two contiguous claims: (1) that truth inheres in, corresponds with, hangs upon the facts (which I shall call the referential claim); and (2) that the most prized, because primary, use of language — that to which Wolf, Brune and Genestal aspire — consists in describing the facts as precisely as possible, in relating to others the essential, intractable, universal qualities of the real (the descriptive claim). As well as being the pivots upon which estimations of their evidential value turn, this two-pronged proposition forms the petard which explodes the discursively constructed façade of authenticity wherein Wolf's *En réunion*, Brune's *La Tournante* and Genestal's *La Squale* are clad; for, of these bifurcated claims, both are fallacies, the enucleation of which tips the balance of argument away from an assessment of truth-value on the basis of correspondence with the facts towards an analysis of discourse and its productive, *performative* effects. Yet, precisely what are the clever, 'confidence' tricks which these three texts conspire to play?

In *Le Scandale des 'tournantes'*, Mucchielli accuses Genestal and others of sensationalism — of deliberately exceeding the limits of fact, so as to arouse feelings of consternation and to galvanize politicians and the wider public into action.⁶⁴ In his review of the film, Videau refutes this charge, citing the film's evidential veracity, its basis in reality: 'C'est à partir de [s]es expériences qu'il a souhaité témoigner, ce qui est une garantie de réalisme et nous prémunit contre les excès propres à affoler l'opinion publique'.⁶⁵ As with Genestal's *La Squale*, the truth of Wolf's narrative is supposedly safeguarded against such excesses under the aegis of the facts:

Un jour, une fille a disparu de ma classe. Des garçons ne sont plus venus. On a raconté la première histoire de viol collectif. J'ai interrogé ceux qui connaissaient ces garçons. Mes questions les étonnaient; l'un

⁶³ 'Taking Subjectivity into Account', pp. 21-22.

⁶⁴ '[L]e film dénonce et cherche à provoquer l'indignation. Avec succès', he writes (*Le Scandale des 'tournantes'*, p. 12).

⁶⁵ '*La Squale*, film français de Fabrice Genestal', p. 120.

d'eux m'a dit: 'Mais, madame, maintenant c'est comme ça qu'on fait'.⁶⁶

These are the objective references which vindicate Wolf's claim to authenticity, and which designate the text as being worthy of belief — until one realizes, that is, that these events are merely the scaffold upon which another, entirely mythical narrative has been foisted:

Et puis, dans les années 1995-1996, on m'a raconté une légende. C'est une rumeur, et généralement on situe l'action dans la ville voisine. On dit que quatre ou cinq garçons ont violé une fille; c'était la nuit, ils lui ont mis un sac poubelle sur la tête, pour éviter d'être reconnus, et lorsque le sac est parti, l'un des violeurs a compris que c'était sa sœur. Quand on m'a raconté cette légende, car c'en est une, je me suis dit: c'est ça l'histoire.⁶⁷

Thus, whilst Wolf's *En réunion* retains as its referent-objects the real events which took place in 1988, these referents are revealed to be mere materiality without, because evacuated of, any signifying substance; and so the actual events which the narrative purports to describe are excavations, hollowed-out spaces, filled with all manner of surreptitiously substituted significations. This is the referential fallacy ('*l'illusion référentielle*'),⁶⁸ and it vitiates completely Wolf's claims to represent reality. It is this type- or category-mistake — in this case, 'of mistaking a narrative account of real events for a literal account thereof'⁶⁹ — that characterizes not just Wolf's *En réunion*, but, also, Brune's *La Tournante*, and Genestal's *La Squale*; and it is this clever trickery, this sophistic strategy of masquerade, that constitutes the quintessence of their style. That these three narratives are not true to fact signals that their apparent authenticity and its attendant credibility are

⁶⁶ Édith Wolf, *En réunion* (Paris: Éditions Grasset & Fasquelle, 2003), note on the dust- and back covers followed by the cipher 'E. W.'.

⁶⁷ Patrick Kéchichian and Édith Wolf, 'Dans la logique de la barbarie ordinaire', *Le Monde*, 27 June 2003.

⁶⁸ Roland Barthes, 'L'Effet de réel', *Communications*, 11 (1968), 84-89 (p. 88).

⁶⁹ *The Content of the Form*, p. 48.

discursively generated as truth-effects. This raises the cardinal question: if truth need not necessarily correspond with the facts but can be formulated, fabricated, feigned, what does it mean to pass off as fact that which has been phantasmatically obtained? Mucchielli's mistake is not that he misdiagnoses the problem, that Wolf's *En réunion*, Brune's *La Tournante* and Genestal's *La Squale* are fictionalizations masquerading as statements of fact, but that, by confusing the conceptual contents of those fictionalizations with the referents — the non-discursive facts of 'la tournante' — to which, ostensibly, those fictions relate, he dismisses the very possibility of, foreclosing the discursive space available to those affected by, 'la tournante' on the basis that *these* representations are fabrications. In this way, Mucchielli commits the same category-mistake as Wolf, Brune, and Genestal, but in reverse, taking as matters of fact those objects of discourse which ought to be more properly understood as discursively constituted effects. Despite these divergent claims as to that which constitutes the matter of 'la tournante', Wolf, Brune, Genestal and Mucchielli's accounts take the same form and share the same assumption as to the content of the form: that language has the capacity *to describe* things in the world sufficiently accurately, obviating confusion arising from, by anticipating and occluding sources of, ambiguity, and this because the description adopted can be used and understood if not by everyone, everywhere, universally, at least 'under a range of standard or typical instances'⁷⁰ — which is to say, more or less 'objectively'. Significantly, as well as limiting the scope of whatever truth may be generated narratively, this common conception of language conceals the set of performative processes, forces and effects by which truth is produced rhetorically.

Originary Relations and Partial Perspectives

Traditionally speaking, and still as commonly construed, the primary function of language is expression; and whilst this metaphor calls forth

⁷⁰ 'Taking Subjectivity into Account', p. 20.

an image of words being emitted or exuded, as if under pressure, that which is quite literally ‘pressed out’ (hence, the piquant Italian *espresso*) may be more usefully thought to refer to the extraction of intrinsic meaning from an object. Inasmuch as it has meaning in itself, the thing can speak for itself (*res ipsa loquitur*, in the Latin); but if this meaning has not been expressed precisely, as is the scientific use and wont, it is said to have been misunderstood and/or represented falsely: ‘Si les gens se disent: C’est bien ce qu’on pensait, la cité, c’est la zone et la barbarie, alors ils n’ont pas compris le film, plaide Fabrice G[e]nestal’.⁷¹ Given his fastidious concern with ensuring the film’s accuracy (‘le souci d’authenticité’), and his resolve that it should reconstruct *les cités* and the sexual violence which takes place there and do so faithfully (‘On a reconstitué une cité imaginaire mais emblématique. Car cela se passe dans toutes les cités’),⁷² that Genestal should dismiss so summarily the hypothesis of misrepresentation (of failed or falsified expression) is hardly astonishing; for it is in asserting the correspondence of his words and images with real things in the world that he gains the privileges of authoritative speaking. Thus, to concede that this (or any other) relationship of correspondence is constructed — that, according to David Gooding’s apophthegm, ‘it is skilled agency that brings about the convergence of material and verbal practices’ — would work under and wash away, rendering capriciously insecure, the epistemological grounds upon which such appeals to authority stand; and the denial and/or the dispossession of this potential,⁷³ not of the representational power to describe, but of the performative power to construct, relations of correspondence with reality, is to perpetrate that which John Langshaw Austin calls the ““descriptive” fallacy’.⁷⁴ So, whilst Genestal’s *La Squal*e and the other texts (including Mucchielli’s) disclose by reaffirming

⁷¹ Frédéric Chambon, ‘*La Squal*e, une fiction militante pour alerter l’opinion’, *Le Monde*, 29 November 2000.

⁷² ‘Le père de “la Squal

⁷³ As Christina Crosby writes in ‘Dealing with Differences’ (p. 136), ‘[t]he relationship, then, between “the real” and knowledge of the real, between “facts” and theory, history and theory is occluded’ (*Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 130-143).

⁷⁴ *How to Do Things with Words*, pp. 2-3, 72-73, 100, 144-145, 148, and passim.

systematically that they represent the real, they conceal simultaneously the literalizing mechanisms — the performative forces and effects — by which the appearance of representational correspondence is achieved. What is more, since the epistemic authority which accrues from assigning such relationships of correspondence depends upon their being primary, singular, *originary*, and because such claims carry an automatic presumption of veracity, the descriptive fallacy brings about as its necessary corollary either the exclusion, elision and effacement of alternative perspectives ('[t]he problematic of historical elision'),⁷⁵ or their appropriation and instrumentalization for the purposes of investing dominant, hegemonic discourses with the accoutrements of authenticity ('the colonization of the specifics of daily existence').⁷⁶ Hence, whereas Mucchielli's sociological description of 'la tournante' serves to identify in order to disqualify the discourse of 'unreason' — in this case, the discourse of women ('[Q]uid des "témoins" directs?', asks Marzano),⁷⁷ Genestal's cinematographic description appropriates the discourse of the feminine Other for his own, however well-intentioned ends: "Mon film doit servir d'alerte, il faut aider ces filles, leur redonner la parole, leur faire comprendre que leur corps leur appartient", clame le réalisateur'.⁷⁸ Crucially, such corollaries — 'of appropriation, instrumentality, and distancing'⁷⁹ — result from the invocation of some originary relation between words and things which such objectivist discourses inaugurate but claim only to describe.

The distinction from which this chapter departed — Freud's — sets science against literature: the former, having escaped from under the improper, because unreasonable, influence of affect, deals only with the facts, leaving to the latter the production of certain (emotional, aesthetic, literary) effects. Analysis of Wolf's *En réunion*, Brune's *La Tournante* and Genestal's *La Squale*, however, reveals the convergence of

⁷⁵ Jennifer Terry, 'Theorizing Deviant Historiography', *Differences*, 3 (1991), 55-74 (pp. 69-70).

⁷⁶ 'Under Western Eyes', p. 72.

⁷⁷ Michela Marzano, 'Viols, tournant dangereux', *Le Figaro littéraire*, 12 May 2005.

⁷⁸ 'Fabrice Genestal, réalisateur: "Il faut aider ces filles"', *Le Point*, 22 January 2007.

⁷⁹ *Gender Trouble*, pp. 183-184.

ontological and discursive facts to be the product of signifying effects. This does not mean that these texts should be unceremoniously disregarded, along with whatever truth they convey, but that they should be viewed — like all, even the most rigorously scientific points of view — ‘[as] *partial* perspectives [...] susceptible to reinterpretation and revision, they are both incomplete and value-laden, telling us something but not everything about the world and doing so at a certain cost’.⁸⁰ In this chapter, my preoccupation has been with the form of these fictionalizations — primarily with ‘how’ Wolf, Brune and Genestal tell their stories of ‘la tournante’ (and with the interpretive costs which they incur) rather than with ‘what’ these stories themselves contain. In the third and final chapter of this archaeological investigation, on the analogy of the first where I placed the bodily experience of ‘la tournante’ under the penetrating gaze of phenomenology, the principal focus of my analytical interest shifts to the psychoanalytic (f)acts of ‘la tournante’. More specifically, I argue that Freud’s theory of debasement (‘*Erniedrigung*’)⁸¹ can help us to unpick the causal nexus which structures these (and other) representations of ‘la tournante’ by explicating the complex *matrix* of cultural intelligibility which operates in *les cités*, and along whose axes of reference are emplotted the discursive and bodily possibilities of feminine subjectivity. ■

⁸⁰ Scott Bravmann, *Queer Fictions of the Past: History, Culture, and Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 32.

⁸¹ *Studienausgabe*, v, 197-209.



Figure VI. Chahrazad Belayni: 'On [ne] peut plus vivre dans des conditions comme ça'.



Figure VII. Cécilia Gueye died, aged 21, in December 2008 following 'une tournante'.

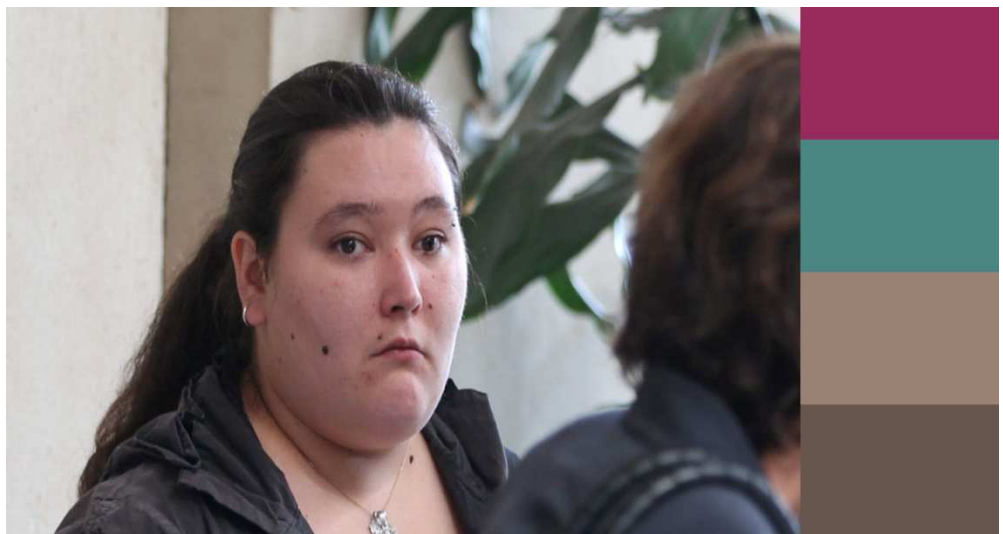


Figure VIII. Nina, photographed for *Le Parisien* in September 2012, seeks justice.

Chapter 3. 'Toutes des putes sauf ma mère': On the Tendency to Debasement in les cités



Figure IX. From *La Squale*: Adiatou Sakho, Banah Touré, Esse Lawson, and Shakara Chea.

[O]ne form of false consciousness which serves compulsory heterosexuality is the maintenance of a mother-son relationship between women and men, including the demand that women provide maternal solace, nonjudgmental nurturing, and compassion for their harassers, rapists, and batterers [...] How many strong and assertive women accept male posturing from no one but their sons?¹

As well as (re)producing reality, albeit only as an effect ('un *effet de réel*'),² the professed purpose of Genestal's film was right from the moment of its inception decidedly pedagogic: it was after all *L'Œil à coulisses*,³ an educational organisation founded by Genestal and Jeanne Sillam, that provided the seed-bed out of which the fifteen-million-franc film grew;⁴ and the determined and successful

¹ Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', *Signs*, 5 (1980), 631-660 (p. 647).

² 'L'Effet de réel', p. 88.

³ The official declaration of the charity's purposes states: '[L']association a pour objet d'] utiliser l'image comme vecteur de valorisation, d'intégration et d'éducation à la citoyenneté et comme moyen de réflexion et de création' (*Journal officiel des associations et fondations d'entreprise*, 3 May 1997).

⁴ This represents about two-and-a-quarter-million euros in today's money.

efforts of those involved to have the film reclassified tell of the film’s eminently honourable, educational aspirations.⁵ Yet, whilst Mucchielli contends that the film serves primarily to demonize boys and young men of second- or third-generation immigrant origin,⁶ identifying them as ‘internal enemies, against whom society must defend itself’,⁷ there is evidence to suggest the partial efflorescence of these instructive, didactic effects, Richard Moyon’s account of his experiences as an educationalist turned activist furnishing the necessary quota of corroboration in this respect.⁸ That the field of discursivity demarcated by these (and Bellil’s, Naït-Balk’s, Amara and Zappi’s, Loubna Méliane’s,⁹ Nacira Guénif-Souilamas and Éric Macé’s)¹⁰ texts is so conflicted, characterized by the taking up of entrenched positions and the fiery, often fractious bandying of words, gestures rhetorically towards the material, bodily nature and import of that which is at stake.¹¹ In recognition of the extent to which this (all?) discourse is invested in the body, in this concluding chapter, I consider the embodied practices on the basis of which those problematizations are formed.¹² In order to do so, I look again to Freud, for, despite Foucault’s antagonistic — and, Joel Whitebook maintains,¹³ rivalrous — disposition towards Freud, particularly with regard to the repressive hypothesis, the parallels between Freud’s psychoanalytic

⁵ ‘Suite à l’intervention de Catherine Tasca, la ministre de la Culture, son premier long-métrage [celui de Genest] n’est plus interdit au moins de 16 ans’, reports *Le Parisien* (‘Une ministre au secours de “la Squale”’, 12 September 2000).

⁶ ‘Dans le contexte de la campagne sur l’“insécurité” et les banlieues, le film permet en réalité d’élargir le thème de la violence des jeunes de cités en ouvrant un nouveau chapitre à leur charge’, remonstrates Mucchielli (*Le Scandale des ‘tournantes’*, pp. 87-89).

⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 59.

⁸ Cf. Richard Moyon, ‘Tournantes, je vous hais!’, *Mouvements*, 20 (2002), 66-69.

⁹ Loubna Méliane, *Vivre libre* (Paris: Éditions France Loisirs, 2003).

¹⁰ Nacira Guénif-Souilamas and Éric Macé, *Les Féministes et le garçon arabe* (La Tour d’Aigues: Éditions de l’Aube, 2004; repr. 2006).

¹¹ ‘[L]e corps est [...] directement plongé dans un champ politique’, Foucault reminds us (Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1975; repr. 2004), pp. 33-35).

¹² The archaeological and genealogical dimensions of analysis are brought together under the umbrella of ‘problématisation’ (Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, 3 vols (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1976-1984), II: *L’Usage des plaisirs* (1984; repr. 2004), pp. 19-20).

¹³ Joel Whitebook, ‘Against Interiority: Foucault’s Struggle with Psychoanalysis’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. by Gary Gutting, pp. 312-347.

theory of debasement and the conditions which govern the psychology of love in *les cités* are so numerous and ponderous that to do anything other than to turn Freud's psychoanalytic treatment of love to good account would, given my wish — indeed, the imperative — to view 'la tournante' in all its phases, be censurably remiss. So, when considering narratives of 'la tournante' from an unashamedly Freudian perspective, what are the aetiological factors which explain the psychoanalytic (f)acts? Before subjecting the characters depicted Brune's *La Tournante* and Genestal's *La Squalie* to psychoanalytic treatment, however, I should like to sketch out that which represents the guiding idea of psychoanalytic discourse and the privileged object of Foucault's criticism — namely, 'th[e] hypothetical process [of] "repression" (*Verdrängung*)'.¹⁴

Psychoanalysis and the 'Repressive Hypothesis'

In claiming, as he does, '[daß] [d]ie Dichter [...] an die Bedingung gebunden [sind], intellektuelle und ästhetische Lust sowie bestimmte Gefühlswirkungen zu erzielen, und darum können sie den Stoff der Realität nicht unverändert darstellen, sondern müssen Teilstücke desselben isolieren [that novelists, poets and playwrights are bound by the obligation to procure (for their readers) intellectual and aesthetic pleasure, as well as particular emotional effects, and for this reason, they cannot represent the stuff of reality as it is, unchanged, but must isolate parts of it]',¹⁵ Freud requires that science should respond to literature as if its *antistrophe*; and so his argument consists not only in the commonplace claim that science represents truly — allowing one to grasp fully — the stuff of reality, but in the additional assertion that, when science designates things in the world, it describes them, over against literature, in their totality. Throughout this investigation, I have made no such effort, nor claim, but, rather, I have sought, after Foucault's fashion, the various elements of this discourse in their

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis', *American Journal of Psychology*, 21 (1910), 181-218 (pp. 192-193).

¹⁵ *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

disparity to maintain. Like Scott Bravmann,¹⁶ what is more, I admit readily, insistently even, the partiality of this discursive mapping, this archaeo-rhetorical survey, this critical *recension*. So, whilst Freud defines the total set of relations, the prevailing conditions under which individuals make choices as to the object of their affections as the conditions of love (‘Liebesbedingungen’),¹⁷ the purview of my discussion here is considerably more bounded, being restricted to an analysis of the rules which govern culturally intelligible notions of femininity in *les cités*.

Except, if I am to set Freud’s theory of debasement to the work of resolving the discursive structure of womanhood into its constituent parts, I shall have to accept — with the proviso that it is merely for the sake of argument, and not from conviction — that which he puts forward as the starting-point of psychoanalytic thought as my point of departure, also: ‘I willingly concede that with the assumption of “repression” we stand, not at the end, but at the very beginning of a psychological theory’.¹⁸ Given that the mechanism of repression can be regarded — was regarded by Freud — as the very first principle of psychoanalysis, as the peg upon which the chain of psychoanalytic discourse hangs,¹⁹ and this despite John Forrester’s best persuasions to the contrary,²⁰ it follows that the conditions of love which obtain under any given set of socio-historical circumstances should be characterized by — since they have their genesis in — specifiable, albeit variable forms of repression. Yet, it is not only that the intrapsychic processes which conduce to individuals’ object-choices are actuated, almost in the manner of Isaac Newton’s

¹⁶ *Queer Fictions of the Past*, pp. 126-127.

¹⁷ *Studienausgabe*, v, 187.

¹⁸ ‘The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis’, pp. 194-195.

¹⁹ ‘Die Verdrängungslehre ist nun der Grundpfeiler, auf dem das Gebäude der Psychoanalyse ruht, so recht das wesentlichste Stück derselben [The theory of repression is the foundational pillar upon which the edifice of psychoanalysis rests. It is really the most essential part of it]’, states Freud (Sigmund Freud, *Zur Geschichte der psychoanalytischen Bewegung* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924), p. 13).

²⁰ [P]erhaps Foucault is making an error in taking the psychoanalytic concept of repression to be so crucial to the widespread theory of the negative character of power’, he writes (John Forrester, ‘Michel Foucault and the History of Psychoanalysis’, in *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud, Lacan and Derrida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 286-316 (pp. 304-305)).

third law of motion,²¹ by the cultural constraints placed upon love at different stages of civilization ('die kulturelle Zügelung des Liebeslebens'),²² but that such curbs are required by the libido in order that the value of the erotic should be maintained. Thus, in accordance with the principle of repression which regulates this libidinal economy, the degree of restraint applied — the extent to which the tender-hearted and erotically charged passions of love are reigned in or bridled (*zügeln*) — and the social value ascribed to 'love' (comprising both its affective and sensual dimensions) are deemed to be inversely proportional: 'In Zeiten, in denen die Liebesbefriedigung keine Schwierigkeiten fand, wie etwa während des Niederganges der antiken Kultur, wurde die Liebe wertlos, das Leben leer [At times when sexual satisfaction is found to be unhindered, like, for instance, during the decline of ancient civilization, love becomes worthless and life empty]'.²³ This being the general theory of repression, the specific task of psychoanalytically informed social criticism involves identifying the particular modalities of sexual and/or affective prohibition with an eye to devising nonce-strategies of 'liberation'. Constituting the yarn out of which Freud's analytics of psychic power is spun, it is this thread that I shall pick up in the next part of my discussion.

Let me begin with the following question: do the conditions of love in *les cités* lend themselves to psychoanalysis — to analysis, that is, in terms of 'repression'? It is evident, but perhaps too easy to forget, that the era of social crisis in France — articulated captiously as questions of, reflecting anxieties about, immigration, 'insecurity',²⁴ and integration — coincides with the end of *les trente glorieuses* and their social, but more especially economic certainties. The invocation of these geographically peripheral spaces as sites of material deprivation dominates the horizon of cultural intelligibility in *les cités*, and the dominance of this trope

²¹ 'Actioni contrariam semper & æqualem esse reactionem [To every action there is always an equal and opposite reaction]' (*Principia*).

²² *Studienausgabe*, v, 206-207.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ I mean, of course, in that distinctly French, politically polyvalent acceptance of the term.

extends beyond the strictly economic sphere to inform individual and communitarian conceptions of sexuality: ‘Derrière la pratique des tournantes, c’est une grande misère sexuelle et affective qui se révèle’.²⁵ In contrast to Freud’s image of wild and dissolute revels, of ancient civilizations characterized by the bounteous supply — and, taking one thing with another, the worthlessness — of sex, as regards the sexual and affective economy of *les cités*, the scale turns metaphorically to scarcity. Inverting the terms of Freud’s proposition, and still working on the principle of repression, ‘[of] an equal and opposite reaction’, if the conditions of love in *les cités* are shaped — as Chambon and many others claim²⁶ — by forces of rarefaction, it is reasonable, indeed logical, to assume that, under such circumstances of sexual and affective paucity, the value set upon love should rise in estimation correspondingly. That the stock of love should be valued so highly, however, appears to be flagrantly at odds with the bathetic rhetoric of love heard in and about *les cités*: ‘[U]ne professionnelle rapportait la parole d’un adolescent qui pour parler des filles disait: “Elle n’est qu’un trou”’.²⁷ This conceptualization of womanhood as emptiness, as vacant space waiting to be filled, or as virgin territory inviting colonization, has been expertly documented;²⁸ but it betokens the worthlessness of ‘woman’ — and not, as one would expect were the conditions of love in keeping with Freud’s logic of repression, her overvaluation. On this *prima facie* basis, given the widespread acknowledgement that the social and sexual mark-down of women in *les cités* reflects the spiralling devaluation there of the

²⁵ Frédéric Chambon, ‘Les viols collectifs révèlent la misère affective et sexuelle des cités’, *Le Monde*, 24 April 2001.

²⁶ In *Vivre libre*, the autobiographical account of an adolescent woman of French birth forced to confront the competing demands of her social situation, her father and estranged mother being of Moroccan origin, Méliane suggests that *les cités* are blighted as if by affective starvation: ‘Nous avons utilisé un slogan pendant la marche [des femmes des quartiers pour l’égalité et contre le ghetto]: “Dans les quartiers, on crève d’amour”. On pourrait penser que la formule est légère, alors qu’elle est grave. L’amour, la sexualité entre une fille et un garçon, c’est la base des rapports sociaux entre les futurs adultes’ (p. 200).

²⁷ ‘À la limite de soi (À propos de *La Squale*)’, p. 30.

²⁸ ‘Within patriarchal narratives, to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency, passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason’ (Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 30).

feminine, their situation in recent decades having been dolorously marked by ‘régression’,²⁹ ‘dégradation’,³⁰ and ‘oppression’,³¹ it would seem that the colour of this evidence shades away from Freud’s repressive hypothesis.

That said, in addition to the figure of the cheapened, debased woman, the love-discourse of *les cités* is permeated by another representation of the feminine wherein the entire thesaurus of love is invested, and wherein the *matrix* of feminine identity is encapsulated: ‘L’expression “toutes des putes sauf ma mère” nous est apparue comme l’illustration même de la manière dont les hommes considéraient les femmes dans les quartiers’.³² According to this simultaneously derogatory and laudative expression, the sphere of feminine subjectivity is bifurcated, the sign of ‘woman’ being subject to systematic devaluation unless, except, and until (‘sauf’) it is filled with the only valued and valuable attributes of womanhood — those belonging to or resembling that most prized and idealized incarnation of femininity, which is to say, motherhood.³³ On this supposition, since the value ascribed by men to the embodied figure of the mother is set irredeemably high, the logic of repression dictates that whatever it is in terms of love that the mother-idea signifies to them — her affective or sensual ‘good’ — must be in short, inadequate, or limited supply. This raises the possibility that young men in *les cités* are starved of maternal love, and their tendency to debase all other women (‘toutes des putes’)

²⁹ ‘Nous avons devant nous la preuve que la régression de la condition des femmes [dans les cités] est générale’, Amara and Zappi attest (*Ni putes ni soumises*, pp. 115-116).

³⁰ ‘Elle [une affaire de “tournante” très médiatisée] est intimement liée à la dégradation des conditions de vie des femmes dans les quartiers’ (Malek Boutih cited in Laurent Delcluze, ‘Viols: “Les premières victimes du ghetto sont les femmes”’, *L’Humanité*, 27 September 2002).

³¹ Consonant with the analytics of repression, *les femmes des quartiers* have developed an against-saying discourse of opposition: ‘Très tôt, Kahina [sœur de Sohane Benziane] a pris conscience qu’être une femme, “c’est un handicap dans les quartiers populaires” [...] “Mais aujourd’hui, martèle Kahina, le visage décidé, certaines se révoltent. On en a ras-le-bol de cette oppression”’ (Marie-Estelle Pech, ‘La marche des femmes est partie des lieux où la jeune fille a été brûlée vive en octobre dernier’, *Le Figaro*, 3 February 2003).

³² *Ni putes ni soumises*, p. 94.

³³ ‘Seules les femmes qui poussent un landeau [proprt “landau”: voiture d’enfant] sont respectées, indiquent-elles [les marcheuses]’ (Solenn de Royer, ‘La marche des femmes pour l’égalité et contre les ghettos arrivera le 8 mars à Paris’, *La Croix*, 7 March 2003).

could be construed accordingly as the frustrated expression and/or the aggressive acting out of feelings arising from the pathogenic effects of maternal deprivation. Whilst the postulate of absent or deficient mothering remains, at this stage, baseless conjecture, I should like to test the feasibility of this and of Freud’s repressive hypothesis further; and to this end, I propose to make use of Brune’s *La Tournante* and Genestal’s *La Squalle* as examples of ‘thick’ — which is not to say, however, ‘factual’ — description, and to assess whether the leading ideas thrown up by those texts are amenable to psychoanalytic interpretation.

On the Social and Psychic Sacralization of Things Motherly in les cités

Assuming that the overvaluation of motherhood in *les cités* speaks to the operation of some prohibition, which ushers in an absence or deficiency of the corresponding quality, and given that it is still, in these and many other quarters, primarily the mother’s role to school her children in, one might reasonably expect that this would manifest itself as an absence of, *affectivity*.³⁴ Yet, although Genestal’s *La Squalle* illustrates generously the conditions which admit of and tend towards the polarization of culturally acceptable and intelligible forms of femininity in *les cités*, as regards the absence of an affective bond between mother and son, in furtherance of this thesis, on the contrary, the film offers little evidence — indeed none. When surveying the portraiture of imaginary characters depicted by Genestal, it is Toussaint, ‘caïd brutal qui préside au viol collectif de lycéennes de la cité avant de les marquer au fer rouge’,³⁵

³⁴ ‘Normalement, la mère est considérée comme étant plus responsable de l’éducation de ses filles que le père’, (Simona Tersigni, ‘La virginité des filles et l’“honneur maghrébin” dans le contexte français’, *Hommes et migrations*, 1232 (2001), 34-40 (pp. 34-35)). Whilst specific reference is being made to families of Maghrebi origin living in France, Tersigni’s remarks have much wider, although certainly not universal applicability: ‘[S]i les femmes [en France] ont gagné en autonomie professionnelle, sexuelle et familiale, elles sont confrontées à l’inertie des rôles sociaux sexués qui leur font supporter plus que les hommes la “double journée” des tâches domestiques et éducatives’ (Éric Macé, ‘L’antisexisme est un postféminisme ou comment défendre l’individu contre les assignations de sexe’, in *Les Féministes et le garçon arabe*, ed. by Nacira Guénif-Souilamas and Éric Macé, pp. 23-57 (pp. 35-36)).

³⁵ ‘Décidément, ces gens[-]là ne sont pas comme nous’, pp. 8-9.

whose attitudes towards women capture all of the psychological ambivalency attendant upon the overvaluation of the mother (effected at the expense of all other women) by the son, but which give absolutely no indication of his being subject to the ill-effects of maternal deprivation:

TOUSSAINT (*en chipotant sur la nourriture qu'avait préparée sa mère*) Ç'a

l'air bon, ça!

MÈRE (*d'un air désapprobateur*) Tu pourrais dire bonjour à ta mère!

TOUSSAINT Bonjour, maman!

Il lui fait gentiment la bise.

MÈRE Mais présente-moi!

TOUSSAINT (*d'un geste vague de la main*) Désirée, maman. Maman,

Désirée.

DÉSIRÉE Bonjour.

MÈRE (*avec une tape encourageante sur l'épaule*) Assieds-toi, Désirée!

Désirée se met à table.

MÈRE (*à Désirée*) Tu vas bien goûter mon combo? Ouais?

Désirée fait signe que oui.

TOUSSAINT Tu m'en sers beaucoup, maman.

MÈRE Oui.³⁶

Taken in isolation, there is nothing out of the ordinary in this quotidian scene of homely familiarity, nothing either to indicate the presence of an impediment to the growth of maternal love; but, if one dismisses the hypothesis according to which an absence of motherly feeling exsiccates the communal well-spring of affection, creating the desert-like conditions, believed by many to blight *les cités*, of affective dearth ('désert affectif'),³⁷ the question remains: wherein lies the prohibition which explains the attribution by young men and others to the mother of excessive worth? That the incident possibilities of femininity in *les cités* are polarized — as Amara and Zappi's 'toutes des putes sauf ma mère' proposition implies — adverts to that which is shadowed forth by the figure of the mother, to the discursive means by which the common

³⁶ *La Squale*, dir. by Fabrice Genestal [on DVD]. Whilst the dialogue is reproduced here exactly as it appears in the French subtitles, the stage directions are merely indicative.

³⁷ Émilie Lanez, 'Viol collectif: La grande peur des cités', *Le Point*, 1 December 2000.

woman is constructed as her antitype, her ‘complementary opposite’,³⁸ her Other:

YASMINE (*inquiète*) Qu’est-ce que t’as?

TOUSSAINT (*d’un air préoccupé*) Écoute: lâche-moi!

YASMINE (*facétieusement*) T’emmènes souvent des filles ici?

TOUSSAINT (*avec dédain*) Mais bien sûr, qu’est-ce que tu crois? Ca défile
ici!

YASMINE Pourquoi tu me parles comme ça?

TOUSSAINT (*avec une colère qui monte*) C’est toi qui me parles comme si
j’étais un bouffon!

Il s’approche de très près d’elle et la regarde en face.

TOUSSAINT Tu crois que t’as des droits sur moi?

Il lui prend la tête à deux mains.

TOUSSAINT Tu te prends pour ma reum [verlan: mère]?

Il lui rejette la tête en arrière.

TOUSSAINT Ta mère!

*Il donne un coup de pied dans le mur comme pour libérer
ses frustrations.*

When, in the continuation of this sequence, Toussaint rapes Yasmine, saying ‘C’est ce que tu voulais, petite pute!’, not only does the coexistence in Toussaint’s mind of outwardly inconsistent attitudes towards women become apparent, as if his capacity to love is somehow *split* (‘Liebesspaltung’),³⁹ but the first of two aetiological factors — which, together, account for the need to debase the sexual object — is shown to be present; for whilst Genestal construes Toussaint’s actions in terms which are problematically formulaic,⁴⁰ according to Freud, it is the

³⁸ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; repr. London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 58-59.

³⁹ *Studienausgabe*, v, 202-203. In his audio commentary of the film (cf. *infra*), Genestal evokes the schizophreniform nature of Toussaint’s character: ‘On voit Toussaint. En fait, il a vraiment deux visages: un visage à la maison (donc plutôt le gentil garçon, un peu macho, mais quand même respectueux de sa mère et assez affectueux) et puis, de l’autre, c’est le Toussaint de la cité, le Toussaint qui joue les durs’.

⁴⁰ When watching Genestal’s *La Squalle*, it is evident right from the very start that there has been no serious attempt here to rethink rape — or, as Sharon Marcus puts it in her compelling way, ‘to rewrite the script’ (‘Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention’, in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, pp. 385-403 (pp. 391-392)). Hence, the film constitutes an object-lesson

firmness of the *hold* which the mother maintains over her son that is, by degrees, pathogenic: '[Erstens] das Maß der *Anziehung*, welches die zu verlassenden infantilen Objekte äußern können und das proportional ist der erotischen Besetzung, die ihnen noch in der Kindheit zuteil wurde [There is, firstly, the weight of *attraction* which the yet-to-be-relinquished infantile objects can exert, and which is proportional to the erotic attachment formed to them in childhood]'.⁴¹ Lest this should be misconstrued as meaningless psychobabble, it may prove useful to winnow the normal conditions of love from those which Freud defines as pathological.

Ordinarily, with the onset of puberty, the emotional attachment formed by the child to, in response to the warmth of affection radiating from and the dutiful solicitude demonstrated by, his principal care-giver, customarily the mother, is newly cathected — charged with additional, powerfully sensual energy. Because of the obstacle raised against incest, however, which debars the mother from becoming the figure around which the extant and the nascent currents can coalesce, the developmental path leads the child away from his (preferred, but prohibited) primary object-choice, the young man's sensuality — and, in time, the feelings of affection previously vested in, for so long the preserve of, the infantile object — being drawn towards those objects which offer the realistic and enticing prospect of initiation into sexual life. This Oedipal drama reaches the climatic point of narrative closure — the beau-ideal of love — when, finally, affection and sensuality come together, tethered to ('gekettet') an extraneous, non-incestuous object, chosen in the image of, but not the mother: 'Der Mann wird Vater und Mutter verlassen — nach der biblischen Vorschrift — und seinem Weibe nachgehen, Zärtlichkeit und Sinnlichkeit sind dann beisammen [A man shall leave his father and his mother — according to the biblical

in the tropology of rape, for this and many other similarly 'well-scripted' narratives (cf. *Baise-moi*, dir. by Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi, and *Irréversible*, dir. by Gaspar Noé) metaphorize typically into an ecstatic act of revenge: 'Je nous ai vengées', Désirée tells Yasmine.

⁴¹ *Studienausgabe*, v, 201-202.

command — and shall cleave unto his wife; [in whom] affection and sensuality are then united]’.⁴² Except, when Toussaint rapes Yasmine — and, in the film’s opening scene, Leila — his errant trajectory shatters the seductive logic of this fairy-tale teleology; for such grievous acts of antipathy towards women represent not the confluence of these two streams, the high-water mark of libidinal energy, the liminal point in Toussaint’s psyche at which sensual pleasure and affective feeling are brought into relations of mutually reinforcing, felicitous reciprocity, but their scission, the splitting away of the sensual from, the fissile effect of the psychic *pull* (*‘Anziehung’*) exerted by the mother on, the subject’s affections:

Une mère qui ne respecte pas la vie privée de son fils, qui entretient une attitude ambiguë à son égard — séduction, charme, propos équivoques —, qui cherche à accaparer tout son amour par un chantage affectif, l’enferme dans une situation ingérable, pathogène.⁴³

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Toussaint is wholly incapable of treating those whom he acquires as objects of sensuality with some degree of tenderness, as Genestal demonstrates in the film’s most intimate and saccharinely romanticized scene, where Toussaint conjures up, offering Désirée ingress to, his emotional *cosmos idios*;⁴⁴ rather, it signifies that, under certain circumstances — critically, in the lead-up to and during sex, the subject’s affections are ‘held back’ or ‘retained’, the etymological sense of, and the gloss put by James Strachey upon, the Greek ‘cathexis’ (*‘Besetzung’*). That Toussaint’s mother retains ‘rights’ over her son (*‘Tu crois que t’as des droits sur moi?’*) speaks to an *excess* of affection which accounts, in part, for her overvaluation, and which explains, also, the degree of resistance — an accumulation or build-up of

⁴² *Studienausgabe*, v, 200-201.

⁴³ Vincent Cespèdes, *La Cerise sur le béton: Violences urbaines et libéralisme sauvage* (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), p. 265.

⁴⁴ ‘Ça [la fumée de haschich] se mélange à ton parfum’, intones Toussaint, the consummate alchemist and conjuror; ‘Tu me fais kiffer, toi’, he reveals in an unguarded moment whilst lavishing gentle, generous caresses upon her.

energy in the mind's psychic circuitry, an effect like impedance — encountered by the subject's affections as they seek to relinquish their infantile fixation by cathecting objects regarded as potential outlets for the subject's swelling sense of sensual excitation.

Alert to the danger which arises when the sphere of love falls unduly, because excessively, under the sway of the mother, Naït-Balk construes this behaviour as an exercise in affective 'control' which tips the balance of power in her favour:

‘En principe, on aime son fils et on désire son bonheur. Pense-t-elle vraiment à moi quand elle franchit les limites de ma vie intime?’ La plupart des mères maghrébines ont tendance à contrôler la vie de leurs fils, qu'ils soient homosexuels ou pas.⁴⁵

Whilst it is clear, however, that Naït-Balk feels his mother's involvement in his love-life to be an unwelcome imposition, can the process at work in these psychic structures, that which leads to an overvaluation of the mother by the son, be properly described as, raising once again the contentious question of, 'repression'?

Since excessive attachment to and subsequent domination by the mother are produced in and through the child's infinitesimal interactions with her, since there is, in other words, no pre-existing apprehension of the mother in the child's psyche to be restrained, checked, put down, or kept under, one would do better to define this as an instance of psychic *production* — far removed from, and not in the least helpfully explicated by, the negative process of 'repression'. Provided that one accepts the principal premise of Foucault's 'repressive hypothesis', therefore, according to which 'il [le pouvoir conçu en termes de répression] n'établit jamais de rapport que sur le mode négatif',⁴⁶ this question cannot be answered, for the language of 'repression' does not lend itself to being expressed, in the affirmative. Paradoxically, then, at the same time as its greatest proponent (Freud) and critic (Foucault)

⁴⁵ *Un homo dans la cité*, pp. 107-108. Cf. *Vivre libre*, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁶ *La Volonté de savoir*, p. 110.

emphasize the centrality to psychoanalytic thinking of the ‘repressive hypothesis’, when considering the conditions of love which obtain in *les cités*, and more particularly the social and psychic sacralization of things motherly, psychoanalysis reveals not the fundamental role of repression in, but, rather, the *positivity* of, their genesis.⁴⁷

As well as the son, and the mother, and the ‘whore’, which is to say, the mother’s psychically debased Other, the love-scene in *les cités* is peopled by — and the *dramatis personae* of Genestal’s *La Squalle* and Brune’s *La Tournante* include — another archetypal character, another feminine figure who, because she shares the ‘sacred’ status enjoyed by the mother, is systematically conflated with her: ‘La cour s’est surtout plongée dans ce code bien établi qui sépare les femmes en deux catégories distinctes et hermétiques, d’un côté la mère et la sœur, intouchables et sacrées, de l’autre les salopes’.⁴⁸ Whilst the role of the sister and that of the mother are psychoanalytically similar, it is the relationship between sister and brother that provides the key not only to understanding the operation of the second aetiological factor, but to squaring the circle of confusion which began with the Freudian postulate of ‘repression’, yet which revealed the mother-idea to be governed by something more akin to the Foucauldian thematics of ‘prolifération’.⁴⁹ In the next part of this chapter, in order to extend the

⁴⁷ ‘By “positivity”’, writes James E. Miller, ‘he [Foucault] seems to have had in mind how certain ways of thinking, by embodying a certain style of reasoning, ordered some aspect of existence or defined some field of knowledge’ (*The Passion of Michel Foucault* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993; repr. 2000), pp. 29-30). This can be set instructively against the sense taken in by Foucault’s use of the term in *La Volonté de savoir*, the acceptation which I adopt here: ‘Pourquoi accepte-t-on si aisément cette conception juridique du pouvoir? Et par là l’élision de tout ce qui pourrait en faire l’efficacité productive, la richesse stratégique, la positivité?’ (p. 113).

⁴⁸ Pascale Robert-Diard, ‘Les auteurs du viol collectif d’Argenteuil condamnés à des peines allant de 5 à 12 ans de prison’, *Le Monde*, 30 September 2002. In an on-line article, Mohammed Colin reaffirms the orthodoxy of this taxonomy: ‘La sacralité que donnent les garçons auteurs des tournantes à leur mère et leurs sœurs, ils l’enlèvent complètement à leur victime, si bien qu’elle devient une chose à leurs yeux’ (‘Signal fort contre les viols collectifs’, *Saphir News*, 28 September 2002 <http://www.saphirnews.com/Signal-fort-contre-les-viols-collectifs_a93.html> [accessed 22 March 2013]).

⁴⁹ From the mid-1970s onwards, according to Didier Eribon, Foucault considers the structuring and *generative* principle of discourse to be that of ‘prolifération’ and not, as he had believed previously, ‘[le] principe de “raréfaction”’ (*Réflexions sur la question gay* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), p. 415).

scope of Freud's theory of debasement — and, therewith, the purchase of the 'repressive hypothesis' — even further, I should like to demonstrate, with recourse to representations of brother- and sisterhood in Brune's *La Tournante*, how the status of 'untouchability' accorded by young men in *les cités* to their sisters results in the frustration of their sexual desires.

Frustrations in Reality; or, 'la tendance à la non-mixité'

So, the tendency to debasement proceeds partly from the overvaluation which attaches to the mother, and which extends to those like her — namely, the sister — who have been elevated in the minds of certain young men to the affective or 'sacred' sphere, the consequences of being psychically cast down from which could not be starker:

On connaît les mecs qui ont lancé ça [...] Ils disent: 'Celle-là, je l'ai trouée. Elle est bonne. Je lui ai mis le doigt dans le cul, elle a joui toute la nuit, la salope'. Ils voient ça comme un jeu ou comme un sport. Les gonzesses, c'est que de la viande pour eux, ils voient pas du tout le problème de s'amuser avec. Tant que c'est pas leur sœur, en tout cas, ils s'en foutent royal.⁵⁰

Couched in the most abject terms, conveying an image of 'woman' characterized by her lewd carnality ('Les gonzesses, c'est que de la viande'), reified as an object of men's ludic activity ('[I]ls voient pas du tout le problème de s'amuser avec'), Benoît's remarks are *meaningful* inasmuch as they reconstitute the reality which confronts young women in *les cités*: 'Ils [les garçons dans le quartier] nous appellent les "gigots", la viande fraîche, des trucs comme ça. En fait, c'est comme de la viande. Ils nous voient comme des objets, pas comme des filles, quoi!'.⁵¹ Conceived as 'an order of language which speaks violence', which is to

⁵⁰ Élisabeth Brune, *La Tournante* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 2001), p. 133.

⁵¹ The words of an unnamed girl ('[faisant partie d']une bande de filles qui s'évadent, un samedi après-midi, loin de la cité') cited in Amar Henni and Gilles Marin, *Cités hors-la-loi: Un autre monde, une jeunesse qui impose ses codes* (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 2002), p. 172.

say, ‘names certain behaviors and events as violent, but not others, and constructs objects and subjects of violence, and hence violence as a social fact’,⁵² such rhetoric is equally *forceful*, since it defines and delimits socially accepted (and acceptable) ways of embodying femininity in *les cités*, evoking an order of discourse organized along the strictly policed lines of sexual dissymmetry:

On dirait que participer à cette tournante, pour eux, c’est comme d’avoir gagné la Coupe du monde. Ils sont les rois. Ils se mettraient des médailles. De toute façon, les mecs peuvent faire toutes les conneries qu’ils veulent, on ne leur dira jamais rien. Mais une fille, il suffit qu’elle se maquille ou qu’on la voie avec un mec pour qu’on la regarde de travers et qu’il y ait plein de rumeurs sur elle. Sa réputation est foutue.⁵³

Here, as expressed by Leïla, ostensibly an imaginary character of Brune’s manufacture,⁵⁴ the notion of reputation (‘la fameuse réputation’)⁵⁵ serves to sanction submission to the injunction which such words as ‘pute’ and ‘ salope’ carry, and to penalize those of questionable ‘docility’⁵⁶ whose morals, manners of speech and motility diverge from that which is required by the disciplines of normative femininity:

Dans ce contexte favorable à la propagation des rumeurs, les femmes qui n’adhèrent pas aux injonctions de féminité traditionnelles sont soupçonnées d’être des ‘salopes’, ou ‘des putes’ par les garçons (les ‘tournantes’ étant la forme extrême du prix qu’on leur fait payer...)⁵⁷

⁵² Teresa de Lauretis, ‘The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations on Representation and Gender’, in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 31-50 (p. 32).

⁵³ *La Tournante*, p. 154.

⁵⁴ Cf. Frédéric Chambon, ‘Une fille qui se fait tourner dans le quartier, c’est elle qui l’a cherché’, *Le Monde*, 24 April 2001.

⁵⁵ *Vivre libre*, p. 200.

⁵⁶ Cf. Michel Foucault, ‘Les corps dociles’, in *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1975; repr. 2004), pp. 159-166.

⁵⁷ Horia Kebabza, ‘Logiques de genre dans des quartiers populaires’, *Hommes et migrations*, 1248 (2004), 52-63 (p. 57).

Thus, as well as their basis in fact, that which I am seeking to draw out from Benoît and Leïla's descriptions is the performative force of such enunciations, their possible and/or discernible effect; for the rhetoric of rape derives its power as much from its statemental capacity to describe as from its enunciative potential *to do* violence to those — mostly, but not exclusively women — who are hailed by its insistent interpellation.⁵⁸ Under the weight of such conditions ('le poids d'une forte pression permanente'),⁵⁹ where rape and reputation anchor an anatomo-politics of the feminine body, it is not in the least surprising, although it remains nonetheless deeply disturbing, that young women in *les cités* should consider violence and the rhetoric of violence to be daily disciplines, to be ranked amongst the most constitutive elements of their subjectivity: 'La violence se banalise et devient le seul moyen de dialoguer. Même les filles s'habituent à cette violence journalière, insidieuse envers elles. Les insultes, les "chambrettes" sur leur aspect physique ou vestimentaire, les crachats font partie de leur quotidien'.⁶⁰ Discursively, such irruptions of profanity have been mobilized strategically in order to demonstrate — and, often, to exaggerate — the dangers to women of, reinforcing man's ('traditional', 'natural') dominion over, the putatively unruly and barbarous 'outside'. Psychoanalytically, given such conditions in reality, one can understand the strength of the impulse amongst certain young men to confine those whom they over-estimate psychically within, reaffirming the hierological basis of woman's historical relegation to, the supposedly safe and sacred 'inside'. Hence, when one studies the range of restrictive practices imposed upon — and, to some extent, adopted more or less freely by — young women in this context, it is almost always violence and the threat of violence that are cited by advocates of such strategies as the seemingly peremptory pretext:

⁵⁸ 'The threat of rape [...] is a constitutive and sustained moment in the production of the feminine body', concludes Cahill ('Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body', pp. 56-57).

⁵⁹ Malek Boutih cited in Laurent Delcluze, 'Viols: "Les premières victimes du ghetto sont les femmes"', *L'Humanité*, 27 September 2002.

⁶⁰ Samira Bellil cited in Mina Kaci, 'Samira Bellil ou la rescapée de l'enfer des viols collectifs', *L'Humanité*, 22 October 2002.

Un garçon, à qui je demandais pourquoi il voulait que sa sœur reste à la maison, m'a répondu: c'est chaud en bas. Tu sais bien comment ça se passe, Safia. Il y a une telle violence, il faut protéger nos sisters (sœurs).⁶¹

As well as the highly plausible proposition that, since the mid-1990s, an expansion of disciplinary controls specifically targeting girls and women in *les cités* has taken place, and this in order 'to protect' them from the violence which, those on the ground agree, pervades much of France's suburban space, it has been argued that such restrictions enforce an unwritten code of social and spatial segregation, not only attenuating the possibilities of exchange between adolescent women and men, but unleashing an accelerating spiral of violence fuelled principally by boys' pent-up feelings of sexual frustration.⁶² Yet, and this is the cardinal question upon which this part of my argument hangs, to what extent does the control exercised by young men in *les cités* over their sisters ('[le] contrôle aigu des frères sur les sœurs')⁶³ contribute to the conditions of frustration from which — according to psychoanalytic and naturalistic accounts of rape⁶⁴ — sexual violence springs? In order better to understand the social aetiology of the frustrations which many in *les cités* report, I propose turning back to the jumble of imaginary and, yes, partially plagiarized characters in Brune's *La Tournante*.

Like Toussaint in Genestal's *La Squale*, Rachid in Brune's *La Tournante* dons the cap of 'caïd brutal'; and by ensuring that his sister conforms with the socially idealized attributes of feminine subjectivity

⁶¹ Safia Lebdi cited in Solenn de Royer, 'La marche des femmes pour l'égalité et contre les ghettos arrivera le 8 mars à Paris', *La Croix*, 7 March 2003.

⁶² Cf. *Ni putes ni soumises*, pp. 52-53.

⁶³ David Lepoutre, 'Action ou vérité: Notes ethnographiques sur la socialisation sexuelle des adolescents dans un collège de banlieue', *Ville-école-intégration*, 116 (1999), 171-184 (p. 175).

⁶⁴ I am reminded, in particular, of Plaza's critique of the (still-)dominant ideology of rape, '[qui] posait l'homme comme une espèce de bouc en rut dont la fougue ne supporte aucune entrave, comme un être bestial sans retenue' ('Nos dommages et leurs intérêts', p. 102).

(‘vierge’, ‘dévouée’, ‘sage’),⁶⁵ Marion’s rapist and Leïla’s brother displays the archetypal attitudes of that excessively ‘manly’, ‘virilist’ *persona*:

Si Leïla se promène une seule fois dans la rue sans foulard, je peux la faire enfermer pour trois jours. C’est vital. Si jamais ta sœur passe pour une taspé, alors c’est la honte. Tu peux même plus marcher dans la rue, les gens vont même plus te parler. Mais Leïla est bien dressée, elle sait ce qu’elle doit faire. Autre chose que le bordel qui court ici.⁶⁶

If ‘she knows what she must do’, it is only because Leïla is compelled to play the essential part which is expected of, and which is deemed properly to belong to, girls and young women; but quite apart from the degree of compulsion which characterizes this regulatory fiction, ‘th[is] disguising and distorting of possible options’,⁶⁷ that which emerges very clearly is the degree to which Rachid’s masculinity is constructed discursively and valued socially not only in terms of his capacity to exercise ‘power — over women’,⁶⁸ but in proportion to the status conferred upon him by the demonstrable efficacy of the punitive measures which he takes in order ‘to preserve’ his sister’s honour. Thus are reconciled ‘the relentless repudiation of the feminine’,⁶⁹ the historical and developmental setting of masculine identity against that of social women, and the overvaluation which attaches to, arising from the fixation of affective feeling upon, the sister and/or the mother:

[L]e garçon qui impose à sa sœur ‘un comportement de pudeur’ est respecté par le groupe. Il ne voit ainsi pas sa domination, sa virilité remise en question [...] La pire chose que vous pouvez faire à un garçon vivant dans les quartiers, c’est s’attaquer à sa sœur ou à sa mère. Il n’y a

⁶⁵ *Vivre libre*, p. 65.

⁶⁶ *La Tournante*, pp. 201-202.

⁶⁷ ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence’, pp. 637-638.

⁶⁸ Michael S. Kimmel, ‘Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity’, in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. by Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 266-287 (p. 282).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

rien de plus terrible que d’être perçu comme le frère ou le fils d’une fille qualifiée de ‘pute’.⁷⁰

On the one hand, then, by cordoning off his sister from the contagion of moral infection which even the loosest suggestion of deviation from the proper styles of feminine subjectivity can bring ([P]our les garçons, une fille en jupe, c’est une taspé (pétasse), une fille facile’),⁷¹ the chaste behaviour imposed by Rachid upon Leïla serves to maintain intact — to strengthen, in fact — his psychic over-estimation of her. On the other hand, however, this criss-crossing lattice-work of constraints circumscribes the bodily and discursive possibilities of feminine subjectivity, laying down the limits of ‘sex’ in *les cités*: ‘C’est pervers, commente Safia [Lebdi]. Ils ne parlent pas d’interdiction mais de protection’.⁷² Accordingly, if one imagines the space of feminine subjectivity as an inhabitable grid or chequer-board of possibilities, where the constraints which I have described cause particular ‘openings’, ‘squares’, or ‘cells’ to be blanked out or blocked off, the ‘moves’ which girls and young women in *les cités* can make are revealed to be structurally restricted,⁷³ not to the extent necessarily that they are completely closed in or ‘checkmated’, but inasmuch as, whilst certain strategies may be foreclosed and/or fraught with danger,⁷⁴ room for manoeuvre and pockets of resistance remain:

Les filles redoutent davantage leurs frères que leurs pères. Elles les appellent les CRS. Quand elles sont en centre-ville, elles regardent toujours s’ils ne sont pas en train de les épier. Pour aller en boîte, c’est

⁷⁰ Amar Henni cited in Willy Le Devin, ‘Être une “pute” s’apparente parfois simplement à sortir avec un garçon’, *Libération*, 19 April 2011.

⁷¹ The words of Maria, ‘17 ans, [qui] cache sa féminité’, cited in Marie-Estelle Pech, ‘Une fille en jupe, c’est une taspé, une fille facile’, *Le Figaro*, 21 June 2002.

⁷² Solenn de Royer, ‘La marche des femmes pour l’égalité et contre les ghettos arrivera le 8 mars à Paris’, *La Croix*, 7 March 2003.

⁷³ Cf. Paul Veyne, ‘Foucault Revolutionizes History’, trans. by Catherine Porter, in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 146-182 (p. 177)

⁷⁴ According to Butler, and I concur, ‘the term “strategy” better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs’ (‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution’, p. 522).

tout un stratagème. Je connais une fille de 18 ans qui s'est fait engueuler par son cadet de 12 ans, elle portait des boucles d'oreilles, des créoles. Il l'a traitée de salope devant tout le monde.⁷⁵

Under such 'carceral' conditions ('Au quotidien, les filles sont cantonnées dans les maisons'),⁷⁶ where brothers act as guardians of the social and moral order, overseeing an entire architecture whose 'panoptic' structures keep girls and young women 'in check' ('une surveillance quasi-policière'),⁷⁷ and despite the considerable benefits which accrue to boys and young men from this fraternal arrangement ('le "système des frères"'),⁷⁸ the effects of the intersexual segregation which they enforce bound recalcitrantly back: 'Plus que de violence sexuelle en cité, il faudrait parler de misère sexuelle, sublimée par une surenchère verbale. Ces jeunes n'ont aucun moyen de vivre la sociabilité affective propre à cet âge, et du coup la tension [y] est permanente'.⁷⁹ Hence, in contrast to the all-seeing, all-powerful figure of the 'big brother', 'un grand frère à la fois protecteur et tyrannique',⁸⁰ who sits — and whom local politicians sought, it is alleged,⁸¹ to install — at the apex of this pyramidal structure, the occupiers of this enunciative function find themselves to be just as circumscribed within the narrow confines of this virilist enclosure ('l'enfermement viriliste').⁸² Shut away those love-objects which they desire, and deprived of opportunities to channel their sexual impulses in more socially acceptable ways, the frustration felt by

⁷⁵ The words of Sabrina, '24 ans, animatrice', cited in Mina Kaci, 'Femmes des cités: Oubliées de la politique de la ville, les femmes des quartiers populaires adressent un manifeste aux candidats à l'élection présidentielle', *L'Humanité*, 7 April 2002.

⁷⁶ Fadela Amara cited in Cécilia Gabizon, 'Les filles sont révoltées par leur sort', *Le Figaro*, 1 February 2003.

⁷⁷ 'Action ou vérité: Notes ethnographiques sur la socialisation sexuelle des adolescents dans un collège de banlieue', p. 175.

⁷⁸ *Ni putes ni soumises*, pp. 91-92.

⁷⁹ Caroline Vaissière, author of 'Les sociabilités adolescentes dans les quartiers difficiles', cited in Émilie Lanez, 'Viol collectif: La grande peur des cités', *Le Point*, 1 December 2000.

⁸⁰ 'Commentaire audio par Fabrice Genestal (réalisateur)', in *La Squale* [on DVD].

⁸¹ Guillemette Faure, 'La politique des grands frères que dénonce [Rachida] Dati, c'était quoi?', *Rue89*, 7 June 2008 <<http://www.rue89.com/explicateur/la-politique-des-grands-freres-que-denonce-dati-cetait-quoi>> [accessed 22 March 2013].

⁸² Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, 'De nouveaux ennemis intimes: Le garçon arabe et la fille beurette', in *Les Féministes et le garçon arabe*, ed. by Nacira Guénif-Souilamas and Éric Macé, pp. 59-95 (p. 64).

boys and young men in *les cités* threatens to find vent in acts of violence and verbalizations of anger:⁸³ ‘La frustration sexuelle des garçons adolescents est propre à l’adolescence [...] mais dans les quartiers sensibles, cette frustration ne peut être sublimée autrement, dans la réussite scolaire notamment. Elle risque donc de devenir violente’.⁸⁴ Except, as I shall now set out before stitching the various strands of my argument together, it is not the fact of frustration per se that conduces to sexually violent and degrading behaviour, but the *weight* of frustration that corresponds with the intensity of the repression generated by these so-called ‘protective’ measures.

Whilst feelings of frustration arising from parental and societal resistance to the fulfilment of self-determined desires are said to be part and parcel of adolescence, the conditions of love in *les cités* are distinguished by the severity of the restrictions placed upon the expression of *sensuality*, this being ‘the curb put upon love by civilization’,⁸⁵ which characterizes and accounts for its failure ‘to secure [at least] a partial outlet into reality’:⁸⁶

Le couple de la banlieue, explique en écho Asmaée, 16 ans, c’est on se voit une fois par mois dans la cage d’escalier, on discute, on s’embrasse deux secondes et puis attention y a le frère et puis on rentre chez nous.⁸⁷

As evinced here, the degree of control exercised by brothers (and others) in *les cités* militates against the practicalities, often precluding altogether

⁸³ ‘Et leurs expressions [celles des garçons dans les quartiers] ne parlent pas d’amour. Ils disent: “Je l’ai chopée”, “Je me la suis prise”, “Je l’ai niquée”, “Je me la suis tirée”... Elles résument leur vision des relations sexuelles’ (*Vivre libre*, pp. 82-83). On the subject of sexist language in *les cités*, cf. Claudine Moïse, ‘Pratiques langagières des banlieues: Où sont les femmes?’, *VEI enjeux*, 128 (2002), 46-60.

⁸⁴ Marie Raynal, ‘[à l’époque] conseillère technique au ministère de la Ville’, cited in Émilie Lanez, ‘Viol collectif: La grande peur des cités’, *Le Point*, 1 December 2000.

⁸⁵ Sigmund Freud, ‘On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love’, in *The Pelican Freud Library*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, 15 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975-86), VII: *On Sexuality*, ed. by Angela Richards (1977), pp. 243-260 (pp. 256-257).

⁸⁶ *The Pelican Freud Library*, VII, 251.

⁸⁷ Émilie Lanez, ‘Viol collectif: La grande peur des cités’, *Le Point*, 1 December 2000.

the possibilities, of entering into and carrying on intimate relationships, constituting an impediment to encountering and understanding, especially in his or her sexual difference, the uncanny alterity of the Other: 'Pour séduire l'autre, construire une relation, il faut au moins parvenir à l'approcher, avoir un échange dans une atmosphère sereine. C'est devenu impossible dans les cités, où la mixité a disparu'.⁸⁸ If one thinks back to Freud's theory of attachment whose lineaments I outlined previously, and which posits the forward march of the libido and its 'fairy-tale teleology', it is at or around the age of puberty that the feelings of affection fostered by boys towards their mothers in infancy are supplemented — *beset* ('besetz[t]'),⁸⁹ that is — by pulses of sexual, Freud prefers 'sensual' energy; but, in seeking to cathect the primary object-choice, given the successful insinuation into the boy's psyche of the barrier against incest, the flow of sensual energy encounters considerable resistance; and so it is that his libidinal impulses are turned or thrust outwards, 'to[wards] other, extraneous objects with which a real sexual life may be carried on'.⁹⁰ Because of the 'protective' — experienced by girls and young women as 'repressive' — measures instituted by boys and young men, however, which lead to the *de facto* segregation of the sexes, 'efforts to pass on from these objects which are unsuitable in reality'⁹¹ are frequently *frustrated*;⁹² and since the energetic requirements of the libido are not sufficiently met, the sensual stream returns reluctantly inwards, following the line of least resistance in the direction of the primary object-cathexes. Under the extremest conditions of social and sexual repression, where no object-choice is possible,⁹³ or where those which can be made are unsuitable, the libido disassociates itself from this sexually unsatisfactory reality and takes flight into the

⁸⁸ *Ni putes ni soumises*, pp. 52-53.

⁸⁹ *Studienausgabe*, v, 200-201.

⁹⁰ *The Pelican Freud Library*, vii, 249-250.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² '[En parlant de ses copains] Ils sont tous frustrés et en veulent à la terre entière, incapables d'exprimer leurs désirs' (The words of Steeve, '18 ans', cited in Marie-Estelle Pech, 'Une fille en jupe, c'est une taspé, une fille facile', *Le Figaro*, 21 June 2002).

⁹³ 'Où sont donc passées les filles?', asks Horia Kebabza (Horia Kebabza, 'La ségrégation sexuée dans les quartiers populaires', *Ville-école-intégration*, 138 (2004), 129-136).

realm of phantasy: ‘In this way it can happen that the whole of a young man’s sensuality becomes tied to incestuous objects in the unconscious, or to put it another way, becomes fixated to unconscious incestuous phantasies. The result is then total impotence’.⁹⁴ Having said that, would it not be an odd claim if, on the basis of Freud’s repressive schema, his dialectics of psychic power, I assigned an absence of sexual potency as the *causa causans* of the tendency to debasement in *les cités*?

This is not, if the reader will permit me, an averment of impotency *quoad illos*, evidence to the effect that boys and young men in *les cités* lack totally the capacity to carry out — or, more properly, to consummate — the sexual act; rather, I am asserting that the fact of intersexual segregation inhibits access to, bringing in its train an abatement of, the action of thrusting oneself forcibly and tortiously into, the sexed Other: ‘Le viol n’est pas qu’un abus de puissance, un crime lâche, il est l’abolition de l’humanité de celui qui le commet. Toute violence, surtout si elle est conforme au stéréotype diffus, signe l’impossible accès à l’autre’.⁹⁵ In this sense, violence does not just communicate (*signaler*) the impossibility of gaining access to, but acknowledges as its own by placing its distinguishing mark upon (*signer*), the Other.⁹⁶ Indeed, Freud would go further: ‘As soon as the condition of debasement is fulfilled, sensuality can be freely expressed, and important sexual capacities and a high degree of pleasure can develop’.⁹⁷ In other words, violence becomes the very condition of moving towards, of coming into contact with, and of getting ‘to know’, the unsettling and otherwise impenetrable strangeness of the Other.

It remains to be seen, however, how such conditions of frustration (the second aetiological factor) combine with excessive attachment to and subsequent overvaluation of the mother and/or the sister, such that

⁹⁴ *The Pelican Freud Library*, VII, 250-251.

⁹⁵ Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, ‘De nouveaux ennemis intimes: Le garçon arabe et la fille beurette’, in *Les Féministes et le garçon arabe*, ed. by Nacira Guénif-Souilamas and Éric Macé, pp. 59-95 (pp. 76-77).

⁹⁶ As well as asserting rights of ownership, the act of branding conveys and confers upon the body the infamy which it presupposes. Cf. Alexandra Topping, ‘Oxford child abuse trial: Woman says she was branded at age of 12’, *Guardian*, 22 February 2013.

⁹⁷ *The Pelican Freud Library*, VII, 251-252.

they require and result in the violent inauguration of an adulterated Other. Also, since I do not wish to evade ‘the contentious question’, to what extent does ‘the amount of *frustration in reality* which opposes the new object-choice’⁹⁸ in *les cités* constitute an instance of, that which Freud defines as, psychic ‘repression’ (‘Verdrängung’)? Whereas, according to his psychology of love, the so-called ‘madonna-whore’⁹⁹ complex forms under the influence of ‘the psychical constellation connected with the mother’,¹⁰⁰ I propose, in the final part of this chapter, to position — or, better, to constellate — the love-objects which dominate this hemispherical, because psychically and discursively ‘split’, horizon of cultural intelligibility in relation to Foucault’s theory of desire.

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As I approach the end of this perambulation through the suburban lovescape of *les cités*, I should like to retrace the steps which I have taken — to return, indeed, to the starting-point of my discussion, which began with the following question: ‘do the conditions of love in *les cités* lend themselves to psychoanalysis — to analysis, that is, in terms of repression?’. In search of an analytically advantageous position from which to gain purchase upon the complex interactions between the conditions of love in *les cités* and the repressive forces said to be constitutive of them, I undertook an exposition of the logic governing the construction which Freud puts upon the value of ‘love’ as it weakens and wanes during the decline and fall of ancient civilizations — an argument which, in the interests of brevity, I shall re-present here only schematically: ‘love’ + absence of resistance = libidinal excess + conflation of ‘love’ with worthlessness (‘wurde die Liebe wertlos, das Leben leer’).¹⁰¹ Yet, the dominant terms of talk in *les cités* do not seem to satisfy this equation, for the sphere of love itself appears to be divided,

⁹⁸ *The Pelican Freud Library*, VII, 250-251.

⁹⁹ ‘Pour les mecs [des cités], elles sont madones ou salopes’ (Fadela Amara cited in Mathilde Mathieu and Sylvia Zappi, ‘Des filles de banlieues lancent la première “marche des femmes”’, *Le Monde*, 3 February 2003).

¹⁰⁰ *The Pelican Freud Library*, VII, 236.

¹⁰¹ *Studienausgabe*, V, 206-207.

love-objects being *either* psychically over-valued and venerated, *or* assigned an inferiorized identity, ‘subjected to the pervasive threat of rape’,¹⁰² and systematically derided. Since it is the perceived or actual fact of motherhood that constitutes the principle of division or *differentia* according to which one species of ‘woman’ is distinguished from and elevated above another, I sought to establish, as an *experimentum crucis* — in order, that is, to test the cogency of the ‘repressive hypothesis’, whether the over-valuation attaching to things motherly in *les cités* could be imputed to the relative insufficiency of mothers’ emotionally nourishing care.

Upon examination, however, by virtue of their being representationally immersed in an effusion of motherly affection, boys and young men in *les cités* exhibit, at the level of text and talk, few or no outward signs of maternal or ‘emotional deprivation’.¹⁰³ Swept along by this powerfully emotive current, they are *pulled* towards and *held* within the sphere of, whence they are at risk of becoming monopolized by (‘accaparer’),¹⁰⁴ the mother’s psychic influence. Thus, because the libidinal force at work derives from the ‘pulling power’ exerted upon boys and young men by the weight of the mother’s (erotic) ‘attraction’ (‘das Maß der *Anziehung*’),¹⁰⁵ constituting neither the cancelling out of an instinct, nor the forestalling of its operation, it cannot properly pass under the name of ‘repression’. That the principle which regulates the psyche on this occasion does not reduce to the repudiative and distantiating workings of ‘repression’ raises probing questions about, potentially undermining, the firmly established grounds upon which Foucault’s ‘repressive hypothesis’ is built. That mothers may be implicated in the making of sexually violent boys and young men has equally far-reaching, presently more pressing implications, not least

¹⁰² ‘Foucault, Rape, and the Construction of the Feminine Body’, p. 45.

¹⁰³ In his excellent compendium of ‘attachment theory’, Jeremy Holmes summarizes John Bowlby’s *credo*: ‘The emotional deprivation of children is a social ill, distorting and degrading the fabric of social life. It is society’s responsibility and duty to remedy this ill by appropriate social medicine’ (*John Bowlby and Attachment Theory* (London: Routledge, 1993; repr. 2001), pp. 200-201).

¹⁰⁴ *La Cerise sur le béton*, p. 265.

¹⁰⁵ *Studienausgabe*, v, 201-202.

because such an analysis lays mothers in *les cités* open to the commonplace charge of complicity. Although I do not propose to enter upon an expansive discussion of the vicarious role which Foucault imputes to ‘repression’, or to consider in any great detail the practical, political implications of this psychoanalytic way of thinking, I should like to moot each question *en guise de conclusion*, starting with Foucault and his aphoristic, ‘anti-repressive’ rhetoric.

There can be very little doubt as to the prominent place occupied by the question of ‘repression’ in Foucault’s *œuvre*: ‘[R]ejecting the notion of power as repression [...] [constitutes] a central theme of *The History of Sexuality*’.¹⁰⁶ Whilst acknowledging my indebtedness to Ann Stoler’s consummately well-versed, ‘colonial’ reading of *La Volonté de savoir*, in light of Didier Eribon’s biographical piecing together of Foucault’s (‘gay’) subjectivity and his political philosophy,¹⁰⁷ I would be still bolder: the first volume of his *Histoire de la sexualité* is so wholly turned over to, such that the entire text reads as if directed *against*, this notion. Without wishing to dwell on such an esoteric question, what does it mean to say that Foucault is writing *against* ‘repression’? Foucault characterizes the model of ‘repressive’ power which he seeks to disqualify as ‘juridico-discursive’ — ‘juridical’ in the sense that it relates to and/or resembles the administration and the application of the law; and it is only when subject to the rule of law that desire has any existence at all. In place of this Reichian, ‘Freudo-Marxist’ conception of power, ‘l’idée d’une énergie rebelle qu’il faudrait juguler’,¹⁰⁸ the alternative which Foucault proposes is altogether more ‘attractive’; for, by bypassing theoretically the circuitry said to regulate the flow of desire, he exposes its dynamic energy to an electro-magnetic field of possibilities: ‘Le pouvoir fonctionne comme un mécanisme d’appel, *il attire*, il extrait ces étrangetés sur lesquelles il veille. Le plaisir diffuse sur le pouvoir qui le traque; le pouvoir ancre le plaisir qu’il vient de débusquer’.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Race and the Education of Desire*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Réflexions sur la question gay*, pp. 389-397.

¹⁰⁸ *La Volonté de savoir*, pp. 107-108.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62. Emphasis added.

Alternatively put, Foucault's history of 'pleasure' (the corollary of desire) charts the vacillant establishment over time of an elaborate network of power-knowledge relations by dint of which desire is (medically, pedagogically, scientifically, etc.) 'stimulated', 'incited', 'intensified', and 'optimized', offering an unrivalled *aperçu* captured schematically of the circuits through which desire is itself called and *willed* into existence. However productive, 'path-breaking and provocative',¹¹⁰ his manner of philosophizing may be, it does not merit or confer exemption from criticism, opening the door to the critical point which I wish to make, and which I throw out speculatively as an unanswered volley of questions.

First, what is the 'mechanism of attraction',¹¹¹ which Foucault puts forward in lieu of 'repression' if it is not precisely the 'pulling power' which Freud ascribes to '*Anziehung*'? Next, because 'the defences invoked by psychoanalysis are much more varied than the simple negative absence connoted by repression', and since 'indeed, they correspond quite closely to the broader, more positive forms of power that Foucault wishes to accentuate',¹¹² is the tenor of Forrester's argument — that Foucault overstates the case of 'repression' and its psychoanalytic significance — not demonstrably proven? Last, and perhaps more to the point, is the 'seduction' of which Foucault speaks in this ground-breaking and canonical text not the same as the power of seduction which certain mothers in *les cités* exert over their sons ('séduction, charme, propos équivoques')?¹¹³ Given the inexorable limitations of this investigation, I must resist the tantalizing temptation to frame an answer to these questions, save to signal, despite my misgivings, the latent potential of both Foucault's quasi-structuralist 'archaeological' and his

¹¹⁰ Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 95.

¹¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 3 vols (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978-1986), 1: *An Introduction* (1978), pp. 44-45.

¹¹² *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 304-305. To be fair to Foucault, he does acknowledge this (cf. *La Volonté de savoir*, pp. 107-108), but his argument proceeds nevertheless *as if* 'repression' and psychoanalysis are synonymous.

¹¹³ *La Cerise sur le béton*, p. 265.

Nietzschean ‘genealogical’ writings¹¹⁴ — an assessment which inspires eager anticipation at the prospect of setting his theories to the work of more assiduously problematizing and more oneirically reimagining ‘the rhetoric of rape’.

In this connexion, if the pathogenesis of the rapist can be traced back, on the basis of Freud’s thesis, to the mother’s improper (because excessive, whence ‘seductive’) influence, any attempt to rethink rape must surely incorporate some analysis of the concrete consequences which flow from this diagnosis. Before I consider the implications of this *argumentum ad matrem*, however, I should like to enter this caveat: in order to test the tractability of Freud’s theory *vis-à-vis* the conditions of love in *les cités*, I have proceeded on the assumption that, suspending judgement only provisionally as to whether, his first principles are correct; and whilst recognizing and conceding many of the criticisms which have been levelled against him, especially those made on the grounds of his theories’ radical heterosexism, I prefer to adopt an approach of qualified, critical engagement which draws on the theoretical fecundity of his insights, but which cultivates an attitude of scholarly irreverence towards them.¹¹⁵ Thus, although Freud’s theory offers an opportunity to shed new light upon the conditions of love in *les cités*, its explanatory force comes at the cost of instituting rigid boundaries between, effectively constituting, ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’ individuals. So, assuming that an excess of motherly affection does constitute part of the pathogenic material out of which the rapist’s psyche is moulded, what flows concretely from this social pathologization of motherhood — and how, if at all, can the consequential and deleterious effects of Freud’s theory be avoided?

¹¹⁴ I shall leave the last word on the subject to David Halperin, who writes: ‘My belief remains that, far from having exhausted the lessons that Foucault had to teach us, we have yet to come to terms with their startling implications’ (*How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 8).

¹¹⁵ ‘The prevalence of this heterosexual matrix in the construction of gender emerges not only in Freud’s text, but also in those cultural forms of life that have absorbed this matrix and are inhabited by everyday forms of gender anxiety’ (p. 168), writes Judith Butler in an article which exemplifies the approach which I endorse (‘Melancholy Gender—Refused Identification’ (*Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 5 (1995), 165-180).

According to the psychoanalytic chain of causation which calls the affective economy of the mother-son relationship into question, because the subject’s affections are (too) tenaciously ‘held back’ — hence, ‘over-invested’, or ‘hyper-cathected’, the confluence of the affective and the sensual streams is impeded, as if the subject’s mind is torn, ‘split’, or divided between the weight of affection which he feels towards his mother and the strength of the impulse towards satisfaction of his sexual desire. It is not, on the basis of this diagnosis, the ill-effects of maternal deprivation that require the interventions of ‘social medicine’, but, inverting and extending the terms of John Bowlby’s ‘attachment theory’, the pathogenic conditions arising from the son’s excessive attachment to and domination by the mother:

Les garçons sont encore plus influencés par leur mère que les filles. Ils la mettent sur un piédestal, ont du mal à leur désobéir, et elles les tiennent de cette manière. Il est important pour nous de faire évoluer les mentalités des mamans, elles sont responsables de beaucoup de choses.¹¹⁶

As well making reference to their *tenacity* — by which I mean the capacity of mothers in *les cités* to retain that which they hold psychically, Méliane’s remarks speak to the entry or emergence (*‘Herkunft’*) of the mother-idea into an explicitly political and discursive (more properly genealogical) arena,¹¹⁷ [‘where] *emergence* is the designation of a space, a site where the struggle of forces takes place, a place of differentiation, an arena where struggles for domination which have no “progressive” aim are realised within the play of dominations’.¹¹⁸ Indeed, the battle-lines could not be more narrowly drawn. Exposed, on the one hand, to the accusation that their sons’ sexually violent behaviour results from their

¹¹⁶ *Vivre libre*, p. 82.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Michel Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, la généalogie, l’histoire’, in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, ed. by Suzanne Bachelard and others (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), pp. 145-172.

¹¹⁸ Philip Barker, *Michel Foucault: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 21.

having been deprived or ‘starved’ emotionally, and outflanked, on the other, by the charge of complicity in their sons’ brutality, the rigidity of the rules which define the discursive space remaining to mothers in *les cités* tends to polarize the field of strategic possibilities: ‘Les mères [en banlieue] malheureusement sont souvent résignées ou complices, et je suis assez critique à l’égard du rôle de la mère, même s’il y en a qui sont extraordinaires car elles assument tout’.¹¹⁹ Because the terms of motherhood are subject to such contestation, all manner of incursions (social, political, and intellectual) into this arena are likely to run into danger; and yet, despite the very real risk of adopting and/or endorsing practices of ‘speaking for’ mothers in *les cités* which confer social stigma — an effect which can be anticipated and however imperfectly minimized, given the gravamen of the charge, an interrogation of the role which mothers play in maintaining the social and sexual order must not be resisted. For this reason, I look favourably upon Adrienne Rich’s grappling with the question of the mother-son relation, but her analysis in terms of ‘false consciousness’ constitutes an abrogation of agency, idyllizes motherhood and precludes an assessment of women’s own emotional, material, strategic, sexual, and sometimes even profitable investments in patriarchy. ■

¹¹⁹ Amélie Chauvet, ‘Entretien avec Fabrice Genestal’, *Comme au cinéma*, 4 September 2001.



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