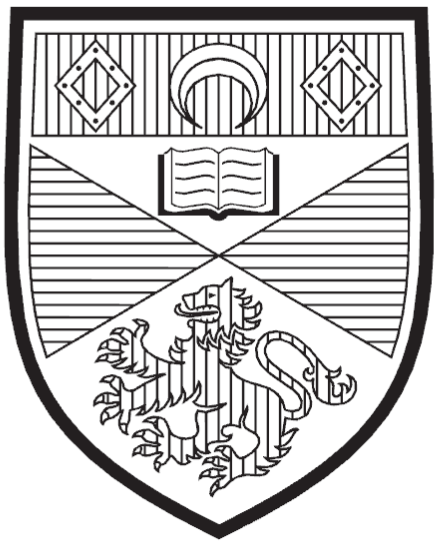
The 'Internal Exotic':

A Postcolonial Re-reading of Nineteenth-Century Alsatian and Corsican Literature in French

By

Julia Elfriede Lorber



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Abstract

This thesis examines nineteenth-century French literature about the peripheral regions of Alsace and Corsica, observing the discursive process of their incorporation into the imagined French landscape.

Firstly, approaching literature from a postcolonial angle, this thesis shows how Alsace and Corsica were represented as exotic by contemporary canonical writers. 'Internal exoticism' helped conceptualise these regions as different from the French self, while justifying their rule by France. It also investigates how nineteenth-century Parisian authors envisaged Alsace's and Corsica's transition from 'otherness' to 'Frenchness.'

Secondly, this research reveals long-forgotten regional authors, who endeavoured to write about their provinces in French for the first time. It analyses the influence of Parisian literary figures on these authors, showing whether they were imitating or responding to canonical representations. This process reveals regional writers' tendencies to 'auto-exoticise', seeing their provinces through the eyes of the centre.

Finally, this analysis shows how French nation-building was interlinked with France's larger imperial project, suggesting that peripheral provinces were often perceived through the same conceptual framework as overseas colonies.

This thesis contributes to the field of French studies by unearthing unknown authors, and by applying a new theoretical framework, drawing on literary, political and socio-cultural approaches, to the study of France.

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Introduction

In 1794, Bertrand Barère wrote in his famous *Rapport du comité de salut public sur les idiomes*:

> Quatre points du territoire de la République méritent seuls de fixer l'attention du législateur révolutionnaire sous le rapport des idiomes qui paraissent les plus contraires à la propagation de l'esprit public […]. [N]ous avons observé […] que l'idiome appelé bas-breton, l'idiome basque, les langues allemande et italienne ont […] empêché la révolution de pénétrer dans neuf départements importants, et peuvent favoriser les ennemis de la France.[1]

The revolutionary government's first ruling instance called attention to the margins, and to four peripheral spaces in particular, whose languages and cultures appeared dangerously different to that of the centre: Brittany, the Basque Country, Alsace and Corsica. The revolutionaries identified these apparently non- or even anti-French regions as fields for immediate action, and their initial drive to homogenise them was followed through more or less intensely under all French governments throughout the nineteenth century. Since the peripheries became combat zones for the nation, this exploration of French identity-making on the margins will pick out two of the aforementioned four provinces, namely Alsace and Corsica, for comparison and investigation.

Out of the four proposed provinces, the focus on Alsace and Corsica was determined for the following reasons: Heather Williams has already examined the literary making of identity in Brittany.[2] A comparison between island and mainland seemed more attractive than a comparison between two continental provinces, which is why Corsica was chosen. Furthermore, in order to have more varied data for analysis, a juxtaposition between north and south seemed preferable to an analysis of two southern provinces; hence, Alsace was selected as the second focus of this thesis. Corsica's and Alsace's languages and cultures could be associated with other nations: respectively Germany and Italy, as seen in Barère's report - hence the urgency to extinguish local cultures and Frenchify them. This makes them valuable examples for the study of literary conceptions of alterity and identity, allowing a more critical assessment of the integration of peripheries into the national centre.

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[1] Bertrand Barère, *Rapport du comité de salut public sur les idiomes (8 pluviôse an II)*, fully reprinted in Michel de Certeau et al, *Une Politique de la langue: La Révolution française et les patois. L'Enquête de Grégoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 292.

[2] Heather Williams, *Postcolonial Brittany: Literature between Languages* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007).

This thesis examines the first literary depictions of Alsace and Corsica in French prose fiction, from their discovery to their discursive incorporation into the imagined national landscape. This process occurred largely throughout the nineteenth century, a paramount period for the French definition of nationhood. Exhibiting the regions in their differences, as well as demarcating the limits of the nation, literature (re-)constructed multiple identities for Alsace and Corsica. Revealing the interplay between the construction of a national identity and the growing awareness of 'foreign' peripheral spaces, this research will survey the first time French literature scrutinised and took possession of the provinces. This will involve unearthing unknown authors and works, as well as taking a fresh look at canonical writers and material.

Alsace

Having shared culture and language with their neighbours to the right side of the Rhine since Antiquity, Alsace held a prominent place in the development of German high culture during the Middle Ages.[1] Its intellectuals identified with an ethnic idea of Germany and its scholarship underwent the standardisation of the German language following Luther's translation of the Bible in 1534.[2] The region was a part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation until its annexation to France in 1648. Louis XIV used the aftermath of the Thirty Years' War to absorb the province into France, hoping to someday claim the throne of the Holy Roman Empire through its bias.[3] While the ambiguous Peace of Westphalia gave the French King the right to rule Alsace, many Alsatian cities refused to swear allegiance to the monarch.[4] The following thirty years were marked by the military conquest of Alsatian strongholds of resistance, ending with the capitulation of Strasbourg in 1681. History books optionally include references to plunder, arson, killings and rape on the part of the French military.[5] The Monarchy secured its territorial acquisition through the creation of military

[1] Frédéric Hoffet, *Psychanalyse de l'Alsace* (Colmar: Éditions Alsatia, 1973), p. 37 and Pierre Klein, *Les Raisons d'Alsace ou Tête haute pour nos langues, nos cultures, nos identités* (Colmar: Bentzinger, 2001), p. 114.

[2] See Bernard Wittmann, *Die Geschichte des Elsass: eine Innenansicht* (Kehl: Morstadt, 2009), p. 15, and *Les Raisons d'Alsace*, p. 114.

[3] See Bernard Wittmann, *Une Histoire de l'Alsace, autrement… E G'schicht zuem uewerläwe, Tome I: Débuts historiques à 1918* (Morsbronn-les-Bains: Éditions Rhyn und Mosel, 1999), p. 83.

[4] The Treaty of Westphalia transferred the house of Habsburg's Alsatian possessions to the French monarch; including a lot of Alsatian territory, but excluding its free imperial cities, which continued to answer directly to the German Emperor. However, the French king was given the right of 'protection' (and therefore taxation) over these municipalities, thereby himself becoming a subject of the German Emperor (it is probably by this means that the French monarch hoped to accede to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire). The Treaty maintained Alsace under the direct sovereignty of the German Emperor ('immédiateté à l'égard de l'empire romain'), albeit in possession of the French King - hence the French administration of Alsace as 'province à l'instar de l'étranger effectif.' For a closer analysis of the ambiguities of the Treaty, see *Une Histoire de l'Alsace,* pp. 84-5 and Philippe Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace* (Toulouse: Privat, 1970), p. 279.

[5] Tellingly, municipal archives from this period have been mostly destroyed, making it difficult to verify such claims. Compare Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* pp. 278-290, *Geschichte des Elsass*, p. 17 and Bernard Vogler, *Histoire de l'Alsace* (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 2002), pp. 26-7.

fortifications on the Rhine and the destruction of fortresses on the Vosges.[1] The province's administration was given into the hands of French military, royal servants and nobility.[2] Alsace was administrated as 'province à l'instar de l'étranger effectif' and was generally seen as German: a map from 1666 describes it as *L'Alsace ou Conquestes du Roy en Allemagne* and the region was commonly referred to as 'la France allemande.'[3] Despite French overrule, Alsace remained linguistically, culturally and economically turned towards Germany. Bernard Vogler estimates that around 1789 only one per cent of Alsatians were fluent in French, and that a further five to eight per cent were able to communicate in the language - usually noblemen or members of the *haute bourgeoisie*.[4]

There are contradictory accounts of Alsace's participation in the French Revolution. Vogler claims that 'les nouvelles valeurs, liberté, égalité et droits de l'homme, ont suscité l'intégration à l'ensemble national [et] un patriotisme vigoureux' and David Harvey presents 1789 as a key event in transforming the Alsatians' national sentiments.[5] While Susanne Lachenicht claims that the revolutionary ideas found enthusiastic supporters in Alsace, Philippe Dollinger describes the Alsatians as reserved vis-à-vis the Revolution and Eugen Weber states that the majority of Alsatians were not affected by the Revolutionary fervour.[6] Bernard Wittmann warns against the misconception that the French Revolution meant the beginning of the cultural integration of Alsace into France and underlines the Alsatians' linguistic inability to take part in French political life.[7] Whatever clash of ideas there might have been in Alsace, it was complicated by external events. The Revolutionary Wars (1792 - 1802) and the *Terreur* struck Alsace harder than other peripheral provinces, because it constituted the front line between revolutionary France and the monarchist states to the east. Prussia and Austria joined forces in order to fight back revolutionary troops (and ideas) coming from France - via Alsace. It is no coincidence that Rouget de Lisle, captain in the revolutionary forces, composed what is now known as the French national anthem under the name of *Chant de guerre pour l'Armée du Rhin* when he was posted to Strasbourg in 1792 - just after

[1] Vogler, *Histoire de l'Alsace*, p. 27.
[2] Ibib. pp. 18-9.
[3] Bernard Schwengler, *Syndrome alsacien: D'Letschte?* (Strasbourg: Oberlin, 1989), p. 23. See also Guillaume Sanson, *L'Alsace ou Conquestes du Roy en Allemagne, tant deçà que delà le Rhein [sic]* (Paris: Galleries du Louvre, 1666). See also *Syndrome alsacien,* pp. 22-3.
[4] Vogler, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 31.
[5] *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 35 and David Harvey, *Constructing Class and Nationality in Alsace 1830-1945* (Illinois: Northern Illinois U.P., 2001), p. 12.
[6] Susanne Lachenicht, *Information und Propaganda: Die Presse deutscher Jakobiner im Elsass (1791-1800)* (München: Oldenburg, 2004), p. 11. Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 372. Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977), p. 96.
[7] *Geschichte des Elsass,* p. 22.

France had officially declared war on Austria.[1] The defence of the frontier on the Rhine was an ideological milestone in the life of the young French Republic. Alsace became a curious outpost; Parisian leaders referred to themselves as 'Français de l'intérieur' (an expression that is still in use today) and to the Alsatians as 'ceux de l'extérieur;' underlining the division between the true French interior and its outpost.[2] Alsace was key to spreading the ideas of the Revolution outwards; but this depended on the Alsatians' adherence to revolutionary values. However, Alsace was suspect to revolutionary leaders because of its cultural affiliation with the German enemies.[3] Famously, Frédéric de Dietrich, Strasbourg's mayor, was accused of conspiring 'pour livrer Strasbourg aux ennemis de la France.'[4] Fears that the Alsatians could make *cause commune* with Prussia and Austria were not altogether unfounded: an increasing number of Alsatian men resisted conscription; some joined counter-revolutionary forces.[5] When Austrian troops took control of northern Alsace in October 1793, many inhabitants welcomed them as liberators and later fled with them to the right side of the Rhine when the French forced their retreat.[6] The revolutionary government reacted with terror, arrests and public executions.[7] Threatening with more repressive measures in 1794, the revolutionary Pierre-Henri Rousseville encouraged the Alsatians to submit to the Republic and learn French:

> [Moi,] Français au milieu d'une troupe d'Allemands [c'est-à-dire Alsaciens], appréhende sans cesse que dans leur langue barbare ils ne blasphèment la révolution. Habitans de la ci-devant Alsace, […] si ce qu'il en a coûté à plusieurs d'entre vous pour appeler nos perfides

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[1] Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle, *Chant de guerre pour l'Armée du Rhin, dédié au Maréchal Lukner* (Paris: Rignon, [1800?])

[2] See for example Pierre-Henri Rousseville, *Dissertation sur la francilisation de la ci-devant Alsace* (n.p.: Imprimerie de Levrault, 1794), p.3.

[3] Heinrich Pleticha, *Deutsche Geschichte 1618 bis 1815: Vom Dreißigjährigen Krieg zum Ende des Deutschen Reiches* (München: Bertelsmann, 1981), p. 351.

[4] Claude Muller*, La Liberté ou la mort: L'Alsace et la Révolution* (Nancy: Éditions Place Stanislas, 2009), p. 81.

[5] *L'Alsace et la Révolution*, p. 64 and pp. 96-7. The Alsatian general Dagobert-Sigismund Wurmser von Vendenheim is a famous example, since he led Austrian troops into Alsace and secured its northern parts for the German Empire until his defeat in 1793. See *Une Histoire de l'Alsace autrement,* p. 17.

[6] *Geschichte des Elsass*, p. 22; *L'Alsace et la Révolution*, pp. 96-7.

[7] Ibid. p. 92. Also see Barère's anaylisis of these events in his *Rapport du comité de salut public sur les idiomes*: 'Dans les départements du Haut et du Bas-Rhin, qui a donc appelé, de concert avec les traîtres, le Prussien et l'Autrichien sur nos frontières envahies? l'habitant des campagnes qui parle la même langue que nos ennemis, et qui se croit ainsi bien plus leur frère et leur concitoyen que le frère et le concitoyen des Français qui lui parlent une autre langue et ont d'autres habitudes. Le pouvoir de l'identité du langage a été si grand qu'à la retraite des Allemands plus de vingt mille hommes des campagnes du Bas-Rhin sont émigrés. L'empire du langage et l'intelligence qui régnait entre nos ennemis d'Allemagne et nos concitoyens du département du Bas-Rhin est si incontestable qu'ils n'ont pas été arrêtés dans leur émigration par tout ce que les hommes ont de plus cher, le sol qui les a vu naître, les dieux pénates et les terres qu'ils avaient fertilisés.' Reprinted in *Une Politique de la langue*, p. 293.

> ennemis, vous a totalement guéris du désir d'être allemands; faites que nous puissions connoître par vos discours les dispositions de vos cœurs.[1]

Alsace's linguistic affinity with the enemy was perceived as a likely reason for treason. Nicolas Hentz proclaimed at the *Convention Nationale* in 1794: 'Tout le Haut-Rhin, le Bas-Rhin et les districts de la Moselle qui ne parlent qu'allemand sont plus mauvais que l'ennemi!'[2] Barère's report of 1794 further states: 'l'émigration et haine de la République parlent allemand […]. La Contre-révolution parle l'italien et le fanatisme parle le basque. Cassons ces instruments de dommage et d'erreur.'[3] Because of its cultural and linguistic diversity, Alsace became a combat zone for the ideal of *la République une et indivisible*. With the edict of 20 July 1794 began the first period of organised *francisation* in Alsace.[4] Many toponyms were force-translated into French and French-speaking propagandists were recruited to republicanise the population.[5] The Revolution transformed Alsace's socio-political landscape through the exile of many noblemen, clergymen and commoners and the rise of the (French) bourgeoisie who cheaply bought the land and buildings left behind.[6] Administrative equalisation and the relocation of the customs barrier from the Vosges to the Rhine served to sever Alsace's economic ties with Germany and set the province up for integration into the French space.[7] However, Bernhard Struck states that before the Napoleonic Wars, contemporary travellers did not perceive the border between France and Germany as a fixed line, but as a gradual phenomenon, linked to the language barrier on the Vosges far more than the political frontier on the Rhine.[8]

The politics of centralisation continued during the Consulate and the First Empire. Napoleon forced the abdication of the German Emperor and the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1806, thereby cutting its final ties with Alsace: paragraphs 87 and 89 of the Treaty of Münster, which had formally maintained Alsace under the immediate sovereignty of the German Emperor (albeit in France's possession), became void.[9] Napoleon placed Alsace under an all-powerful prefect; the region's political life was centrally controlled from Paris.[10] Dollinger claims that

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[1] *Dissertation sur la francilisation de la ci-devant Alsace,* p. 8.
[2] Quoted in Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace*, p. 374.
[3] *Rapport du comité de salut public sur les idiomes*, reprinted in *Une Politique de la langue,* p. 295.
[4] *Geschichte des Elsass*, p. 22.
[5] Ibid. p. 22; *Information und Propaganda,* p. 53.
[6] Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 382.
[7] Ibid. p. 357.
[8] Bernhard Struck, *Nicht West, nicht Ost: Frankreich und Polen in der Wahrnehmung deutscher Reisender zwischen 1750 und 1850* (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 2006), pp. 200-10.
[9] See *Une Histoire de l'Alsace,* pp. 84-5.
[10] *Geschichte des Elsass,* p. 24.

Napoleon's politics found favour with the population because he addressed the Alsatians' two most immediate concerns, guaranteeing respect of the region's religious particularities through the *Concordat* and foreclosing forced linguistic assimilation.[1] Dollinger states that '[les Alsaciens] ne cherchent jamais à remettre en question l'appartenance française de l'Alsace. […] Approbation ou résignation, sous une forme toujours modérée, caractérisent l'opinion publique alsacienne entre 1799 et 1814.'[2] Given that any statements to the contrary were suppressed by strict censorship, this is not altogether surprising.[3] Vogler states that the Napoleonic era connected Alsace more closely to France.[4] The Napoleonic Wars saw the rise of several Alsatian generals who used the French army as a means of relatively easy social advancement; the Alsatian painter Benjamin Zix glorified the Napoleonic battles.[5] Roland Oberlé confirms the creation of a Napoleonic myth according to which the Alsatians became united to France during the First Empire.[6] All the while, the Alsatians' primary language remained German, even in higher social classes.[7]

After Napoleon's fall, Alsace remained in France's possession, although there had been discussions about returning it to the house of Habsburg.[8] During the Restoration and July Monarchy, Alsace was held under Parisian control by means of the prefect system.[9] The province remained generally culturally turned towards Germany, so much so that the first Alsatian attempt at French literature caused heated debates.[10] The opinion that Alsace was 'politiquement français, culturellement allemand,' seems to have been widely held. Nevertheless, the Monarchy attempted to reform schooling in Alsace, emphasising the teaching of French.[11] Dollinger claims that a majority of Alsatians welcomed the regime change of 1848.[12] Wittmann states that they clearly ratified Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état* in the 1851 referendum.[13] The Second Empire continued the centralising policies of an authoritarian state and stressed the importance of French in schools more than ever. While Strasbourg's university still taught a German curriculum, French was instituted as the main

[1] Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 393.
[2] Ibid. p. 392.
[3] *Geschichte des Elsass,* p. 23.
[4] Vogler, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 36.
[5] Ibid. p. 23.
[6] Roland Oberlé, *Napoléon et l'Alsace: de l'histoire à la légende* (Strasbourg: Carré Blanc, 2004), p. 105.
[7] Dollinger states that only around 18% of teachers in Alsace were able to speak French in 1812. One may infer that the percentage of the total population mastering the language was minuscule. See *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 287.
[8] *Geschichte des Elsass,* p. 24.
[9] Ibid. pp. 24-5.
[10] Louis Spach was the first Alsatian to write a novel in French in 1834. His work, as well as contemporary reactions, will be examined in the chapter on Alsatian literature.
[11] François Igersheim, *L'Alsace et ses historiens, 1680-1914: La Fabrique des monuments* (Strasbourg: P.U., 2006), p. 183; *Une Histoire de l'Alsace,* pp. 214-5.
[12] Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* pp. 414-5.
[13] *Geschichte des Elsass*, p. 28.

medium of schooling in 1860, causing opposition amongst the population.[1] The debate about Alsace's nationality and language resurfaced.[2] Meanwhile, Alsace lived a period of industrialisation and its leading classes increasingly spoke French.[3] The French language also gained importance due to a greater number of political officials and executives moving to Alsace from 'inner France'.[4] In 1870, the upper class was bilingual, but German remained the language of the masses.[5]

When the newly unified German Empire annexed Alsace following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the reactions of the population were mixed. There is evidence of Alsatians who felt liberated; yet, Vogler claims that 'l'annexion […] constitue un véritable traumatisme pour la très grande majorité de la population.'[6] The French media tended to emphasise the declaration of Bordeaux, which indicated that the Alsatians wanted to remain French.[7] Dollinger takes this as proof of Alsace's national sentiments, whereas Wittmann argues that it was not representative of Alsace's population.[8] Be that as it may, during the remainder of the nineteenth century, Alsace was attached to Germany and experienced a crucial period of German nationalism. It is equally difficult to gauge how the Alsatians' national sentiments developed during the forty-eight years of German rule.[9]

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[1] Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 429-30; Vogler, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 40.
[2] Ibid. p. 424.
[3] Ibid. p. 24.
[4] *Geschichte des Elsass*, p. 32.
[5] *Une Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 19.
[6] For instance, following Alsace's annexation to Germany in 1870, the Alsatian poet Karl Hackenschmitt published a poem entitled 'My Alsace German! My Alsace free!' (my translation), cited in *Une Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 19. Also see Vogler, *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 42.
[7] N.a., *Déclaration des députés d'Alsace-Lorraine lue à l'Assemblée Nationale de Bordeaux le 1er Mars 1871,* ed. by Jules Grosjean (n.p.: n.pub., 1871)
[8] France capitulated under the condition that a national assembly could be voted without German interference. The occupied Alsatians voted in February 1871 and sent their deputies to the national assembly in Bordeaux that was to decide the fate of the province. The deputies produced the declaration of Bordeaux, stating that the Alsatians wanted to remain French. However, their protest was ignored by the assembly since an insistence to keep Alsace could have jeopardised peace treaties. Dollinger takes the declaration of Bordeaux as indicative of the Alsatians' sentiments. See *Histoire de l'Alsace,* p. 435. Wittmann states that the vote was not indicative of the majority's wishes because of undemocratic election procedures, favouring French-speaking candidates, excluding others at the prefects' will, and giving the right to vote only to the wealthiest 17% of Alsace's population. Wittmann argues that voters as well as candidates were likely to be former migrants from the French centre rather than locals (for instance, Parisian politicians secured places for themselves on Alsatian voting lists; Leon Gambetta ran in both Alsatian *départements*, and foreign secretary Jules Favre in the Bas-Rhin). See *Geschichte des Elsass*, pp. 31-4.
[9] Dan Silverman, *Reluctant Union – Alsace-Lorraine and Imperial Germany 1871-1918* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State U.P., 1972), p. 28.

Corsica

From Antiquity, Corsica's population was interconnected with peoples of the eastern Mediterranean.[1] After the Roman conquest (259-162 BC), Corsica was handed around between various political powers (Rome, the Vatican, Tuscany and Pisa) in what is nowadays Italy, where dominations of small groupings over others were customary at the time.[2] From the eleventh century, a pattern of shared rule between Pisa and Genoa emerged.[3] During a further four centuries of political to and fro, the Republic of Genoa kept the upper hand.[4] Roger Caratini qualifies Genoa's stewardship as lax and underlines the fraternity between Corsicans and Genoans, while Marc de Cursay states that Genoa's rule 'pourrait être qualifiée de rapport de force colonial.'[5]

In this context, the figure of Sampiero Corso appears. He is seen as the figurehead of the Corsican fight against Genoa (1553-1567), often presented as the birth of Corsican nationalism.[6] Yet, Sampiero could be seen as a puppet in the wider conflict between France and the house of Habsburg. Having served the French monarchs since 1533, Sampiero led French troops to Corsica, beat the Genoese and occupied the island for France. Caratini claims that the French war against Genoa did not find popular support and that the islanders distrusted the French.[7] However, Cursay states that 'l'île entière est soumise […] et entre dans l'orbite du royaume de France.'[8] Sampiero was pulled back when his mission ceased to be politically interesting for France; Genoa finally defeated France's troops and put an end to French occupation in 1559.[9] Robert Blackwood claims that, despite the brief French interlude, Corsica remained culturally and politically tied to eastern Italy.[10] Sampiero – perhaps less interested in Corsican independence than in personal power, as Caratini suggests - attempted a come-back without French support in 1564, failed to find popular support and was killed as a result.[11]

The period from 1729 to 1753 represents another bout of Corsican nationalism, when differences between the Genoese administration and the Corsican population led to several

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[1] Francis Pomponi, *Histoire de la Corse* (Paris: Hachette, 1979), p. 19.
[2] Ibid. pp. 42-4; Marc de Cursay, *Corse: La Fin des mythes* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), p. 25.
[3] Robert Blackwood, *The State, the Activists and the Islanders: Language Policy on Corsica* (Berlin: Springer, 2008), pp. 11-12.
[4] Jean-Marie Arrighi, Olivier Jehasse, *Histoire de la Corse et des Corses* (Paris: Perrin, 2008), p. 239.
[5] See Roger Caratini, *La Corse: Un Peuple, une histoire* (Paris: Éditions de l'Archipel, 2009), p. 165; *La Fin des mythes,* p. 48.
[6] *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 165.
[7] Ibid. pp. 166; 172-6.
[8] *La Fin des mythes*, p. 24.
[9] *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 1.
[10] *State, Activists and Islanders*, p. 11.
[11] Ibid. pp. 177-180; *Un Peuple, une histoire,* pp. 179-80.

insurgencies and culminated in Pascal Paoli's fight for independence. Various reasons for these upheavals have been proposed: Jean-Marie Arrighi mentions high taxes and bad harvests, Caratini names conflicts between privileged landowners and dispossessed herdsmen, Cursay blames rivalries between clans and underlines that the Corsican revolts were less motivated by nationalism than by personal or family interests.[1] In any case, the upheavals led to the establishment of an ephemeral Corsican Monarchy (1736). Caratini mentions France's manoeuvring behind the scenes, following Chauvelin's plan to manipulate Corsican public opinion against Genoa, hoping that Genoa would call for help and allow the French army to pacify Corsica in their name.[2] The plan worked and French troops took repossession of Corsica in the name of Genoa in a first military intervention (1737-41). This 'pacification' saw no success; insurgencies and auto-proclamations abounded, leading to a second French military intervention (1748-1753).[3] In 1755, Pascal Paoli profited from the situation, rallied sufficient support, was elected *Général de la Nation*, proclaimed Corsica an independent kingdom and created a constitution.[4] Generally, Paoli is presented as the father of the Corsican nation and his constitution is seen as the event that awakened Corsican national sentiments.[5] Arrighi claims that Paoli's government had overwhelming popular support; conversely, Cursay argues that 'il serait exagéré de prétendre que ce serait signe d'une conscience nationale naissante.'[6] In his view, Paoli's supporters were a minority, and most Corsicans did not aspire to autonomy, but were in favour of finding a strong protectorate.[7]

The French military interventions on Corsica between 1756 and 1769 are open to different interpretations, either casting France in the role of liberator in line with the Corsicans' expectations or as violating Corsican independence.[8] Louis XV first occupied Corsica on behalf of the Genoese, then posed as mediator between Genoa and Paoli, and finally proposed to buy the island in 1768. Given that France enjoyed de facto control of the territory and that Genoa had little hope of regaining power over Corsica without external help, Corsica was sold to France in the somewhat ambiguous Treaty of Versailles.[9] Foreseeably, Paoli reacted with resistance to this affirmation of

[1] *Un Peuple, une histoire,* pp. 49, 209; *Histoire de la Corse et des Corses*, pp. 300-1.
[2] Ibid. pp. 210, 218-9.
[3] Ibid. pp. 311-7.
[4] *Un Peuple, une histoire,* pp. 240-1.
[5] See ibid. p. 237.
[6] *Histoire de la Corse et des Corses*, p. 336; *La Fin des mythes*, p. 54.
[7] Ibid. pp. 29-30, 52.
[8] Compare ibid. pp. 55-62 and *Un Peuple, une histoire,* pp. 251-6.
[9] The Treaty of Versailles did not explicitly state the sale of Corsica. France was granted sovereignty over the island for ten years, on the condition that an important sum of money was paid yearly to Genoa. After ten years, Genoa could only take Corsica back if it repaid the French for their war effort. It was foreseeable that Genoa would not be able to pay France back, which was acknowledged in secret clauses of the Treaty,

French sovereignty over his kingdom, and French troops took a year to pacify his independence fighters. Following their defeat at Ponte Novu and Paoli's exile in 1769, the island came fully under French control.[1] At this point, the language spoken on Corsica was Italian in different local varieties.[2]

Corsica lived under the French Monarchy for twenty years. This period saw sporadic acts of resistance that were quickly quashed, but also the association of many notable Corsican families with the monarch.[3] Despite Corsica's formal annexation to France, the island's society remained economically and culturally turned towards Italy.[4] The French Monarchy did not push for cultural assimilation, or tight political control, largely leaving the island's administration in the hands of influential native families.[5] Louis XV gained the favour of local elites through the official recognition of their nobility, the creation of new posts and frequent promotions, and the recognition of Tuscan Italian as Corsica's official language.[6] The French Revolution interrupted the course of history after only thirty years of French rule. Cursay claims that 1789 brought Corsica closer to France and transformed it into an integral part of the nation, while Caratini argues that Corsica was treated as conquered territory.[7] Paoli returned to Corsica and attempted to wrest the island away from the French state's grip, establishing the short-lived Anglo-Corsican kingdom with the help of the British.[8] Nevertheless, the revolutionary regime declared that Corsica was French and set out to reconquer and pacify the island again, re-annexing it to France in 1796. Cursay underlines that Corsican clans changed with the wind and supported whatever institution seemed more advantageous (Paoli or revolutionary France), without great ideological conviction.[9] Arrighi states that the quasi-totality of Corsicans supported the Anglo - Corsican kingdom and was opposed to the Revolution and the rise

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foreseing that Corsica would become a possession of the French kingdom. See *Histoire de la Corse et des Corses*, p. 337; *Un Peuple, une histoire,* pp. 252-3.

[1] Ibid. pp. 253-4.

[2] As with many minority languages, the definition of the Corsican language is problematic and often politically motivated. Those who see Corsica as closely related to Italy consider it Italian; French discourses traditionally degrade it to an undefined patois, and during the twentieth century, regional activists have attempted to elevate it to the status of a separate language. See Suzanne Cervera-Mattei, *Jean de Peretti della Rocca: 1855-1932. Journalisme et poésie à la Belle Époque* (Ajaccio: Alain Piazzola, 2005), p. 13. Even Robert Blackwood, writing about language issues on Corsica, is vague on what 'Corsican' actually is. He states that 'the majority of […] educated Corsicans were bilingual in Tuscan Italian and Corsican,' suggesting that these were two different languages. But then, he defines Corsican as 'another Italo-Roman language' and asserts that 'Corsican and Tuscan are […] mutually comprehensible […] without formal training.' See *State, Activists and Islanders*, pp. 11-13.

[3] *La Fin des mythes*, pp. 31 and 85-6.

[4] *State, Activists and Islanders,* p. 19.

[5] Ibid. p. 12.

[6] *La Fin des mythes*, p. 84.

[7] Ibid. pp. 31-2; *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 255.

[8] Ibid. p. 263.

[9] *La Fin des mythes*, p. 77.

of Napoleon Bonaparte.[1] Blackwood claims that while the revolutionaries considered Corsica as suspicious, the island's esteem grew with the rise of Napoleon and his First Empire.[2] Napoleon evidently distrusted his compatriots and their changeable political sentiments, and Arrighi underlines that many islanders disapproved or openly resisted his rule.[3] He assured a tight grip on the island through his prefects, suppressing uprisings and potential resistances with exemplary brutality, harsh censorship, exceptional jurisdiction and police terror.[4] Caratini claims that the majority of Corsicans suffered from Napoleon's authoritarian centralisation and did not appreciate his leadership.[5] Napoleon was only elevated to a cult figure some forty years later.[6]

The Restoration started with yet another *épuration* on Corsica, this time aimed at Bonapartists. The Monarchy also increased efforts to promote the French language on Corsica through schooling, administration and changed toponyms. Caratini situates the birth of irredentism in this period and underlines that certain Corsicans felt that their island should belong to Italy, since it shared its language and ethnic roots. Yet, the Restoration and July monarchies also invested in Corsica, improving its infrastructure and administration.[7] The island's society tranquilised and the phenomenon of *clanisme* appeared, whereby Corsicans gave their political allegiance to notable families which would in turn distribute social advantages. This paralysed progress, but also made the island easy to control.[8] The July Monarchy witnessed the creation of a cult surrounding Napoleon Bonaparte on the mainland and on Corsica, preparing the ground for Louis-Napoleon's Second Empire. The Corsicans almost unanimously voted him for president and, subsequently, emperor.[9] Cursay claims that the Second Empire facilitated 'un attachement profond et durable [des Corses] à la France,' introducing better infrastructure, better accessibility of the mainland, and most of all preferential treatment for Corsicans in administrative, military and political posts.[10] However, Caratini insists that many young Corsicans' eagerness to migrate to the mainland or the colonies in the pursuit of their careers stemmed from Corsica's disastrous economic situation.[11] Be that as it may, this dynamic meant that young Corsicans turned away from Italian, spoke French and

[1] *Histoire de la Corse et des Corses,* p. 376.
[2] *State, Activists and Islanders,* p. 20
[3] *Histoire de la Corse et des Corses,* p. 376.
[4] *La Fin des mythes*, p. 92.
[5] *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 269.
[6] *La Fin des mythes*, p. 106.
[7] Ibid pp. 277 -286.
[8] Ibid. pp. 289-90.
[9] Ibid. p. 106.
[10] Ibid. pp. 106-11.
[11] *Un Peuple, une histoire,* pp. 291-5.

frequented universities on mainland France, positioning Corsica within a perceived French sphere of influence.[1]

Although Corsica's links with France solidified during the Second Empire, the island fell into disgrace after Napoleon III's defeat in 1870. Public opinion turned anti-Bonapartist and anti-Corsican, provoking a debate about whether or not Corsica ever had been, or should remain, French.[2] According to Francis Pomponi, the Third Republic was a time of crisis on Corsica, denoting economic hardship, social unrest and growing discontentment with a state that did nothing to improve the situation.[3] The only concerted state effort on Corsica was the push for Frenchification through schooling so typical for the Third Republic, although Caratini claims that Ferry's system was insufficiently implemented on Corsica.[4] This was fruitful soil for the creation of regionalist and independence movements.[5] The same period also saw what Blackwood describes as a division of the population in Francophobes and Francophiles.[6] While many Corsicans remained attached to Napoleon III, the system of *clanisme* favoured the spread of Republicanism for pragmatic reasons.[7] The Third Republic also marks the heyday of Corsican migration to France and Corsican service in the colonies, often in reaction to dire prospects at home.[8] While Corsica's integration into France was not completed, the island was much more closely linked to the mainland than it had been at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, the *Encyclopædia Corsicae* claims that the use of French remained restricted to the upper classes during the nineteenth century and only really gained ground among the wider population in the first half of the twentieth century.[9]

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[1] David Evans, 'Creating the Island Imaginary: Corsican Poetry in French', *Modern and Contemporary France,* Vol.18, No. 1 (February 2010), p. 69.

[2] Jules Vallès wrote in *Le Cri du peuple* (04/03/1871): 'La vérité qu'il faut dire, c'est que la Corse n'a jamais été et ne sera jamais française.' Quoted in *Jean de Peretti della Rocca,* p. 15. Georges Clemenceau demanded Corsica's breakup from France in 1871 and again in 1911: 'Le club positiviste de Paris demande à l'Assemblée nationale que la Corse cesse immédiatement de faire partie de la République française.' Quoted in *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 313.

[3] *Histoire de la Corse*, p. 383.

[4] *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 318.

[5] Ibid. p. 399.

[6] *State, Activists and Islanders*, p. 20.

[7] *La Fin des mythes*, p. 109.

[8] *Creating the Island Imaginary*, pp. 32, 69.

[9] Tony Sabiani (ed.), *Encyclopædia Corsicae, tome III: Anthropologie* (Pietrasanera: Dumane, 2004), p. 813.

France

The histories of Alsace's and Corsica's annexations must be understood within the context of the history of the French state, which had engaged in expansionist politics from its very beginnings. Since the proclamation of the *Royaume de France* in 1204, its successive monarchs went to great lengths in order to add ever more lands to their kingdom, immediately on European soil and from the sixteenth century overseas (in the Americas, Africa and Asia).[1] The French desire for *aggrandisement* did not cease with the (temporary) abolition of the Monarchy in 1789. The pinnacle of France's continental territorial possessions was reached during the First Empire, when Napoleon Bonaparte occupied large parts of Europe. Overseas expansionism saw a renewed surge from the 1830s onwards, with the height of France's overseas possessions situated during the Third Republic.[2] France has a tradition of Imperialism, 'the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire' - a collection of heterogeneous territories and ethnically distinct populations that are controlled by one single state authority.[3] Eric Hobsbawm argues that this tradition of empire-building underwent significant changes during the nineteenth century, which he calls the 'Age of Empire.'[4] The most important way in which the nineteenth-century French Empire differed from previous extensions was on the level of discourse and ideology.[5]

Nation-formation

In 1789, the French revolutionaries inherited a state: a fixed apparatus of political domination over a territory.[6] However, they did not inherit a nation, if one defines 'nation' in terms of 'notions of collectivity and belonging, a *mutual* sense of community that a group of individuals imagines it shares.'[7] And even less so if one applies our contemporary connotations of the word, namely cultural and linguistic homogeneity. In reality, the French state at the time of the Revolution was a jigsaw of separate cultural and linguistic communities. Maurice Agulhon lists seven non-French languages (including Alsatian and Corsican) and 'innumerable' dialects and *patois* that were spoken in 1789.[8]

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[1] *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 299.
[2] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987), p. 59.
[3] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 8. See Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2005), p. 2.
[4] *Age of Empire,* p. 56.
[5] Hobsbawm enumerates several factors that made nineteenth-century Imperialism different from earlier forms of empire-forging. An unprecedented number of rulers around the globe boasted the title of 'emperor.' Advances in technology meant that territories much further away from the centre of power could be annexed and administered successfully. The new style of Empire was connected to the rise of capitalism, making the search for new markets and goods a principal motivation for expansionism. The most important factor for this thesis are the discourses related to imperial ideology. See ibid. pp. 56-62.

[6] Bethan Benwell, Elizabeth Stokoe, *Discourse and Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 2006), p. xii.
[7] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester U.P., 2000), p. 69.
[8] Maurice Agulhon, 'Le centre et la périphérie', in Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 2890. Agulhon remains unclear about how he distinguishes between languages, dialects and *patois*.

The *Rapport Grégoire* of 1794 'calculated that a mere eighth of the nation spoke French' and suggested that thirty different *patois* were spoken on French territory; next to counting the idioms of continental France, the paper also mentions languages spoken by 'les nègres de nos colonies.'[1] In light of this diversity, Pierre Nora argues that the ideas of unity and fragmentation of the country surfaced at the same time: 'La Révolution est donc ce moment paradoxal qui conjugue la volonté unitaire et la découverte des différences régionales, l'une portant l'autre.'[2] These tensions between the whole and its parts were to permeate all political and cultural activity in the century to come.

Given that 'the average citizen of the new *République* had little or no sense of national identity,' France's successive rulers had to create an image of the nation that would inspire an emotional response in most of their subjects.[3] Territories annexed prior to 1789 had to be stabilised, consolidated and their inhabitants permanently bound to the idea of France. Nineteenth-century nation-building was the follow-up to the continental expansionism of previous centuries and was marked by the importance of ideology. The battle for France's cohesion was fought on the field of discourse and eventually led to the creation of a national identity. Benedict Anderson claims that national identities are constructs of the collective imagination and Homi Bhabha underlines that nations are 'a form of narrative.'[4] As Antonio Gramsci remarks, the telling of this narrative corresponds to the formation of a hegemony, by which a social group attains domination over another by persuasion, achieving their consensus and complicity through discourse.[5] Hegemony is far more effective than force in achieving long-term control over a population, since '[s]ubjects give their consent to particular formations of power because the dominant cultural group generating the discourse persuades them of their essential "truth," "desirability" and "naturalness".'[6] The discourse of French nationalism had to be proposed to and accepted by the majority of the states' subjects in order for a hegemonic national identity to occur. As Anderson points out, owing to the invention of print capitalism and increased literacy rates, the nineteenth century was the first time in history that ideological dissemination on such a large scale became possible.[7] The written word, and literature in particular, played a crucial part in

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[1] Abbé Henri Grégoire, *Sur la necessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française*, fully reprinted in *Une Politique de la langue*, p. 302.
[2] *Les Lieux de mémoire II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 2927.
[3] *Postcolonial Brittany,* p. 15.
[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 6; Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 2.
[5] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* ed. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 12.
[6] Ibid. p. 30.
[7] *Imagined Communities,* p. 44.

shaping conceptions of the national self and in making them available to the community of readers.

Of course, hegemonies often contain contradictions and the invention of French national identity was marked by conflicting discourses. Famously, nationhood after 1789 was defined in political terms: in relation to the French state and its territory.[1] Since it is bound to the state, this view of nationhood is often referred to as civic nationalism; as opposed to ethnic nationalism, which is usually built around a single cultural and linguistic community.[2] The discourse of civic nationalism imagined a community based on shared values, a common political culture and constructed around the symbols of the state.[3] Social thinkers such as Mably, Sieyès and Rousseau inspired the ideal of popular sovereignty, seeing the nation as the expression of the people's collective will.[4] In principle, anyone could choose to join the nation, irrespective of their origins, language, culture etc., as belonging to the national community was seen above all as a conscious decision. However, this civic definition of the nation already depended on assumptions about moral value, rationality and education. Self-rule was seen as one of the great achievements of enlightened thought and civilisation: the nation could only be defined in terms of a contract between educated, morally responsible and autonomous individuals. Frenchness was thus from the outset defined as civilisation.[5] The notion of universality constituted a double-edged sword: anyone could be French if they became civilised, and civilisation and therefore Frenchness could become a global phenomenon. However, this universality was in practice often used to decree that everyone had to become like the French.

Paradoxically, hegemonic discourses also presented France as an ethnic and linguistic community, based on the model of Paris, 'the centre, which was supposed to incarnate permanent and universal value.'[6] The discourse of French nationalism had a strong ethnic undercurrent that postulated the capital as the essence of Frenchness. Not only was all political power concentrated in Paris, so that the capital came to represent all of France's inhabitants. Centralisation also became increasingly important on a cultural level. There was greater emphasis that the French nation should

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[1] Michael Keating, *Nations against the State* (Hampshire: Macmillain, 1996), p. 6.
[2] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 21.
[3] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1990), p. 91.
[4] See Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État?* (n.p.: n.pub., 1789); Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *Doutes proposés aux philosophes et aux économistes sur l'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* (Paris: Vallard, 1791); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Principes du droit politique. Du Contrat social* (Amsterdam: Michel Rey, 1762).
[5] Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: the Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895 -1930* (Stanford: Stanford U.P.), p. 1.
[6] *Beginning Postcolonialism*, p. 14.

be 'une et indivisible' and its members, in some sense, homogenous.[1] The discourse of Frenchness perpetuated the cultural supremacy of Paris, and the dominant status of French as national language. As William Kidd argues, '[t]he language question, then, is built into the very foundations of Republicanism itself, inseparable from the […] Republican core values: only through what the Abbé Grégoire in 1794 calls "l'usage unique et invariable de la langue de liberté," can there be true egalité and fraternité.'[2] Under the weight of the assumption that morality, education and civilisation were attached to such a tangible feature as language, regional particularisms came under suspicion. Not only were France's diverse cultures and languages increasingly perceived as a threat to political unity; they also became synonymous with backwardness and moral underdevelopment.[3] And so it came to pass that the famous *mission civilisatrice* - the quest to bring civilisation to the uncivilised – was ushered in at home, in mainland France.[4] For, in order to bring these uncultivated individuals into the covenant of the nation, they first had to be educated. This drive for the cultural assimilation of the peripheries is an undisputed historical fact; France is even considered the 'paradigmatic example' of a state successfully converting its inhabitants to one single language.[5] At the heart of French nationalism was a division of the territory into Paris and the provinces, insisting that the inhabitants of the latter had to be educated and transformed from 'peasants into Frenchmen,' as Eugen Weber argues.[6] It emerges that 'the elaboration of a whole set of theories and ideas, in particular the delineation of primitive and civilized cultures' - though usually associated with colonialism - was already at the core of French ideas about nationhood.[7]

Empire-building

France's imagined identity embraced the state's expansionist tradition, postulating an inherent entitlement to world domination via its definition in terms of civilisation. In the words of the French explorer Jules Harmand:

> 'Il faut donc accepter comme principe […] qu'il y a une hiérarchie des races et des civilisations, et que nous appartenons à la race et à la civilisation supérieures, mais en reconnaissant aussi que, si cette supériorité confère des droits, elle impose en retour de

[1] Gérard Noiriel, *Population, immigration et identité nationale en France, XIX^e^ – XX^e^ siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1992), p. 18.
[2] William Kidd, Siân Reynolds, *Contemporary French Cultural Studies* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2000), p. 131.
[3] *Peasants into Frenchmen*, p. 72.
[4] Robert Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), p. 92.
[5] *Postcolonial Brittany*, p. 15.
[6] *Peasants into Frenchmen.*
[7] Martin Evans, *Empire and Culture: the French Experience, 1830 -1940* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 3.

> grands devoirs. La légitimation foncière de la conquête indigène, c'est cette conviction […] de notre supériorité morale; c'est en elle que réside notre dignité et que se fonde notre droit à la direction du reste de l'humanité.'[1]

This perceived entitlement was realised relatively quickly through the conquest of large overseas territories and the concerted endeavour to rule them; hence, Hobsbawm argues that France entered into 'the era of a new type of empire, the colonial.'[2] Elleke Boehmer defines colonialism as involving 'the consolidation of imperial power, […] the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands.'[3] Martin Evans divides this 'new' French Imperialism into two phases, the 'acquisition of knowledge' (1789 – 1871) and the 'height of empire' (1871 – 1918), when France ruled over the largest amount of land in its history.[4]

What differentiated this specifically nineteenth-century form of empire-building was its unprecedented reliance on discourse and ideology. Just like nationalism, French colonialism relied heavily on binary distinctions between cultured and uncultured, civilised and primitive, educated and uneducated people groups.[5] The annexation and exploitation of overseas territory was justified in terms of the superiority and supposed universality of French - that is, Parisian - civilisation. The discourse that justified colonialism used the idea of a *mission civilisatrice* given to the French: their right to rule inferior peoples was grounded in their perceived obligation to educate and enlighten them.[6] The universality of French culture thus foresaw the 'civilisation' of the natives and equally enticed the 'uncivilised' to believe in Paris' cultural superiority and to accept their subordinate role. John McLeod calls this process 'colonising the mind.'[7] As with nationalism, the written word and literature in particular was an important medium for the propagation of colonial discourses, as it benefitted from a wider readership than ever before.[8] Finally, the annexation of colonies was justified on the very same ideological basis that had already served to bind together France's disparate territories on the mainland.

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[1] Jules Harmand, *Domination et colonisation* (Paris: Flammarion, 1910), p. 156.
[2] *Age of Empire*, p. 57.
[3] *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, p. 2.
[4] *Empire and Culture,* p. 3.
[5] Ibid. p. 3.
[6] *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 17.
[7] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 18.
[8] *Imagined Communities,* p. 44.

Striking parallels

There are striking parallels between the discourses of nation-formation and empire-building that pervaded nineteenth-century France. Overseas colonialism and mainland nationalism intersected in the perceived necessity to improve the uneducated thanks to the benefits of universal French civilisation. Tellingly, Jules Ferry was at the forefront of both processes: the man who created the national education system in order to draw ignorant children into the nation was at the forefront of the colonising and educating mission overseas. Heather Williams argues that 'the [educational] reforms were not dissimilar to educational policy in France's overseas colonies […]; there was essentially no difference between the linguistic policy of the French Revolution in the Hexagon, and that of the Third Republic in the colonies.'[1] Ferry's belief in French culture as a universal model led him to push for the *francisation* of mainland and overseas territories alike.[2] The notions of French universality and *mission civilisatrice* became leitmotifs for French Imperialism at home and abroad. The French state embarked on two colossal projects in the nineteenth century: that of turning 'peasants into Frenchmen' and that of subduing even more peoples to become its future subjects. It is not by chance that the Third Republic became the centre stage for both processes, the pinnacle of Empire (as identified by Hobsbawm) and the height of nation-formation in France (as documented by Weber). By the end of the nineteenth century, the French state had achieved cohesion on the mainland and had subjugated a vast array of overseas territories. There are thus striking similarities between French nationalism and Imperialism. Hermann Lebovics has already pointed out the parallels between empire-building and nation-formation with reference to twentieth-century France.[3] Eugen Weber also argues for the interconnectedness of nation-building and colonialism:

> The famous hexagon can itself be seen as a colonial Empire shaped over the centuries: a complex of territories conquered, annexed, and integrated in a political and administrative whole, many of them with strongly developed national or regional personalities, some of them with traditions that were specifically un- or anti-French.[4]

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[1] *Postcolonial Brittany*, p. 12

[2] *Empire and Culture*, p. 10.

[3] Lebovics argues that the French state's twentieth-century cultural mission was not unlike the colonial *mission civilisatrice*. In 1959, just as the colonial Empire was crumbling away, Charles de Gaulle founded the *Ministère de la Culture* in order to spread Parisian culture to the regions. Almost all the staff of the new ministry were former administrators of ex-colonies, directly recruited from the overseas, and pursuing the same politics of assimilation and *francisation* they had been applying there. In cultural terms, Lebovics argues, the state dealt with the regions as if they were colonies; 'it is the continuity of the old colonial hands which makes that unlikely linkage plausible, and largely true.' Hermann Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (London: Duke U.P., 2004), pp. 69-72.

[4] *Peasants into Frenchmen,* p. 485.

Weber regards French nationalism as a process of internal empire-building that was far from finished in the nineteenth century.[1] He concludes that the processes of French national integration and colonialism appear to have been closely related.

Whereas the existence of a power imbalance between Paris and the regions is incontestable, this thesis does not postulate that provinces and colonies were identical or treated identically. The purpose is neither to redefine colonialism such as to conflate continental and overseas spaces, nor to prove that Alsace and Corsica were, in material terms, colonies. Suffice it to say that several scholars have already argued these points and that it is not necessary for the purposes of this research to prolong that debate.[2] Rather, this thesis focuses on the field of discursive representations, arguing that the discourses that underpinned French nation-building were interlinked with France's imperial project. The central argument is that in the domain of literary representations, peripheral provinces were often perceived through the same conceptual framework as overseas colonies.

The discovery of the regions

In the domain of French literary representations, Said remarks upon the curious absence of colonial depictions until after the middle of the nineteenth century.[3] Conversely, there is a multitude of literary depictions of the provinces after 1789. Eighteenth-century literature had shown very little

[1] *Peasants into Frenchmen,* p. 486.

[2] Several scholars have argued that France's provinces and colonies have received identical treatment and should be regarded (at least in some respects) as equivalent. Weber illustrates the similarities between the state's treatment of provinces and colonies in material and social terms, showing that the forces of order (police, judges, army) came 'from outside' into the provinces, often having no understanding of traditional cultures and languages. Provincial communities were deprived of certain rights, such as fishing and hunting, use of pastures and forests and other natural resources, 'in the name of progress, of freedom, of productivity, and of a common good that made no sense to those in whose name it was proclaimed.' Weber claims that resources and privileges were accorded to the centre first and that Paris has fed off the riches of the regions, concluding that the immediate outcome of France's civilising mission were '[u]nderdeveloped regions, absence of infrastructure, a world without doctors, without engineers, […] [c]ultural alienation.' See ibid. pp. 72, 485-7. François Gravier was the first French author to explicitly make the link between provinces and colonies in his book *Paris et le désert français*, arguing that the Parisian administration did not treat the regions any better than its overseas colonies: 'dans tous les domaines, l'agglomération parisienne s'est comportée depuis 1850, non pas comme une métropole vivifiant son arrière-pays, mais comme un groupe "monopoleur" dévorant la substance nationale.' See François Gravier, *Paris et le désert français en 1972* (Paris: Flammarion, 1972), p. 60. Depending on what factors one emphasises in the definition of 'colonialism,' it becomes relatively easy to argue that certain provinces had, in fact, been colonies. Caratini advances that Corsica's annexation was in fact colonisation and Pomponi enumerates factors that 'peuvent faire parler d'action coloniale.' Wittmann and Schwengler argue that the appropriation and treatment of Alsace in terms of language and culture was akin to colonisation. See *Un Peuple, une histoire*, p. 300; *Histoire de la Corse*, p. 354; *Geschichte des Elsass*, pp. 19-20; *Syndrome alsacien*, p. 34.

[3] *Culture and Imperialism,* p. 74.

interest in portraying the peripheries. Provincials had been represented as a homogeneous mass of non-educated peasants and the regions themselves 'trouvaient leur place au sein d'un continuum inorganique, sans limites ni repères, et dont l'unité ne se constituait que dans ce qui l'opposait à la culture légitime [de Paris].'[1] This changed after the French Revolution, which led to a *prise de conscience* of regional differences and a surge of interest in their individual depiction.[2] From being 'the unmentionables of French prose fiction,' the provinces became a central subject of nineteenth-century literary production.[3] By the end of the century, literature had elaborated a framework of truth claims, received opinions and clichés about the peripheries. Consequently, one might say that the provinces were invented in nineteenth-century literature: the regions 'we know today [… are] largely the product of the textual practices and representations of the nineteenth century.'[4]

Martin Evans' two phases – defined originally in reference to France's overseas territories - were fulfilled simultaneously within literature about continental France. Phase one, the period between 1789 and 1871, marks the concerted acquisition of knowledge about the French provinces. During this period, the territory was charted with the help of countless surveys, inventories, travel accounts, geographical and ethnological descriptions.[5] The number of regional societies more than tripled between 1810 and 1846, and there were three times as many works published on 'geography, travel and description of the French territory' between 1800 and 1850 than during the previous three centuries.[6] Jacques Demougin mentions the importance of ethnological studies about Alsace, Berry, Brittany and Corsica.[7] Stéphane Gerson adds that 'participants in this enterprise sought to penetrate, survey, inspect and inventory the territory […] and ultimately articulate a novel conception of French identity and cohesion.'[8] Phase two, the period between 1871 and 1918, marks the height of domestic nationalism. Weber argues that the critical period for the establishment and consolidation of the French national consciousness was 'the two score years on either side of 1900.'[9] Political action was gradually turning disparate individuals into committed citizens, ensuring the cohesion of continental France.[10] Not coincidentally, many of the primary sources this thesis will

[1] Jacques Revel, 'La Région' in *Les Lieux de mémoire II,* p. 2916.
[2] Ibid. p. 2918.
[3] Andrew Watts, *Preserving the Provinces: Small Town and Countryside in the Work of Honoré de Balzac* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 15.
[4] *Postcolonial Brittany*, p. 33.
[5] Stéphane Gerson, 'Parisian Littérateurs, Provincial Journeys and the Construction of National Unity in Post-Revolutionary France,' in *Past and Present,* No.51 (May 1996), p. 172.
[6] Ibid. p. 150; *Preserving the Provinces*, p. 41.
[7] Jacques Demougin (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique, thématique et technique des littératures: Littératures françaises et étrangères, anciennes et modernes* (Paris: Larousse, 1986), p. 1410.
[8] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 172.
[9] *Peasants into Frenchmen,* p. 493.
[10] *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, p. 10.

examine were written during the period of acquisition of knowledge and testify to the expansion of the nineteenth-century French imaginary. With regards to the primary sources published during the height of nationalism, it will be shown that there is a marked change in discourse about Alsace and Corsica post-1870. While the nineteenth century brought regional differences into focus, it also problematised them, juxtaposing a heterogeneous provincial space with the ingrained idea that only Parisian culture was truly French.[1] The tensions between national unity and peripheral heterogeneity are at the heart of nineteenth-century French fiction. 'Il est donc d'autant plus important de les repérer [les particularités], de les décrire et, dans la mesure du possible, de les comprendre. De cette tension naît une littérature bavarde, souvent contradictoire […]: La description de la France réelle.'[2]

Concurrently, the movement of French Romanticism brought a vogue for travel writing, the description of strange lands, as well as losing and finding oneself in outlandish spaces. Robert Aldrich emphasises the Parisian reading public's keen interest for literature about 'romanticised colourful distant places.'[3] Famously, many Parisian authors went abroad to capture that sensation of otherness, often travelling to the Mediterranean, but also Switzerland, Germany and the British Isles, and further afield to the Americas and the Orient later on in the century.[4] 'À chaque fois, semble-t-il, on nous propose un voyage différent. Nous sommes "ailleurs": exotisme spatial, temporel, mais voyage aussi dans l'irréel ou irrationnel, aux pays de la Différence.'[5] However, the French hunger for the exotic did not only find nourishment abroad. Romantics often found their 'pays de la Différence' within what is nowadays seen as France itself. Demougin affirms in relation to French Romanticism:

> Mais il n'est pas besoin de ces expéditions lointaines pour se dépayser vraiment: la France elle-même est un terrain d'exploitation merveilleux. Dès qu'on sort de Paris, on entre dans l'aventure, et la province en soi est exotique.[6]

Gerson confirms this, detecting a trend for travelling and writing about the provinces in the first half of the nineteenth century, again within the timeframe that Martin Evans describes as the acquisition

[1] *Preserving the Provinces*, p. 38.
[2] *La Région*, p. 2928.
[3] *Greater France*, p. 234.
[4] Demougin mentions Stendhal, George Sand, Alfred de Musset, François-René de Chateaubriand, Alphonse de Lamartine, Gérard Nerval, Gustave Flaubert, Alexandre Dumas. See *Dictionnaire historique des littératures,* p. 1410.
[5] Ibid. p. 1410.
[6] Ibid. p. 1410.

of knowledge.[1] Many renowned authors such as Honoré de Balzac, Charles Nodier and Prosper Mérimée (together with many less well-known writers) engaged in the process of '[d]ocumenting the Provinces [sic] for Paris.'[2] Anne-Marie Thiesse traces patterns of production and consumption of literature about the regions that consistently match those of Romanticism about foreign lands.[3] Yet, she fails to see how these works fit into the general category of interest in the foreign and exotic. Nevertheless, her work provides an extensive overview of material that testifies to the preoccupation with the otherness of the regions in nineteenth-century French cultural representations.

Was this a time of French self-discovery, or did this charting of provincial territory simply reveal 'the yearning of those who now owned most of France to inspect their property,' as Gerson argues?[4] French writers were probably involved in both processes, finding the national self and mapping its boundaries. French Romanticism had a clear agenda for discovering and narrating the nation, best exemplified in the *roman historique,* in which authors sought to relate a story of common national foundations.[5] Literature about the regions often took this form, famously exemplified by Balzac's *Les Chouans* (1829). Unsurprisingly, there is a strong connection between literary journeys through the regions and the discovery of the national self: 'Si les romantiques voyagent tellement, physiquement ou par les livres, […] c'est aussi parce qu'ils se cherchent eux-mêmes.'[6] This quest for the self necessarily implies the search for an other; as McLeod remarks, '[e]very definition of identity is always defined *in relation* to something else.'[7] Parisian authors embarked on a discursive mapping of the self, recounting where the nation stopped and where foreign land began. Nation-building, provincial exploration and colonialism could be seen as extensions of the same discursive process, namely the literary creation of a national self and its other. The establishment and pushing back of boundaries was thus essential to narrating the national self. The key thing to notice is that the boundaries of the French self were not yet fixed.

'Us' and 'ours': 'inner others' and the internal exotic

During the process of their exploration, the provinces were situated in a curious place in between 'us' and 'ours,' the national self and its possessions. Gerson defines '*la province* [as] a French territory that is distinct from France [… with] ruins and monuments, which are part of present France

[1] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 150.
[2] *Preserving the Provinces,* p. 38.
[3] Anne-Marie Thiesse, *Ils apprenaient la France: L'Exaltation des régions dans le discours patriotique* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1997)
[4] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 172.
[5] Béatrice Didier (ed.), *Dictionnaire universel des littératures* (Paris: P.U. de France, 1994), p. 3267.
[6] Ibid. p. 1410.
[7] *Beginning Colonialism*, p. 74. Italics in the original.

and are not […]; peasants, who likewise stand between past and present; and […] a provincial elite, which is French and which is not.'[1] In nineteenth-century cultural representations, the boundaries between nation, provinces, and colonies were extremely fluid. Too often, contemporary scholarship has failed to see this fluidity, instead taking for granted the cohesion of what is nowadays perceived as France.[2] In reality, the difference between inside and outside was not always self-evident, and the space of the nation had long remained unfixed. Hence the urgency, faced with France's large territorial possessions in the nineteenth century, to work out which of these lands (and individuals) were a part of the national self and which only represented its possessions.

For nineteenth-century writers, the other was not only found outside, but very commonly located inside of what we nowadays call France. In his paper on 'Outer and Inner Others,' Joep Leerssen observes that famous French authors, such as Balzac, Dumas, Hugo, Sue and others, exhibited a fascination with the exotic and culturally different within France, concluding that they developed 'a sort of internal exoticism, where the mysterious, inspiring, disquieting and Romantic Other is sought within France.'[3] Yet, Leerssen's analysis never makes the connection between such depictions and wider imperial discourses. Nevertheless, this thesis owes to him the concept of the 'internal exotic' and the conviction that it is appropriate to apply the term 'exoticism' to the description of cultural differences within France. Commonly, the word 'exotic' denotes 'ce qui n'appartient pas à la civilisation de la personne qui parle, à ce qui vient de pays lointains […] souvent avec une idée de pittoresque superficiel.'[4] Keeping in mind that French authors tended to understand their 'national' civilisation in terms of Parisian culture and language, this definition can be easily applied to the provinces with their divergent mores, traditions and local languages. This analysis therefore postulates the existence of an 'internal exoticism,' a framework of references which helped conceptualise outlying regions as different from the French self, while justifying their rule by France.

Nineteenth-century writers detected the exotic presence of 'inner others' on the French mainland, thus blurring the boundaries between the uneducated populations of provinces and colonies.[5] The Parisian gaze spotted uncivilised savages not only overseas, but also in continental

[1] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 166
[2] *Les Lieux de mémoire II*, p. 2910.
[3] Joep Leerssen, 'Outer and Inner Others: the Auto-image of French Identity from Mme de Staël to Eugène Sue' in *Yearbook of European Studies* No.2 (1989), p. 50.
[4] Nathalie Schon, *L'Auto-Exotisme dans les littératures des Antilles françaises* (Paris: Karthala, 2003), p. 12.
[5] *Outer and Inner Others*, p. 35.

France, as shown by Agulhon.[1] In his chapter 'A Country of Savages,' Weber claims that the term 'savage' can be 'readily applied, and for a long […] period of time, to sections of the rural population - equally strange and little known […], poor, backward, wild.'[2] Paul Gauguin, the primitivist painter famous for his voyages to exotic places such as Tahiti and Polynesia, boasted in 1886 that he was going to flee the burden of civilisation: 'Je pars pour être tranquille, pour être débarrassé de l'influence de la civilisation […]. [J]'ai besoin de me retremper dans la nature vierge, de ne voir que des sauvages, de vivre leur vie.'[3] He went to Brittany.[4] Apparently, the exotic other was not necessarily located overseas for the nineteenth-century Parisian intellectual. Conversely, the civilised national self could potentially stretch much further than the French mainland. It is widely acknowledged that Algeria in particular was not strictly seen as a foreign land. 'From the 1830s on, French officials maintained that Algerian territory was a part of France […]. [T]he Second Republic declared […] that French territory in North Africa was an extension of the Republic.'[5] Thus, the ambivalence over which territories were and were not part of the French nation reached much further than the mainland. At the heart of this confusion lies the paradoxical French combination of ethnic nationalism with a claim to universal validity and a vocation to expansionism. The consequences of this view of France were a drive for the *francisation* of provinces and colonies alike, and attempts to assimilate inner and outer others into the nation. Thiesse finds that 'la nouvelle définition de la nation énonce la singularité des entités locales tout en leur déniant un autre mode d'existence que celui de l'intégration dans le national.'[6] This statement certainly applies to provinces and colonies alike, since the discourses justifying their rule only worked in view of their assimilation.

The fluidity of boundaries between provinces and colonies can be observed in nineteenth-century discourses about Alsace and Corsica. Debates about whether or not these provinces were integral parts of the nation were still common during the Third Republic. After the defeat of 1870, a

[1] *Les Lieux de mémoire II*, p. 2893.
[2] *Peasants into Frenchmen*, p. 3.
[3] Quoted in Edward Hughes, *Writing Marginality in Modern French Literature: from Loti to Genet* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001), p. 30.
[4] *Greater France,* p. 253.
[5] Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: the Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 2008), p. 20.
[6] Thiesse's book on '*L'Exaltation des régions dans le discours patriotique'* - sponsored by the French Ministry of Culture - aims to show that, contrary to popular belief, 'la célébration de l'identité française ne s'est pas effectuée par une dénégation des identités locales, tout au contraire.' Thiesse takes her readers through a series of provincial representations, aiming to show that the state celebrated them, and was not, after all, an agent of suppression of local diversity or forced assimilation to the centre. Yet, what she finds is a very restrictive view of traditional cultures in France. Thiesse's results are invitations to read her book against her original intentions, because the provincial representations she unearths fit exactly into the scheme of internal exoticism. It emerges that the regions were never celebrated or represented in their own right, but only with regards to forging a greater, national whole that would eventually efface them: 'l'histoire locale n'est tenue pour signifiante que dans le cadre de l'histoire nationale.' See *Ils apprenaient la France*, pp. 1, 4-5, 55.

popular argument ran that the loss of Alsace-Lorraine should simply be remedied by the acquisition of new overseas territories.[1] Jules Ferry's proposal of this idea was opposed by the revanchist Paul Déroulède: 'J'ai perdu deux sœurs, et vous m'offrez vingt domestiques.'[2] While some statesmen were happy to swap one region for another, others insisted on the unity and indivisibility of France's territories. Which spaces were or were not part of the nation was a subject for debate, not a given. This is further exemplified in discourses about Corsica during the same period. Whereas one newspaper writes in 1871 that '*[l]a Corse n'a jamais été ni sera jamais française*,' another insists in 1893 that '*les Corses […] sont réellement français.*'[3] This shows, if anything, that the French sense of national space had not yet been consolidated and that the boundaries of the nation remained blurry. There are numerous statements about Corsica that demonstrate a slippage between self and other, province and colony. When the Republic's president travelled to Corsica in 1890, the *Petit Journal* went with the headline 'Le Président chez les sauvages' and expounded:

> Ah! nous sommes de tristes colonisateurs, vraiment, puisque […] la Corse aussi bien que l'Algérie sont entre nos mains comme deux mines d'or d'où nous ne pouvons extraire des richesses et où nous ne savons implanter que la paperasserie de nos bureaux.[4]

Such references to Corsica as a colony abound, typically placing it alongside Algeria.[5] A distinction was usually made between civilised France and the savage island, which then served to justify Corsica's rule by the French. Volney, in his *Précis de l'état actuel de la Corse* (1793) underlines the inability of the Corsican people to govern themselves, 'participant de l'état sauvage et d'une civilisation commencée.'[6] This chorus was repeated over time, reaching a new peak during the 1830s. Just after the conquest of Algeria had strengthened France's colonial enthusiasm, Hubert Lauvergne included Corsica in his *Annales maritimes et coloniales* (1832), stating that 'cette île, jetée

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[1] Aldrich additionally mentions the thinkers and colonialists Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, Jean Duval, Lucien Prévost-Paradol, Paul Gaffarel as proponents of this strategy. See *Greater France*, pp. 97-100.

[2] Quoted in ibid. p. 100.

[3] *Le Cri du peuple* (04/03/1871) quoted in *Jean de Peretti della Rocca,* p. 15; *Réveil de la montagne et de Nice* (16/09/1893) quoted in ibid., p. 85.

[4] Jean sans Terre, *Le Président chez les sauvages,* in *Petit journal,* 1890, quoted in *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 313.

[5] The French civil servant J.-B. Truchy de Basouche wrote in 1837: 'La Corse est comme Alger une des conquêtes de la France et, à voir le peu de parti qu'on en a tiré et le peu d'améliorations qu'on y a faites depuis 68 ans qu'elle nous appartient, on serait tenté de croire que, si nous savons conquérir, nous ne savons guère administrer.' J.-B. Truchy de Basouche, *Quelques notes sur la Corse et sur la nécessité d'y établir un bon cadastre* (Paris: Allier, 1837), pp. 12-13. This tone had not changed half a century later. Émile Bergerat, in 1887, thought along the same lines: 'la Corse vaudra comme colonie une petite Algérie, lorsqu'on se décidera à la […] coloniser.' *La Chasse au mouflon, ou Petit voyage philosophique en Corse* (Paris: Delgrave, 1893), p. 338.

[6] Volney, *Précis de l'état actuel de la Corse*, quoted in Pierrette Jeoffroy-Faggianelli, *L'Image de la Corse dans la littérature romantique française* (Paris: P.U. de France, 1979), p. 69.

comme par exception au milieu du monde civilisé, [est] restée immobile dans le tourbillon ascensionnel des sociétés modernes.'[1] In 1870, the administrator Félix Bertrand acclaimed the triumph of 'la domination désintéressée de la France' over the savagery of Corsica's *mœurs*: 'personne n'a vu avec plus de bonheur que nous le système éclairé du gouvernement triompher […]; personne n'a plus applaudi à cette conquête […]. Un évènement si heureux au point de vue de la morale […] intéresserait […] tous ceux qui aiment à suivre les races humaines dans la voie difficile du progrès.'[2] Pierrette Jeoffroy-Faggianelli underlines that political debates throughout the century fluctuated between a view of Corsica as a *département français* or a colony.[3] This ambiguity of Corsica's status showed not only in political culture, but also in travel literature. Émile Bergerat, a Parisian artist musing on his journey to Corsica in 1887, insists that France should 'civiliser, coloniser, franciser et républicaniser [la Corse] sérieusement.'[4]

References to Alsace as a colony were less ubiquitous, but they did exist, in particular during the Revolutionary Wars, doubtlessly linked to many Alsatians' collaboration with German allies. The revolutionary general Jean-Charles Pichegru wrote in 1793:

> La perfidie des habitants de l'Alsace […] est atroce. […] Nous ne devions avoir aucune confiance en ces monstres. Il faut que toute l'Alsace soit régénérée par une colonie de patriotes. Sans cela, *nous ne ferons jamais rien de cette maudite race.*[5]

Several other Revolutionaries spoke out for a clamp-down execution or deportation of the Alsatian population and a colonisation of the province by French *sans-culottes*, all in an effort to make Alsace French.[6] Half a century later, Jules Michelet did not include Alsace in his famous series *Histoire de France* (1833-1867).[7] This resonates ironically with the revanchists' outcry after the province's

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[1] Hubert Lauvergne, *Annales maritimes et coloniales,* (Paris: n. pub., 1832), p. 410.
[2] Félix Bertrand*, La Vendetta, le banditisme et leur suppression: Tableau de mœurs corses* (Paris: Hurtau, 1870), pp. 5-6, 98.
[3] *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 384.
[4] *La Chasse au mouflon,* p. 342.
[5] Quoted in *L'Alsace et la Révolution,* p. 95. Italics in the original.
[6] Rousseville suggested to 'faire une espèce de levée en masse de tous les jeunes citoyens et citoyennes de la ci-devant Alsace […] Il sera fait […] un scrutin épuratoire de ce qui reste d'hommes […]: on en transplantera une bonne partie dans des lieux où il faudra qu'ils deviennent français, et on laissera l'autre pour se franciser avec la colonie qu'on appellera de l'intérieur de la République […] Il arrivera […] que toutes les familles s'unissant et se confondant, les deux peuples n'en feront qu'un autour du centre commun, qui est ici l'unité et l'indivisibilité de la République!' *Dissertation sur la francilisation de la ci-devant Alsace,* pp. 13-14. The deputy Elie Lacoste, in his 1793 letter to the *Convention Nationale*, suggests that they should 'guillotiner le quart des habitants de l'Alsace et de ne conserver que ceux qui ont pris une part active à la Révolution, chasser le surplus et séquestrer leurs biens.' Quoted in *L'Alsace et la Révolution,* p. 92.
[7] Gérard Noiriel claims that Michelet omitted Alsace because 'Michelet affirme que plus on s'éloigne du centre,

annexation to Germany in 1870, claiming that Alsace had always been French.

Postcolonial France

Nineteenth-century discourses about the regions tended to blur the categories of nation, province and colony, thus creating inner others and an internal exotic within a space that is nowadays largely considered as inherently French. Given the parallels between the discourses of nation-formation and empire-building underlying these representations, the provinces should be understood as Francophone spaces. A literary analysis of the regions would greatly benefit from using tools of a conceptual framework that is usually applied to the examination of overseas territories: postcolonialism.

Heather Williams, in her ground-breaking book *Postcolonial Brittany,* is the first researcher to apply postcolonial criticism to a part of mainland France. She argues that '[t]he use of the word Francophone to refer to a part of mainland France serves as a reminder that "Frenchness" was only achieved surprisingly recently, and at the expense of France's other indigenous languages.'[1] Williams maintains that a theory which scrutinises cultural expressions of people groups that were, in the course of the French *mission civilisatrice,* forced or at least encouraged to give up their native languages and traditions, can be fittingly applied to the province of Brittany.[2] Her postcolonial approach to Brittany rests on the assumption that the cultural situation there is not significantly different from France's overseas colonies.[3] William's analysis is therefore focused around power imbalances between the centre and the peripheries and the resulting consequences for marginal cultures, languages and identities. Charles Forsdick also hints at the need to consider the hexagon from a postcolonial perspective. In his article on 'French Studies and the Postcolonial Turn', he remarks that 'the very necessary postcolonial detour […] leads back to questions about the relationship between France and French, French and Francophone.'[4] Forsdick suggests that the Francophone world cannot be rigidly situated beyond present-day France's borders: 'metropolitan and non-metropolitan […] these categories are no longer, and perhaps never were, watertight.'[5] An analysis of the regions as Francophone spaces is necessary, and it should involve detaching

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plus on s'éloigne de la nation française. Pour lui les régions frontalières sont "moins françaises" que les autres; notamment parce qu'elles parlent d'autres langues. En vertu de ce principe, il exclut […] l'Alsace de la France.' *Population, immigration et identité nationale,* p. 18.

[1] *Postcolonial Brittany,* p. 9.
[2] Ibid. p. 9.
[3] Ibid. p. 18.
[4] Charles Forsdick, 'État present. Between "French" and "Francophone": French Studies and the Postcolonial Turn', in *French Studies* Vol. LIX, No. 4 (2005), p. 527.
[5] Ibid. p. 530.

postcolonial analysis from the overseas and turning its focus back to France itself.

Advocating a postcolonial re-reading of cultural productions about the provinces is not necessarily paramount to declaring the regions synonymous with France's overseas colonies.[1] It does, however, entail the recognition of a power imbalance in the relationship of a centralised state and its heterogeneous peripheries, and its consequences with regards to local cultures, languages and particularities. A postcolonial vision of France takes into account the post-revolutionary drive for the Frenchification of 'national' territory and the state's efforts to eradicate regional differences. This thesis recognises the fact that Alsace and Corsica were culturally and linguistically other to the centre and underwent cultural *bouleversements* during the period of French nation-building, resulting in ambivalent bicultural and bilingual situations at the end of the nineteenth century. Postcolonial analysis examines how such power imbalances affected cultural productions and modes of representation, investigating the intersections of power and discourse.[2] It 'explore[s] the ways that *representations* and *modes of perception* are used as fundamental weapons of […] power.'[3] As mentioned above, the French state achieved supremacy in the processes of nation-formation and empire-building through the creation of discursive hegemony. A postcolonial approach to France should therefore study discourses to reveal the way in which such representational strategies served to justify the centre's cultural domination. Since postcolonial criticism examines how power structures are created and maintained in discourse, it generally analyses narratives, and particularly prose fiction. Edward Said argues that 'cultural forms such as the novel […] were immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences. I do not mean that only the novel was important, but that I consider it *the* aesthetic object whose connection to the expanding societies of Britain and France is particularly interesting to study.'[4] Prose fiction is a key to charting national expansionism and the creation of cultural hegemony. The expansion of the reading public and the wider dissemination of books during the nineteenth century meant that literature was a more powerful social tool than it had ever been before. It played a paramount role in the creation of the French imaginary and in the elaboration of identity and alterity. Gerson underlines

[1] The difference between the epithets 'postcolonial' and 'post-colonial' carries important nuances. 'Post-colonialism' analyses territories after they have gained formal independence from colonisation and therefore postulates the formal recognition that the territory in question had been a colony. The term 'postcolonial' is not bound to any particular point in a territory's history and does not depend on a formal recognition of its status as (ex-) colony. See *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 5. The question of whether provinces should be formally recognised as colonised in the full sense of the word would require diligent historical analysis. While it is not within the subject matter of this thesis, such an examination would certainly be an important contribution to the future of French Studies.

[2] Ibid. p. 32.

[3] Ibid. p. 17. Italics in the original.

[4] *Culture and Imperialism,* p. xii. Italics in the original.

the influential function of travel writing about the regions: 'the […] traveller was a conscious or unconscious agent of symbolic domination […]. [C]onflicts for power lay behind the representations which his accounts disseminated.'[1] Williams underlines that 'all places are invented in literature. […] Literature creates for us, or in other words blinds us to, the real landscape.'[2] Literature was the only way in which the average French reader would ever see France's territories and thus constituted the lens through which these were perceived. Once literary discourses about the provinces solidified in the popular imaginary, they could help support (or resist) existing power-structures. Given the parallels in the discursive representations of provinces and colonies, David Evans argues that it is appropriate to 'use analytical frameworks usually applied to texts written far beyond mainland France to read the literature through which these regional identities are constructed.'[3]

In McLeod's words, a 'colonising of the mind' took place in literature, imposing certain ways of perceiving the provinces that justified their dependency on Paris. Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* have convinced scholars of the interrelation between exoticist cultural representations and the European endeavour to conquer and rule overseas territories.[4] French internal exoticism stands in a parallel relation to French nation-building as exoticism to Imperialism, and reproduced very similar depictions of the provinces. Over and above a fascination with inner others, exoticist portrayals of cultural differences could be used to underpin the domination and assimilation of the peripheries by the centre. Said underlines the constructed or imagined nature of exoticist discourses, which were less based on objective observation, than on cultural assumptions that were presented as facts.[5] These truth-claims constituted an institutional framework, circulating in the form of 'knowledge,' 'science,' and 'history,' conceptually dividing France 'into those who have culture and those who do not.'[6] The premise that the Parisian way of life was the only legitimate and civilised culture in France was accepted as true from the outset, creating the need for an internal *mission civilisatrice.* The discourses of internal exoticism thus postulated the provinces' cultural inferiority to the centre and, in so doing, legitimated their centralised control. Internal exoticism can thus be understood as a 'far-reaching system of representations bound to a structure of political domination.'[7]

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[1] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 172.
[2] *Postcolonial Brittany,* p. 28.
[3] *Creating the Island Imaginary*, p. 86.
[4] Said never used the term 'exoticism;' he wrote about 'Orientalism' and 'Imperialism.' Yet, both terms simply denote more specific forms of exoticism; in the first case, exoticism about the Orient, and in the second, exoticism in relation to the project of empire-building.
[5] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 42.
[6] *Empire and Culture*, p. 9.
[7] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 43.

Postcolonial analysis

Literary postcolonialism is first and foremost a reading strategy that takes into account historical, cultural and geographical specificities. Said calls this approach 'contrapuntal reading,' because it juxtaposes awareness 'both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and […] those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominant discourse acts.'[1] A postcolonial re-reading of provincial literature will not only pay close attention to how marginal spaces are depicted, but also read these representations against the backdrop of what else could have been mentioned, what was avoided or distorted and what was emphasised. Close textual analysis will reveal the processes of apprehension, comprehension and assimilation of Alsace and Corsica, as well as the ideological concepts that served to rationalise and justify them.[2] Postcolonial analysis usually first turns to texts produced by the centre, offering re-readings of the classics of national literature, in order to chart the creation of exoticist discourses. In the light of theories of colonial discourses, the canon of the metropolitan centre is re-examined and screened for references and attitudes to the project of empire-building. Secondly, postcolonial criticism scrutinises works written by authors from the ruled peripheries, paying particular attention to the first literary creations by marginal authors in the coloniser's language. Exoticist discourses are not only propagated by canonical authors: native intellectuals, writing in French for the first time in their homeland's history, often interiorised and imitated the centres' representations of their territories. Frantz Fanon claims that the first colonial literary productions in the coloniser's language tend to reproduce 'the dominant trends in the literature of the colonising power.'[3] Nathalie Schon labels this phenomenon 'auto-exoticism,' whereby the marginal self is viewed through the eyes of the centre.[4] However, not all marginal writers engage in auto-exoticism, and not every canonical work produces exoticising discourses. Therefore, postcolonial analysis seeks to identify acts of resistance. Such 'writing back to the centre,' as Bill Ashcroft argues, challenges or modifies the dominant discourse and produces new modes of representation through which to perceive the peripheries.[5] A postcolonial analysis of the provinces should therefore compare canonical texts about the peripheries to works of provincial authors, and pay close attention to discursive strategies such as internal exoticism, auto-exoticism and resistance.[6]

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[1] *Culture and Imperialism,* p.59.

[2] Such an approach does not presuppose that authors were unfree to transcend the ideologies of their day; the idea is that whether they reproduce, battle or resist the dominant opinions of their day, this will be reflected in their work.

[3] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 86.

[4] *L'Auto-Exotisme,* p. 16.

[5] Bill Ashcroft et al, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 6.

[6] While generalisations might apply in many cases, a division of the representative strategies of exoticism, auto-exoticism and resistance among certain kinds of authors should not be taken for granted. Parisian

In *Beginning Postcolonialism*, McLeod draws up a list of typical exoticist discourses about the colonies.[1] Parallels with internal exoticism are to be expected, as Thiesse's research on nineteenth-century depictions of the provinces has already demonstrated strikingly similar discursive strategies.[2] Hence, the examination of nineteenth-century Alsatian and Corsican literature will keep in mind McLeod's and Thiesse's list of characteristics and examine if such representative strategies exist in the description of these regions. Exoticism typically constructs a binary division between self and other, centre and peripheries, in terms of civilisation and progress versus savagery and backwardness.[3] Within this framework, the margins only become thinkable with reference to the centre and are never perceived in isolation, but always in comparison to Paris.[4] There is a perceived need to connect the peripheries to the centre's civilisation, and a drive for cultural assimilation of the other. The concept of travel also constitutes a key stylistic device of internal exoticism, since 'it conveys the insurmountable distance between cultures that is implicit in this writing.'[5] A common assumption was that only a Parisian author, representing the capital as a moral authority, can understand the true nature of any given province.[6] A further criterion of internal exoticism is that it depicts the regions as bound up in timelessness or atemporality.[7] Parisians travelling to the provinces were 'not only moving in *space* from one location to the other; […] they were also travelling back in *time* to an earlier world.'[8] Simultaneously, the peripheries were represented as history-free; descriptions of the local past were extremely limited or non-existent; events generally only figured in accounts if they could be shown to make the coloniser's presence necessary.[9] '[L]'histoire locale n'est tenue pour signifiante que dans le cadre de l'histoire nationale,' as the time-measurement of the coloniser is imposed on the margins.[10] A rewriting - or obscuring - of local

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authors will not automatically produce discourses of internal exoticism, and provincial authors will not automatically interiorise or resist them. Neither is it possible to neatly class texts into one of the three categories; discourses of (auto-) exoticism and resistance may well coexist in one and the same literary work.

[1] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* pp. 44-46.

[2] Ironically, Thiesse never noticed the overlap between colonial and internal exoticism, since her basic assumption was that '[i]l n'eût […] pas été possible de définir la nation comme "unité dans la diversité" si cette unité n'avait déjà été ancienne et solide.' *Ils apprenaient la France*, p. 5. Despite her failure to recognise the dimension of internal exoticism in nineteenth-century provincial writing, an almost identical list to the one in *Beginning Postcolonialism* - in which McLeod lists general aspects of exoticist depictions - could be drawn up by going through her book chapter by chapter.

[3] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 40.

[4] Thiesse's findings underline this point; proving that the region, 'la petite patrie,' could generally only be thought in relation to France, 'la grande Patrie.' *Ils apprenaient la France*, p. 8.

[5] *Postcolonial Brittany,* p. 30.

[6] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 160.

[7] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 44.

[8] Ibid. p. 44. Italics in the original.

[9] *Culture and Imperialism,* p. 180.

[10] *Ils apprenaient la France*, p. 55.

history is but one of the ways in which exoticist discourses give an 'illusion of permanence.'[1] The ruled territories are described as stable, and the natives as compliant with French rule. Challenges to the status quo are either omitted from the writing, or vilified as mad or evil. Gerson finds parallel mechanisms in writing about the provinces:

> [Authors] simplify a complex situation and point to a resolution, a reinstated unity. This manoeuvre required a pacified *province,* however, an expanse docile enough to permit the traveller to uncover whatever he desired in its midst; it required the elimination of all danger and the transformation of the countryside (or *la province*) into a reassuringly subservient object.[2]

Colonial and internal exoticism commonly eroticised and feminised the peripheries.[3] Thiesse states that 'les auteurs de cette caractérologie locale […] décrivent la terre […] selon un champ sémantique emprunté au portrait moral et physique d'un personnage féminin […], allégorie de la terre et suprême achèvement de la *race* […] en sa jeune beauté.'[4] McLeod suggests that this gendering brings with it a 'specifically sexual vocabulary' and certain assumptions about the gender roles of centre and margins.[5] Ruled lands were assigned female stereotypes and seen as sensual, passive, dependent and submissive and/or tempting, excessive, dangerous and uncontrollable. Such characterisations require the presence of a strong and rational male, able to save, pacify and control its female counterpart. This role was naturally cast for the coloniser. Likewise, exoticist discourses tend to exaggerate or subvert gender roles, especially with female subjects. While native women's chastity and submission were frequently exaggerated to the point of veiling, they were equally often depicted as perverted, untamed and promiscuous. The margins became 'a site of perverse *desire*' for many nineteenth-century authors; fantasies that had to be suppressed at home could be lived out there.[6] Exotic spaces were often equated with humanity's strongest, but also most primitive desires and forces, such as sexuality and death.[7] As well as feminising the colonies, exoticism also insists on the 'infantilism of the colonized' and frequently portrays the relationship between centre and peripheries in terms of parent and child.[8] The natives are seen as in need of the centre's selfless

[1] *Culture and Imperialism,* p. 180.
[2] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 162.
[3] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 45.
[4] *Ils apprenaient la France*, pp. 36-7.
[5] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 45.
[6] Ibid. p. 46. Italics in the original.
[7] *Writing Marginality*, p. 23.
[8] Ibid. p. 11.

rule.[1] The same mechanisms are at work in nineteenth-century Parisian writing about the provinces. Gerson found that most authors likened the provincials, 'these naïve, passive and often unreasonable beings to children.'[2] Again, the centre emerges as parental guardian and saviour of its primitive subjects.

Exoticism often shows a fluctuation between portraying the colonial space as savage and depraved, or pure and regenerative. In the first case, the natives were seen as corrupted and controlled by primitive desires and forces, requiring control and pacification by a civilised nation. Colonialism was presented as a moral obligation, since the natives 'needed saving from themselves.'[3] In the second case, the natives appeared wild and unspoilt, whereas the centre was seen as morally corrupt and decadent. Edward Hughes traces the ideas of a generation of Parisian authors such as Paul Gaugin and Pierre Loti who sought refuge from modernity in the colonies.[4] Feeling nostalgia for an earlier, innocent state of being, they left Paris in search for colonial spaces which in their eyes had allowed 'the preservation of an essential, original Self that pre-dates moral restriction and the burden of civilization.'[5] The natives' life-styles, albeit primitive and backward, were praised as liberating and reinvigorating for the coloniser. Gerson finds a similar fluctuation in the depiction of the provinces:

> The first decades of the nineteenth century thus saw the coexistence of […] a persisting opposition between a degenerate capital and a pure *province*, and […] a distinction between Paris as a source of order, progress and ideas, and a backward *province*.[6]

Like the colonies, the provinces were either seen as depraved and in need of civilising or simple, pure, unspoilt by civilisation and sources of regeneration for the centre.[7]

Another obvious characteristic of colonialism is that it is based on racial stereotypes.[8] The concept of the coloniser's racial superiority served to justify colonial subjugation and domination. Education and civilisation were not seen as sufficient for native self-rule; the factor of race was presented as making complete assimilation to the centre impossible. Homi Bhabha theorises the natives' perceived inability to fully assimilate and states that colonial discourses usually present

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[1] *Culture and Imperialism,* p. 178.
[2] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 163.
[3] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 46.
[4] *Writing Marginality*, p. 4.
[5] Ibid. p. 10.
[6] *Parisian Littérateurs, pp.* 156-157.
[7] *Preserving the Provinces,* p. 21.
[8] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 44.

them as caught in 'ambivalence' between self and other.[1] He calls these ambiguous natives 'mimic men' and observes that even educated and civilised colonial subjects remain excluded from the national self by definition, seen as '*almost the same but not quite.*'[2] According to Bhabha, the coloniser's gaze cannot allow the colonised to succeed at transforming into civilised, educated, independent beings, because this would undermine the very justification of colonial rule (i.e. the *mission civilisatrice*). Assumptions about race also underpinned internal exoticism. Gerson explains that nineteenth-century thought in general was prone to classifying and exposing an 'underlying natural order' in everything. This scientism, he argues, led authors 'to dissect and reorder society as one would the realm of nature […], portraying society as a grid of recognizable types.'[3] The concept of race helped portray provincials as a set of generalised personalities. Once again, Thiesse's research perfectly illustrates this point; a total of twenty pages of her book are dedicated to an analysis of 'les valeurs de la "race".'[4] With regards to the provinces, race is not generally seen in genetic terms; internal exoticism tends to adopt Montesquieu's definition: 'un discours selon lequel une longue familiarité avec le sol et le climat a forgé le caractère physique et moral des habitants.'[5] In internal exoticist literature, the description of the countryside therefore goes hand in hand with the character traits of its inhabitants: 'Le caractère du pays, c'est celui du paysan, et réciproquement […]: la nature fait l'homme à son image et lui imprime ses traits.'[6] Given that Thiesse's work already hints at the linkage between the representative strategies of colonialist and internal exoticist discourses, it will be useful to keep in mind McLeod's categories in the examination of nineteenth-century literature about Alsace and Corsica.

Methodology

The methodology consists of a postcolonial re-reading of nineteenth-century texts about Alsace and Corsica, paying special attention to the existence of discourses such as internal exoticism, auto-exoticism and resistance. The shape of this thesis is largely determined by the sources found. A first stage of research was aimed at locating canonical sources about Alsace and Corsica, as well as sources written by authors from the two regions. In this context, the word 'canonical' refers to (mostly) Parisian authors that were famous at the time and are now recognised as belonging to the canon of French literature; having made a lasting impact on the French literary consciousness and still determining to some extent how the regions are seen today. The corpus for this thesis comprises sixty-two primary sources by twenty-four authors. The findings were very disparate: not

[1] *Culture and Imperialism,* p. 182.
[2] *Beginning Postcolonialism*, p. 89. Italics in the original.
[3] *Parisian Littérateurs,* p. 167.
[4] *Ils apprenaient la France*, p. 42.
[5] Ibid. p. 35.
[6] Ibid. p. 37.

even a third (26%) of all primary sources concerned Alsace; over two thirds (74%) describe Corsica. Six canonical writers wrote about Corsica and only two about Alsace (before 1870). Their output also testifies to a clear preference for Corsica: eighty-nine per cent of canonical sources describe the island, only eleven per cent concern Alsace. This discrepancy is accentuated with regard to provincial authors: while ten Corsicans depicted their island in French (in a total of thirteen sources), only a single Alsatian author wrote one work about his province in the language of the centre (before 1870). The timeframes for the examination of Alsatian and Corsican material are not synchronised; this is linked to historical events. Taking into account the national phenomena of nation-building and Imperialism, this analysis is naturally focused on the nineteenth-century - which is, not incidentally, when the great majority of literary works about Alsace and Corsica were produced. However, the annexation of Alsace to Germany after the 1870 war interrupted French nation-building concerning the province; any subsequent cultural productions about Alsace cannot be seen as a part of the same process and deserve an analysis in and of themselves.[1] The timeframe of Alsace's examination will therefore cut off in 1870 and will, because of the scarcity of Alsatian material, include one eighteenth-century novel.

There is certainly enough material about Corsica for an informative analysis. This examination is divided into two chapters. The first examines texts by canonical authors and charts the creation of a discursive hegemony about the island, inquiring whether the literary productions of the centre shaped internal exoticism. The second chapter analyses the prose fiction of Corsican authors about their island and compares their self-portraits to canonical discourses. Because of the great number of primary sources, both chapters will be ordered by theme, allowing for more efficient analysis. The timeframe for this study of Corsica's literary identity starts with the first canonical depiction of Corsica in 1829 and finishes with the end of the century. Alsace's literary representation was so limited (only five canonical sources to compare with one provincial novel) that there was not enough material for analysis. This is why the selection criteria for Alsatian sources were extended to take into account all prose fiction ever written in French about the province since its annexation to France in 1648. In practice, this did not enlarge the corpus a lot: eleven primary sources by four non-canonical non-Alsatian authors were added.[2] The analysis of Alsace's representation thus comprises a total of sixteen sources and will be regrouped in one chapter. The relatively small corpus lends itself to a chronological analysis, charting the history of the region's

[1] Julia Schroda has recently provided a very detailed analysis of French prose fiction about Alsace after 1870 in her book *Nationaler Anspruch und regionale Identität im Reichsland Elsass-Lothringen im Spiegel des französischsprachigen Elsassromans (1871-1914)* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2008).

[2] Arguably, one could say that there were only two authors, since the number four here is made up of two collaborative authors (Brett-Villaret and Erckmann-Chatrian).

perception in French prose fiction from the first novel in 1745 until the break of 1870. The examination of Alsace's literary identity will investigate whether discursive phenomena such as internal exoticism, auto-exoticism or resistance existed in prose fiction about Alsace. This research contributes to the field of French studies through the rediscovery of eleven long-forgotten regional authors, the unearthing of unresearched texts by canonical authors, as well as a re-reading of French literary classics. It will allow insights into the literary creation of provincial, as well as national, identities and challenge several preconceived ideas about France's historical cohesion and Alsace and Corsica in particular. Lastly, the outcomes of this research may lead to a reconsideration of the historical processes of French nation-formation and empire-building.

Parisian Corsican narratives

'La Corse s'étant unie à la France, celle-ci dût ensuite, comme il est habituel, la découvrir.' - Gaston Roger, 1947[1]

Between 1829 and 1891, six canonical Parisian authors published the following prose narratives, representing Corsica to the French public:

1829 Prosper Mérimée, *Mateo Falcone: Mœurs corses*

1830 Honoré de Balzac, *La Vendetta*

1840 Prosper Mérimée, *Colomba*

1844 Alexandre Dumas (père), *Une Famille corse/Les Frères corses*

1845-6 Alexandre Dumas, *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*[2]

1853 Eugène Sue, *Les Enfans de l'amour*[3]

1869 Alphonse Daudet, *Le Phare des Sanguinaires, L'Agonie de la Sémillante, Les Douaniers, Les Oranges*[4]

1874 Alphonse Daudet, *Mari-Anto: Étude de femme corse, Le Bandit Quastana*

1877 Alphonse Daudet, *Le Nabab*[5]

1880 Guy de Maupassant, *Le Monastère de Corbara, La Patrie de Colomba, Une Page d'histoire inédite, Bandits corses*

1881 Guy de Maupassant, *Histoire corse*

1882 Guy de Maupassant, *Voyage de noce [sic], Phoques et baleines*, *Un Bandit corse*

1883 Guy de Maupassant, *Une Vie, L'Exil, La Main, Une Vendetta*[6]

1884 Guy de Maupassant, *Le Bonheur, Vérités fantaisistes*

1885 Guy de Maupassant , *Un Échec*

1888 Alphonse Daudet, *L'Immortel*[7]

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[1] Gaston Roger, *L'Âme de la Corse à travers la littérature française: Anthologie* (Alger: Baconnier, 1947), p.17.

[2] Bertuccio, one of the main characters, is Corsican. There is one chapter dedicated to him, *Monsieur Bertuccio*, and three chapters to *La Vendetta* (vol. 6 and 7).

[3] Sue's *Le Commandeur de Malte* (1845) also contains one short passage describing Corsica's coast.

[4] These four short stories appeared in the newspapers *L'Événement* and *Le Figaro* between 1866 and 1868. In 1869, Daudet included them in his collection of short stories. Alphonse Daudet, *Lettres de mon moulin*, ed. by Mathilde Paris (Paris: Pocket, 2005), p. 6.

[5] *Le Nabab* is only partially concerned with Corsica. Its main protagonist hopes to refloat his fortune there, and the chapter *Une Élection Corse* describes Corsica in detail.

[6] One chapter of *Une Vie* is set on Corsica, describing the protagonists' honeymoon, largely copying from Maupassant's earlier Corsican short stories.

[7] Corsica is not the main subject of *L'Immortel;* one of the protagonists is Corsican and the island reappears as a theme throughout.

1890 Alphonse Daudet, *La Polenta*

1891 Alphonse Daudet, *Rose et Ninette*[1]

Contexts and backgrounds

The novels named above are not the only nineteenth-century texts about Corsica. In the fictional domain, many minor authors exploited the same subject matter, as Pierrette Jeoffroy-Faggianelli, François Flori and Michel Vergé-Franceschi have shown.[2] Some canonical authors alluded to Corsica in other genres than prose narrative: Victor Hugo's drama *Les Burgraves* features a Corsican character. Young Gustave Flaubert wrote, but never published, Corsican stories. Balzac drafted, but never finished, his first Corsican novel *Corsino* and later composed the melodrama *Le Corse*.[3] Pierre Loti travelled to Corsica in 1881, but left no impressions of his journey.[4] Furthermore, copious non-fictional material about Corsica had been published since the 1769 annexation. This 'littérature d'information' was comprised of official records, historical, geographical and ethnological studies, travel accounts etc.[5] Jeoffroy-Faggianelli points out that these informative works had already established a framework of specific vocabulary and images associated with Corsica:

> [A]insi se constitue un matériel de mots et d'expressions qui commencent à fonder la spécificité linguistique de L'Image de la Corse. […] Une réalité corse, différente de la réalité française, apparaît, condensée parfois, à force de démarquages ou de simplifications, en visions toutes faites, sur lesquelles se projettent les rêves des écrivains.[6]

Parisian greats drew on this already existing body of knowledge for the elaboration of a realistic image of the island - Mérimée and Balzac particularly relied on it, writing their first pieces about

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[1] *Rose et Ninette* is mainly set in Paris, but part of the action takes place on Corsica.

[2] See *L'Image de la Corse;* François Flori, *Bibliographie générale de la Corse, des origines à 1975* (Ajaccio: Piazzola, 1979) and Michel Vergé-Franceschi, *Le Voyage en Corse: Anthologie des voyageurs de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: Laffont, 2009).

[3] Hugo's drama *Les Burgraves* (1843) describes the character of Guanhumara/Ginevra, Otbert's nurse, a bitter old Corsican woman whose only desire is vengeance. See Victor Hugo, *Théâtre complet. Les Burgraves* (Paris: Tresse, 1846); *L'Image de la Corse,* pp. 403-4. According to Sabiani, this character was inspired by Hugo's unpleasant memories of his Corsican nanny during his time on the island as a child. *Encyclopaedia Corsicae*, p. 137. Flaubert, as a *collégien*, wrote about Corsica in his 'Cahier de Narrations' (1835), but never published his school writings. He remodelled Mérimée's first success in a short story entitled *Matteo Falcône ou Deux Cercueils pour un proscrit* and abandoned his attempt to recount *San Petro d'Ornano: Histoire corse* half-way through the narrative. *L'Image de la Corse*, pp. 152-3 and 290. Flaubert also thought about writing a Corsican drama and mentioned this idea in a letter to a friend around 1845. A draft of this project is preserved in *Carnet 1, Notes de voyage* (April/May 1845). Ibid., p. 399. Balzac attempted a first novel about Corsica, *Corsino*, around 1822 and then abandoned the draft. Ibid., p. 153. He was once more inspired by Corsica for his melodrama *Le Corse* (1847), whose hero is named 'Mateo Sampiero Vanini' in homage to Mérimée's *Mateo Falcone* and the infamous Corsican couple Sampiero Corso and Vanina d'Ornano. *Voyage en Corse*, p. 1196.

[4] Antoine Serpentini, *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse* (Ajaccio: Albiana, 2006), p. 564.

[5] *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 410. See this book for a detailed study of these informative works, and prose narratives by unknown authors, from 1769 to 1840.

[6] Ibid. pp. 55-6.

Corsica without having seen it.[1] Like virtually all Parisian authors after 1829, Balzac was greatly influenced by *Mateo Falcone,* which had become a big success.[2] Sue, in turn, never visited Corsica, but copied Balzac's idea of setting a Corsican vengeance tale in Paris, thus allowing him to exploit stereotypes while avoiding further research into the topic. This goes to show how fictional and factual sources became blurred in the constitution of a Parisian literary image of the island. Even for those authors (Dumas, Daudet, Maupassant) who had visited Corsica before writing about it, it became difficult not to see the island through the already-established lens of prior fictional or non-fictional accounts. Especially Mérimée's two Corsican novels had consolidated a hegemonic image of Corsica which tainted all subsequent literary visions of it.[3] For instance, Dumas' *Les Frères corses* is dedicated to Mérimée.[4] Canonical Corsican texts are marked by a high degree of intertextuality, with each new representation borrowing themes and images from previous ones.

The same intertextuality holds for prose narratives and *littérature d'information*; many Parisian greats also actively contributed to the proliferation of the latter. Voltaire was the first canonical French author to write a chapter on Corsican history in the year of the island's annexation to France.[5] Mérimée, after his 1839 state-sponsored tour of Corsica as *inspecteur des monuments historiques,* published his *Notes d'un voyage en Corse,* alongside an official report on Corsica's monuments.[6] Following this theoretical groundwork, Mérimée consolidated his vision of Corsica in *Colomba.* Stendhal's biography *Vie de Napoléon* gives a short presentation of Corsica in the introductory chapter.[7] Maupassant, travelling the Mediterranean between 1880 and 1887,

[1] Writing *Mateo Falcone* before his 1839 stay on the island, Mérimée got his information from Gabriel Feydel's *Mœurs et coutumes des Corses* (1798), Abbé de Germanes' *Histoire des révolutions de la Corse* (1771), Jacques Gaudin's *Voyage en Corse et vues politiques sur l'amélioration de cette île* (1787), and an anonymous article entitled *Les Devoirs de la France envers la Corse* (1828). Balzac, authoring *La Vendetta* without first-hand knowledge of Corsica, incorporated information from the duchesse d'Abrantès' *Mémoires* (1831-35) and possibly de Pommereul's *Histoire de l'isle de Corse* (1779). See Patrick Berthier, *Colomba de Prosper Mérimée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), pp. 40-3; Prosper Mérimée, *La Venus d'Ille. Colomba. Mateo Falcone,* ed. by Patrick Berthier (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), p. 320; and *L'Image de la Corse*, pp. 223, 233.

[2] *Colomba de Prosper Mérimée,* p. 44. Voltaire also mentioned Corsican history in passing in *Candide*, mentioning the shortlived Corsican king Theodor von Neuhoff. Voltaire, *Candide* (Paris: Delarue, 1877), pp. 111-115.

[3] Dumas' *Les Frères corses* quotes from *Colomba* in its opening lines. Sue quotes *Colomba* in describing his Corsican protagonist. Maupassant wrote an article entitled *La Patrie de Colomba.* Flaubert read *Colomba* in the course of his journey through the island. Also see *Venus d'Ille. Colomba. Mateo Falcone,* p. 8, and *Colomba de Prosper Mérimée*, p. 49.

[4] *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse*, p. 563.

[5] Amongst numerous additions to this overview of French and European history, Voltaire wrote a chapter about the French invasion of Corsica: Voltaire, *Précis du siècle de Louis XV, servant de suite au 'Siècle de Louis XIV', du même auteur* (Geneva: n. pub., 1769).

[6] Prosper Mérimée, *Notes d'un voyage en Corse* (Paris: Fournier, 1840).

[7] Stendhal, *Vie de Napoléon, Fragments* (Paris: Levy, 1876).

simultaneously published his travel impressions in the Parisian press.[1] Both Balzac and Flaubert wrote letters and journals during their stays on Corsica (1838 and 1840, respectively), but never published them during their lifetime.[2]

The increasing frequency and high degree of intertextuality of writings about Corsica are evidence that the island was a fashionable topic in the Parisian literary scene. With *Mateo Falcone* as a trend setter, 'L'Image de la Corse s'épanouit dans la littérature française. […] L'île devient "à la mode".'[3] This emerging trend coincides with the annexation of Algeria in 1830 and the ensuing growing interest in the exotic overseas, with Mérimée's crowning Corsican success marking the year of the return of Napoleon's ashes to Paris.The recurrence of themes and specific vocabulary confirm the rise of awareness about Corsica among the French readership. In *Mateo Falcone*, Mérimée feels the need to explain key Corsican concepts, such as bandits or the *maquis*.[4] Balzac, writing only one year later, takes such knowledge for granted, entitling his story *La Vendetta,* and presupposing that his readership will be familiar with the idea of Corsican vengeance. Conversely, Mérimée increased his heavy referencing in *Colomba*, probably out of a desire for scientific accuracy following his visit of Corsica*.* The narrator puts the story on hold to give a whole chapter of ethnological details that further explain Corsican vengeance customs, thus engraining key Corsican concepts in the French imaginary.[5] Dumas' *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* offers evidence that the French public post-Mérimée, embodied by the French judge to whom Bertuccio declares the vendetta, understood Corsica through Mérimée's framework: 'Et savait-il au moins ce que cela voulait dire ce mot vendetta? – Il le savait si bien qu'à partir de ce moment il ne sortit plus seul et se calfeutra chez lui.'[6] Sue alludes to Mérimée, rephrasing Orso's statement 'Ma douce Colomba, […] tu es, je le crains, le diable en personne'[7] and applying it to Pietri: 'En vérité, vous êtes le diable en personne.'[8] These authorial indications prove that Corsican narratives after *Mateo Falcone* and *Colomba* inserted themselves into an already circulating, recognisable system of representations concerning the island.

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[1] See Guy de Maupassant*, 'Cette Brume de la mer me caressait, comme un bonheur' Chroniques méditerranéennes,* ed. by Henri Mitterand (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2011).

[2] Balzac, stopping off on Corsica on his way to Sardinia, wrote a long 'lettre-journal de voyage' to Mme Hanska, processing his impressions. See *Voyage en Corse*, p. 1196. Flaubert, on his first holiday 'abroad' after passing his baccalaureate, wrote letters to his sister Caroline and *Notes de voyage en Corse*. See *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 222.

[3] Ibid. p. 221.

[4] *Venus d'Ille. Colomba. Mateo Falcone,* p. 8.

[5] Pages 145-158 of *Colomba* give a detailed account of how Corsican vendettas come about, with a view to the enmity between Colomba's family and the Barricini.

[6] Alexandre Dumas, *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo, tome 6* (Paris: Pétion, 1845), pp. 296-7.

[7] *Colomba*, p. 243.

[8] Eugène Sue, *Les Enfans de l'amour* (Paris: Le Siècle, 1853), p. 24.

Henceforth, choosing to write about Corsica meant traversing an already charted landscape. Mérimée had roused such public interest in the Corsican novel that subsequent authors often exploited the by then familiar structures as a means to other ends. For Balzac, at the beginning of his career, choosing a Corsican subject may have simply meant writing what sells well. His *La Vendetta* neither innovates nor dares to investigate a territory directly that its author has not yet seen. Balzac exploits a stereotype and transplants received images of Corsicans onto Parisian soil, using the capital's fascination for the island to his advantage. Sue, during the decline of his writing career after his futile attempts at politics and his exile, seems to have used the same strategy to boost his writing output, and perhaps, as Béatrice Didier suggests, to project his hatred for Napoleon III onto his Corsican figures.[1] Just like *Les Enfans de l'amour,* Dumas' *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* is no longer interested in exploring Corsican mores, but uses their very stereotypicality to drive the action forward. Evidently, writing traditions, as well as readers' expectations about Corsica, were well established after 1840, in large part due to the resounding success of Mérimée's second Corsican novel, *Colomba*. Dumas in particular, writing between 1844 and 1846, comments on this Parisian vogue for Corsica:

> Vous êtes venu avec votre curiosité d'homme du monde, d'artiste ou de poète […] dans l'espoir de voir quelque […] vendette, d'être mis en relation avec quelque bandit bien original, comme ceux que M. Mérimée a peints dans *Colomba.*[2]
>
> [L]orsque dans quelque salon parisien on parlera devant monsieur de ces terribles vendettes et de ces implacables bandits corses […] il pourra […] dire ce qu'il en est.[3]

Until the middle of the century, Corsica, its mores, and its inhabitants, were fashionable topics in Parisian discussions, and had taken deep root in the popular imagination. Daudet and Maupassant revived this tradition during the last third of the nineteenth century. Their renewal of Corsican exoticism coincides with the French colonialist wave that followed the 1870 Franco-Prussian war.[4] The writers did not focus as much on the islanders' mores, perhaps because they felt the topic had been exhausted. In *Une Vie,* Maupassant briefly alludes to an imagined Corsican reality that had lost its novelty: 'La Corse! les maquis! les bandits! les montagnes!'[5] By 1883, one sentence sufficed to

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[1] Sue was elected to the *Assemblée législative* in 1848, but left France after Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte's *coup d'état* of 1851 and exiled himself to Savoy (Italian territory at the time), where he died. See Robert Laffont, Valentino Bompiani, *Le Nouveau Dictionnaire des auteurs de tous les temps et de tous les pays* (Paris: Laffont, 1994), p. 3088. *Les Mystères du peuple* (1642-3) and *Le Juif errant* (1844-5), see *Dictionnaire universel des littératures*, p. 3647.

[2] Alexandre Dumas, *Les Frères corses; Othon l'archer* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1853), pp. 12-13.

[3] Ibid. p. 14.

[4] *Culture and Imperialism,* p. 205.

[5] Guy de Maupassant, *Une Vie* (Paris: Havard, 1883), p. 84.

sum up a whole network of ideas associated with the island. Yet, both Maupassant and Daudet self-consciously fed an on-going hunger for narratives about Corsica. In line with the rise of a colonial fascination for uncharted lands, they showed their readers see undiscovered sides of the island and painted that which had not yet been portrayed. This explains their focus on Corsica's landscape, causing their renderings of the island to lean more towards travel fiction. By the end of the nineteenth century, the canonical image of Corsica was complete, depicting people, mores and land.

One may thus argue that canonical authors drove forward the Corsican novel as a genre, as a simple alternative to overseas exoticism. Seeking to please their Parisian readers by spicing up an old recipe for success in a movement of 'reattribution of the exotic to provincial France,' they attempted to capture 'the imagination of readers who still favoured the exoticism of foreign shores' by simply transferring that exoticism closer to home.[1] The nineteenth century thus marks the literary creation of an internal exoticism about Corsica with recognisable features; the rest of this chapter will expose the major themes of this discourse.

Authenticity and ethnology

Literature - and the genre of the prose narrative in particular - played an important part in the creation of a Parisian vision of Corsica. Novels and short stories were not only read for entertainment, but also for information about the peripheral other; their descriptions were often understood as realistic accounts. Émile Bergerat, a Parisian tourist, explains the reading habits of his social group:

> J'étais homme […] à me contenter des notions ethnographiques que *Colomba* donne sur la Corse à la majorité des civilisés. La célèbre nouvelle de Mérimée est […] un document très complet des mœurs, du caractère et des tendances physiologiques du petit peuple [corse].[2]

For the majority of Parisian readers, novels served as ethnographic documents, next to the works of *littérature d'information*. Parisian authors attempted to live up to this desire for ethnology among their readers, generally making their Corsican narratives appear authentic. They cast themselves as legitimate mediators between the two worlds, seeking to give accounts that appeared at the same time credible and astonishing. Mérimée starts *Mateo Falcone* with the words 'quand j'étais en Corse en 18..,' even though he had not yet visited the island at this point.[3] Likewise, Dumas' *Les Frères corses* begins with '[v]ers le commencement du mois de mars de l'année 1841, je voyageais en

[1] *Preserving the Provinces*, pp. 16, 43.
[2] *La Chasse au mouflon,* p. 4.
[3] *Venus d'Ille. Colomba. Mateo Falcone*, p. 24.

Corse.'[1] Dumas had travelled to Corsica and published his impressions, thus leading to a confusion of author and narrator, implying that the story is an eye-witness account of Corsican reality.[2] This blurring is heightened by the author/narrator's claim that he found on Corsica 'quelques volumes de romans, parmi lesquels je saluai avec un certain orgueil mes *Impressions de voyage*;' alluding to travel writing Dumas published in 1841.[3] Daudet's authorial voice and the use of a first person narrator in his *Lettres de mon moulin* likewise lead to confusion between fact and fiction. His articles were published - in letter form - in the newspapers *L'Événement* and *Le Figaro*, creating the illusion that they were written from first-hand experience. As Mathilde Paris observes, 'souvenirs et impressions, épisodes de l'existence de son auteur, émotions et fantasmagorie se mêlent et s'entremêlent jusqu'à semer le trouble entre la fiction et la réalité.'[4] A similar blurring of authorial and narrative voices happens in Maupassant's Corsican stories, since he published them as travel accounts in the Parisian press while touring the Mediterranean. His writings could therefore be read as travel journalism or fiction.[5]

Paradoxically, prose narratives about Corsica simultaneously claim and question their own authenticity and truth. Even authors who did not travel to Corsica generally maintain a claim to ethnological veracity in a broader sense: through the study of Corsican mores and character. This is especially true of Balzac, who devoted his *La Vendetta* to an in-depth study of two Corsican individuals against a Parisian setting - in line with the greater goal of his provincial fiction: 'peindre le pays tout en peignant les hommes.'[6] This allowed him not only to explore Corsicans and their way of life, but also to position them in relation to the idea of Frenchness. Jeoffroy-Faggianelli points out that Balzac categorised people in 'espèces sociales comme il existe des espèces zoologiques.'[7] Within this logic, Balzac systematically represents and studies the 'species' of Corsicans in a foreign environment. The use of Paris as background definition of the national self allows Balzac and also Sue to highlight Corsican differences and engage in ethnography in their own way. The eighteenth

[1] *Les Frères corses*, p. 1.
[2] Dumas' travel accounts countain one short reference to his stay on Corsica, proving that he did journey to the island around 1841: 'les meilleurs et les plus doux souvenirs de ma vie sont ceux de ces courses faites en Suisse, en Allemagne, en France, en Corse, en Italie, en Sicile et en Calabre.' Note that he separates France and Corsica. Alexandre Dumas, *Nouvelles impressions de voyage: Le Midi de la France – Nouvelle édition* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1887), p. 31. The book was first published in 1841.
[3] *Les Frères corses,* p. 5.
[4] Mathilde Paris, Preface to *Lettres de mon moulin,* p. 8.
[5] Of Maupassant's fourteen Corsican articles, nine were printed in the daily newspaper *Le Gaulois*, apparently insisting on factual accuracy. Five others appeared in the literary periodical *Gil Blas,* presumably stressing the imaginative side of its subject matter. However, at least one article in *Le Gaulois*, 'La Main*,'* is obviously fantastical, and at least two reports ('Vérités Fantaisistes', 'Phoques et Balaines') in *Gil Blas* appear to be factual, further adding to the confusion between author and narrator, fact and fiction.
[6] Honoré de Balzac, *Préface* to *Une Fille d'Eve I* (Bruxelles: Meline, Cans et Cie, 1839), p. 15.
[7] *L'Image de la Corse,* p. 227.

and nineteenth centuries thus witnessed the constitution of a body of knowledge about Corsica; with an emphasis on the production of popular knowledge during the nineteenth century, by means of prose fiction. The knowledge made available to the public by canonical Parisian authors compounded fact and fiction, conforming to Said's definition of knowledge as a series of representations on the basis of facts, prejudices, theories and received opinions.[1] The literary portrayal of Corsica spans both of Martin Evans' cornerstone phases of French Imperialism: the acquisition of knowledge from 1789 to 1871 and the height of Empire from 1871 to 1918.[2] During these crucial time periods, 'colonial power was buttressed by the production of knowledge about colonised cultures.'[3] The very same process can be observed about Corsica during the same period: France supported its claim to ruling the island through knowledge structures that emphasised Corsica's dependence on the coloniser. Yet, however authoritative nineteenth-century prose narratives may sound, they remain in the realm of literature, thus automatically giving their contents a fictional status. Advancing strong opinions and truth claims, canonical Parisian fiction finally left the reader with an aftertaste of doubt, however slight. This tension can be interpreted as a strategy to arouse further interest in the topic and to prompt the reader to investigate for himself.

Tourism, imagined journeys and travel invitations

Prose narratives invited their readers to discover Corsica through imagined and actual voyages. Stories such as *Colomba* had a visible impact on the travelling practices of nineteenth-century Parisians, exemplified by the large number of canonical authors who journeyed to the island. Corsican literature affected tourism, reiterating the truth of Wenger's observation: '[the] influential novelist became likewise one of the most influential of French tourists.'[4] Many Corsican stories include invitations and references to travel on Corsica; Mérimée, Dumas, Daudet and Maupassant depict it as a perfect holiday location for adventurers. For instance, the first two pages of *Les Frères corses* read more like a tourist manual than a novel:

> Rien de plus pittoresque et de plus commode qu'un voyage en Corse: on s'embarque à Toulon; en vingt heures, on est à Ajaccio, ou en vingt-quatre heures à Bastia. Là, on achète ou on loue un cheval […]. Et qu'on ne rie pas de la modicité du prix. […] Quant au logement de chaque nuit, c'est bien plus simple encore: le voyageur arrive dans un village, […] choisit la maison qui lui convient et frappe à la porte. Un instant après, le maître ou la maîtresse paraît sur le seuil, invite le voyageur à descendre, lui offre la moitié de son souper, son lit

[1] See *Culture and Imperialism,* p. 93.
[2] *Empire and Culture*, p. 3
[3] *Beginning Postcolonialism*, p. 22.
[4] Jared Wenger, *The Province and the Provinces in the Work of Honoré de Balzac* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1937), p. 105.

> tout entier s'il n'en a qu'un, et le lendemain, en le reconduisant jusqu'à la porte, le remercie de la préférence qu'il lui a donnée. De rétribution quelconque, il est bien entendu qu'il n'en est aucunement question: le maître regarderait comme une insulte la moindre parole à ce sujet.[1]

Dumas paints Corsica as attractive, easily accessible and cheap - underlining that Corsican culture dictates hospitality and that the natives expect the French to take advantage of their services. Parisian narratives stress that the island offers the same exotic appeal as other overseas colonies, but more convenient to get to. Canonical texts also underline that Corsica offers the best mix of novelty, incredible landscapes and strange customs. *Colomba* recommends Corsica to tourists who are eager to discover unexplored lands, in this case an Englishman and his daughter Lydia: 'Vous aimez la beauté sauvage […] la Corse vous plaira. – Ma fille […] aime tout ce qui est extraordinaire; c'est pourquoi l'Italie ne lui a guère plu.'[2] Corsica is the place for tourists who want to set themselves apart from ordinary travellers. Mérimée promotes it as an adventure holiday location, emphasising 'l'aspect étrange, sauvage du pays, le caractère original de ses habitants, leur hospitalité et leurs mœurs primitives.'[3] According to Maupassant, Corsica fully satisfies the tourists' expectations: 'de rentrée, […] [i]l lui semblait qu'elle venait d'accomplir le tour du bonheur.'[4] The Parisian author who works his travel experiences on Corsica into literature thus presents himself as a refined explorer of unknown territories, inviting others to travel and discover them in turn, if only through the intermediary of literature.

Especially for Daudet, Corsica becomes synonymous with escapism from the life of the capital. In *Lettres de mon moulin,* the author/narrator describes the purpose of his time on Corsica as losing himself in the contemplation of nature:

> C'était dans cette île enchantée […] qu[e] j'allais m'enfermer quelquefois, lorsque j'avais besoin de grand air et de solitude […] j'y restais presque tout le jour dans cette espèce de stupeur et d'accablement délicieux que donne la contemplation de la mer. […] Vous connaissez […] cette jolie griserie de l'âme? On ne pense pas, on ne rêve pas non plus. Tout votre être vous échappe, s'envole, s'éparpille. On est la mouette qui plonge, la poussière d'écume qui flotte au soleil entre deux vagues, […] ce flocon de brume, tout excepté soi-

[1] *Les Frères corses,* pp. 1-2.
[2] *Colomba*, p. 116.
[3] Ibid. pp. 102-3.
[4] Ibid. p. 102.

> même… Oh! que j'ai passé dans mon île de ces belles heures de demi-sommeil et d'éparpillement![1]

For Daudet, Corsica makes possible an escape from the self and its constraints. In the heightened states of awareness produced by the island's atmosphere, he simultaneously experiences the disappearance and the rebirth of the self in the other. Some of the vocabulary suggests drug-induced stupors: stupeur, accablement délicieux, griserie, éparpillement. Corsica allows the tourist Daudet to become other to himself, to flee from reality. Simultaneously, Corsica becomes the traveller's island, his possession, which he claims for himself by means of uniting himself to it. His narrative weaves a movement of interpenetration of author and land, self and other, France and Corsica. The author goes to Corsica in order to lose himself and acquire the illusion of a new identity in an exotic space. Daudet's literary travels to Corsica become synonymous with escapism from life in the capital and express the longing of an increasingly scientific and secular society to experience the unmediated transcendence of nature. This literary escapism is characteristic of a whole generation of exoticist Parisian authors who sought refuge from modernity in the colonies. Gaugin and Loti, for example, presented irrational, savage, colonised spaces as invigorating and refreshing for the coloniser.[2] Daudet, suffering from poor health, initially went to Corsica in search for physical restoration. His narrative processing of this experience, however, goes further than physical regeneration: Daudet's Corsica comes to connote rebirth, renewal and reinvigoration for body and soul. The orange groves of Barbicaglia exemplify this paradisiac wellbeing:

> Quelles bonnes heures j'ai passées dans ce jardin! Au-dessus de ma tête, les orangers en fleur et en fruit brûlaient leurs parfums d'essences. De temps en temps, une orange mûre […] tombait près de moi, comme alourdie de chaleur, avec un bruit sans écho, sur la terre pleine. Je n'avais qu'à allonger la main. C'étaient des fruits superbes, […] exquis, et puis l'horizon était si beau! Entre les feuilles, la mer mettait des espaces bleus éblouissants […]. Avec cela le mouvement du flot agitant l'atmosphère […], ce murmure cadencé qui vous berce […], la chaleur, l'odeur des oranges… Ah! qu'on était bien pour dormir dans ce jardin de Barbicaglia![3]

This view of Corsica, with delicious food ready to eat, a wonderful atmosphere and warm climate and its invitation simply to be and do nothing else, is an allusion to the medieval myth of the land of plenty, where food would fly into people's mouths as they lazily lay around. Life on Corsica itself is

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[1] Alphonse Daudet, 'Le Phare des Sanguinaires,' in *Lettres de mon moulin,* p. 74.
[2] *Writing Marginality*, p. 4.
[3] Alphonse Daudet, 'Les Oranges: Fantaisie', in *Mari-Anto et autres nouvelles,* ed. by Véronique Schwab (Ajaccio: Acquansù, 2007), p. 72.

defined as the opposite of city life, in a realm of nature, relaxation and liberty. This, of course, is a common theme in colonial literature, echoing the idea that the primitive life-styles of the colonised are somehow beneficial and refreshing. Leaving behind the rational and secular world-view of the capital, Corsica allows the writer to get back in touch with nature as creation, and to imagine his own version of the Garden of Eden. This theme of the 'île-paradis' is frequently used in descriptions of overseas colonies:

> Le petit monde de l'île est souvent vu comme un univers protégé, clos, paradisiaque […]. [L]e voyage 'dans les îles' associe insularité et exotisme, mythe de terres vierges et de la nature première. Il s'agit […] de retrouver une naturalité prétendument perdue, protégée dans quelques morceaux de terre que leur position a préservés.[1]

The link with the idea of paradise is strengthened by the description of another garden right next to the orange groves: a Corsican burial chapel in the shape of a little white house with its own garden. Corsica comes to denote the themes of paradise, tranquility and death at the same time. Watching the grave gardener, the narrator muses:

> Dans le grand silence radieux, l'entretien de ce petit jardin ne troublait pas un oiseau, et son voisinage n'avait rien d'attristant. Seulement la mer paraissait plus immense, le ciel plus haut, et cette sieste sans fin mettait tout autour d'elle, parmi la nature troublante, accablante à force de vie, le sentiment de l'éternel repos…[2]

The narrator's train of thought, and consequently the narrative, fade out here, symbolising passing away and eternal tranquillity. Daudet's Corsica is a paradise in both senses of the word: it invigorates and refreshes, bringing the traveller back to life. But it also hypnotises and lulls the traveller to sleep; giving a peace and serenity that can only be found in death. The Parisian author finds transcendence on Corsica that is lost in the increasingly irreligious and materialistic capital. While the idea of a religious afterlife was out of fashion, exoticist writers often imagined an earthly hereafter in the colonies. Daudet's descriptions of Corsica are in line with this escapism. Marketing Corsica as an exotic and otherworldly travel destination logically implies that it does not belong to the realm of the familiar and the known; in other words, it is not French.

A French possession without a French identity

The notion that Corsica is not a part of the French self is expressed more or less decisively by all canonical authors who wrote about the island. Mérimée, Dumas, Daudet and Maupassant describe

[1] Alain Rey, *Dictionnaire culturel en langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 2005), p. 1805.
[2] *Les Oranges,* p. 75.

the island's status as on the margins or outside of France. Balzac and Sue, since their narratives are set in Paris, do not comment directly on the issues, but imply a division between France and Corsica. Significantly, Balzac chose not to depict Corsica in his series entitled *Scenes de la Vie de Province*, where he sought to give a portrait of each French region, indicating that he did not consider Corsica as a French province.[1] Wenger states that for Balzac, the boundaries of France were far narrower than the hexagon: 'he relegated the Midi to an exotic position [… and] constantly confuses Spain, Italy, and the South of France. Thus, from his early years, Angoulême became as it were the southernmost border of his fatherland.'[2] Set in Paris, *La Vendetta* nevertheless describes the culture and mores of a civilisation that is – in Balzac's eyes – different from that of France and juxtaposed with the way of life of the capital.[3] Sue follows the same strategy of finding the exotic within, and contrasting it with, the capital; Didier points out that this is a well-known feature of his overall work:

> l'exotisme [de Sue] se fait à l'intérieur de Paris, allant chercher pittoresque et aventure dans le monde des miséreux et des marginaux, à la fois criminels et victimes, évoquant les mœurs spéciales de ces 'tribus' sauvages, et jusqu'à leur langue.[4]

This internal exoticism postulates an opposition between the cultures of Corsica and France, which becomes all the more apparent within the capital. Scarce remarks about the Corsican Paula underline this conceptual divide between France and Corsica: 'Elle était venue en France avec sa mère'; 'elle est retournée en Corse… son pays.'[5] Likewise, Pietri, the Corsican protagonist, is named 'le Corse' throughout, as a way of setting him apart in character and behaviour from the Parisians around him. The underlying assumption of these designations is that Corsica and France are not identical, but two separate entities.

Mérimée, Dumas, Daudet and Maupassant directly represent Corsica as outside of - or on the margins of - what they see as the nation, belonging to France as a possession, but not as a part of the national self. Mérimée explains to his readers that '[c]e n'est pas flatter prodigieusement les

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[1] See *The Province and the Provinces*, pp. 49-50. *La Vendetta* is classed under *Scènes de la vie privée*, set in Paris, and only represents Corsica indirectly through the description of its Corsican protagonists.

[2] Ibid. p. 51.

[3] Balzac seems to have considered Corsica not only as a foreign country, but as a colonial space, as expressed in a letter to Mme Hanska during his stay there: 'La France ne tire pas, ne sait ou ne veut pas tirer parti de cette belle contrée, elle est grande comme dix de nos départements, elle devrait avoir cinq millions d'habitants, elle en a trois mille à peine, cependant, nous commençons à y faire des routes et à y exploiter les forêts, qui recèlent d'immenses richesses, comme le sol tout à fait ignoré, il peut y avoir les plus belles mines du monde.' Honoré de Balzac, 'Lettre à Mme Hanska' (27/03/1838) in *Œuvres complètes de M. de Balzac* (Paris: Pierrot, 1967), p. 594. Balzac is either thoroughly misinformed or vastly exaggerating about Corsica's size. Not even allowing Corsica the status of 'nos départements,' Balzac considered the island with a view to its profitable exploitation and colonisation.

[4] *Dictionnaire universel des littératures*, pp. 3647-8.

[5] *Les Enfans de l'amour,* pp. 14, 22.

Corses, que leur rappeler qu'ils appartiennent à la grande nation. Ils veulent être un peuple à part, et cette prétention, ils la justifient assez bien pour qu'on la leur accorde.'[1] *Colomba* presents the Corsicans as under French rule against their will, and the island's belonging to France as a question of power, and not of choice. Speaking of the national self, the Corsicans do not want to belong to it, preferring to remain their own nation under foreign rule. The French in *Colomba* reiterate this distinction between Corsica and France: 'Quel pays! répétait le préfet […]. Quand donc reviendrai-je en France?'[2] Corsica is represented as a foreign territory, grudgingly ruled by France, whose domination is admitted unwillingly by its inhabitants: in other words, a colony in spite of the reluctance of both natives and colonisers. Daudet and Maupassant focus more on the impressions experienced by French civil servants and other officials during their service on the island, describing them as estranged and lonely. Daudet portrays a conversation between two civil servants who begrudgingly serve their time on Corsica: 'je ne lui cachai pas, au milieu de nos lamentations d'exilés, que je comptais rentrer en France avant peu.'[3] Whereas France denotes home and familiarity, Corsica is seen as distinct from the homeland in geographical and in cultural terms. Dumas is even more explicit in his delineations of France and Corsica. The author/narrator of *Les Frères corses* states: 'La Corse est un département français, mais la Corse est encore bien loin d'être la France.'[4] *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo,* written one year later, is even more categorical: 'La France est un pays […de] quatre-vingt-cinq départements, je dis quatre-vingt-cinq départements, car bien entendu j'excepte la Corse de la France.'[5] Dumas depicts Corsica as a territory under French rule that does not have its part in the community of the nation. It is on the same standing as other colonial possessions at the time, notably Algeria, which was also classed as a *département français*, but with little or no access to French national identity. While Parisian authors are reluctant to integrate Corsica into their vision of France, they nevertheless tend to see it as a part of France's mission on the world stage.

All canonical authors apart from Sue make references to Corsica in colonial terms. While the island is often linked to Italy throughout the century, it is even more frequently put on a par with other overseas territories.[6] In the very first piece of prose fiction about Corsica, *Mateo Falcone,*

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[1] *Colomba*, p. 131.
[2] Ibid. p. 237.
[3] Alphonse Daudet, 'Le Bandit Quastana' in *Études et paysages,* ed. by Robert Helmont (Paris: Dentu, 1874), p. 135.
[4] *Les Frères corses,* p. 2.
[5] *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo, tome 6,* pp. 158-9.
[6] For associations of Corsica and Italy see Honoré de Balzac, 'La Vendetta' in *Œvres complètes, tome 1* (Paris: Houssiaux, 1874), pp. 168-170, 189; *Colomba,* pp. 110, 126, 139 199; *Les Enfans de l'amour,* pp. 3, 5; *Les Frères Corses,* pp. 2, 4; Alphonse Daudet, *Rose et Ninette, Le Trésor d'Arlatan, La Fédor* (Paris: Lemerre, 1911), pp. 78, 90; *La Polenta*, p. 78; *Mari-Anto,* p. 101; *Le Bandit Quastana,* p. 136. Dumas co-authored a book entitled

Mérimée already uses colonial vocabulary borrowed from the Middle East and India in his efforts to explain Corsican realities to his readers. The text contains definitions such as '[l]es bergers, espèces de nomades' and statements like '[l]es Corses de divisent, par une ancienne habitude, en cinq castes.'[1] Furthermore, Mérimée's protagonist was probably inspired by a native Indian character in Fenimore Cooper's series *Leatherstocking*, which had just been translated into French.[2] Œil-de-Faucon, like his namesake Mateo Falcone, was known for his shooting skills. From the outset, Parisian fiction thus represented the Corsican world through a network of concepts borrowed from the colonial exploration of the Middle East, India and the New World. Works from the period during and after the French conquest of Algeria confirm this trend to colonial representations and increasingly associate the island with the occupied Mediterranean-African territory. Jeoffroy-Faggianelli states that '[l]a Corse s'insère dans un exotisme oriental qui se développe depuis la campagne d'Egypte et, plus récemment, depuis la prise d'Alger.'[3] The association with Algeria is particularly clear in Daudet's *Les Oranges,* which creates a distinction between France (the beneficiary of outlandish oranges) and the exotic overseas, the producer of oranges. The article starts with the words 'À Paris,' then takes the reader to Blidah (Algeria) and its orange groves and finally finishes on Corsica: 'Mais mon meilleur souvenir d'oranges me vient encore de Barbicaglia.'[4] Daudet compares two colonial locations for the quality of their products, juxtaposing their 'heures de chaleur' and paradisiac life style with the Parisian 'hiver pluvieux et froid,' where oranges have '[l']aspect étrange [… d'un] fruit cueilli au loin.'[5] While Paris and far away Corsica are diametrically opposed, the sense of Algeria's and Corsica's connectedness is strengthened by the fact that both place names begin with the letter B (Blidah, Barbicaglia).

However, Algeria is not the only point of reference or comparison; allusions to the general overseas colonial sphere abound. Daudet's Mari-Anto*,* the woman analysed in *Étude de femme corse,* wears 'le madras qui lui masquait à la mauresque le haut et le bas de la figure.'[6] In *Rose et Ninette,* the native servants of a Parisian baron who established himself in Ajaccio attempt to imitate their boss' French, but, '[z]ézayé par l'accent du cru, ce langage faisait l'effet des modes parisiennes ajustées aux femmes de Tahiti.'[7] Daudet describes the Corsican landscape in these terms: 'un horizon entièrement bleu […] et des cactus découpant leurs feuilles métalliques sur un ciel

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'*L'Italie pittoresque: Tableau historique et descriptif de l'Italie, du Piémont, de la Sardaigne, de la Sicile, de la Malte et de la Corse.'* (Paris: Costes, 1834).

[1] *Mateo Falcone,* pp. 25, 27.

[2] *L'Image de la Corse*, pp. 201-2.

[3] Ibid. p. 258.

[4] Ibid. pp. 69, 71-2.

[5] Ibid. pp. 69, 72.

[6] *Mari-Anto,* p. 102.

[7] *Rose et Ninette,* p. 98.

africain.'[1] In the same vein, multiple colonial spaces are referred to and intermingled in Maupassant's descriptions of Corsica, associating it with Africa, the Orient and the Americas. The narrator of *Voyage de noce* enjoys a sunset while approaching Corsica on the sea: 'Le grand soleil s'enfonçait doucement là-bas, vers l'Afrique invisible, l'Afrique! la terre brûlante dont je croyais déjà sentir les ardeurs.'[2] The narrator already senses Africa - however, the land that actually comes into view is Corsica, and not the African coast. Reiterating concepts and images associated with overseas colonialism, Maupassant emphasises the spatial and cultural gulf between France and Corsica. His portrayals of the island often depict it viewed from France, in the distance. Four texts (*Le Bonheur, Une Vie, Voyage de noce, La Patrie de Colomba)* give long descriptions of travellers bridging the gap between mainland and island. These passages are often little more than copied and pasted from previous writings. The following quotation from *Le Bonheur* is characteristic:

> Mais tout à coup quelqu'un, ayant les yeux fixés au loin, s'écria: 'Oh! voyez, là-bas, qu'est-ce que c'est?'
>
> Sur la mer, au fond de l'horizon, surgissait une masse grise, énorme et confuse. Les femmes s'étaient levées et regardaient sans comprendre cette chose surprenante qu'elles n'avaient jamais vue.
>
> Quelqu'un dit: 'C'est la Corse! On l'aperçoit ainsi deux ou trois fois par an dans certaines conditions d'atmosphère exceptionnelles, quand l'air d'une limpidité parfaite ne la cache plus par ces brumes de vapeur d'eau qui voilent toujours les lointains.' On distinguait vaguement les crêtes, on crut reconnaître la neige des sommets. Et tout le monde restait surpris, troublé, presque effrayé par cette brusque apparition d'un monde, par ce fantôme sorti de la mer. Peut-être eurent-ils de ces visions étranges, ceux qui partirent, comme Colomb, à travers les océans inexplorés.[3]

As Maupassant's characters stare from the French mainland at Corsica's sudden appearance, it becomes clear that the island does not have a place in their vision of French geography; only one spectator is informed enough to know its name. Corsica belongs to the realm of 'les lointains,' spaces that seem unreal, remote, unknown and somehow veiled to the French eye. The reference to Columbus and the crossing of unexplored oceans associates Corsica with the realm of the New World, waiting to be discovered, unveiled and conquered. Perhaps it is with reference to this that

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[1] *Le Bandit Quastana,* p. 134.
[2] Guy de Maupassant, 'Voyage de noce*,'* in Guy de Maupassant, *La Corse de Guy de Maupassant: Nouvelles et récits,* ed. by Dominique Poli (Ajaccio: Albania, 2007), p. 98.
[3] Guy de Maupassant, 'Le Bonheur' in *La Corse de Maupassant,* pp. 124-5.

Mérimée named his novel *Colomba*. Comparisons between the island and Columbus' conquests are well-employed in Maupassant's work; for instance, the travelling narrator of *Le Bonheur* states: 'Je fis, voilà cinq ans, un voyage en Corse. Cette île sauvage est plus inconnue et plus loin de nous que l'Amérique, bien qu'on la voie quelquefois des côtes de France, comme aujourd'hui.'[1] Once more, Corsica is approached and put into words with reference to other colonised people groups or overseas territories.

This association is not only made semantically, but also in terms of the roles Corsica and Corsicans tend to play in the narratives. Dumas', Daudet's and Maupassant's storylines presuppose the material exploitation of Corsican riches and the success or misfortune of their French characters depend on the realisation of this endeavour. *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* is a good example of this dynamic. The small island of Monte-Cristo indirectly becomes the catalyst for the story when the Frenchman Dantès finds unimaginable treasure there and makes himself count of the island. This easily acquired wealth allows Dantès to insert himself into Parisian high society, and to gain an immense influence on the richest of the rich. Monte-Cristo becomes a colonialist instrument in the narrative in the classical Saidian sense: the resources obtained on this periphery make possible and drive forward the main action set in the centre, in turn relegating to the background the very existence of the peripheral territory. Given Dumas' description, Monte-Cristo may well be seen as a placeholder for Corsica: 'Dantès la connaissait […] cette île, située […] entre la Corse et l'île d'Elbe […]. Cette île était, avait toujours été […] complètement déserte; c'est un rocher […] qui semble avoir été poussé par quelque cataclysme volcanique du fond de l'abîme à la surface de la mer.'[2] Unlike the actual Corsica, Monte-Cristo is conveniently painted as virgin land, ripe for possession and exploitation by a hardened adventurer such as Dantès. Knowledge is the key to power, as shown in the depth/surface metaphor: Dantès' knowledge and discovery of hidden territories is the key to his success. Daudet's *Le Nabab* describes a man with similar behavioural patterns and colonialist ways of thinking. According to the *Dictionnaire culturel en langue française,* '[a]u XVII^{e} s[iècle], le titre de nabab désignait dans l'Inde musulmane les grands officiers des sultans, des gouverneurs de province et, au XVIII^{e} s[iècle], des Européens ayant fait fortune aux Indes.'[3] Bernard Jansoulet fits the second definition, called 'Nabab' when he returns to Paris after having made a fortune at the court of the Bay of Tunis. But when this source of money runs dry, Jansoulet turns towards another colonial territory, where he hopes to gain power and wealth: Corsica. Jansoulet's plan is to become a *député* on the island and use resources easily gained on the periphery to advance his projects at the centre. Although this does not work out, Jansoulet's idea is another example of using Corsica like a colony: a

[1] *Le Bonheur,* p. 125.
[2] *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo, tome 3*, pp. 44-5.
[3] *Dictionnaire culturel en langue française,* p. 871.

place to exploit for the benefit of (men at) the centre. His statement about the Orient also describes his attitude to Corsica: 'Là-bas, c'est connu et reçu ces gains énormes […]; c'est la rançon des sauvages que nous initions au bien-être occidental…'[1] Such dismissive attitudes towards the inhabitants of the colonies can also be observed in canonical Corsican literature. *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* is again a case in point: the self-proclaimed count is constantly aided by his colonial servants. Dantès possesses a male Nubian and a female Ottoman slave, with whom he finally begins a romantic relationship. In addition, he is served by the Corsican Bertuccio. Dantès describes his cortege as follows: 'Ali, mon Nubien […]; Bertuccio, mon intendant […]; Haydée, mon esclave.'[2] The novels' main Corsican figure is included in a list of servants next to two other colonial slaves. Each has their own role in the count's life, and Bertuccio's position is not straightforwardly described as slavery. However, Dantès claims about the Corsican:

> [- I]l est sûr de ne jamais me quitter […] je suis dans les certitudes; le bon serviteur, pour moi, c'est celui sur lequel j'ai le droit de vie ou de mort.
>
> - Et vous avez le droit de vie et de mort sur Bertuccio? demanda Albert.
>
> - Oui, répondit froidement le comte.[3]

Even though Dumas does not explicitly say so, the relationship between Dantès and Bertuccio is shown to be that of master and slave. The count seems all-powerful next to Bertuccio, who humbly follows his every wish: 'Bertuccio se retira l'âme ravie, tant était grande, puissante et réelle, l'influence de cet homme sur tout ce qui l'entourait.'[4] Just like the island of Monte-Cristo, Bertuccio is indispensable to the outworking of Dantès' plans. The Corsican servant, like the treasure island, is the reason for his master's success and expected to serve him gratuitously. Colonial rhetoric presents the use of the peripheries and their inhabitants to enhance one's own social status in the centre as normal, and Corsica is described with the same language. For most Parisian authors, Corsica appears to be attached to the realm of overseas territories, linked to other French colonies and to the practice of colonialism in general. Writing about Corsica meant creating an internal exotic that had the potential of becoming just as attractive to the Parisian readership as the Orient or Africa. As Jeoffroy-Faggianelli suggests, '[l]'image de la Corse […] décèle des aspects de l'Ancien et

[1] Alphonse Daudet, *Le Nabab* (Paris: Lemerre, 1887), p. 313.
[2] *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo, tome 6,* p. 205.
[3] Ibid. *tome 12,* pp. 218-9.
[4] Ibid. *tome 8,* p. 103.

du Nouveau Monde […] A quoi bon […] chercher si loin un dépaysement qui s'offre à quelques lieues du continent français?'[1]

A land before time and its history

Albeit likening Corsica to a colony, canonical texts do not describe the French act of taking possession of the island; none of the Parisian writers ever comments on how Corsica became French**.** The absence of depictions of conquest reflects French assumptions about the normality of French rule and its acceptance by the islanders. And yet, many narratives implicitly remember resistance and tend to equate it with proof of the natives' savagery. Parisian authors frequently chose places with a history of upheaval and insubordination as settings for their stories or as origins of their most primitive Corsican characters. Mérimée, Dumas, Daudet and Maupassant use the province of Sartène as a signifier of Corsican primitivism, connoting 'cette partie de l'île où la civilisation n'est pas encore parvenue.'[2] Patrick Berthier explains that Mérimée chose this setting for *Mateo Falcone* because it was one of the most remote areas at the time, which seemed to guarantee authenticity.[3] The search for authentic insular lifestyle may be one reason for the region's prominence. The narrator of *Les Frères corses*, avid to see true Corsica, travels to the area on the assumption that, 'si l'ancien esprit national [corse] recule devant la civilisation et se réfugie dans quelque coin de l'île, ce sera certainement dans la province de Sartène.'[4] However, Sartène is not only associated with primitivism, but also with savagery and resistance to French authority. Maupassant's characterisation of the territory as 'refuge habituel des brigands' retains the historical reality of resistance to the French government, since Sartène was an epicentre of anti-French agitation and revolts in the aftermath of Paoli's return and the Anglo-Corsican kingdom.[5] Other frequently used Corsican settings, such as Île-Rousse and the region around Corte and the Monte-Rotondo, also mark *lieux de mémoire* of the short-lived Corsican independence under Paoli: Île-Rousse was founded by Paoli himself, and Corte was the capital of his Corsican Republic.[6] However, Parisian authors never state the historical significance of these places, instead underlining their primitivism and savagery. Dumas, Daudet and Maupassant represent Corte's surroundings as known hide-outs for bandits, while Dumas and Daudet equate Île-Rousse with archaic mores and classify it as furthest removed from civilisation. *Le Bandit Quastana*, in 1874, still regards these spaces as unreached by civilisation:

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[1] *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 255.
[2] *Les Frères corses*, p. 4
[3] See *Colomba de Prosper Mérimée,* p. 23.
[4] *Les Frères corses*, p. 12.
[5] 'Bandits Corses,' in *La Corse de Maupassant,* p. 56. See also *Histoire de la Corse et des Corses,* p. 379.
[6] See *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 251.

> La Corse se civilisant chaque jour perdait ses traditions de vendetta; et si, par hasard, dans un canton reculé de Sartène ou de l'Île-Rousse, un indigène au sang vif se laissait encore aller à jouer du stylet ou de l'escopette, il passait vite en Sardaigne.'[1]

Lieux de mémoire of Corsican resistance or independence transpire in canonical texts in the form of areas that are presented as particularly backwards and populated by criminals. Since the French government represents civilisation, areas with a history of opposition to its values are represented as equalling savagery.

Corsica's involvement with England and Paoli's Anglo-Corsican Kingdom are further parts of local history obscured in canonical texts. *Colomba* shows the English Colonel Nevil and his daughter Lydia travelling to Corsica, keen to experience a land that is completely unheard of at home. '[C]ar jamais Anglaise n'avait été en Corse; donc, elle devait y aller. Et quel bonheur, de retour dans Saint-James's Place, de montrer son album!'[2] By extension, no Englishmen have ever been to Corsica; Mérimée overlooks their presence on the island and the most recent attempt at Corsican independence under the tutelage of the English crown. Maupassant equally dissociates Corsica and England. *La Main* tells the fantastical story of an English explorer who settled on Corsica. Influenced by the island, colonial artefacts the Englishman had collected in the Americas come to life and he ends up strangled by a mummified hand. Corsica is thus seen as expelling the English and purging itself from their influence – without even admitting their presence in the first place.

Of all canonical narratives, Dumas' *Les Frères corses* gives the most detailed account of Corsica's history – which still remains extremely sketchy. Dumas carefully situates his text in history by dropping names and sporadically mentioning events, thus creating a sense of authenticity. However, the resulting version of history achieves another, and perhaps more important aim: it creates historical continuity where there was none. The island's history is presented in the form of Lucien and Louis' family tree. The reader finds out that the de Franchis are the offspring of Vincentello d'Istria, who lived four hundred years ago.[3] This historical reference does not go further than name-dropping; the informed reader might have known that d'Istria fought against Genoa on behalf of the Kings of Aragon.[4] Lucien proudly shows the narrator memorabilia such as Sampiero Corso's dagger, Pascale Paoli's sword and Napoleon Bonaparte's sabre, all objects that his ancestors were given for their faithful service. The three heroes are spun into a narrative that makes their battles seem coherent and leading towards unification with France. Dumas mentions Sampiero's

[1] *Le Bandit Quastana,* p. 20.
[2] *Colomba,* p. 104.
[3] *Les Frères corses*, p. 18.
[4] *Histoire de la Corse et des Corses*, pp. 232-4.

fight against Genoa, during which Lucien's forefather saved his life. Sampiero is presented as prefiguring Corsica's unification with France, as seen in Lucien's explanations about his dagger:

> Voyez! il porte les armes de Sampiero; seulement la fleur de lis de France n'y est point encore; vous savez que Sampiero n'a été autorisé à mettre la fleur de lis dans son blason qu'après le siège de Perpignan.[1]

Dumas' insistence on the authorisation to use French symbols implies that Sampiero desired and asked for this permission, suggesting that he wanted to be bound to France. Dumas presents the island's belonging to France as not yet realised, all the while implying that it was always meant to be and wished for by the natives. His portrayal of Paoli also distorts history, since he shows the man who opposed France's rule on Corsica as harmoniously reconciled to the man who sealed it. Lucien's room features 'deux portraits à côté l'un de l'autre […], Paoli et Napoléon.'[2] Immediately following on from Sampiero's fight against the Genoese, Lucien explains that Paoli fought 'pour la défense de la patrie […] au moment de la guerre d'indépendance.'[3] Dumas does not specify that Paoli fought against France, leaving the reader to assume that Paoli, like Sampiero, opposed the Genoese. Positioning him next to Napoleon implies Paoli's consent to French rule and allows Dumas to make a seamless transition from Corsica's struggle against Genoa to its seemingly wholehearted adherence to France. The first historical event properly referenced is Napoleon's '*Bataille des Pyramides,* 21 *juillet* 1798,' demarcating Corsica's integration into the history of France.[4] Showing Lucien's family's loyalty to Napoleon - especially given their association with Sampiero and Paoli in the past - implies that Corsica's history was always moving towards unification with France and that the islanders support French rule. Glossing over undesirable facts and events, Dumas constructs a Corsican history of rebellion against Genoa and voluntary submission to France, creating an impression of continuity and naturalness of French rule.

Most canonical authors do not comment on Corsican history, but generally content themselves with representing Corsica as behind the times and cut off from the progress of modernity. Mérimée, Balzac, Dumas, Daudet and Maupassant categorise literary travel to Corsica as travel back in time. For instance, the following statement by Mérimée was printed side by side with the first publication of *Mateo Falcone*:

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[1] *Les Frères corses*, pp. 9-10.
[2] Ibid. p. 10.
[3] Ibid. p. 10.
[4] Ibid. p. 11.

> Ce qui est crime dans un état de civilisation perfectionné n'est que trait d'audace dans un état de civilisation moins avancé, et peut-être est-ce une action louable dans un temps de barbarie. Le jugement qu'il convient de porter de la même action doit, on le sent, varier […] suivant le pays, car entre un peuple et un autre peuple il y a autant de différence qu'entre un siècle et un autre siècle.[1]

Flaubert, discovering Corsica at the same time as Mérimée's *Colomba,* comments in the same vein: 'Il ne faut pas juger des mœurs de la Corse avec nos petites idées européennes.'[2] Corsica is thus defined as cut off from the continent spatially and temporally, denoting a prehistoric space. Just like many overseas colonies, Parisian authors understood the island to represent the remnants of an earlier state of civilisation as opposed to the highly evolved French capital. Maupassant particularly emphasises this opposition, showing Corsica to be at the beginning of time:

> Figurez-vous un monde encore en chaos, une tempête de montagnes que séparent des ravins étroits où roulent des torrents; pas une plaine, mais d'immenses vagues de granit et de géantes ondulations de terre couvertes de maquis ou de hautes forêts de châtaigniers et de pins […] la Corse sauvage est restée telle qu'en ses premiers jours.[3]

The way Maupassant paints the Corsican landscape reminds the reader of the story of creation: God brings the world out of chaos, forms the earth and the sea and sets limits for each, before creating plants, animals and humankind. In contrast to this created order, Maupassant's Corsica is an entangled mesh of elements and substances, still waiting for a superior power to order and shape it. Maupassant transforms the island, in McLeod's words, into 'a timeless place, changeless and static, cut off from the progress of Western history.'[4] Of course, these descriptions are selective; Maupassant ignores the fact that many of the savage forests he describes are actually plantations.[5] Rather than aiming at a factual retelling, Maupassant obliterates real Corsican history, giving the impression that it was non-existent before the island was linked to France. The only detail of Corsican history Maupassant shows - fittingly entitled *Une Page d'histoire inédite* - links France and Corsica through the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte, recounting how an old woman saved his life back on the island before his ascension to consul and later Emperor. This event on the margins is shown

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[1] Mérimée originally wrote this statement for the preface of his *Chronique de Charles IX* (1828). It was taken out of context and placed next to the first publication of *Mateo Falcone* in the *Revue trimestrielle*, thus applying it to Corsica and its presumed difference to France. See *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 199.
[2] Gustave Flaubert, *Notes*, quoted in ibid. p. 391.
[3] *Le Bonheur*, pp. 125-6.
[4] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 44.
[5] Jean-Dominique Poli confirms that around 1880, much of Corsica's agriculture consisted in cultivating plantations of chestnut and olive trees. *La Corse de Maupassant,* p. 19.

to have changed the course of French history, thus binding Corsica to the destiny of the nation, and once more denying it a history of its own. While canonical works at the start of the nineteenth century still dealt awkwardly with Corsican history, most *fin-de-siècle* texts overlook the subject altogether, making France's position as ruler of the island seem inevitable.

Representing Corsica as wild and prehistoric fulfils another purpose: that of better explaining the nature of the islanders. Dumas and Maupassant explicitly underline the causality between the nature of the land and its inhabitants, as theorised by Montesquieu. Dumas has the Corsican Lucien explain: 'je suis une espèce de production de l'île, comme le chêne vert et le laurier-rose; il me faut mon atmosphère imprégnée des parfums de la mer et des émanations de la montagne.'[1] Maupassant repeats this theme, arguing that

> il existe une singulière tendresse […] pour le pays où nous sommes nés, qui nous a nourris de son air, de ses plantes et de ses fruits, de la chair de ses bêtes, du jus de ses vignes et de l'eau de ses sources. Notre corps est fait de sa substance; nos organes sont accoutumés à sa température et à ses formes; notre peau a le ton et la résistance que donne son soleil et qu'exige son climat. Nous sommes les fils de la terre plus encore que les fils de nos mères.[2]

If an individual is a product of their natural environment, then canonical descriptions of Corsica as a savage and barren land gain particular significance, since they serve to underline truth claims about the Corsicans' nature. Maupassant's elaborate descriptions of Corsica can be seen as a study of its population at the same time. Poli remarks that Maupassant's image of the island consists of describing different types of desert, all savage and barren.[3] As Poli's paper shows in detail, Maupassant's texts abound with lengthy descriptions of dangerous precipices, stone deserts and the jungles of the *maquis*, reducing Corsica to 'ce sauvage et dangereux détroit […] hérissé de rocs, qui sortent leurs têtes à fleur d'eau, comme des bêtes méchantes attendant une proie,' (*La Patrie de Colomba*) 'une solitude de pierre […] au fond de ce trou sauvage […] un désert de granit étincelant, chauffé comme un four par un furieux soleil,'(*Un Bandit corse*) 'les maquis, […] que relient entre eux, les mêlant comme des cheveux, les clématites enlaçantes, les fougères monstrueuses [...] dont j'approchais une inextricable toison' (*Histoire corse*).[4] Maupassant portrays predominantly three landscapes: the barren and dangerous coast, the scorched stone desert and the impenetrable, uncontrollable jungle, thus likening Corsica to other overseas destinations and the New World.

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[1] *Les Frères corses,* p. 7.
[2] Guy de Maupassant, 'L'Exil' in *La Corse de Maupassant,* p. 108.
[3] Ibid. p. 18.
[4] Guy de Maupassant, 'La Patrie de Colomba' in ibid. pp. 84-5; 'Un Bandit corse' in *Histoire corse, Un Bandit corse, Une Vendetta* (Marseille: Via Valeriano, 1993), pp. 16-7; 'Histoire corse'in ibid. p. 9.

Descriptions of the *maquis* and its inhabitants are among Maupassant's favourite themes; there are remarks about it in many of his Corsican stories, and two reports are exclusively devoted to them, again linking Corsican men to their natural environment *(Bandits corses, Un Bandit)*. Maupassant operates a choice in the description of these landscapes; he could have focused on towns, vineyards and groves. Instead, he emphasises savage and undomesticated nature, underlining the ferocity of the natural environment in order to better categorise its inhabitants and their mores as primitive and barbaric. Lost in the immensity of nature, their lifestyle resembles that of animals more than humans:

> Quelques fois, sur les pentes rapides, j'apercevais quelque chose de gris, comme un amas de pierres tombées du sommet. C'était un village, un petit village de granit, accroché là, cramponné, comme un vrai nid d'oiseau, presque invisible sur l'immense montagne.[1]

The image of the hamlet as a birds' nest recurs in other Corsican stories by Maupassant (*Le Bonheur, Le Monastère de Corbara)*, likening the islanders to animals rather than humans, and presenting their lifestyle as precarious and at the mercy of the island's violent natural environment.

> L'être y vit dans sa maison grossière, indifférent à tout ce qui ne touche point son existence même ou ses querelles de famille. Et il est resté avec les défauts et les qualités des races incultes, violent, haineux, sanguinaire avec inconscience, mais aussi hospitalier, généreux, dévoué, naïf.'[2]

The passages postulate a direct connection between Corsica's wilderness and the islanders' primitivism; as Poli states, 'Maupassant ne retient que la sauvagerie des lieux afin d'expliquer la sauvagerie des habitants.'[3] Morally immature, naïve and uncultured, Maupassant sees the Corsicans as no different from the savages that nineteenth-century French colonial writers observed all over the globe.

Savages

This is not altogether surprising, since Eugen Weber has already proven that many provinces were perceived as savage during the process of French nation-building: 'there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that vast parts of nineteenth-century France were inhabited by savages. […] From Bordeaux to Bayonne all was wilderness. Savagery also from the Île-d'Yeu, off the Atlantic coast, to the Drôme in the east.'[4] Parisian views of Corsica complement already existing paradigms about

[1] *Histoire corse*, p. 9.
[2] *Le Bonheur*, p. 126.
[3] *La Corse de Maupassant,* p. 19.
[4] *Peasants into Frenchmen*, pp. 3-4.

rural France, a correlation that can also be observed in the *littérature d'information* already discussed.[1] The writers' travel impressions are coloured by the discourses they had found in secondary literature about Corsica. Mérimée reveals in his correspondence that what attracts him to the island is 'la pure nature de l'*homme*. Ce mammifère est vraiment curieux ici et je ne me lasse pas de me faire conter des histoires de *vendette*.'[2] Pseudo-scientific vocabulary and references to stories and fiction stand side by side in Mérimée's self-understanding as an author who accumulates and dispenses knowledge about Corsica. Likewise, Balzac writes in a letter about his stay on Corsica: 'Car voici la première fois que je sais ce que c'est qu'un désert où il y a des inconnus quasi sauvages.'[3] Given these antecedents in the non-fictional domain, it is unsurprising that references to Corsicans as savages abound in the fictional works of all six canonical authors. These references take different forms: terminology, imagery or narrative action.

Mérimée and Balzac frequently liken their Corsican characters to animals. In a fashion reminiscent of American Indians, Mérimée's protagonists have animal names, such as Orso ('ours des montagnes'), Colomba (dove) and Falcone (falcon).[4] He also recurrently compares the islanders and their behaviour to animals in statements such as 'chacun semble aux aguets comme un faucon sur son nid' or 'Fortunato […] ressemblait à un chat.'[5] Balzac employs the same strategy in the description of Piombo and Ginevra's relationship: 'Le Corse se complut à développer ces sentiments sauvages dans le cœur de sa fille, absolument comme un lion apprend à ses lionceaux à fondre sur leur proie.'[6] Both authors enjoy playing with eyes to further underline the inhumanity of their Corsican characters. Piombo sports 'un air de cruauté indéfinissable et […] un regard de tigre,' while Falcone impresses with 'ses yeux de lynx.'[7] Colomba's attractive appearance is belied by her 'yeux d'une tigresse qui voit un daim s'approcher de la tanière de ses petits.'[8] The islanders appear as beasts of prey as opposed to France's civilised representatives. Most metaphors liken them to felines, underlining their animalistic and dangerous side and linking them to common conceptions about cats, such as their self-will and indomitability. Corsicans are generally seen as close to nature,

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[1] *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 252.
[2] Prosper Mérimée, 'Lettre à Requien,' 30th September 1839, in Prosper Mérimée, *Correspondance générale, tome II,* ed. by Maurice Parturier (Paris: Le Divan, 1941-47), p. 288. Italics in the original.
[3] Honoré de Balzac, *Lettre du 20 mars 1838,* quoted in *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 333. Jeoffroy-Faggianelli's research shows that Balzac's experience on Corsica actually differed considerably from what he described in his letters to Mme Hanska. Contemporary newspaper articles confirm that Balzac was welcomed as a celebrity by Corsican bibliophiles. Ibid. pp. 339-41.
[4] *Colomba,* p. 129.
[5] Ibid. p. 128; Mateo *Falcone,* p. 34.
[6] *La Vendetta,* pp. 199-200.
[7] Ibid. p. 213, *Mateo Falcone,* p. 41.
[8] *Colomba,* p. 229.

described as animals or else plants. In his draft of *Corsino*, Balzac elaborated on the primitivism of the Corsican protagonist with his usual psychological depth:

> [E]n un mot il représentait parfaitement un homme primitif. Sa conduite changeait à chaque instant, son âme était un fleuve sans courant qui s'engloutissait où le vent du moment le poussait, c'était un arbre sauvage au milieu d'un jardin cultivé.[1]

Frequent nature metaphors suggest that Corsican natives belong to the realm of wildlife, rather than to a society of rational agents. Mérimée's and Balzac's literary discourse establishes a division between animals and persons, savagery and civilisation, Corsica and France.

The most common signifier of Corsican savagery, as proposed in Parisian narratives, is the islanders' violence, particularly in the forms of vendettas and banditry. All Parisian authors incorporate these themes in their descriptions of Corsica and exhibit the savagery of Corsica's inhabitants through storylines; around two thirds of the corpus depict bandits or vengeance sprees. Mérimée's first Corsican story is at the origin of this representative strategy. *Mateo Falcone* introduces the first Corsican bandit described in prose narrative, creating the stereotypical insular savage:

> [P]arut un homme, coiffé d'un bonnet pointu comme en portent les montagnards, barbu, couvert de haillons, et se traînant avec peine en s'appuyant sur son fusil. Il venait de recevoir un coup de feu dans la cuisse. Cet homme était un bandit.[2]

While *Mateo Falcone* offers the bandit in isolation, *Colomba* shows his genesis, devoting a whole chapter to explaining his origins, thus exemplifying the Parisian need to comprehend, classify and define outlandish Corsican behaviour. Casting himself as an omniscient narrator, Mérimée gives authoritative explanations about the 'sauvagerie du pays' and the 'idées d'honneur barbare' that control its inhabitants.[3] Mérimée's interpretation sees vendettas and bandits as symptoms of the islanders' fundamentally vindictive nature, which he indicates in the protagonists' surname: 'della Rebbia' is an allusion to the Italian term 'rabbia', meaning 'fierceness, anger, rage, determination.' Because of this irrational temper, killings start for almost no reason: 'on est assassiné par ses ennemis, mais le motif pour lequel on a des ennemis, il est souvent fort difficile de le dire,' explains

[1] Quoted in *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 153. Balzac drafted and abandoned *Corsino* around 1822, eight years prior to *La Vendetta.* Nb. the 'jardin cultivé' which surrounds the protagonist does not refer to Corsica; the narrative is set in Scotland.
[2] *Mateo Falcone,* p. 27.
[3] Ibid. p. 104; *Colomba,* p. 167.

the narrator.[1] Once the first blood is shed, the victim must be avenged by a member of their family, who, after having fulfilled this duty, flees to the *maquis* and becomes a bandit, until he is in turn assassinated by his victim's family. From the first canonical narratives, vendettas and bandits are presented as a vicious cycle; the bandit - necessarily connected to violent homicides - becomes the local Corsican expression of the general theme of savagery identified in colonial discourses about the overseas. Orso explains the island to foreign newcomers with a focus on the vendetta: '[La Corse était […] parée de couleurs poétiques. Comme on peut le penser, le mot de vengeance se présenta plus d'une fois dans ses récits, car il est impossible de parler des Corses sans attaquer ou sans justifier leur passion proverbiale.'[2]

This impossibility of thinking Corsica without vendettas and bandits is confirmed by subsequent canonical works all the way through the century; the themes identified by Mérimée are equated with the very structure of Corsican society and become paramount markers of the difference between Corsica and France. Chronologically, texts from the first two thirds of the century deal almost exclusively with the investigation of the vendetta and its by-products. *La Vendetta* and *Les Frères corses* recount the genesis of particular vengeances. *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* and *Les Enfans de l'amour* recycle these clichés in order to drive forward storylines that are not directly concerned with the island. Dumas' narrative is, above all, about the execution of Dantès' revenge, accomplished through his Corsican henchman Bertuccio. Sue's storyline depends on the actions and machinations of one Corsican character, Pietri, whose life motto is: 'Mort, votre vengeance doit vous survivre!'[3] The first two thirds of the nineteenth-century thus saw a literary acquisition of knowledge about the phenomenon of the vendetta, resulting in truth claims about the Corsicans' general nature. Once the cliché established, authors made use of such generalisations as convenient means to explain the inexplicable or to avoid finding more complex motives for their villains.

Authors writing during the last third of the century put their main emphasis elsewhere, but still retained the popular themes of vengeance and banditry. Daudet and Maupassant routinely refer to vendettas caused by one-dimensional Corsican characters and persist in inserting the iconic figure of the bandit into their descriptions of landscape and nature. The vendetta is just as present in canonical Corsican literature at the end of the century as it was in its beginning, as shown by the following passage from *La Main* (1883):

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[1] *Colomba,* p. 145.
[2] Ibid. p. 124.
[3] *Les Enfans de l'amour,* p. 23.

> [L]à-bas, c'étaient les affaires de vendetta. Il y en a de superbes, de dramatiques au possible, de féroces, d'héroïques. Nous retrouvons là les plus beaux sujets de vengeance qu'on puisse rêver, les haines séculaires, apaisées un moment, jamais éteintes, les ruses abominables, les assassinats devenant des massacres et presque des actions glorieuses. Depuis deux ans, je n'entendais parler que du prix du sang, que de ce terrible préjugé corse qui force à venger toute injure sur la personne qui l'a faite, sur ses descendants et ses proches. J'avais vu égorger des vieillards, des enfants, des cousins, j'avais la tête pleine de ces histoires.[1]

The recurrent identification of the island with these themes allowed canonical authors to insist on the differences between France and the Corsica of their imagination. The insulars become fixed in the figure of the bandit, and their savagery explained through '[l]e tempérament national [corse], orgueilleux, sournois, intrigant, vindicatif,' as Daudet puts it.[2] In the same vein, the author/narrator of Maupassant's *Histoire corse* affirms: 'j'ai saisi l'esprit même de cette race acharnée à la vengeance.'[3] Such literary truth claims constitute a body of knowledge that was received as factual by many Parisian readers and could potentially support political actions taken towards the island. Claudie Bernard argues in her paper on the Romantic madness of vengeance: 'La passion vindicative est une réaction individuelle, viscérale, archaïque, disons "naturelle" de l'offensé contre l'offenseur.'[4] Conveying the vendetta as the central distinctive piece of information about Corsican culture, Parisian authors represent Corsicans as uncivilised and savage, while their society - because it legitimises such behaviour - is branded as archaic and backwards. The islanders are depicted as primitive and in need of civilisation.

The last third of the century saw an increase and intensification of representations of primitivism. Daudet and Maupassant, probably influenced by the ubiquity of colonial rhetoric during the Third Republic, progressively incorporated iconic images of overseas territories into their description of Corsica. Daudet's first depictions of the island in the late 1860s already contain racial overtones. In *Le Phare des Sanguinaires,* he compares three lighthouse keepers, one from Marseille and two from Corsica:

> [T]ous trois [étaient] petits, barbus, le même visage tanné, crevassé, le même *pelone* (caban) en poils de chèvre, mais d'allure et d'humeur entièrement opposées. A la façon de vivre de ces gens, on sentait tout de suite la différence entre deux races. Le Marseillais industrieux et

[1] Guy de Maupassant, 'La Main,' in *La Corse de Maupassant,* p. 115.
[2] *Le Nabab,* pp. 304-5.
[3] *Histoire corse,* p. 8.
[4] Claudie Bernard, 'Raison et déraison vendettales dans *La Vendetta* de Balzac et *Les Frères corses* de Dumas,' in Lise Dumasy et al, *Stendhal, Balzac, Dumas: Un Récit romantique?* (Toulouse: P. U. du Mirail, 2006), p. 266.

> vif, toujours affairé, toujours en mouvement. […] Les Corses, eux, en dehors de leur service, ne s'occupaient absolument de rien.[1]

The passage presumes a racial difference between continental Frenchmen and insular Corsicans; the gulf between mainland and island is not only perceived as a cultural reality, but now also as a hereditary fact. Eight years later, in *Le Nabab*, Daudet propagates the same ideas, describing a French investor's encounter with a Corsican employee in these terms: 'J'ai eu beaucoup de mal à arracher quelques renseignements de cet être aux trois quarts sauvage qui me regardait avec méfiance, embusqué derrière les poils de chèvre de son pélone.'[2] Daudet's Corsicans have slipped into the paradigm of 'savages/indigeneous inhabitants' propagated by French imperialist discourses.

Resonating with Daudet's depictions, Maupassant hesitates to recognise the islanders as fully human: 'la Corse sauvage est restée telle qu'en ses premiers jours. L'être y vit dans sa maison grossière, indifférent à tout ce qui ne touche point son existence même ou ses querelles de famille.'[3] Tellingly, Maupassant refers to the Corsicans as 'êtres' and not as 'hommes,' suggesting that they are not on a level with civilised men yet. Corsica symbolises the origins of mankind, while France comes to denote its evolution. Showcasing Corsica's primitive stage of social development, Maupassant's *Le Bonheur* depicts Corsica as a non-cultural, ahistorical and asocial place:

> Point de culture, aucune industrie, aucun art. On ne rencontre jamais un morceau de bois travaillé, un bout de pierre sculptée, jamais le souvenir du goût enfantin ou raffiné des ancêtres pour les choses gracieuses et belles. C'est là même ce qui frappe le plus en ce superbe et dur pays: l'indifférence héréditaire pour cette recherche des formes séduisantes qu'on appelle l'art.[4]

Like Daudet, Maupassant foregrounds the concept of heredity in explaining the Corsicans' perceived primitivism. In his eagerness to make Corsica pass for more exotic than it actually is, the author is prepared to overlook the truth. What matters is not whether his depictions are true to reality, but the underlying message: a strict differentiation between Corsican and French people, savages and modern men. This distinction fulfils the strategic purposes of colonial discourses and puts Corsicans on a level with the savages in France's other colonial possessions.

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[1] *Le Phare des Sanguinaires,* pp. 75-6.
[2] Ibid. p. 300.
[3] *Le Bonheur*, pp. 125-6.
[4] Ibid. p. 125.

Daudet's last piece on Corsica, *La Polenta* (1890) - which also happens to be the last piece of writing in the chronology of canonical depictions of the island - reformulates the same ideas in a pronounced exoticist style:

> La côte corse, un soir de novembre. - Nous abordons sous la grande pluie un pays complètement désert. […] [U]n berger indigène, une espèce de sauvage tout habillé de peau de bouc, nous invite à venir manger la *polenta* dans sa cabane. Nous entrons, courbés, rapetissés, dans une hutte où l'on ne peut se tenir debout. Au milieu, des brins de bois vert s'allument entre quatre pierres noires. La fumée qui s'échappe de là monte vers le trou percé à la hutte, puis se répand partout. […] Une femme, des enfants apparaissent de temps en temps quand la fumée s'éclaircit, et tout au fond un porc grogne. On distingue des débris de naufrage, un banc fait de morceaux de navires, une caisse de bois avec des lettres de roulage, une tête de sirène en bois peint arrachée à quelque proue, toute lavée d'eau de mer.[1]

Further elaborating on the theme of primitivism, Daudet degrades the Corsicans to complete barbarians, clothed in animal skins only. The passage borrows vocabulary from other colonial depictions, introducing new words such as 'indigène' and 'hutte' to the terminology surrounding Corsican literature. Daudet imitates exoticist descriptions of African (or other) tribes, including their apparels and habitations. The primitivism of the Corsicans' hut, as well as its shape, apparently triangular with a fireplace in the middle and a hole above it, is reminiscent of Indian tipis and other indigenous shelters. The fact that the native's wife and children are stacked into the tiny hut alongside other animals further contributes to the impression of absolute primitivism. Given that Corsican housing had never been described in these terms before - the conventional image being a badly-built stone house - Daudet's depictions seem far removed from Corsican reality. Although the text - an extract from the *Paysages Gastronomiques* - is recounted by a first person narrator and pretends to be a factual culinary review, it seems unlikely that its descriptions date back to memories of Daudet's stay on the island almost thirty years previously.[2] A far more likely explanation would be that Daudet was inspired by the 1889 Parisian *Exposition Universelle*, which 'imported colonial subjects to provide living examples of civilization in the making' and sported enclosures of African tribes with their huts etc.[3] Admitting this hypothesis of a superposition of African images onto Corsican reality in the author's mind, it seems that Daudet chose to make the island appear more exotic than it actually was. The references to shipwrecks and the Robinson

[1] Alphonse Daudet, 'La Polenta,' in *Mari-Anto et autres nouvelles*, pp. 77-8.
[2] See *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse,* pp. 563-4.
[3] See *Mission to Civilize,* p. 14.

Crusoesque flavour of the scenario strengthen the association of Corsica with the tropics. Daudet perpetuates Maupassant's generalisation according to which the islanders are unable to produce works of art, crafts or architecture. The text shows the Corsican natives as profiting from the leftovers of Western civilisation, suggesting that they are unable to invent or construct for themselves. In short, Corsica is denied any proof of civilisation that may have been acknowledged in previous literary depictions. The chronology of representations during the Third Republic allows conclusions about the progressive colonisation of Corsica in the writers' imagination. While all Parisian authors describe the Corsicans as savages in some way, Daudet and Maupassant's texts take this trend to a new level and continually reinforce it. The century's last literary depiction of Corsica fully associates the island with the overseas colonial realm, completing its othering. Daudet and Maupassant, influenced by the peak of colonial discourses at the time, paint Corsica as far removed from civilisation and modern men. Their descriptions no longer paint reality, but strive to show that Corsica's primitivism necessitates a French civilising mission.

As for their female characters, canonical authors describe fourteen Corsican women, but only two, Ginevra and Colomba - arguably three with Mari-Anto -, have lead roles. The others appear infrequently, often as someone's mother or sister. Parisian authors' descriptions of Corsican women largely correspond to colonial ways of representing female natives. Apart from Maupassant, all authors paint female Corsicans as extremely beautiful and seductive, but strange and threatening at the same time. Balzac's Ginevra is set apart from other Parisian girls despite her assimilation to the capital:

> De toutes les jeunes filles venues jusqu'alors dans l'atelier de Servin, elle était la plus belle, la plus grande et la mieux faite. […] Par un singulier caprice de la nature, le charme de son visage se trouvait en quelque sorte démenti par un front de marbre où se peignait une fierté presque sauvage, où respiraient les mœurs de la Corse. Là était le seul lien qu'il y eût entre elle et son pays natal: dans tout le reste de sa personne, la simplicité, l'abandon des beautés lombardes séduisaient si bien qu'il fallait ne pas la voir pour lui causer la moindre peine. Elle inspirait un si vif attrait que, par prudence, son vieux père la faisait accompagner jusqu'à l'atelier. Le seul défaut de cette créature véritablement poétique venait de la puissance même d'une beauté si largement développée: elle avait l'air d'être femme.[1]

Ginevra is a part of Parisian high society, shown through her attendance of Servin's prestigious art classes. Yet, even in her conformity to the capital's norms, she differs from French girls; there is a foreign quality about her virtues that Balzac links to Italy (Lombardy) and not France. Any civilised

[1] *La Vendetta,* pp. 178-9.

features are linked to classical Italy, and not to France or Corsica. The contrast between Ginevra's face and her forehead is meaningful, denoting the difference between appearances and thoughts. Although she is a virgin, Ginevra is painted as more sensual and voluptuous than a girl of her standing should be; her femininity is somehow indecent. Since this sensuality is linked to Ginevra's otherness, her portrait takes on slight colonialist overtones, tempting the Parisians to take advantage of this foreign beauty. Subsequent writers took Balzac's descriptions as a model for Corsican women in general; Mérimée's Colomba resembles her and Louisa, Sue's Parisian *métisse*, is compared to a painting by the Spanish artist Murillo, underlining her Mediterranean appearance. Despite their seductiveness, Corsican women generally seem foreign and dangerous.

While certain females (particularly secondary characters) appear submissive and subservient, Parisian writers stress Corsican women as dangerous and frightening. Colomba is the most elaborate example of this trend; her beauty heightens her menacing nature: 'Colomba [avait] quelque chose d'imposant et de terrible; à sa vue, la foule recula épouvantée, comme à l'apparition d'une de ces fées malfaisantes.'[1] As opposed to rational, enlightened Frenchmen, Colomba belongs to the realm of magical power and primitive superstition. Mérimée threads this theme through the whole narrative, from her death chant in the beginning, through her incitating Orso to vengeance in traditional rituals, to the very last scene, where she harms the father of her dead enemies simply by looking at him:

> Le vieillard poussa un cri, et sa tête tomba sur sa poitrine. Colomba lui tourna le dos, et revint à pas lents vers la maison en chantant quelques mots incompréhensibles d'une ballata: 'Il me faut la main qui a tiré, l'œil qui a visé, le cœur qui a pensé…' Pendant que la jardinière s'empressait à secourir le vieillard, Colomba, le teint animé, l'œil en feu, se mettait à table devant le colonel […]. [L]a fermière la suivit des yeux quelque temps. 'Tu vois bien cette demoiselle si jolie, dit-elle à sa fille, eh bien, je suis sûre qu'elle a le mauvais œil.'[2]

Colomba reveals herself as the occult power behind the vendetta; the words she sings form a part of the death song she made up for her father's funeral, introduced at the very beginning of the story.[3] The circle is closed, making Colomba's death song the theme tune for the narrative and the ultimate expression of her character. The last lines of the novel revisit the uncanny and supernatural side of Colomba's character. Mérimée alludes to the 'annocchiatura' he mentioned in his *Notes d'un voyage*

[1] *Colomba,* p. 270.
[2] Ibid. pp. 305-7.
[3] See ibid. pp. 118-9, 157.

en Corse, explaining that the evil eye gives a person 'le pouvoir de nuire par les yeux.'[1] The narrative links Colomba's 'œil en feu,' with this Corsican superstition, suggesting that Colomba might possess a demonic power. While Mérimée insists on the association with the occult, subsequent writers borrow the theme of the beautiful, but dangerous native woman. Dumas describes a pregnant woman who kills her enemy with her own hands, Sue shows Louisa's frightening desire for vengeance, and Maupassant takes female savagery to the extreme, portraying a woman who trains her dog to mangle her husband's killer. Corsican women therefore often appear as possessors of fearsome power, at least symbolically opposing French attempts to bring order and reason to the island.

Some narratives insist on the chastity of their female characters: Colomba remains a veiled virgin and Ginevra's morality is spotless. Yet, many Corsican women are shown as sexually subversive. Dumas starts this trend, narrating how Louis and Lucien's ancestor Savilia's exhibitionism and willingness to sexually torture men finally led to her naked public exposure and collective rape. Sue is the first writer whose female character is sexually available for Frenchmen: despite her angelic looks, Louisa is a prostitute. Daudet continues this progression and presents Corsican women as colonial subjects to be sexually exploited. Over twenty-seven years, Daudet offers three different visions of the same woman, three *Études de femme corse,* progressively resembling colonial clichés. His chronologically last depiction describes the Parisian baron Rouchouze's household in Ajaccio and his beautiful Corsican maid, Séraphine. He praises the advantages of this servant to another Parisian traveller:

> 'Entre nous.' Ici le baron baissa la voix et, de l'air le plus abominablement niais, avoua que Séraphine allait bientôt lui accorder ses faveurs, dont la première, la plus précieuse de toutes, avait été de se laisser conduire au bain par son heureux maître et seigneur qui l'attendait.[2]

> 'Séraphine? […] Une femme idéale, vous savez... Il faut venir en Corse... poète, cuisinière, les jambes de Diane et ne me coûtant pas un radis.... Mais attendez, mon petit trognon, vous allez juger vous-même.' Elle vint à l'appel du maître, grande et forte fille, à la taille massive, aux jambes robustes mais de lignes élégantes sous le mince plaquage de la jupe. - Ôte donc ça, dit le baron, levant le fichu jeté sur ses cheveux et qui lui cachait la figure […] Le baron lui tapotait les hanches d'une main.[3]

[1] See Berthier's editor's note in *Colomba,* p. 307.
[2] *Rose et Ninette,* p. 78.
[3] Ibid. p. 94.

The baron's explicit sexual references are tainted with obvious colonial overtones. The naming in the quotation implies a relationship between master and slave. Rouchouze's gesture of removing Séraphine's veil at will symbolises ownership and forced sexual intimacy. His insisting 'il faut venir en Corse' generalises this relationship and implies that exotic women like Séraphine are available to Frenchmen who come to the island. As with colonial literature, canonical texts made Corsica a site of sexual desire, arousing fantasies and making them possible realities. Corsican women are simultaneously beautiful, harmless, chaste, subservient, and wild, uncontrollable, erotic and dangerous. The island becomes a secret paradise for Frenchmen who want to live out sexual fantasies that are seen as immoral at home.

Maupassant associates the land itself with savage sexuality, ascribing to Corsica a mysterious quality that arouses human passions. The narrator of *Un Échec* falls under this spell during an overnight coach ride and attempts to seduce a married woman:

> Une odeur fraîche et puissante d'herbes aromatiques entrait par les vitres baissées, cette odeur forte que la Corse répand autour d'elle, si loin que les marins la reconnaissent au large, odeur pénétrante comme la senteur d'un corps, comme une sueur de la terre verte imprégnée de parfums, que le soleil ardent a dégagés d'elle, a évaporés dans le vent qui passe.[1]

These sexualised descriptions of nature are interspersed with depictions of sensual pleasure between the travellers, who become enthralled: 'toujours l'air parfumé et savoureux des montagnes corses nous caressait les joues et les lèvres, et me grisait comme du vin.'[2] Finally, the narrator's sexual advances do not work out, diverting the reader's attention to the sexual nature of the land itself. In keeping with the colonialist tradition of sexualising and feminising conquered territories, Maupassant's description of Corsica resembles that of a female body, using specific sexual vocabulary, such as 'pénétrer' and 'imprégner.' Corsica is portrayed as attractive for the coloniser, worth possessing and worth impregnating with the centre's culture.

Une mission civilisatrice

The superiority of French life style is a paradigm that underlies all Parisian authors' understandings of reality. Daudet and Maupassant overstress the Corsicans' primitivism; yet, all writers demonstrate a conceptual division of the world in civilised and uncivilised spaces. All six canonical authors underline the difference between Corsica and France and presuppose the superiority of French civilisation. Maupassant starts out with the assumption that France is necessarily superior to any

[1] Guy de Maupassant, 'Un Échec,' in *La Corse de Maupassant,* p. 141.
[2] Ibid. pp. 149.

other country in the world, which comes out most clearly in *Une Vie.* The protagonists discuss possible travel destinations and name several countries (Corsica, Switzerland, Greece, England, China and Lapland). In this context, Maupassant includes the following statement:

> Alors ils parcoururent l'univers, discutant les agréments de chaque pays […] mais ils en arrivèrent à conclure que le plus beau pays du monde, c'était la France, avec son climat tempéré, frais l'été et doux l'hiver, ses riches campagnes, ses vertes forêts, ses grands fleuves calmes et ce culte des beaux-arts qui n'avait existé nulle part ailleurs, depuis les grands siècles d'Athènes.[1]

The reference to classical Greek culture lays claim for France as the apogee of civilisation, culture and progress. The self-nomination of France as the centre of all 'beaux-arts' contrasts with Maupassant's previous descriptions of Corsica as an artless and uncultured place. The end of the discussion underlines the juxtaposition between France and Corsica, as the Parisian protagonists decide to travel to the island, precisely because of its primitivism: 'ce doit être si sauvage et si beau!'[2] Analogously, the narrator of *Les Frères corses* describes his travels to Corsica and sets up an intrinsic opposition between France and the island when he claims that he feels 'tout à fait étranger aux Mœurs corses' and that 'il me semblait […] être entré dans un monde étranger.' Whereas the Corsicans identify the narrator as 'étranger' and 'voyageur français,' he describes himself as 'Parisien.'[3]

The capital becomes the alpha and omega of French self-definition: all authors except Mérimée make literal references to Paris as the epitome of France. French superiority is thus embodied by Paris, which is juxtaposed to the peripheral island. Corsican stories are either set on the island, or in the capital; nine narratives explore the islanders in a Parisian setting. Most authors follow the distinctive Balzacian opposition of Paris and the peripheries. As Wenger remarks,

> [t]here is not one of Balzac's provincial works which does not in a major or minor capacity stress the antithesis of Capital and Province […]. He focused his Province and his provinces, as it were, from a Parisian observatory. Paris thus becomes as essential to the provincial picture as the Province itself.[4]

The statement equally applies to canonical authors' outlooks on Corsica, which is generally seen through a Parisian lens, allowing the reader to glimpse insular reality through its opposition with

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[1] *Une Vie,* pp. 53-4.
[2] Ibid. p. 53.
[3] *Les Frères corses,* pp. 3, 12, 15, 18.
[4] *The Province and the Provinces*, p. 79.

Parisian mores and values. Paris serves as the ultimate definition of French civilisation, and Corsica is described in relation to that specific idea of Frenchness. Characterisations of the two spaces as binary opposites abound, as in Maupassant's *Le Monastère de Corbara,* which recounts the narrator's visit to a Parisian monk who recently moved to the island:

> Alors nous avons parlé de Paris, et le même amour pour cette admirable ville nous retint longtemps en face l'un de l'autre. Il m'interrogeait, demandant des nouvelles, s'intéressant à tout, repris par le 'souvenir' comme on est ressaisi par une fièvre mal guérie… - En entrant ici [en Corse], me dit-il, j'ai eu l'impression d'être mort, car n'est-ce pas mourir que renoncer brusquement à tout ce qui emplissait votre existence?[1]

While the capital symbolises life and community, Corsica is associated with death and void. Maupassant frequently describes the feelings of alienation experienced by Frenchmen coming to Corsica:

> Il semble que tout soit près de finir, l'existence et l'univers. On perçoit brusquement l'affreuse misère de la vie, l'isolement de tous, le néant de tout, et la noire solitude du cœur qui se berce et se trompe lui-même par des rêves jusqu'à la mort.[2]

The above quotations illustrate the binary opposition created by canonical authors between capital and peripheral island, clearly connoting a colonial outlook whereby Paris is elevated to being the heart of the universe, while the conquered territories depend on the life-giving power of the centre. In exoticist style, Maupassant affirms the French self-image as one of progress, advancement and civilised culture, while Corsica becomes the negation of those values.[3] The island inevitably looks savage and primitive next to France's culture and civilisation - it is precisely this cleavage that gives France the right and the duty to intervene on Corsica. The binary division between France/Paris and Corsica necessitates France's civilising mission.

Indeed, all writers depict a French *mission civilisatrice* on the island. Mérimée, Dumas and Daudet focus on material improvements brought to Corsica by the French government. *Colomba* shows French architects transforming the Corsican landscape: 'Le bourg […] est très irrégulièrement bâti, comme tous les villages de la Corse; car, pour voir une rue, il faut aller à Cargèse, bâti par M. de Marbœuf [sic].'[4] Charles Louis de Marbeuf was one of Corsica's first French governors and military

[1] Guy de Maupassant, 'Le Monastère de Corbara: Une Visite au P. Didon,' in *La Corse de Maupassant,* pp. 49-50.
[2] *Le Bonheur,* p. 127.
[3] *Empire and Culture*, p. 4.
[4] *Colomba,* p. 176.

commanders; French rule is thus shown as bringing progress and structure to the island.[1] Mérimée underlines that the French continue to bring improvements ever since, as shown in Lydia's letter to Orso:

> Le préfet […] va poser une première pierre à Corte; je m'imagine que ce doit être une cérémonie bien imposante […]. Un monsieur en habit brodé, bas de soie, écharpe blanche tenant une truelle!... et un discours; la cérémonie se terminera par les cris mille fois répètes de *vive le roi*![2]

The French government is celebrated as a bringer of progress and prosperity whose generous investments are applauded by the Corsican public. Mérimée's analysis is historically correct: the Restoration Monarchy initiated improvements to Corsica's infrastructure.[3] Daudet's vision of the French mission to bring material advancement is somewhat less glorious; forty years on from Mérimée, he depicts French civil servants struggling for survival in a hostile and foreign environment:

> [N]ous entrâmes […] dans un petit port aride et silencieux qu'animait seulement le vol circulaire de quelques *gouailles.* Tout autour de la plage montaient de hautes roches escarpées, des maquis inextricables d'arbustes verts, d'un vert sombre, sans saison. En bas, au bord de l'eau, une petite maison blanche à volets gris: c'était le poste de la douane. Au milieu de ce désert, cette bâtisse de l'État, numérotée comme une casquette uniforme, avait quelque chose de sinistre […]. 'C'est un poste terrible, me dit tout bas l'inspecteur. Nous sommes obligés de renouveler nos douaniers tous les deux ans. La fièvre de marais les mange…'[4]

Daudet's depiction focuses on the immensity of Corsica's wilderness and the lostness of this outpost of civilisation. The description of the island uses a mixture of colonial vocabulary (désert) and Corsican signifiers (*maquis*). The message inherent in the image is that Corsica is the opposite of civilisation, linked to society only through the presence of French administrators. The focus is on the enormity of the task of the French civil servants, fighting for survival against illnesses generally associated with overseas colonies, such as malaria. The bleakness of Daudet's description is also

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[1] See *La Fin des mythes,* p. 84.
[2] *Colomba,* p. 223. The French flag is white because *Colomba* is set in 1819, under the Restoration. Louis XVIII had readopted the *Ancien Régime*'s colour.
[3] See *Un Peuple, une histoire,* p. 286.
[4] Alphonse Daudet, 'Les Douaniers,' in *Lettres de mon moulin,* pp. 91-2.

historically accurate, since Corsica was undergoing an acute economic crisis when *Les Douaniers* was published.[1]

Over and above material improvement, the aspect of France's civilising mission to which Parisian authors attach most importance is the islanders' moral improvement. Brandishing the vendetta as proof of the Corsicans' savagery, canonical texts underline the necessity of educating the natives and controlling their vindictive instincts. All writers comment on this perceived mission to civilise the islanders, whether their stories are set in Paris or on Corsica.

La Vendetta exemplifies this understanding of France's normative and restraining power, evident in this scene between Napoleon and Piombo just after the Corsican's arrival in Paris following his vengeance spree:

> - Eh bien, que viens-tu faire ici, mon pauvre Bartholoméo? dit le premier consul à Piombo.
>
> - Te demander asile et protection, si tu es un vrai Corse, répondit Bartholoméo d'un ton brusque. […]
>
> - Pourquoi donc as-tu tué les Porta? […]
>
> - Ils ont tué mon fils. […] Ils ont été vos persécuteurs dans les temps, leur dit-il. Ces mots ne réveillèrent aucune expression de haine chez les deux frères [Bonaparte].
>
> - Ah! vous n'êtes plus Corses, s'écria Bartholoméo avec une sorte de désespoir. Adieu. Autrefois, je vous ai protégés, ajouta-t-il avec un ton de reproche. […]
>
> - En conscience, Piombo, répondit Napoléon, je ne puis pas te prendre sous mon aile. Je suis devenu le chef d'une grande nation, je commande la république, et dois faire exécuter les lois.
>
> - Ah! ah! dit Bartholoméo.
>
> - Mais je puis fermer les yeux, reprit Bonaparte. Le préjugé de la *Vendetta* empêchera long-temps le règne des lois en Corse, ajouta-t-il en se parlant à lui-même. Il faut cependant le détruire à tout prix. Bonaparte resta un moment silencieux […] Demeure ici, reprit le consul en s'adressant à Bartholoméo, nous n'en saurons rien. […] Mais plus de *Vendetta*! Il n'y a pas de mâquis ici. Si tu y joues du poignard, il n'y aurait pas de grâce à espérer. Ici la loi protège tous les citoyens, et l'on ne se fait pas justice soi-même.

[1] See *Un Peuple, une histoire,* pp. 291-5.

> - Il s'est fait chef d'un singulier pays, répondit Piombo, en prenant la main de Lucien et la serrant.[1]

Balzac first dissociates Napoleon and Corsica, by suggesting that his former compatriot does not recognise him as one of their own anymore. The consul represents a purely French political figure, as law-giver of a nation defined with reference to its judicial and executive institutions. France, thus delineated, is a modern society, where law, order and justice reign. Citizenship is equated with law-abiding behaviour and respect of the government. This definition of Frenchness traces cultural boundaries: social groups who do not share the values embedded in French law are not French, but merely subject to the state's authority. Accordingly, Corsica is characterised by lawlessness, anarchy and, above all, its archaic custom of self-justice. As Claudie Bernard explains,

> [l]es systèmes vindicatoires caractérisent les sociétés d'avant l'État ou en marge de l'État. Dès son apparition, celui-ci s'efforce de réduire […] leurs droits à l'auto-défense, et de leur substituer son système de justice […]. [E]nfin, le contenu du châtiment n'est plus laissé à l'initiative individuelle ou à l'usage, mais inscrit dans la Loi, interrompant ainsi le cycle de la violence.[2]

Corsican society is characterised by its primitive system of retribution, and is therefore placed outside the circle of the modern French nation. And yet, the island is situated within France's field of influence, as clearly expressed in Napoleon's mission statement to destroy the vendetta at all costs and bring the reign of laws to Corsica. The inference inherent in this declaration is that France has a civilising mission on Corsica: imposed enforcement of French rule will bring about the Corsicans' transformation from instinct-driven savages into rational human beings, from peripheral subjects to citizens. *La Vendetta* plays out this objective on Parisian soil, exposing three Corsicans to the capital's civilising influence and seeking to 'faire connaître tous les changements survenus chez ces trois personnages depuis leur arrivée à Paris.'[3]

Whether in Paris or on Corsica, all canonical authors observe and monitor the progress of the French civilising mission and the Corsicans' reactions. Mérimée, Dumas, Daudet and Maupassant describe the introduction of French laws and executive justice on the island, advocating the state as a normative institution and describing the Corsicans as needing its restraining presence. Mérimée puts his understanding of the civilising mission into the prefect's mouth, stating the need to combat 'certaines *coutumes* de ce pays-ci, dont quelques-unes ne sont pas telles qu'un administrateur

[1] *La Vendetta,* pp. 170-2.
[2] *Stendhal, Balzac, Dumas,* p. 267
[3] *La Vendetta,* p. 199.

voudrait les voir.'[1] Orso expresses his hopes and expectations for the French authorities in these terms: 'Le préfet fera son devoir […]. Il veillera à ce que l'ordre ne soit pas troublé à Pietranera, il prendra soin que justice soit faite.'[2] Mérimée thus defends the legitimacy of French rule over Corsica by showing that it is supported and wished for by the natives. Finally, it is the French justice system that makes a happy end possible for Orso and Lydia. Having killed his enemies in self-defence, Orso would have been forced to flee to the *maquis* and live as a bandit. But thanks to the acquittal of the French court, the Corsican is able to remain in society, get married and live in peace. Effectively, French agents on Corsica are either presented as a necessary peace-keeping force that prevents more killings, or as peacemakers impacting local culture. Mérimée shows the prefect attempting to act as peacemaker between Orso's family and their enemies. Dumas presents the first successful peace-making intervention in canonical literature in form of a ceremony of reconciliation of two enemies, presided by French officials. The driving forces of the peace process wear French insignia, glorifying France's contribution to the improvement of the situation: 'Sur la première marche de l'église se tenait un homme solennellement ceint d'une écharpe tricolore: c'était le maire.'[3] Dumas' depiction achieves the impression that reconciliations never existed on Corsica and only came about thanks to French involvement. The narrator tells Lucien after the official ceremony:

> - [J]e me félicite d'avoir vu une cérémonie aussi nouvelle en Corse que celle à laquelle je viens d'assister.
>
> - Oui, oui, dit-il, félicitez-vous-en, car vous avez vu une chose qui a dû faire tressaillir nos aïeux dans leurs tombeaux. […] Ceux-là ne se fussent pas réconciliés du tout.[4]

Desiring to legitimate Corsica's domination, Dumas conveniently ignores the fact that ceremonies of reconciliation were as ancient as the custom of the vendetta itself on Corsica.[5] Presenting the reconciliation as a new and glorious outcome of French intervention, Dumas makes France's control of Corsica appear necessary and beneficial. Parisian authors tend to underline the necessity of imposing law, justice and peace, the moral achievement of the civilising power, and the natives' ready compliance with France's benign leadership. The first canonical narratives about Corsica

[1] *Colomba,* p. 131. Italics in the original.
[2] Ibid. pp. 233-4.
[3] *Les Frères corses,* p. 28.
[4] Ibid. p. 31.
[5] Jean-Yves Coppolani states that *paci,* peace treaties between families, as well as *paceri*, appointed peace-makers, have existed on Corsica since the Middle Ages and constituted an important judicial apparatus that was regulated and kept in check over the centuries by ecclestial, local, or even state authorities. *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse,* pp. 719-21.

already reflect a certain imperialist self-understanding of France and a somewhat colonialist view of the island.

Parisian authors tend to give great importance to the effective implantation of the French judicial system on Corsica, and often anxiously monitor the efficacy of this civilising apparatus. Particularly Mérimée and Dumas, whose narratives assign a lot of space to judicial practice, signal the shortcomings of the system. Early on in *Colomba,* the reader is confronted with this prevalent Corsican opinion: 'Il n'y a pas de justice en Corse […] et je fais plus de cas d'un bon fusil que d'un conseiller à la cour royale.'[1] Colomba herself, of course, reiterates this opinion with regard to the enquiry into their father's violent death: 'Croyez-en votre sœur, Orso; les robes noires qui vont venir saliront du papier, diront bien des mots inutiles. Il n'en résultera rien.'[2] And indeed, the narrative confirms these claims. The reader learns that the murderer of Orso's father was cleared after a first court session in which the town's mayor (also a lawyer and the head of the della Rebbias' enemy clan) had falsified the facts. With Orso's arrival and because of Colomba's continuing insistence, the prefect reopens the case, but almost ends up deceived a second time. The French authorities are unable to recognise the true culprits. In the end, it is Colomba who brings things to light, with the help and testimony of two bandits. The outlaws' words count for more than the mayor's and are actually shown to be trustworthy. The French prefect, convinced and proud to be bringing justice and peace in the name of France, is left to look rather foolish. Mérimée shows that the French judicial apparatus is stuck because the natives are not co-operating in the way the system expects them to; even those who have been given power and are supposed to represent France (mayors, advocates etc.) use their positions in order to help their clans. Mérimée critiques the organisation of the French justice system, and compares it with the systems of other progressive nations - the British system, for example, when Lydia's father wonders why the law does not investigate immediately: 'Son père demandait pourquoi l'on ne se hâtait pas de porter plainte devant un magistrat. Il parlait de l'enquête du *coroner* et de bien d'autres choses également inconnues en Corse.'[3] The problem *Colomba* signals is not the existence of the French justice system, but rather its inefficient structure. Similarly, Dumas' *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* criticises abuses of power by French judges who deny their Corsican clients a proper investigation. However, those criticisms are aimed at the *modus operandi*, but not the system itself. The French civilising mission, the authors suggest, is less successful than it should be because it is badly equipped, understaffed, not adapted culturally or entrusted to civil servants who abuse their position. Yet, these criticisms do not represent doubts about the legitimacy of French rule. In fact, the authors are far from suggesting

[1] *Colomba,* p. 123.
[2] Ibid. p. 242.
[3] Ibid. p. 268.

that France is not in the right in controlling, regulating and exploiting the island. If anything, the urgency with which Mérimée and Dumas signal inefficiencies in the judicial system shows their belief in the morality and importance of the French civilising mission. The appropriate and prompt execution of French justice on Corsica seems of paramount importance to canonical authors.

Coincidentally, there is a long-standing colonial tradition connecting the claim to ownership over a foreign land and the ritual of executing justice in the name of the colonising nation. This practice of taking possession had been performed since the first discoverers, as shown in this fifteenth-century Spanish procedure for claiming territory:

> in the land or part that you shall have discovered, you shall make […] an act of possession in our name […] and you shall make a gallows there, and have somebody bring a complaint before you, and as our captain and judge you shall pronounce upon and determine it, so that, in all, you shall take the said possession.[1]

Canonical Corsican fiction can be seen as re-enacting this ritual of taking possession, with its emphasis on France's execution of justice on this savage island. Parisian authors imply that there was no justice on Corsica before the French took possession of the island. In reality, there was a different idea of justice with a different structure of execution. The real challenge to the French was not introducing a justice system where there was none, but overruling an already existing, socially engrained system of retribution. Yet, as with the fifteenth-century Spanish discoverers, the natives' world-views and social structure were not taken into account, made void by the assumption that the only civilised society was that of the coloniser. Most canonical authors replicate the colonialist assumption that the Corsicans were not capable of social organisation on their own and needed the French to bring justice.

Blinded by hegemonic discourses, Parisian authors often overlooked existing local realities and social structures. Stephen Greenblatt, in his analysis of Columbus' writings at the very beginning of European colonialism, observes that 'complete indifference to the consciousness of the other' allows the colonising power to envisage themselves as rightful conquerors of foreign lands.[2] Increasing indifference to the islanders can also be observed in the texts of the last third of the nineteenth century. Whereas earlier authors were concerned with understanding and categorising the natives' behaviour, Daudet and Maupassant present ever more one-dimensional and caricatural portrayals of the Corsicans, as has been shown. Their main emphasis has shifted towards the

[1] Royal instructions to Juan Díaz de Solís (around 1500), quoted from Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 55-6.
[2] Ibid. p. 59.

adventurous exploration of unknown land, only formally juxtaposing the category of the Corsican other to the French self, but never giving it real substance. Greenblatt argues that there is a long-standing pattern in colonial discourses that voids conquered territories of human presence:

> According to medieval concepts of natural law, uninhabited territories become the possession of the first to discover them. We might say that Columbus […] tries to make the new lands uninhabited - *terrae nullius* - by emptying out the category of the other.[1]

Daudet and Maupassant equally 'empty out' their Corsican others, portraying them as clichéd, animalistic beings that are mere extensions of nature and wildlife on the island. This then allows them to paint French adventurers who take possession of Corsica as if it was virgin land. They portray the immensity, wilderness and strangeness of the landscape and especially Maupassant focuses on the experiences of Frenchmen who visit or settle on the forlorn island, underlining their courage and boldness, but also the bleakness of their situations. However, obliterating the presence of the islanders also means emptying the French civilising mission of its purpose. The question these accounts do not answer is what the point of the Corsican endeavour is for the French. Avoiding such reflections, texts from the last third of the century tend to propose contemplations of the marvellous and exotic, foregrounding natural curiosities etc. And yet, the loss of meaning of the French mission is reflected in the experiences of French exiles and civil servants on Corsica, whom Maupassant describes as suffering from a sense of lostness and confusion. The civilising mission that earlier canonical writers supported so fervently has turned into an aimless exploration.

From Savages to Frenchmen

Earlier Corsican stories, particularly those by Mérimée, Balzac and Dumas, focus on France's duty to enlighten the natives and to connect them to the progress of the capital. Particularly during the first two thirds of the century, much space was devoted to charting the progress of civilisation on Corsica and evaluating France's achievements in educating the islanders. Whether set in Paris or on Corsica, these texts examine the influence of the *mission civilisatrice* on their Corsican characters, charting their progression from savages towards Frenchmen. The underlying premise of these explorations is that the Corsicans need and want to be civilised.

Dumas' stereotypically savage character Lucien provides the best example for the native's implicit desire to be educated. Dumas introduces Lucien to the reader when he welcomes the travelling narrator into his Corsican home at the beginning of the narrative, avowing:

[1] *Marvelous Possessions*, p. 60.

> Ce n'est jamais sans une certaine inquiétude que je vois arriver chez nous un homme du continent, car nous sommes encore si sauvages, nous autres Corses, que ce n'est vraiment qu'en tremblant que nous exerçons, vis-à-vis des Français surtout, cette vieille hospitalité.[1]

Lucien's discourse juxtaposes Frenchmen and Corsicans in terms of humanity/inhumanity and civilisation/savagery. Yet, Lucien's statement is contradictory: is the tradition of hospitality not a sure sign of civilisation? In his perception of the situation, the Corsican puts side by side two seemingly irreconcilable beliefs: that Corsica is and is not civilised. Over and above his own way of seeing Corsica, the native has come to understand and perceive himself according to French colonial representations. Greenblatt's explanation of colonialist discourses can be applied to Dumas here:

> Narrative is a comfortable home for the discursive strategy [… of colonialism] because the pressure of linked events and the assumed coherence of the tale help to pull the reader past the awkwardness of incommensurable positions and silenced voices. It is one of the principal powers of narrative to gesture toward what is not in fact expressed, to create the illusion of presences that are in reality absent.[2]

The apparent straightforwardness of Lucien's explanation distracts from the fact that it is made up of two conflicting discourses. The reader only senses a negative value judgement on Corsican culture and, consequentially, an implied aspiration to civilisation in the Corsican's mind. Dumas makes the reader assume what is not said, gesturing towards the native's implicit wish to be civilised. The passage also indirectly postulates French domination of Corsica and justifies this by invoking the cultural gap between mainland and island. Alongside a declaration of Corsican savagery, the narrative introduces a desire for assimilation to French civilisation. Tellingly, this implicit wish to be civilised comes from the most savage character in the story.

The same thing is true of *Colomba*: The woman who embodies Corsica's primitive and visceral nature is also the character who most explicitly states her desire to be educated. Orso, believing that Colomba's thirst for vengeance is caused by 'ces préjugés qu'excuse son éducation sauvage,' decides that the best antidote would be to pass on the continental education he has received.[3]

> [I]l dit à sa sœur que sa malle contenait un certain nombre de livres; que son intention était d'en faire venir de France et d'Italie, et de la faire travailler beaucoup. 'Car il est honteux, Colomba, […] qu'une grande fille comme toi ne sache pas encore des

[1] *Les Frères corses,* p. 6.
[2] *Marvelous Possessions*, p. 61.
[3] *Colomba,* p. 160.

> choses que, sur le continent, les enfants apprennent en sortant de nourrice.' - 'Vous avez raison, mon frère, disait Colomba; je sais bien ce qui me manque, et je ne demande pas mieux que d'étudier, surtout si vous voulez bien me donner des leçons.'[1]

While later writers would tend to narrow their definition of civility down to France, Mérimée proposes several European cultures as a possible source of education for the Corsicans. The main civilising influences on Colomba come from France (via Orso's education) and England (via Lydia). Corsica is seen as a place that needs input and education from the outside in order to ascend to civilised society. Importantly, Colomba is aware of her ignorance and asks to be educated, thus making it a duty for civilised nations to intervene. Mérimée's depiction again legitimises the *mission civilisatrice* as beneficial to and called for by the islanders.

Canonical narratives often inspect France's civilising mission in action; Mérimée, Balzac and Dumas pay great attention to Corsicans who are being educated. *Mateo Falcone,* the first Parisian fiction about the island, already shows the conditioning of a local child to give up Corsican values for a reward:

> Fortunato […] ressemblait à un chat à qui l'on présente un poulet tout entier […] il n'ose y porter la griffe, et de temps en temps il détourne les yeux pour ne pas succomber à la tentation; mais il se lèche les babines à tout moment, il a l'air de dire à son maître: 'Que votre plaisanterie est cruelle!'[2]

The person tempting Fortunato is the head of the police, representative of French order in the narrative. He attempts to make the boy forsake the Corsican social imperative of assistance to bandits by offering him a valuable object. Fortunato's reaction is described as the training of an animal with the carrot-or-stick method; he has become the object and the French trainer his master. Remarkably, Fortunato is not given a voice vis-à-vis his superior; he only seems to want to say something, but cannot. The choice he is given is very restricted and purely on the terms of the agent of French order. Yet, it epitomises the choice the French government gives to the Corsicans: to give up their way of living in order to benefit from the invaluable riches of French civilisation. This technique finally works with the child, who is shown to respond to the conditioning, perhaps because he has not yet absorbed the values of Corsican society as completely as an adult. In any case, the role allocation is clear: the representative of French order is the human and it is his task to become the master of this cat-child representative of Corsican society.

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[1] *Colomba,* p. 189.
[2] *Mateo Falcone,* p. 34.

Dumas shows a much more advanced example of civilisation through schooling in his Frenchified Corsican Louis. His achievement of education and his character are expressed in an inventory of his room by the Parisian narrator:

> Alors il me prit l'envie […] de dresser l'inventaire de ma chambre et de me faire par l'ameublement une idée du caractère de celui qui l'habitait. […] L'ameublement était tout moderne […]. J'ouvris la bibliothèque et je trouvai la collection de tous nos grands poëtes: Corneille, Racine, Molière, la Fontaine, Ronsard, Victor Hugo et Lamartine.
>
> Nos moralistes: Montaigne, Pascal, la Bruyère.
>
> Nos historiens: Mézeray, Châteaubriand, Augustin Thierry.
>
> Nos savants: Cuvier, Beudant, Elie de Beaumont.
>
> Enfin quelques volumes de romans, parmi lesquels je saluai avec un certain orgueil mes *Impressions de Voyage.* Les clefs étaient aux tiroirs du bureau; j'en ouvris un. J'y trouvai des fragments d'une histoire de la Corse, un travail sur les moyens à employer pour abolir la vendette, quelques vers français […]: le tout manuscrit. C'était plus qu'il ne m'en fallait, et j'avais la présomption de croire que je n'avais pas besoin de pousser plus loin mes recherches pour me faire une opinion sur M. Louis de Franchi. Ce devait être un jeune homme doux, studieux, et partisan des réformes françaises. Je compris alors qu'il fut parti pour Paris dans l'intention de se faire recevoir avocat. Il y avait sans doute pour lui tout un avenir de civilisation dans ce projet.[1]

Dumas compiles a French canon - writers, thinkers and moralists which he thinks represent French values and Frenchness as such, thus establishing a curriculum that the islanders should follow. His emphasis on education, national history and the importance of speaking the French language inserts itself into the Parisian litany about schooling the uneducated peripheries. The narrator believes that Corsicans can acquire new cultural identities by surrounding themselves with French material and by making French thoughts their own. Education is shown to propagate French values through exposure to French cultural artefacts, transforming Louis' character. Louis' behaviour corresponds to Frantz Fanon's description of the 'native intellectual' in the process of creating an identity for himself during the first phase of colonisation:

> In the *first* phase, the native intellectual attempts what he [Fanon] calls 'unqualified assimilation' ([*The Wretched of the Earth*] p. 179). For example, this means that he or she is

[1] *Les Frères corses*, pp. 4-6.

> inspired by and attempts to copy the dominant trends in the literature of the colonising power. In so doing the cultural traditions of the colonised nation are ignored as the native intellectual aspires to reproduce the cultural fashions of the colonising power.[1]

Louis fits this description exactly, having abandoned his native culture and plunged himself into what he understands to be the heights of French culture, reading French literature and reproducing French verse. The goal of Louis' life becomes, as the narrator interprets it, to civilise and to Frenchify Corsica which is defined in the habitual way: through the abolition of the vendetta. Louis has moved to Paris in order to become a lawyer, and later on exercise justice on Corsica; 'il croira avoir servi son pays, avoir apporté sa pierre au temple de la civilisation.'[2] Louis has become estranged from his own people and has sided with the coloniser, continuing a mission that has so far been conducted by Frenchmen from the mainland only. 'Son pays' for Louis no longer denotes Corsica, but France as a whole. The narrator praises Louis' efforts to become like the French and applauds this obvious advancement of civilisation on Corsica.

Next to such positive examples of the natives' successful education, Mérimée and Daudet in particular show awareness of the limitations of French power over the natives. While government officials and institutions are generally described as firmly established, active and making a difference to the Corsicans' lives, there are insecurities concerning the amount of control France really has over the islanders. Overall, *Colomba* shows the French civilising mission at work, and underlines that Orso is willing to cooperate with the French authorities and has accepted their values. Yet, at only one moment in the narrative, Mérimée shows the frightening perspective of what would happen if Orso, and the Corsicans in general, rebelled:

> - Monsieur della Rebbia, vous avez eu tort. Je vous demande votre parole d'honneur de vous abstenir de toute violence et d'attendre que la justice décide dans cette maudite affaire […] Vous ne vous battrez pas! s'écria le préfet; je vous le défends!
>
> - Permettez-moi de vous dire, monsieur, qu'en matière d'honneur je ne reconnais d'autre autorité que celle de ma conscience.
>
> - Je vous dis que vous ne vous battrez pas!
>
> - Vous pouvez me faire arrêter, monsieur…, c'est-à-dire si je me laisse prendre. Mais, si cela arrivait, vous ne feriez que différer une affaire maintenant inévitable. […]

[1] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 86.
[2] *Les Frères corses*, p. 12.

> - Si vous faisiez arrêter mon frère, ajouta Colomba, la moitié du village prendrait son parti, et nous verrions une belle fusillade.[1]

Put on the spot, the prefect has no power to prevent Orso from doing what he wants to do. Colomba and Orso have successfully undermined any illusion of power the prefect may have had. In this passage, the Corsicans' act of resistance shows just how limited the French government's influence is. The natives no longer appear as docile individuals to be spoon-fed culture and civilisation; they constitute a frightening force opposing French civil servants. Daudet reveals similar anxieties about maintaining political control on Corsica. In *Mari-Anto,* the baron Burdet describes his initiation into the island's French administration as *conseiller de préfecture:*

> J'arrivai à mon poste, un peu troublé. C'étaient mes débuts dans l'administration; puis la traversée, [..] l'aspect renfrogné de cette île […] avec ses roches rouges et ses tourbillons de goélands, brochant sur le tout deux ou trois histoires de bandits, de vendettas qu'on m'avait contées, […] bref, j'étais tout mal en train en débarquant. Ce que j'entendis à la préfecture acheva de me déconcerter. Quoique seul avec moi dans son cabinet, le préfet me parla tout le temps à voix basse, d'un air inquiet: 'Surtout soyez prudent, jeune homme. Vous tombez pour vos débuts sur un pays terriblement dangereux […].' Je sortis de la préfecture encore plus gelé qu'en y entrant.[2]

No longer mentioning lofty goals and mission statements, Daudet describes the French agents' fear for survival on the island. However, neither Daudet nor Mérimée ever allow a narrative situation to escalate; very few small acts of resistance to French rule on the part of the islanders are shown, such as bandits fleeing prosecution. Although the situation never gets out of hand, the natives have a threatening capacity for disobedience and represent a potentially dangerous force. The resulting overall impression of Corsica remains paradoxical, representing its inhabitants as both subservient and bestial, and the island as both idyllic and dangerous. Choosing at will from this palette, Parisian authors use the island as a canvas for the projection of chosen emotions and images, creating a literary reality that underpins the validity of the civilising mission. For, on the one hand, canonical authors need to show progress on Corsica in order to legitimate French intervention; on the other hand, they also must point towards continued savagery in order to justify the continuation of France's rule.

Hence the sustained efforts to chart the progress of the *mission civilisatrice* and the interest of depicting savages that are in the course of being educated, but not quite civilised yet. *Mateo*

[1] *Colomba,* pp. 235-6.
[2] *Mari-Anto,* pp. 99-100.

Falcone, La Vendetta, Colomba, Les Frères corses and *Les Enfans de l'amour* all turn on the central question of whether or not the Corsicans are able to give up their vengeance traditions and to assimilate to a modern, rational French life-style. The question of whether Orso is French or Corsican is decided over the question of whether or not he will carry out Colomba's vendetta. The Piombo family can only become truly integrated in Paris if they manage to end their ancestral hatred. Louis can only really become French if he can stop his Corsican urge for vengeance. And if Pietri was French, then he should react like other cheated Parisian husbands in a civilised society and make a choice between duel, divorce or forgiveness. In each case, the Corsicans in question may seem quite civilised overall, but they all possess a darker, savage side to which they finally appear to give in.

Mimic men

The haunting question of whether Corsicans can be fully civilised underlies most representations. Gabriel Feydel declared in his *Mœurs et coutumes des Corses* (1799): 'Il y a [….] deux espèces de Corses: le Corse policé, mais il est rare et sans aucune influence, et le Corse "sauvage ou si l'on veut demi-sauvage".'[1] Parisian authors largely followed this distinction. All except Maupassant juxtapose two central Corsican figures, one embodying Corsicanness and another presented as Frenchified: the savage and its civilised version. These categories explore the impact of the *mission civilisatrice* and serve as indicators of the Corsicans' defiance or malleability.

Classically, the two characters are seen as engaged in a power struggle involving a vendetta. Mérimée's *Mateo Falcone* is a tentative precursor of this trend, juxtaposing the intransigent father Falcone and his malleable son Fortunato. This clash between Falcone's faithfulness to the Corsican code of honour and his son's collaboration with the French forces of order ends in infanticide; Fortunato's choice to imitate French behaviour is invalidated by his death. Balzac transposes this conflict to the capital, where he opposes the strictly Corsican Piombo and his ostensibly Parisian daughter Ginevra. Their altercation in continuation of the family vendetta also ends with the daughter's death. Mérimée inverses these roles in *Colomba,* contrasting the heroine's belligerent Corsican mores with the peace-loving views of her educated brother Orso. Their power-struggle remains the most famous example of this representational strategy in canonical prose fiction. *Les Frères corses* reinforces this opposition and personifies the clash of Corsican and French convictions in the twins Lucien and Louis, who each try to persuade the other. While Lucien sums himself up with the words 'je suis un véritable sauvage,' Louis has fully endorsed the French mission to pacify and educate.[2] For the first time, Dumas expresses this difference through skin colour:

[1] Gabriel Feydel, *Mœurs et coutumes des Corses* (Paris: Garnery, 1799), quoted in *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 71.
[2] *Les Frères corses*, p. 7.

> En grandissant, nos habitudes ont amené une légère différence de teint, voilà tout. Toujours enfermé, toujours perché sur ses livres et sur ses dessins, mon frère est devenu plus pâle, tandis qu'au contraire toujours à l'air, toujours courant la montagne ou la plaine, moi, j'ai bruni.[1]

A whiter skin tone differentiates the savage from the cultured Corsican and reveals the latter's cultural *métissage*. Sue juxtaposed the staunchly Corsican Pietri and the Parisian Louisa, the only actual *métisse* in canonical fiction. Bringing the action back to the capital, *Les Enfans de l'Amour* narrates Pietri's pernicious influence on Louisa, awakening vengeful instincts in a woman who was born and raised in Paris. Daudet is the last canonical writer to employ the opposition of native and Frenchified Corsicans. His strategy differs from previous authors, since he never juxtaposes the two figures in the same narrative, thus removing the element of direct conflict between them. There is a significant cross-over between *Étude de femme corse*, *L'Immortel* and *Rose et Ninette*, which seem to describe the same Corsican woman under (slightly) different names. The exotic Mari-Anto and Séraphine, as well as the cosmopolitan Maria-Antonia Padovani, exist in parallel to each other.

Most canonical works introduce these categories, only to deconstruct them immediately. As the boundaries between savage and civilised blur, neither side recognisably wins the power struggle. Resilient natives are seen as subject to France's influence despite themselves, and none of the Frenchified characters are acknowledged as truly French. Both figures slip back and forth in a fluctuation between foreign other and national self, frustrating attempts to fix Corsican identities. Oscillating ambivalently between the two cultures, the civilised Corsicans created in Parisian fiction are neither fully Corsican, nor fully French. They can therefore be defined as 'mimic men' in line with Bhabha's definition of the term, which he originally uses to refer to Indians that have been educated and 'Anglicised' by the British Empire, all the while specifying that 'to be Anglicised is *emphatically* not to be English.'[2] Bhabha argues that a final boundary between national self and colonial other must remain intact, in order to justify continuing rule over the colony. Parisian authors show similar concerns about the boundary between self and other. Questions of power lie beneath these representations, since canonical authors generally describe the purpose of the French presence on Corsica in terms of their *mission civilisatrice*. They must show that the natives are being civilised by France, thus proving the effectiveness of the French civilising mission. However, the very success of that mission would also represent the end of French power over Corsica, since their civilising influence would no longer be needed. Consequently, Parisian writers explore the essential problematic of whether Corsicans could ever fully assimilate to the nation.

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[1] *Les Frères corses*, p. 7.
[2] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 87. Italics in the original.

All the civilised natives above can be seen as mimic men, as all of them are plagued by internal conflicts between Corsican and French identities. The interior struggles of five out of six Frenchified insulars are directly linked to the vendetta and the difficulty of resisting vengeful instincts (with the exception of Fortunato, whose predicament is connected to Corsican honour and hospitality). Mérimée's Orso is the best example of the identity split so characteristic of mimic men. His dilemma of either embracing his sister's vendetta or living according to the values he has learnt in the French military is central to *Colomba*'s narrative. Orso is initially presented as a French soldier: after ten years of education and service on the mainland, he has embraced French values and mores. Yet, on his return to Corsica, his family and town community expect him to take up his father's vengeance, which Orso firmly refuses 'en condamnant d'une manière générale les haines interminables de ses compatriotes.'[1] Despite Orso's refusal, the French authority figures in place do not trust his civilised appearance from the outset, as implied in the prefect's warning:

> 'Vous avez beaucoup voyagé, monsieur, dit-il, à ce qu'il paraît. Vous devez avoir oublié la Corse… et ses coutumes. […] Vous avez été trop long-temps dans l'armée française, pour ne pas devenir tout à fait français, je n'en doute pas, monsieur.'
> Il prononça ces derniers mots avec une emphase marquée.[2]

This statement encapsulates the contradictory attitude of a coloniser towards the mimic men their system created, simultaneously claiming that natives can be civilised through prolonged exposure to France's influence, and questioning the very validity of this idea. Keeping Orso at arm's length from civilisation, the prefect makes an indefinite continuation of French control over the Corsican appear necessary. The prefect's assumption turns out to be accurate; the longer Orso stays on Corsica, the more his personality begins to change. The worrying fluctuation of Orso's character becomes the focal point of the narrative.

> Eh bien! malgré moi, je me sens redevenir sauvage depuis que j'ai mis le pied dans cette île. Mille affreuses pensées m'agitent, me tourmentent…[3]

> Parfois, si les préjugés ou les instincts de son pays revenaient l'assaillir et lui montraient une vengeance facile au détour d'un sentier, il les écartait avec horreur en pensant à ses camarades de régiment, aux salons de Paris, surtout à Miss Nevil. Puis il songeait aux

[1] *Colomba*, p. 125.
[2] Ibid. p. 131.
[3] Ibid. p. 159.

> reproches de sa sœur, et ce qui restait de corse dans son caractère justifiait ces reproches et les rendait plus poignants.[1]

Orso's conflicting identities are symbolised through the women in his life: Colomba brings out his savage self, while the British Lydia Nevil encourages his civilised self. His internal struggle is presented throughout as a fight of reason against the subconscious powers of prejudice and instinct. The Corsican is shown to depend on continuous normalising presences in his life, such as his fiancée and various French authority figures, so as not to return to his savage state. Underlying the story is the following assumption, formulated by Lydia: '[Colomba] est vraiment corse, et vous [Orso] êtes un sauvage trop civilisé.'[2] Despite Orso's Frenchification and civilisation, his essential condition is perceived to remain that of a savage, excluded from Frenchness by definition.

This representative strategy applies to most cultured Corsicans in canonical literature, such as Dumas' Louis. Fittingly named after Louis XV, the king who conquered Corsica, Louis' trademarks are French tastes, French thoughts, French clothes and 'plus de blancheur dans le teint et une prononciation plus nette de la langue française.'[3] Dumas' description is ambivalent: Louis is whiter and pronounces French more clearly than his brother; yet, he is not given the status of a full Frenchman. The two brothers are introduced as 'deux jumeaux […] le Corse Lucien et l'autre, le philanthrope, Louis, son frère.'[4] While Lucien is designated as a Corsican, the omission of a term to qualify Louis' nationality is striking. Dumas does not hesitate to qualify Louis as a partisan of French rule over Corsica. Yet, he curiously abstains from calling Louis 'French' at any point in the novel. Other ambivalent Corsican characters are portrayed elsewhere, such as Ginevra, Louisa and Maria-Antonia, as educated and Frenchified, but all texts remain hesitant with regards to their admission into the national self. Following Bhabha's definition of mimic men, civilised Corsicans are generally seen as 'almost the same but not quite.'[5]

While all texts mentioned above explore the question whether educated Corsicans can ever overcome their internal conflicts and become truly French, most only give equivocal answers or avoid resolutions altogether. This is often achieved through the creation of ambiguous endings to the narratives. Parisian authors tend to measure full assimilation through the criterion of the vendetta: their Corsican characters are generally put to the test and tempted to avenge their honour; if they could surmount that final temptation, this would prove their Frenchness. Yet, such

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[1] *Colomba,* p. 193.
[2] Ibid. p. 159.
[3] *Les Frères corses,* p. 34.
[4] Ibid. p. 19.
[5] *The Location of Culture*, p. 89.

full proof is denied to all civilised Corsicans above; Fortunato and Louisa clearly fail the test, and Ginevra's, Orso's, Louis' and Maria-Antonia's results are at best inconclusive. Balzac, Mérimée and Dumas create the most elaborate unclear endings, thus continuously calling the Frenchness of their characters into question. *La Vendetta, Colomba* and *Les Frères corses* awkwardly translate the vendetta into French culture and thus leave the reader wondering whether or not their outcomes should be classed as Corsican vengeance. For example, Mérimée never truly resolves Orso's oscillation between French and Corsican identity. Towards the end of the narrative, Orso's thirst for vengeance becomes more and more predominant. Rather than suppressing his instincts, Orso seeks to express them in a way that is compatible with both cultures: 'Un seul espoir lui restait dans ce combat entre sa conscience et ses préjugés, […] de trouver une solution qui conciliait ses idées corses et ses idées françaises.'[1] In short, Orso attempts to translate the vendetta into French, challenging his enemy to a duel. However, this translation is doomed to fail, since his Corsican adversary does not understand the French concept of duelling. Orso now must completely suppress his desire for vengeance if he is to prove his Frenchness. Mérimée cleverly solves this predicament: in the end, Orso is ambushed by his enemies and kills them both. This end is a 'coup double' in both senses of the word, since Orso has not only shot two people, but fulfilled the expectations of both the Corsican and the French community. Colomba and her compatriots celebrate Orso as avenger who has fulfilled his duty, while the prefect and Lydia see Orso's act as legitimate self-defence. Whether Orso's killing of his enemies should ultimately be classed as vendetta or not remains open, as does the question of Orso's Frenchness.

Dumas uses a similar strategy, setting out to decide Louis' Frenchness according to the criterion of the vendetta. Throughout his whole life, Louis appears to have completely assimilated to French society, to the point of losing his former Corsican identity. Having integrated into the capital, he finally dies during a duel with another Parisian. His dying wish is to ensure that his family will never find out how he died, so that his brother would not avenge him. Honourably buried in the Parisian graveyard of *Père-Lachaise*, next to famous French personalities such as Molière and La Fontaine, Louis appears to be the perfect example of a fully French Corsican. Surprisingly, Lucien turns up despite Louis' precautions, and challenges Louis' killer to another duel in a clumsy attempt to express a Corsican idea through French culture. Despite this inhabitual demand, the Parisian agrees and is killed. The fact that Lucien carries out his vendetta in an awkward transculturation does not necessarily say anything about Louis' identity. But Dumas introduces a last twist to the narrative that blows open the question of whether this vengeance was not in fact Louis' vendetta. Lucien appears in Paris before any notification of Louis' death could have reached him, and knows

[1] *Colomba,* p. 193.

how he died despite Louis' precautionary measures. He explains to the dumbfounded narrator that Louis' ghost visited him and told him to seek revenge:

- Vous avez revu votre frère? m'écriai-je.

- Oui. […]

- Et il vous a tout dit?

- Tout.

- Il vous a dit qu'il était mort.

- Il m'a dit qu'il avait été tué; les morts ne mentent plus.

- Il vous a dit comment?

- En duel.

- Par qui?

- Par M. de Château-Renaud.

- Non, n'est-ce pas? […]

- Je viens tuer celui qui a tué mon frère.

- Le tuer? […] Mais, de son vivant, votre frère ne voulait pas être vengé.

- Eh bien! dit Lucien en souriant avec amertume, il aura changé d'avis depuis qu'il est mort.[1]

Placing the ghost passage alongside Louis' perfect French life, Dumas creates ambiguities and calls all of Louis' civilised achievements into question; for, if it was indeed Louis who desired the vendetta, he has not passed the final test of Frenchness. Indeed, if one chooses to believe Lucien's account, this could lead to conclusions about the unchangeability of a native's core identity. Dumas leaves the ending open for speculation and thus continues the canonical tradition of endings that leave identity questions unresolved.

Although Balzac's novel is entitled *La Vendetta,* at first sight, it does not recount a Corsican revenge. Contrariwise, Balzac sets the story in Paris and shows Ginevra as assimilated to the capital and its culture, to the point of refusing her father's vendetta and marrying his enemy Luigi Porta.

[1] *Les Frères corses*, pp. 58-9.

Contrary to Jeoffroy-Faggianelli's supposition that the author lost sight of his initial idea and wrote a love story instead, several indicators show that Balzac saw the vendetta as essential to the narrative.[1] The initial manuscript of *La Vendetta* only comprised three parts, all set in 1815, 'L'Atelier,' 'La Désobéissance' and 'Le Mariage,' describing Ginevra's Parisian life, her decision to marry despite family enmity, and the tragic deaths of the married couple.[2] Frustrating the readers' expectations, Balzac shows no violence at all; Ginevra and Luigi simply die of starvation, having been too proud to ask her father for financial help to alleviate their misery. It may appear that Ginevra lived and died as a Parisian, were it not for Balzac adding ambiguity to his narrative. He changed the manuscript for the first edition and inserted a prologue, set in 1800, describing Piombo's vendetta against the Portas back on Corsica. According to Balzac, this detailed rendering of the Piombo-Porta vendetta is the key to understanding the rest of the story, since he states in the transition between the prologue and the Parisian part: 'Quinze ans s'écoulèrent entre l'arrivée de la famille Piombo à Paris, et l'aventure suivante, qui, sans le récit de ces événements, eût été moins intelligible.'[3] Balzac's ambiguous ending can be understood as the logical conclusion to the prologue, killing the last remaining Porta family member. This is how Luigi understands things when he announces Ginevra's death to her parents:

> - *Morte*! Nos deux familles devaient s'exterminer l'une par l'autre, car voilà tout ce qui reste d'elle, dit-il en posant sur une table la longue chevelure noire de Ginevra. Les deux vieillards frissonnèrent comme s'ils eussent reçu une commotion de la foudre, et ne virent plus Luigi.
> - Il nous épargne un coup de feu, car il est mort, s'écria lentement Bartholoméo en regardant à terre.[4]

Luigi and Piombo suggest that the vendetta has in fact been fulfilled and the lovers were in the end unable to escape the sacrifice that ancient Corsican tradition demanded. Their deaths could be read in line with the title, as the continuation of the same vendetta. Once more, as Dumasy argues, the vendetta has undergone a transculturation: 'la *vendetta* subit une modification: interdite de manifestations sanglantes, elle est toute intériorisée; ne pouvant se traduire physiquement […], elle ne s'exprime que par des affects: par l'exécration.'[5] According to this interpretation, Piombo's refusal to help his daughter is one of the main factors that led to her death, since he exposed her to a hopeless social situation. Piombo indirectly repeats Mateo Falcone's gesture of infanticide, translating the Corsican tradition of physical violence into a Parisian violence of emotions. If

[1] See *L'Image de la Corse*, p. 226.
[2] Ibid. 227.
[3] *La Vendetta,* p. 173.
[4] Ibid. p. 230.
[5] *Stendhal, Balzac, Dumas,* p. 272.

Ginevra's death really is the consequence of an interiorised vendetta between the Porta and Piombo families, her identity would be bound up in a clash between two Corsican clans, making her appear more ambivalent and less French. Balzac also leaves his ending unclear, thus forever more calling the Corsicans' civilisation into question.

Sue also problematises the mingling of those categories through the creation of Corsican characters that seem to have successfully integrated into Parisian society. *Les Enfans de l'amour* is troubled by fluctuations and confusions between self and other. In an effort to differentiate between Corsicans and Frenchmen, Sue endeavours to measure the distance between Corsicans and other Parisian characters, frequently comparing Pietri's and Louisa's reactions and behaviour to that of other Frenchmen in the same circumstances. For instance, he contrasts Pietri's thirst for revenge with that of other Parisian husbands whose wives also had adulterous relationships. The Frenchmen's reactions are milder; none of them match Pietri's ferociousness. The Corsican is thus characterised by a propensity to vindictiveness that is exponentially larger, more terrible and more frightening than that of the Parisians. Likewise, Sue compares the reactions of two illegitimate children, the *métisse* Louisa and the Frenchman Adalbert, to the possibility of confronting the man who caused their mothers' disgrace. Again, the Frenchman is more moderate: he forgives and even dies to protect his father's reputation. Louisa, on the other hand, values revenge above all else and publicly exposes her father even at the cost of her own incarceration. Sue insists that there is a specifically Corsican quality about the revenge taken by Pietri and Louisa and maintains the vendetta as the criterion to distinguish Frenchmen from Corsicans.

All in all, Parisian authors hold away from fully integrating their civilised characters into the national community and seem at best hesitant to admit that Corsicans can become truly French. Faced with what McLeod calls the '*worrying threat of resemblance* between coloniser and colonised,' canonical writers employ strategic ambivalent endings.[1] This allows them to accentuate the questionability of a Corsican's complete Frenchification and the unstable line between self and other. This continuous questioning and the ambiguity it creates maintain their civilised Corsican characters in the role of mimic men.

Constructions of identity

The authors' underlying concern is the fluidity of the very definition of identity. All of them except Maupassant frequently attempt to understand, classify, measure and fix the Corsicans' identities, and in so doing experience the very volatility of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, various ways of expressing or constructing identity are proposed in the narratives, ranging from role play to décor.

[1] *Beginning Postcolonialism*, p. 89. Italics in the original.

All writers, to different degrees, show mobile relationships between core and outer identity performance, and tend to symbolise this mobility through appearances and role play. Mérimée, Dumas, Sue and Daudet pay particular attention to objects and costume as outward signifiers of identity. The idea that décor, the exterior alone, could define someone's character has been advanced by numerous recognised exoticist authors. Edward Hughes notes that for exoticists such as Loti, 'il n'y a d'urgent que le décor,' underscoring the importance of surfaces, materials and textures as indicators of cultural identity. If décor symbolises identity, it also represents an easy way to change it. Hughes borrows Roland Barthes' idea of 'cultural transvestism' to argue that in exoticist texts, 'cultural migration […] would thus be guaranteed ostensibly by putting on ethnic dress.'[1]

Similar dynamics can be observed in exoticist Corsican narratives. Authors situate their characters within systems of objects in order to make visible their convictions, affiliations, and temptations. Fortunato's temptation to violate Corsican social laws is represented through a French watch. Orso's French personality is symbolised through his uniform, and 'à sa petite moustache frisée, on reconnaissait facilement un militaire.'[2] Colomba incites him to vengeance by dressing him in Corsican bush wear and his father's weapons, and showing him his father's blood-stained shirt. Identity transfers and struggles are also carried out through objects; trying to win Orso over for their side, Colomba and Lydia employ symbolic items:

> 'Voici le plomb qui l'a frappé [notre père]. […] Orso! tu le vengeras!'[3]

> 'Quand vous aurez quelque mauvaise pensée corse, regardez mon talisman et dites-vous qu'il faut sortir vainqueur de la bataille que nous livrent les mauvaises passions.'[4]

To underline the ambivalence of Orso's 'coup double,' Mérimée has him wear a mixture of Corsican and French clothing at the moment of the shooting, thus showing the ambiguity of his position. Mérimée equates clothing and identity to a large degree throughout the book, and the disagreement between Orso and Colomba finds its expression in reciprocal gifts of clothes or accessories more than once. While Colomba presents Orso with Corsican clothes, Orso attempts to dress her in Parisian clothing and offers her 'quelques robes, un châle et d'autres objets à l'usage d'une jeune personne.'[5] Orso's tools for civilising Colomba are objects that represent French ideas, and Colomba shares her brother's understanding of clothes as synonymous with civilisation. She makes a point of appearing veiled and in traditional black dress, carrying a knife as her only

[1] *Writing Marginality,* pp. 15-6.
[2] *Colomba,* pp. 108-9.
[3] Ibid. p. 192.
[4] Ibid. pp. 162-3.
[5] Ibid. pp. 186-7.

ornament, until the vendetta is fulfilled. Once her thirst for vengeance is quenched, she proudly dons Orso's Parisian wear:

> 'N'est-ce pas que je me forme? Je prends le bras, je mets des chapeaux, des robes à la mode; j'ai des bijoux; j'apprends je ne sais combien de belles choses; je ne suis plus du tout une sauvagesse. Voyez un peu la grâce que j'ai à porter ce châle…'[1]

Colomba's understanding of civilisation, and identity change, seems restricted to a change of décor, rather than a change of mind.

Dumas also uses décor and costume to express his characters' identities and positions. The narrator of *Les Frères corses* understands a person's identity to be inextricably bound up with what they wear. Although the person who opens the door of Lucien's house for him acts like any servant would, the narrator concludes that he is not one - precisely because of his lack of specific dress: 'Quand je dis un valet, je me trompe: j'aurais dû dire un homme. Ce qui fait le valet, c'est la livrée, et l'individu qui nous ouvrit était tout simplement vêtu.'[2] Dumas devotes a whole six pages to an exploration of Louis' and Lucien's respective rooms and has the narrator deduce their character traits from what he sees. Louis' continental, modern furniture, combined with his many French books, show his culturedness, whereas old furniture and a large weapons collection symbolise Lucien's Corsican belligerence. While the narrator takes décor to be indicative, Lucien questions the reality of outward appearances:

> [C]'était une manie de mon pauvre frère Louis; il aimait à vivre à la française, mais je doute qu'en sortant de Paris cette pauvre parodie de la civilisation qu'il quittera lui suffise comme elle lui suffisait avant son départ.[3]

Objects can serve to express reality, but they can also mask it; Lucien regards the appearance of civilisation Louis has established around himself as illusory travesty and perhaps even madness. Throughout the narrative, Lucien employs cultural transvestism to take on different roles and to give certain impressions. Louis has charged Lucien with a mission to make peace between two enemy families in his village; Lucien fulfils this duty, despite disagreeing with the reasoning behind it. In his pacifying mission, Lucien wears French clothes and embodies France's *mission civilisatrice* for the people present at the ceremony of reconciliation:

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[1] *Colomba*, pp. 302-3.
[2] *Les Frères corses*, p. 3.
[3] Ibid. p. 6.

> [I]l était vêtu en Français, et même en Français élégant. Il portait une redingote noire, un gilet de fantaisie et un pantalon blanc […]. Il vit que je le regardais avec une certaine surprise.
> - Vous admirez ma tenue, me dit-il; c'est une nouvelle preuve que je me civilise.
> - Oui, ma foi, répondis-je. […] Dans cette tenue, il avait véritablement l'air d'un élégant Parisien.[1]

The narrator is impressed by this transformation and seems troubled by the fluidity of identity suggested by the change of clothing. Yet, Lucien's wilful transformation is problematised, since it does not entail a change of outlook or actions. The play with apparel and décor is an underlying theme running through *Les Frères corses,* highlighting the fine line between clothes and objects as symbols or concealers of identity. Sue and Daudet largely write along the same lines of expressing identity through costume, combined with an awareness that it may hide as much as it reveals. Both of Sue's Corsican protagonists dress in Parisian clothes and are outwardly indistinguishable from other Frenchmen; yet, Sue emphasises over and over that these outward appearances do not match inner realities. Finally, Daudet mainly uses clothes and décor to suggest travesty and distortion of identity, and to this effect describes Corsican carnivals in *Mari-Anto* and *Rose et Ninette.*

Whereas Mérimée, Balzac and Daudet elaborate on objects as symbols of (fake) identity, Sue and Daudet focus on identity as performance. Sue's mimic woman Louisa is a chameleon who makes a living of assuming fake identities and keeps on changing them. Under various aliases, such as 'baronne de Montglas' and 'Louise de Beaulieu,' Louisa appears in all social milieus of the capital, from the slums to the bourgeoisie and high society. She is an excellent actress and plays her roles with such conviction that she is able to manipulate the people around her at will. Sue constantly underlines the variability of identity through performance, but he is also the Parisian author who most decidedly postulates the existence of an unchangeable inner core. While he invents numerous aliases and performances for Louisa, Sue insists that she can be unmasked, thus revealing her true savage self underneath her carefully contrived persona:

> [E]lle pâlit affreusement; ses traits, jusqu'alors d'une expression céleste, se transfigurèrent; l'ange devenait démon; la rage, la haine contractèrent ces traits, naguère si purs et si doux; ses grands yeux noirs étincelèrent d'un feu sombre; […] [elle jeta] rapidement un fauve

[1] *Les Frères corses*, p. 27.

> regard autour d'elle […]; puis la réflexion succédant à ce moment d'emportement qui l'avait trahie, sa figure redevint impassible comme un masque de marbre.[1]

The real Louisa that shone through for a moment is described with the same vocabulary Sue had used before to describe the Corsican Pietri (démon, rage, haine, feu, fauve). More than any other author, Sue constructs essentialised identities for his Corsicans; it is to this effect that he differentiates between their masks and what lies underneath.

Daudet also comments on masks, as seen in the duchess Maria-Antonia Padovani. Wife of a French ambassador, the Corsican has represented France in several countries and worked up a perfectly polished exterior. Every gesture in public life represents a refined performance. However, when her lover leaves her, her act falls apart:

> Et, plus duchesse ni mondaine, démasquée, humaine enfin, elle livrait tout son désespoir moins grand peut-être que sa colère, car l'orgueil criait en elle plus fort que tout, et les quelques larmes débordant ses cils ne coulaient pas, jaillissaient, grésillaient en pointes de feu. Se venger! se venger! […] Frapper soi-même, sentir la joie de la vendetta au bout de son bras…[2]

Unmasked, Maria-Antonia reveals her Corsican side, conventionally expressed as a desire for vengeance. However, Daudet emphasises her humanity and does not go so far as to state that Maria-Antonia has a fixed, Corsican core. Unlike Sue's characters, Maria-Antonia remains ambivalent and continues her life as performance. Whether writers represent identity as costume, role play, or performance, they are always confronted with its fluctuation. The very hybridity of their Corsican characters problematises the notions of truth, selfhood and alterity. In the process of entertaining hegemonic discourses about Corsica and its identity, Parisian writers must grapple with the fluidity of these constructs.

Central uncertainties

Initially representing Corsica in a similar fashion to overseas colonies and setting it apart as France's inferior other, canonical authors soon encounter the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in this positioning. Portrayals that could be interpreted as instruments and expressions of French Imperialism simultaneously bring to light the instability of the very structure they appear to support. Bhabha argues that there is often a 'lack of conviction within colonial discourses,' since they tend to

[1] *Les Enfans de l'amour,* p. 37.
[2] Alphonse Daudet, *L'Immortel: Mœurs parisiennes* (Paris: Lemerre, 1888), p. 274.

contain counter-hegemonic views and resistance to the ideologies they seem to reproduce.[1] The contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the ideal of the *mission civilisatrice* and the impossibility of fixing Corsican identity have become evident in the previous two sections on mimic men and constructions of identity. The last part of this chapter is dedicated to the clearest examples of ambiguities, controversies and moments of self-doubt that underlie canonical Corsican prose narratives.

Whereas authors sporadically criticise the inefficiency and poor motivation of the *mission civilisatrice,* texts generally do not directly debate its viability or legitimacy.[2] The only text that implicitly questions the morality of the civilising mission is the first ever Corsican prose narrative by Mérimée. According to classical colonialist rhetoric, the coloniser is good and moral while the colonised are corrupt and immoral, in need of conversion. *Mateo Falcone* plays on this binary opposition of good and evil, first reproducing the conventional order, but subsequently subverting it. The text lays out a division between moral and immoral, legitimate and illegal on a surface level: it is clear that the bandit, Gianetto Sanpiero, must be arrested and that the gendarme, Tiodoro Gamba, is right to do so. Next to bandit and policeman, Mérimée places the main characters of the story, Mateo Falcone and his son, Fortunato. His attribution of roles is already ambiguous: from a French point of view, Fortunato is the hero for helping the authorities and Mateo is the villain for killing his innocent son. From a Corsican point of view, the opposite is true: Fortunato is the scoundrel for betraying the laws of hospitality, and Mateo is the champion for upholding his family's honour. Mérimée plays with the notions of good and evil, showing how disparate their meanings are in the two cultures. While the exceptional cruelty of Fortunato's execution does not suggest that the Corsicans might be right about morals, Mérimée nevertheless alludes to this possibility through the naming of his side-characters. Ironically, the bandit is named after Sampiero Corso, Corsica's great national hero and one of the few Corsican champions admired by the French reading public. In the same vein, the French authority figure is called Tiodoro in an allusion to Théodore Poli, the most famous and sought-after Corsican bandit at the time.[3] There is an unexpected role reversal whereby the attributes of outlaw and representant of the law, good and evil cancel each other out. However, this role reversal exists in name only and remains hidden for the less educated reader. Yet,

[1] Quoted in *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 51.

[2] Daudet in particular shows a keen interest in measuring and evaluating French investments on Corsica. *Le Nabab* uses a whole chapter to criticise the ineffective exploitation of Corsica's natural resources; in which Daudet condemns the inefficiency, rather than the morals of the manœuvre (pp. 297-300). However, the text is more concerned that colonial exploitation on Corsica is not bringing the hoped-for profits to French investors, than about its moral value. Daudet upholds the legitimacy of France's civilising mission, merely criticising the state's half-hearted execution of this duty.

[3] See *Colomba de Prosper Mérimée,* pp. 16-7.

Mérimée's subtle subversion of roles implicitly opens up the question of the validity of the French mission on Corsica and France's moral superiority. Small textual resistance or side-line irony, *Mateo Falcone* is the only canonical text that even alludes to the question of whether French civilising interventionism on Corsica really is justified. Tellingly, it is also the first text in the chronology; the topic is obliterated in later works.

The most obvious central insecurity undermining many canonical texts is the authors' consciousness of the permeability of the very boundaries and oppositions their narratives set out to create between France and Corsica. Despite their colonising rhetoric, Parisian writers were well aware that Corsicans had been, and were, able to assimilate to French culture. They would have witnessed Corsicans that moved to Paris, above all Napoleon I, whose Corsicanness/Frenchness had been much debated. They all lived through several French regime changes, thus experiencing the volatility of state and national identity. Upon closer examination, political upheavals, intermingling between French and Corsican identities, and contrasting definitions of the nation are present in most works on Corsica. Particularly writings from the first two thirds of the nineteenth century show painful awareness of the fluidity and instability of the French nation-state in the making. The most poignant breaking point for Parisian writers appears to have been the change from the First Empire to the restoration of the Monarchy.

Mérimée's, Balzac's, Sue's and Dumas' Corsican narratives frame Napoleon I's rise and fall and more or less overtly express insecurities about how to deal with this national past. *La Vendetta, Colomba* and *Les Enfans de l'amour* have prehistories set under the First Empire: Orso's first and only battle with the French army was in Waterloo; Pietri also fought in Waterloo and the Napoleonic Wars. Balzac is the only author to portray Napoleon in power: his prelude is set in 1800, just after the *coup d'état*, and briefly shows Napoleon as consul of the nation. Simultaneously, the reader is introduced to Piombo's vendetta and his resulting arrival in Paris. The texts flag up the historic link between Corsica and France, and the undeniable presence of Corsicans at the very centre of the nation. The prelude to *Les Enfans de l'amour* and the three chapters consecrated to *La Vendetta* in *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* are situated just after the *Cent Jours*; tellingly, they explain the start of their Corsican characters' respective vendettas that then become the guiding principle of their denouements during the Monarchy. Balzac's and Mérimée's stories are set respectively in 1815 and 1819. All four writers comment directly on the upheavals and social unrest in France in the aftermath of the Bourbon Restoration and show their - generally negative - impact on the lives of their Corsican characters.[1] The texts testify to the brittleness of individual destinies and the fragility

[1] *Mateo Falcone* is an exception, showing Corsica in isolation from political on-goings.

of political structures, directing the reader's attention to the problematic period of the First Empire, which in some ways undermines the binary divisions between France and Corsica advanced in hegemonic definitions of French identity.

Balzac is the author who most exhaustively comments on the perturbance to French identity caused by the Restoration and *La Vendetta* constitutes the best example of this general trend in pre-1870 canonical works. Like Sue, Balzac explores the problematic status of Corsicans in France following Napoleon's fall, setting his narrative in the capital and focusing on Corsican characters. After the prologue in 1800, the story immediately skips forward to 1815, avoiding comments on Napoleon as head of state and concentrating on the period after the *Cent Jours,* when the main narrative begins. The reader learns that Piombo has enjoyed a rapid social ascension, mostly thanks to Napoleon I's generosity: he has become a baron and close adviser of the Emperor. However, the text never shows Piombo in his political functions, but only at the moment when the backbone of his success has collapsed. Balzac thus exposes the awkwardness of the Corsicans' situation and problematises their status in the centre and their role with regards to the nation. *La Vendetta* not only questions whether Corsican characters can truly assimilate to French society, but also shows the social exclusion of Piombo and Ginevra by other members of the Parisian elite. The first scene in 1815 shows a Parisian art studio filled with students from upper-class families. Each girl has her own workspace, as does Ginevra, who fits in like any other. However, the first action Balzac depicts is a royalist girl stealing Ginevra's spot, and moving her stool further away from the centre. Ginevra's removal from her usual seat becomes symbolic of Napoleon's dethronement and of the ensuing dissociation of Corsicans from the nation:

> Pour comprendre l'importance de l'ostracisme […], il est nécessaire d'ajouter que cette scène avait lieu vers la fin du mois de juillet 1815. Le second retour des Bourbons venait de troubler bien des amitiés […]. En ce moment les familles étaient presque toutes divisées d'opinion, et le fanatisme politique renouvelait plusieurs de ces déplorables scènes qui, aux époques de guerre civile ou religieuse, souillent l'histoire de tous les pays. […] Ginevra Piombo aimait Napoléon avec idolâtrie, et comment aurait-elle pu le haïr? L'Empereur était son compatriote et le bienfaiteur de son père. […] Incapable de renier sa foi politique, jaloux même de la confesser, le vieux baron de Piombo restait à Paris au milieu de ses ennemis. […] [Ginevra] ne faisait pas mystère du chagrin que la seconde restauration causait à sa famille. […] Les jeunes personnes qui composaient le groupe des nobles appartenaient aux familles royalistes les plus exaltées de Paris. Il serait difficile de donner une idée des exagérations de cette époque et de l'horreur que causaient les bonapartistes. […] [P]ersonne n'ayant encore

> osé s'éloigner de la bonapartiste, mademoiselle Thirion venait de frapper un coup décisif, afin de rendre ses compagnes complices de sa haine.[1]

Ginevra and her family occupy an ambivalent position: they remain a part of Parisian high society, but are not really accepted as such and are forced to remain on the margins of the new France. The ostracism is symbolic of the Piombos' precarious status as a Parisian Corsicans, indicating the unease in French society after 1815, the problematic of determining whether Napoleon had or had not been French, and more immediate concerns about how the Corsicans who had followed him into France's administration should now be treated. Balzac is also acutely aware of France's political instability and comments at length on the social unrest between the two regimes. The blurry boundary between national self and other causes confusion and unease over the questions of what France actually was, is or should be.

La Vendetta and *Les Enfans de l'amour* are the only stories to focus on the problematic presence of Corsicans in the capital itself, and neither narrative admits that presence for the long term. Balzac's and Sue's endings follow a similar strategy: they do not resolve the question of how to deal with the Corsicans' involvement in the making of the French nation-state and instead show their Corsican protagonists as liable to self-destruction. *La Vendetta* ends on the mutual extermination of both mentioned Parisian Corsican families, which conveniently solves the problem of their future status. Sue invalidates the Corsicans' intermingling with Parisian society through the death of his Corsican characters and the safe disposal of the remaining *métisse*, thus removing any evidence of their presence in France's centre. Louisa's mother Paula's rapidly deteriorating mental health finally causes her death; Pietri is shot during his grand revenge - a fate he had anticipated and accepted - and Louisa is locked away in prison. Balzac and Sue do not allow an on-going Corsican presence at the heart of France and figuratively destroy any evidence thereof. Their final rejection of the Corsicans' connection to French national identity and their desire to return to the colonial status quo underline their unease about the fluidity of divisions between Corsica and France and their uncertainty about French identity itself.

Le Comte de Monte-Cristo also comments on this purging of the national space of Corsican elements and its arbitrary nature. Bertuccio seeks reparation from the French courts, since his brother was killed by monarchists on his way home from Waterloo. However, the judge de Villefort comments sardonically about the injustice of political reversals and refuses to help Bertuccio:

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[1] *La Vendetta,* pp. 177-8.

> Chaque révolution a ses catastrophes, répondit M. de Villefort; votre frère a été victime de celle-ci, c'est un malheur, et le gouvernement ne doit rien à votre famille pour cela. Si nous avions à juger toutes les vengeances que les partisans de l'usurpateur ont exercées contre les partisans du roi quand à leur tour ils disposaient du pouvoir, votre frère serait peut-être aujourd'hui condamné à mort. Ce qui s'accomplit est chose toute naturelle, car c'est la loi des représailles.[1]

The passage shows the arbitrariness of power structures in periods of political upheavals and reveals that right and wrong become haphazard categories, following the definition of whoever happens to be in power. It emerges that the violent eradication of Corsican elements is implicitly supported and wished for by the state - after all, it is in the monarch's interests to get rid of potential sources of opposition. Ironically, de Villefort's expression 'la loi des représailles' is reminiscent of the Corsican tradition of vengeance and makes it appear as if the French were now embarking on an anti-Corsican vendetta. The aim of this violent repression is ultimately the purging of French national identity from Corsican connotations and reminders of Napoleon's reign, in an attempt to re-establish clear boundaries between the civilised centre and the savage island.

Parisian authors writing before the Third Republic are unsure about how to deal with the factual and historical linkage of island and nation. They particularly problematise the First Empire, a time when the French state had been directed by a Corsican, and seem ill at ease with the potential effects of this period on national identity. To political changes are attached, of course, different conceptions of Frenchness and France's place in the world. Empire, Monarchy and Republic brought with themselves different definitions of the nation. Therefore, underlying most canonical texts about Corsica until about 1870, there is a deep insecurity, a sense of the fragility and fluidity of French identity itself. Despite their apparent focus on defining, explaining and encoding Corsican identity, these texts are just as concerned with a definition of the French national self.

Discourses consolidated with the arrival of the Third Republic, during which France became more and more associated with the imperial project. National identity was centred around the discovery, expansion and incorporation of the state's territorial possessions, and largely reliant on the myth of France's universal vocation to rule. In this context, Daudet's and Maupassant's Corsican texts are more clearly colonial and exoticist in their rhetoric and tend to establish rigid boundaries between civilised centre and savage island. More explicitly than ever before, France appears as a coloniser and Corsica as a conquered territory. But yet again, even these texts are unsure of themselves, as seen in Daudet's textual subversion of the relationship between colonised and

[1] *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*, *tome 6,* pp. 293-4.

coloniser. While most texts create ambiguities surrounding mimic men and their hybrid positions, Daudet's *Mari-Anto* most clearly envisages a role reversal between central agent of power and marginal native. Initially, *Mari-Anto* sets up established roles: the baron Burdet describes his installation in Ajaccio as *conseiller de préfecture* from a first-person perspective. His authoritative voice tells the story from a French point of view and in line with the ideal of the civilising mission, at first describing his relationship with the Corsican Mari-Anto in classical colonial terms: superiority and cultural refinement of the coloniser, inferiority, unculturedness and (linguistic) unintelligibility of the colonised. Mari-Anto becomes a subject of Burdet's sexual fantasies, the fulfilment of which is only hindered by her dangerous husband. Yet, the occasion of a Corsican/Italian carnival provides a pretext for a crossing over of the categories of French self and Corsican other. Using the aforementioned means of role play and costumes to symbolise identity alterations, Daudet figuratively overthrows the power structures in place - if only for one day:

> Toute la ville était en carnaval. On rencontrait par les rues des bandes de masques qui allaient d'une maison à l'autre […] avec je ne sais quel chant de grenouille, mystérieux et mélancolique: 'O Ragani… O cho dotto…' […] Je me sentais en pays perdu, bien loin, bien seul. Tout à coup, en relevant la tête, j'aperçois de la lumière à la fenêtre de ma chambre. Je monte vite, et qu'est-ce que je vois? Installé dans mon meilleur fauteuil, un petit conseiller de préfecture en frac et en chapeau à claque. C'était Mari-Anto qui, en mon absence, avait mis mes armoires au pillage, et venait faire toute seule son petit carnaval chez moi. […] Elle était si charmante en conseiller, cette petite muletière. Tout craquait, la culotte brodée et le gilet blanc. Sans rien dire, elle me prit par la main, et m'emmena dans sa chambre […]. À peine entrés, l'étrange créature me fit signe de l'attendre, et […] sortit une minute après avec une grande poupée faite d'un oreiller, de son fiche et de sa robe. 'Ça, c'est Mari-Anto, me dit-elle en riant, moi je suis le *pinsuto.* Tout à l'heure, quand mon mari va rentrer, il trouvera le *pinsuto* avec Mari-Anto, et nous verrons ce qu'il dira…' Là-dessus, elle s'assit, sa grande poupée entre ses bras, et se mit à la presser, à l'embrasser comiquement, en imitant mon accent, mes intonations: 'Oh! que mi piacce Mari-Anto!' Et elle riait, elle riait. Moi je ne riais pas, je l'avoue. […] En bas la porte venait de s'ouvrir. […] 'Mon mari!... Sauvez-vous,' me dit Mari-Anto.[1]

Daudet uses the moment of the carnival, the one day where power relations are turned upside-down, to envisage a different relationship between coloniser and colonised. At carnival, people defy the current moral and social order, making possible the otherwise unthinkable. For *Mari-Anto,* this

[1] *Mari-Anto,* pp. 105-7.

obviously means envisioning sexual relationships outside marriage, but more importantly, the text suggests a merging of self and other, coloniser and colonised. On the surface, Mari-Anto is pretending to be a French *conseiller de préfecture* - not less, not more. Yet, her change of clothes, while obviously parody, indicates the possibility of a Corsican's involvement in French culture that goes beyond mimicry. There is a reversal of the traditional roles of man and woman, and also an inversion of the power relationship between the French authority figure and the Corsican subject. The whole situation is charged with ambiguity, openly exhibiting that which normatively cannot be the case. Taking control by putting on the councillor's clothes, Mari-Anto takes the initiative, while Bourdet becomes passive and merely reacts. On the one hand, the Corsican is appropriating and acting out the Frenchman's desires, becoming an outlet for his fantasies, which she might be seen to endorse. On the other hand, she uses the combination of Burdet's desires and the occasion of the carnival to empower her, ridiculing the Frenchman's thoughts and putting a clear stop to his advances. Mari-Anto's husband comes home, ready to stab the councillor, showing that Burdet would endanger his life if he tried to seduce her. Realising her hoax, the Corsican engages in sexual intercourse with his wife and Burdet is humiliated, having to witness everything from his hide-out. Daudet's narrative envisages, if only for one night, other possible ways of relating between coloniser and colonised. *Mari-Anto*, at least rudimentarily, becomes representative of thinking a different social order. The text takes on particular significance when keeping in mind that it was written in the context of the Third Republic's beginnings (1874). In a period of purging the French national imaginary of its Corsican heritage and defining the nation as colonial Empire, Daudet imagines a role reversal not only of coloniser and colonised, but also once more gives a Corsican power over a representative of France. Burdet's fantasies about the unactualised union between Corsican and French identities and his desire for a strong Corsican leader figure serve as an uncanny reminder of the periods when France was directed by authoritarian Corsicans.

In the end, Parisian narratives that produce fixed binary identities for France and Corsica simultaneously tend to question the very views they are advancing. The endeavour to delineate national identity from its peripheral negative proves impossible, instead revealing the fluidity and permeability of the boundaries between self and other. Not only is Corsican identity malleable and confusing – it progressively emerges that France's own identity is much more fragile and unstable than the colonial rhetoric leaves room to admit.

The making of France on Corsica – a colonial reinvention

It emerges that most moments of self-doubt and ambiguity in canonical narratives are linked to questions about France and Frenchness. Most Parisian authors share underlying concerns about the fluidity and instability of French identity, pinpointing the need to understand and define the national

self. Often, contrasting definitions of Frenchness are brought into focus through the Corsican lens as French identity is being made on the margins. In the end, the canonical exploration of Corsica becomes an exploration of France itself, offering different definitions of otherness and selfhood. These issues are most clearly expressed in the following quotation from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862), which has not been discussed in this chapter because it does not describe Corsica. However, there is a short debate on the margins of the narrative that epitomises the importance of Corsica for the definition of French identity:

> [Marius] se leva, il marcha lentement vers la carte de France étalée sur le mur et au bas de laquelle on voyait une île dans un compartiment séparé, il posa son doigt sur ce compartiment, et dit:
>
> - La Corse. Une petite île qui a fait la France bien grande.
>
> Ce fut le souffle d'air glacé. Tous s'interrompirent. […] Enjolras, dont l'œil bleu n'était attaché sur personne et semblait considérer le vide, répondit sans regarder Marius:
>
> - La France n'a besoin d'aucune Corse pour être grande. La France est grande parce qu'elle est la France. *Quia nominor leo.*
>
> Marius n'éprouva nulle velléité de reculer; il se tourna vers Enjolras, et sa voix éclata avec une vibration qui venait du tressaillement des entrailles:
>
> - À Dieu ne plaise que je diminue la France! mais ce n'est point la diminuer que de lui amalgamer Napoléon. Ah çà, parlons donc. Je suis nouveau venu parmi vous, mais je vous avoue que vous m'étonnez. Où en sommes-nous? qui sommes-nous? qui êtes-vous? qui suis-je? Expliquons-nous sur l'empereur.[1]

The vital questions of what France and Frenchness even mean underlie all nineteenth-century canonical authors' works and are mirrored again in Marius' interrogations. The outcome of the debate over who we are and what France is becomes defined through the issues of Corsica and Napoleon. It turns out that descriptions of Corsica, with all the truth claims, knowledges and stereotypes attached to them, shape the definition of the French nation. Hence the vogue for Corsican fiction in the nineteenth century: it had become a tool for self-exploration. French identity was made at the margins and Corsica was a hot spot for such identity constructs. On the one hand, this allowed a definition of French identity by elimination (everything 'they' are, 'we' are not). Canonical authors were in need of an other against which to define the self, and Corsica was doubly

[1] Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables, Tome III: Marius* (Paris: E. Hugues, n.d.), p. 121.

important: as a colony and as birthplace of the Emperor. On the other hand, Corsica also allowed Parisian authors to find the national self within the other. In *Les Chouans,* the first novel published under his name in 1829, Balzac examined Brittany, where he saw exoticism, but also somehow found the birthplace of the French nation and imagined its citizens in their most historically unaltered form. One year later, he turned from Brittany to an investigation of Corsica – a study that he located at the very heart of France, in Paris. To what extent can Corsica be seen as the birthplace of modern France?

Marius' and Enjolras' different understandings of France are also linked to two opposing conceptions of national identity that coexisted during the nineteenth century: Marius seems to define France as a civic community, oriented around the state and personified by a strong leader. Enjolras seems to think of France more as a community bound by ethnic characteristics that is somehow preserved through time, independently of its political form or leadership. Defining Frenchness in civic terms has its advantages; national identity becomes more open and flexible and can include various territories and peoples, therefore coping better with the actual heterogeneity of nineteenth-century France. But collective identification with civic institutions and leaders requires a stable political situation. Yet, it was during the nineteenth century that France experienced the fastest succession of political regimes in its history, simply offering too many possible points of attachment (Monarchies, Empires, Republics…). Canonical writers were well aware of this instability of political and social structures and therefore hesitated to describe the nation in civic terms. Most narratives propose a definition of Frenchness in ethnic terms, first and foremost expressed through the values of civilisation, rationality and morality, and secondly anchored in the culture and language of Paris. The advantage of this conception is that nationality does not depend on political leadership, and that unwelcome or awkward historical figures and events can be disregarded as irrelevant to the true character of the nation. But an ethnic definition of French identity is less inclusive and needs to imagine France as a homogeneous space; it has difficulty integrating the cultural and linguistic diversity of nineteenth-century France.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Parisian authors found a way around the problems caused by civic and ethnic conceptions of nationality by advancing a definition of France as an imperial power with a mission to civilise and Frenchify. This self-image as a cultural core in the course of constant expansion helped overcome otherwise irreconcilable tensions at the heart of French national identity. Corsica comes to symbolise this new concept of Empire, simultaneously through Napoleon I and III's Imperialism, and the island's status as exotic territory touched by French culture and language. In a movement that one could call 'the colonial reinvention,' the French imaginary turned

away from itself and towards the outside. With too many pressing and seemingly unsolvable questions at the centre, nineteenth-century authors focused on attempting to stabilise national identity from the margins. They needed a space to reinvent the national self, a screen onto which to project their wishful thinking and their new blueprints of the nation. This screen was found in the colonies, and, more acutely, on Corsica. The colonial/Corsican realm not only served to remake the authors', readers' or travellers' individual selves, but indeed the self-understanding of a whole nation. At a time when regimes were perceived as threatening, unstable or fake in the capital, Corsica was a space to re-envisage the French self and its mission as capable, coping, powerful, good, just etc. This vision develops in Mérimée's, Balzac's, Dumas', and Sue's Corsican texts.

The tradition of conceptualising France as an Empire – while traceable all through the century – flourished after 1870, when the arrival of the Third Republic heralded a long period of relative political stability for France. Coincidentally, the Third Republic also saw the height of French colonialism. Its thinkers embraced a renewed self-definition of France as a great colonial Empire, allowing them to reconcile most contradictions that were inherent in the French nation-state. Said argues that the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and the foundation of the Third Republic

> directly stimulated the increase in French geographical societies. […] After 1872 and for the first time, […] a coherent political doctrine of colonial expansion developed at the head of the French state; between 1880 and 1895 French colonial possessions went from 1.0 to 9.5 million square kilometers, from five to fifty million native inhabitants.[1]

In the wake of this movement, Daudet's and Maupassant's texts about Corsica are more obviously colonial than those of their predecessors. Corsica had finally found its place amongst the realm of overseas territories; defined as other and therefore colonial. And yet, self-definitions of French identity during the Third Republic relied on the margins more than ever before; they were needed as savage negatives that gave meaning to the *mission civilisatrice*. Thus, the nineteenth-century saw the discovery of Corsica in French literature and witnessed how its representations became more and more exoticised and colonial.

[1] *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 175-6.

Insular Corsican narratives

'Il n'y a pas de littérature corse à proprement parler. […] La Corse […] en est toujours à l'état transitoire où s'abolissent les traits d'exotisme intégral pour faire place à l'expression d'un vrai régionalisme seul compatible avec l'unité littéraire nationale.' – Gaston Roger, 1947[1]

Between 1853 and 1898, ten Corsican authors published the following volumes of prose fiction, representing Corsica in French for the first time in the island's history:

1853 Marc Marchi, *Joseph Brandini*
1856 Arrigo Arrighi, *Mœurs corses: La Veuve d'Arbellara, Roman historique*
1860 Leonard Cassien de Peretti, *La Veuve de Cyrnos ou Le Premier Commandement de l'Église*
1867 J.-P. Colombani, *Les Aventures d'un jeune Corse, Roman historique*
1883 D. Ch. Nicolai, *La Mort de Vannina ou Justification de Sampiero par Bonaparte*
n.d. (probably before 1884) Jerôme Monti, *Le Roi de la montagne*
1884 Jerôme Monti, *La Corse et l'Empire: Gennara, Roman*
1885 Abbé Antoine-François Bartoli, *Diana Colonna: Mœurs de la Corse*
1885 Philippe Tonelli, *Les Amours corses*
1887 Emmanuel Arène, *Le Dernier Bandit*
1890 Philippe Tonelli, *Scènes de la vie corse: La Vierge des makis*
1890 Philippe Tonelli, *Scènes de la vie corse: Seppa*
1898 Jean-Baptiste Marcaggi, *Fleuve de sang: Histoire d'une vendetta corse*

Authors, backgrounds, perspectives

This list marks the rediscovery of a first generation of Francophone Corsican writers that have hitherto been largely or completely forgotten. It is difficult to glean information about these authors' lives, since the field of Corsican Francophone literature is so under-researched that there are only - fairly limited - official records on four out of ten writers: Arrighi, Peretti, Arène and Marcaggi. Not even Corsican encyclopaedias or other specialised reference works contain information about Marchi, Colombani, Nicolai, Monti, Bartoli and Tonelli – Colombani's and Nicolai's first names remain unknown. Because of this data shortage, an analysis of biographical backgrounds must take into account any material available, including publishing history, the novels' contents and Monti's autobiography. Inferring from the dates of birth of known authors - Arrighi (1802), Peretti (1822) Arène (1856), Marcaggi (1866) -, most writers were raised during the first half of the nineteenth

[1] *L'Âme de la Corse*, pp. 15-6.

century. Most undoubtedly received secondary or higher education - either in *collèges* on Corsica or *lycées* and universities on the mainland -, meaning that they probably came from middle or upper-class backgrounds. At least five out of ten insular authors seem to have lived in Paris during a period of their lives; Monti's, Bartoli's, Tonelli's and Peretti's Parisian publications suggest that they moved to the capital.[1] Arène is the only one to have succeeded in Parisian circles; he was reputed as an '[a]uthentique Ajaccien, devenu un authentique Parisien et le plus boulevardier des écrivains de son époque.'[2]

Insofar as the authors' professions can be known or inferred, Peretti and Bartoli were Catholic priests; Peretti also served as professor of philosophy at the seminary in Ajaccio. Marcaggi held the post of librarian for the city of Ajaccio and worked as a historian in his spare time.[3] At least three writers seem to have been lawyers; in light of the status of the French justice apparatus discussed in chapter one, it appears that studying law was a way to climb the social ladder for wealthy Corsicans. This career choice also symbolised an endorsement of French authority over Corsica. Arrighi was an advocate and served as director and chairman of public law and morality at the *École Paoli* in Corte from 1836 onwards.[4] Monti appears to have embarked on the career of lawyer.[5] The most eminent and most well-documented figure is the half-Corsican Arène.[6] Having studied law in Paris, Arène became a politician and candidate for the Republicans. He notably benefited from the patronage of Edmond About and Léon Gambetta, who obtained for him a position as chief secretary of the *Ministère de l'Intérieur* in 1879.[7] Arène quickly climbed the political ladder: he was elected *Conseiller Général de la Corse* in 1880, youngest ever *Député de France* in 1881, *Président du Conseil Général* in 1888, and finally *Sénateur de la Corse* from 1904 until his death in 1908. Arène is therefore regarded as a '[p]ersonnage central de la républicanisation de la Corse et […] interlocuteur privilégié entre l'État et la société insulaire' from 1880 to 1908.[8]

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[1] See Jerôme Monti, *En Corse: Quand j'étais bandit. Autobiographie – Roman vécu* (Paris: Offenstadt, 1901), p. 262; Antoine-François Bartoli, *Diana Colonna*: *Mœurs de la Corse* (Paris: Imprimerie des Apprentis-Orphelins, 1885), p. 180; Hyacinthe Yvia-Croce, *Anthologie des écrivains corses, Tome II* (Ajaccio: Éditions Cyrnos et Méditerranée, 1987), p. 224. Given that all of Tonelli's publications were printed in Paris, combined with the fact that many of his stories show Corsicans who make a life for themselves in Paris, one might assume that the author moved to the capital.

[2] *Anthologie des écrivains corses II,* p. 21.

[3] Ibid. p. 142.

[4] *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse*, p. 73.

[5] Although Monti's autobiography only describes his teenage years on Corsica, it contains some clues about his adult life: Monti states that he hoped to become an advocate in Paris. It appears that he lived in the capital at some point in his life, since his works were published there. See *Quand j'étais bandit,* p. 262.

[6] Arène's father was originally from Solliès, Provence, but Arène grew up in Ajaccio. See *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse*, p. 19.

[7] Ibid. p. 68.

[8] Ibid. p. 68.

Next to writing prose fiction, Corsican authors also engaged in journalism. Arrighi wrote for *Le Conservateur* and apparently worked as chief editor for *L'Ère nouvelle* and *Franco-Corse*.[1] Arène pursued a double career in journalism and politics, contributing copiously to national and insular papers such as: *Le XIX^e Siècle*, *La Corse républicaine, L'Éclair, Le Figaro, Gil Blas, Le Journal de la Corse, Le Matin, Le National, Le Paris, La République française, l'Union républicaine* and *Le Voltaire*. Marcaggi founded *L'Écho d'Ajaccio* (1891) and contributed to *Journal de la Corse, Réveil de la Corse, La République, L'Union de la Corse* and *A Tramuntana*.[2] The first Corsican novels in French were published during the Second Empire, when Corsica was finally positioned within a felt French sphere of influence, around ninety years after its initial conquest. However, the literary careers of many of the first French-speaking Corsican authors were limited to the publication of only one novel, as with Marchi, Peretti, Colombani, Nicolai, Monti, and Bartoli. Arrighi, Tonelli, Arène and Marcaggi wrote other novels that either do not fall into the parameters of this study or could not be found anywhere.[3] Paradoxically, the Corsican novelist with the biggest literary output in French (eleven works in total) remains completely unresearched: there are no biographical records about Philippe Tonelli.

Many Corsican authors also published non-fictional books, generally aimed at promoting knowledge about their island. Arrighi, Monti and Marcaggi brought out nine historical works between them.[4] Arrighi, Bartoli and Marcaggi authored biographies of famous Corsicans: one about Sampiero Corso, one about Pascale Paoli, and three about Napoleon Bonaparte.[5] Arène and Marcaggi wrote tourist guides about their island; furthermore, Marcaggi was the principal editor of

[1] *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse,* p. 73.
[2] Ibid. p. 142.
[3] Arrighi seems to have published a *roman historique* entitled *Voyage de M. de Tourville en Corse vers la fin du XVI^e siècle* in 1849; unfortunately, this material could not be traced. See *Anthologie des écrivains corses*, p. 2. Tonelli appears to have written two more Corsican works, *La Vendetta corse* (1869) and *Les Joies féroces* (after 1890); these could not be located either. Arène co-authored two novels that do not concern Corsica and Marcaggi published three more Corsican novels: *Mer belle aux îles sanguinaires* (Ajaccio: Rombaldi, 1925), *Sabella: Vieilles mœurs corses* (Ajaccio: Rombaldi, 1931) and *La Tuerie de Chidazzo* (n.p.: n.pub, 1932). Since they were published so far into the twentieth century, they no longer fit into the framework of this study.
[4] See Arrigo Arrighi, *Notice historique sur le général Cervoni* (Bastia: Ollagnier, 1869); Jerôme Monti, *Histoire de la Corse, à l'usage des écoles de la Corse* (n.p.: Dupret, 1886); Jean-Baptiste Marcaggi, *La Cathédrale d'Ajaccio* (Ajaccio: Pietri, 1927), *La Genèse de Napoléon. Sa Formation intellectuelle et morale, jusqu'au siège de Toulon* (Paris: Perrin, 1902), *L'Escadre russe à Ajaccio* (Ajaccio: Pompeani, 1893), *Le Souvenir de Napoléon à Ajaccio* (Ajaccio: Rombaldi 1921), *Le Berceau de Napoléon* (Ajaccio: Rombaldi, 1921), *M. Frédéric Masson et la Corse* (Valence-sur-Rhône: Ducros et Lombard, [1908 ?]), and *Une Genèse* (Ajaccio: de Peretti, 1895).
[5] Although Arrighi's book is entitled *Histoire de Pascal Paoli, ou La Dernière Guerre de l'indépendance (1755-1807)* (Paris: Gosselin, 1843), Serpentini claims that the real focus of this biography is Napoleon Bonaparte. See *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse,* p. 72. Arrighi further wrote *Histoire de Sampiero Corso, ou Guerre de l'indépendance (1553-1569)* (Bastia: Fabiani, 1842); Bartoli's biography is entitled *Histoire de Pascal Paoli ou Un Épisode de l'histoire de la Corse* (n.p.: Grobon, 1866). Marcaggi wrote two biographical works about Napoleon Bonaparte: *Une Genèse* and *La Genèse de Napoléon.*

Corsica, the monthly bulletin of Ajaccio's tourist board.[1] He undertook ethnological studies and finally published *Terre de Corse*, an encyclopaedia comprising history, archaeology, iconography, numismatics and legends.[2] Peretti brought out a French/Italian grammar, highlighting the fact that Corsican writers generally had to learn French as a second language. Finally, Monti published a pseudo-autobiography entitled *En Corse: Quand j'étais bandit* (1901), describing his teenage years of stereotypical banditry on the island. The truth content of the book is questionable; Monti probably wanted to make a name for himself as a Corsican author in Paris and therefore wrote a somewhat exaggerated account of his youth on Corsica.

Insofar as they can be known or inferred, the political attitudes of early Francophone Corsican writers were very heterogeneous. While there are almost no official records, most of the first Corsican novels are littered with expressions of political sentiment (with very few exceptions, such as Marchi). If one reads between the lines, taking into account statements of narrators and main characters, one finds a great diversity of political opinions. In general, writers express support or criticism of certain French regimes over others. Yet, these expressions are very disparate and show no consensus in overall political tendencies. It seems that most Corsican authors at least admired Napoleon Bonaparte - with Arrighi, de Peretti, Monti and Bartoli voicing their opinions most clearly. Support for Napoleon III appears more divided: Arrighi and Bartoli praise the Napoleonic dynasty, whereas Monti devotes a whole novel, *La Corse et l'Empire: Gennara*, to condemning the Second Empire. Peretti and Tonelli appear to be monarchists and voice, together with Arrighi, sharp criticisms of the Republic and Revolutionary values, especially concerning the status of religion. Inversely, Monti and Arène embrace Revolutionary ideas, campaigning for the abolition of royalty and promoting atheism. While political opinions of Francophone Corsican authors varied greatly, all seem to have been devoted to an idea of France. Apparently, many lived through the political changes of the nineteenth century, without ever giving up their overall commitment to France. Arrighi seems to have bent whichever way the wind blew: 'Arrigo Arrighi a servi tous les régimes, la monarchie de Juillet, la République de 48, le Second Empire et la Troisième République.'[3] Similarly, Arène was less known for his staunch Republicanism than for his nepotism and for the numerous favours he bestowed on his extended family, political allies and financial supporters.[4] Coriscan

[1] Marcaggi first wrote *En voyage: Carnet de route (En Corse)* (1894) and later collaborated with Arène to produce *L'Île de Corse, Guide pratique* (1908).
[2] Jean-Baptiste Marcaggi, *Les Chants de la mort et de la vendetta de la Corse* (Paris: Perrin, 1898); *Lamenti, voceri, chansons populaires de la Corse: Une Introduction sur la musique populaire corse* (Ajaccio: Rombaldi, 1926); *Bandits corses d'hier et d'aujourd'hui: Esquisse d'une psychologie de la vendetta et du bandit corse* (Ajaccio: Rombaldi, 1932); *Terre de Corse: Préhistoire, archéologie, histoire, numismatique, iconographie, visages de la Corse* (Ajaccio: Rombaldi, 1927)
[3] *Anthologie des écrivains corses II,* p. 26.
[4] Ibid. p. 20.

authors' attachment to certain political ideals cannot necessarily be seen as a coherent motif for choosing French as their medium of expression.

There is a general sense in which all the authors embraced the French narrative – even though they disagreed about what exactly that might be. The very act of writing in French meant taking a stand for the *francisation* of Corsica and heralding change on the island; especially considering that the majority of Corsican authors at the time wrote in Italian.[1] Choosing French as a writing medium entailed positioning themselves in opposition to a traditional understanding of Corsican culture. Arrighi was certainly not the only author driven by 'cet esprit ultra-français […] qui, dans la première moitié du XIX^{e} siècle, s'opposa, parfois si violemment, dans l'île, à l'opinion italophile représentée par tout le peuple et la plupart des lettrés.'[2] For the first generation of Francophone Corsican authors, writing in French meant considerable sacrifices: investment in learning the language and often forfeiting style and ease of expression. Peretti is the best example of this compromise: his publication of an Italian-French grammar suggests that he learnt French as a second language, and critics complain about his poor style in imitation of famous French authors. Yvia-Croce condemns his 'mauvais goût classique' and states that his poetry 'n'est qu'un bon exercice de versification française.'[3] Similar criticisms could be made of several other writers (Arrighi, Bartoli, Marcaggi), whose poor style, limited range of expression, restricted vocabulary, and confusion of tenses do not make for an enjoyable reading experience. For the first Francophone Corsican authors, writing in French also meant not being understood or read by the majority of their compatriots. While two of the first Francophone authors (Arrighi, Peretti) address their novels in part to a Corsican public, most writers catered mainly for a Parisian audience. Out of thirteen volumes by Corsican writers, ten were published in the capital; only three were printed on the island. The earliest Franco-Corsican authors had strong ties to Paris and were heavily influenced by the capital's worldview, having embraced an idea of the nation that went well beyond their small island. Arrighi stated: '[J'ai] *placé le dévouement envers la France au rang de [m]es premiers*

[1] Tuscan Italian was the dominant language in Corsican literature until well into the nineteenth century. While French gained importance in the course of the century, insular writers continued to express themselves in Italian. Francesco Ottaviano Renucci (1767-1842) and Salvatore Viale (1781-1861) in particular kept alive the tradition of Italian as the language of written expression among the Corsican literary elite, comprised of authors and poets such as Anton Luigi Raffaelli (1790-1871), Giovan Vito Grimaldi (1804-1863), Regolo Carlotti (1805-1878), Giuseppe Multedo (1810-1896) and Gian Paolo Borghetti (1816-1897). Next to French, Italian remained the language of literature and writing on Corsica for most of the nineteenth century; the first ever prose work in Corsican was printed in 1888; the first novel in the insular dialect only in 1930. See *Bibliographie générale de la Corse,* pp. 297-314; Pascal Mougin (ed.), *Larousse: Dictionnaire mondial des littératures*, (Paris: Larousse, 2001), p. 271 and *Jean de Peretti della Rocca,* p. 93.

[2] Ibid. p. 26.

[3] *Anthologie des écrivains corses II*, p. 224.

devoirs.'[1] The idea of France represents a *fil rouge* in the first Francophone Corsican novels, signifying much more than a political standpoint. Indeed, their authors seem driven by the need to understand the entity of the nation and to position their island with regards to it. An overview of storylines, themes and trends in the first Francophone Corsican literature will shed light on these points.

The practice of writing in French on nineteenth-century Corsica

While not all novels can be classified into distinct genres, and while there is some overlap between categories, one can roughly say that most writers produced the genres of *roman de mœurs* or *roman historique*. Arrighi, Colombani, Bartoli, Monti and Tonelli, Arène and Marcaggi aspire to describe Corsican mores and to paint a seemingly accurate image of Corsican life for the reader, as indicated by titles such as 'Mœurs corses' or 'Scènes de la vie corse.' Marchi, Arrighi, Peretti, Colombani, Nicolai, Monti, Bartoli, Tonelli and Marcaggi retell historical events or periods and their impact on Corsica. All authors profess to represent authentic Corsicanness in its historical and social context, whereby this *effet de réel* is used to construct a representation of reality in line with the writers' agendas and ideals, rather than to faithfully reproduce insular life. Yet, the claim to authenticity is central to many works, as Arrighi writes in his foreword to *La Veuve d'Arbellara:*

> De là l'idée d'esquisser rapidement ce tableau de mœurs dont le fond est historique, et où il n'y a d'imagination que les noms propres. Ceux qui connaissent le pays s'apercevront aisément que la vérité y tient plus de place que la fiction.[2]

Novels that promised literary realism tended to have more impact on the readership, and insular authors probably sought to balance the disadvantage of their geographical marginality with the advantage of asserting first-hand knowledge of the island. Francophone Corsican publications often include forms of ethnology and sociology and frequently underline the truthfulness of their contents. As Serpentini argues,

> Le concept de 'couleur locale,' appliqué à l'histoire et au roman historique, est utilisé pour désigner une 'vérité locale' et une 'vérité historique;' le style romantique qui tend à l'exotisme se fond ainsi avec le style documentaire ou ethnographique.[3]

This pseudo-ethnography takes various forms: descriptions of urban settings, landscapes, agricultural methods, mores and mentality. Monti's *Gennara* provides a perfect example. Under the

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[1] Quoted in *Anthologie des écrivains corses II*, p. 26. Italics in the original.
[2] Arrigo Arrighi, *Avant-propos* to *Mœurs corses: La Veuve d'Arbellara, Roman historique* (Bastia: Fabiani, 1856), p. iii.
[3] *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse*, p. 561.

pseudonym of 'Roquani,' Monti describes the town of Bonifacio in abundant detail, including its architecture, social hierarchy and its inhabitants' occupations. He dedicates two whole chapters to a study of local festivities, thirty-two pages to a religious festival and a further eighteen pages to the description of a village feast.[1] Monti completes this picture of Corsican life with a depiction of agricultural processes, such as techniques for catching birds, sowing, and making olive oil, accessorily stressing his self-understanding as 'humble serviteur de la vérité.'[2] Arène mainly describes urban lifestyles on Corsica, focusing on Ajaccio. In Bartoli's *Diana Colonna*, about 100 of 363 pages are devoted to pseudo-ethnology and folklore, commenting on local customs, mores, superstitions, folk tales, architecture, and sports, as well as accounts of the author's family and even ghost stories.[3] Despite the obvious confusion of fact and fiction, the author insists on the veracity of his account: 'On croira peut-être que nous racontons une fable. Ce serait une erreur. Tout un village est là pour attester le fait.'[4] Recognising the efforts of earlier Corsican writers to document their island, Tonelli claims to fill a gap in the field of Corsican ethnology by including an essay on Corsican women:

> Parler de son pays, c'est là une tâche qu'on aime remplir avec joie […]. Seulement nous nous sommes souvent étendus dans nos études sur les hommes et les choses matérielles de la Corse, en blâmant, toutefois, leurs travers et en mettant à jour leurs qualités primordiales, sans que nous nous soyons occupés particulièrement de la femme cyrénéenne.[5]

Highly involved in documentation and folklore, Tonelli includes many pseudo-sociological musings in his three Corsican volumes, particularly concerning the Corsican character and ways of life. Lastly, Marcaggi develops an organic idea of Corsican society which takes the focus off individual characters and attracts attention to the way of being of a whole community. His narrative of endless revenge killings pretends to study Corsican society as a whole. Serpentini praises Marcaggi's aspiration to historicity, arguing that 'd'estimables écrivains ont tenté, avant et après lui, d'analyser l'âme complexe de la Corse, d'en observer les traditions. […] Nul n'a mieux réussi que lui.'[6] Using pseudo-ethnological discourse and endless digressions to achieve an *effet de réel* for their readers, early Francophone Corsican authors created a fictional reality surrounding their island. In this way, writers attempted to produce an idea of what Corsica really is, helped by the purportedly objective tool of

[1] Jerôme Monti, *La Corse et l'Empire: Gennara, Roman* (Paris: Auguste Ghio, 1884), pp. 1 -32; 339-356.
[2] Ibid. pp. 64-9 and p. 8.
[3] *Diana Colonna*, pp. 185-8.
[4] Ibid. pp. 187-8.
[5] Philippe Tonelli, 'La Femme corse' in *Les Amours corses* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1885), p. 183.
[6] *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse*, p. 144.

ethnological enquiry. The problematic endeavour of defining Corsicanness in order to compare and contrast it with Frenchness remains a central theme in many works.

The proposed definitions of Corsicanness are equally shaped by a pronounced interest in historiography. Endeavouring to understand and redefine Corsican identity, local authors aim to retell their island's history, often repositioning it around France. The corpus of nineteenth-century Francophone Corsican literature establishes a timeline of events the authors considered important to the island's history – even though they often represent an arbitrary selection in the interest of promoting a certain interpretation of Corsica's status vis-à-vis France. This ideologically coloured chronology starts with a recounting of the Sarrasins' incursions into Corsica in Monti's *Gennara* and taken as the starting point for Bartoli's *Diana Colonna*. Fast-forwarding around six hundred years, the next cataclysmic event is the Corsican fight for independence from Genoa. Numerous writers comment on the figure of Sampiero Corso, often emphasising his alliance with France. Importantly, no novel is set at the time of Paoli's fight for independence and France's invasion and annexation of the island. The Corsicans' resistance is at best mentioned in a few sentences, exemplifying the biased nature of the novels' historiography. Whereas Sampiero's fight against Genoa is emphasised and interpreted in favour of French rule, any opposition to French control is wilfully ignored, thus justifying – by omission, so to speak - the French conquest of Corsica. The next recorded event is the French Revolution and its impact on Corsica, described by Peretti; his book comes closest to describing conflicts between Corsicans and their French rulers. Next on the time line is Napoleon Bonaparte's life, with Nicolai depicting him at the starting point of his career and Arrighi, Monti and Tonelli setting their works just after his defeat. Monti and Tonelli make reference to an on-going cult of the Emperor, and Monti's *Le Roi de la montagne* depicts Corsica just after the Restoration of the Bourbon Monarchy.[1] The July Monarchy, the Revolution of 1848 and Louis-Napoléon's *coup d'état* are overlooked; although Marcaggi's novel is set between 1840 and 1851, it makes no reference to its wider political context. Colombani and Monti set their novels during the 1850s, and *Gennara* focuses on the end of the Second Empire and finishes on the proclamation of the Third Republic. Finally, Tonelli's stories are set during the Third Republic, with *Une Tombe dans les makis* mentioning the end of the Second Empire. The novels taken together propose a literary rendering of Corsican history, chronologically rewriting the island's past from a perspective that condones or justifies France's conquest and rule of Corsica.

[1] *Le Roi de la montagne* shows its heroes' faithfulness to Napoleon, as the Corsican family celebrate '[un] jour de fête nationale pour la Corse: [… l'] anniversaire de la naissance de l'Empereur' (Jerôme Monti, *Le Roi de la montagne* (Paris: Albert Méricant, n.d.), pp. 7-8). 'La Mort du bandit Suzzoni' in *Les Amours corses* romantically paints the shooting of a great bandit; the last thing Suzzoni contemplates before his death is 'une image collée sur le mur, représantant la bataille de Waterloo.' *Les Amours corses,* p. 219.

This rewriting of history takes different forms, ranging from oracles, invented spaces, reinterpretations of prominent characters' biographies, references to historians, to the reporting of local news. The strategy employed by Marcaggi to make claims to historical truth consists in writing his novel in a journalistic style, pretending to historical accuracy through the frequent mention of dates, places, full names and background information for every incident:

> Le 9 juillet, à la suite d'une discussion pour le règlement d'une menue dette de douze francs, un jeune berger de dix-huit ans, François-Antoine Crimaldi, tua, tout près du village, au lieu-dit Bacilli, à sept heures du matin, un brave père de famille, Dominique-Marie Negri, maréchal-ferrant.[1]

Monti's *Gennara* devotes a whole chapter to rewriting the history of Bonifacio, renaming the town 'Roquani' and presenting its foundation by pirates, its subjugation by the Genoese, and the development of its population over the centuries until the present day.[2] In his pseudo-historical overview of a representative Corsican town since its beginnings, Monti also reimagines Corsica's overall history. Many texts reinterpret well-known Corsican heroes and personalities, often in order to create continuity between Corsica and France. Corsican history is reorganised around Sampiero Corso, Napoleon I and the bandit Théodore. The figure of Sampiero Corso receives special attention among early Francophone writers, best illustrated by Marchi and Nicolai. Both writers retell Sampiero's biography and heavily emphasise his preference for France. For instance, Marchi uses a double narrative, one strand focusing on the Corsicans' fight for freedom in the aftermath of Sampiero's revolution, the other strand representing a love story between a Corsican and French character. This strategy allows Marchi to link Sampiero, Corsican nationalism and a fundamentally pro-French attitude. Shortly after the story begins, Sampiero dies, but the Corsicans – represented by the main character Joseph – carry on his battle. Joseph falls in love with the French girl Marie; the Biblical pairing of the characters' names signifies their predestination for each other. The story ends with a peace Treaty and Joseph and Marie's marriage, thus foreshadowing the happy union of Corsica and France. Marchi thus symbolically creates continuity between the paradoxical elements of the struggle for independence and French rule in Corsica's history. The island's control by France is shown to be a seamless continuation of Sampiero's fight for Corsican independence. Nicolai equally recentres Corsica's history around France and creates continuity between the characters of

[1] Jean-Baptiste Marcaggi, *Fleuve de sang: Histoire d'une vendetta corse* (Paris: Perrin, 1898), p. 57.
[2] *Gennara*, pp. 35-54.

Sampiero and Napoleon Bonaparte. He first makes a connection between the two historical figures by interposing Napoleon as the narrator of Sampiero's biography:

> [J]e suis obsédé par le souvenir de Sampiero de Bastelica, de mon compatriote Sampiero, un rude homme, ma foi! […] Tenez, je cherche maintenant un sujet de tragédie […]. Je voudrais un sujet bien pris dans notre histoire insulaire. Il y a toujours eu en Corse des âmes si fortement trempées et comprenant si bien la haine nationale![1]

Nicolai shows Napoleon just before his first military successes, on the threshold of his entry into world history. This man in the making identifies strongly with Corsica and is inspired in his personal development by the Corsican hero par excellence, Sampiero. Insisting on the hatred between Corsica and Genoa, Nicolai simultaneously creates the myth of the predestination of Corsica's unity with France:

> Sampiero, né au bourg de Bastelica, près d'Ajaccio, en 1501, de parents pauvres, eut pour la France une affection égale à la haine qu'il avait vouée à Genès. […] Plus tard il voulut arracher la Corse aux Génois, la donner à la France et préparer peut-être ainsi de merveilleuses destinées à quelqu'un de ces descendants.[2]

Corsica's identity is shown to have always gravitated towards France, and French rule is seen as the natural outcome of this attraction. Many writers make similar use of Sampiero and Napoleon, reconstructing historical events and characters with hindsight and altering their significance. Such reinterpretation in retrospect is extremely common among Corsican authors – especially attributing specifically nineteenth-century ideas such as patriotism and nationalism to medieval insulars. For instance, it is not clear that the historical Sampiero gave any thought to the concept of the *patrie* when he staged his revolts against the Genoese.[3] Likewise, medieval Corsicans most likely fought for immediate, local interests rather than the complex notion of the fatherland, belonging to the collective imagination of the nineteenth century. Yet, the first Corsican fiction in French is littered with such typically nineteenth-century concepts and ideas. Marchi's rewriting of the Corsican upheaval against Genoa assumes that the insulars' first allegiance was to the cause of the fatherland and that they shared the nineteenth century's enthusiasm for nationalism (possibly even extending

[1] D. Ch. Nicolai, *La Mort de Vannina ou Justification de Sampiero par Bonaparte* (Bastia: Ollagnier, 1883), p. 5.
[2] Ibid. p. 7.
[3] See Roger Caratini's statements in the introductory chapter to *Un Peuple, une histoire,* pp. 13-26.

to mainland France). *Joseph Brandini* begins with a chapter entitled 'L'Amour de la patrie.'[1] Bartoli equally clutters his novel – set in the fifteenth century – with concepts and issues specific to the French post-revolutionary period. At least a quarter of the book is devoted to discussing pressing questions such as:

> Verra-t-on plus tard tomber ces grandes monarchies de l'Europe? […] L'Église serait-elle condamnée à périr, à faire place à une autre religion? […] Admettra-t-on toujours l'existence de la divinité? J'avoue que tous ces changements survenus jusqu'à présent dans la politique, dans la religion, me confondent; je n'y comprends rien; ma foi chancelle.[2]

Set three centuries before the French Revolution, Bartoli's novel explores the issues of post-revolutionary France in lengthy discussions and dialogues, constantly referring to a present that serves as a looking glass for understanding the past.

Similarly, many Corsican authors understand their history through the lens of nineteenth-century events, the most prominent of which is Napoleon Bonaparte's First Empire. The most striking example of such historical reinterpretation is the appearance of a sea goddess retelling Corsica's history and predicting its future in *Diana Colonna*.[3] It is perhaps also the best illustration of retelling history from a nineteenth-century perspective: the narrative is set in the fifteenth century, but the Corsican spirit omnisciently knows the author's nineteenth-century present. Bartoli leads the reader through roughly 5000 years of Corsican history, starting with the peoples that inhabited and attacked the island in Antiquity, then covering Genoese domination and the Middle Ages up to French rule, the First and Second Empires, and finally the most recent death of the *Prince Impérial* Louis Napoléon Bonaparte in 1879. This achieves a sense of continuity and seamless transition between various periods, during which Corsica's identity is shown to be essentially unchanged, embodied by the sea goddess. Corsica's history is conveniently recentred around France and the somewhat awkward changeover between Corsica's independence fights and French rule is smoothed over:

> La France elle-même, qui se dit ma sœur, se déclarera contre moi. Elle viendra d'abord sur mon littoral sous prétexte de me protéger; puis, peu à peu elle s'enhardira. Un jour, elle tirera l'épée contre moi. En vain, lui prouverai-je que je ne veux être l'esclave de personne

[1] Marc Marchi, *Joseph Brandini* (Ajaccio: G. Marchi, 1853), p. 3.
[2] *Diana Colonna,* p. 224.
[3] Ibid. pp. 351-6.

> par les défaites sanglantes que je lui infligerai à Borgo, à Penta, à Loreto, par les prodiges de valeur que feront mes enfants. Elle insistera; elle m'accablera par le nombre. Je céderai. Depuis la bonne harmonie ne cessera d'exister entre nous. La France, en réparation de l'injustice commise à mon égard, me donnera son nom; je serai partie intégrante de son territoire. Je ne serai plus une sœur; je serai sa fille. Moi, à mon tour, je me vengerai de mes griefs, en lui donnant le plus grand génie qui ait jamais existé, en la couvrant de mon corps, en versant pour elle mon sang.[1]

Despite obviously conflicting claims and concepts, Bartoli presents a glossy vision of Franco-Corsican history. The text never explains how France and Corsica's relationship evolved from mastery and slavery to unity and harmony, leaving essential questions unanswered. This inconsistency is masked by the progression of the prophecy and the strongly resonating concepts of daughterhood, *mère patrie*, militaristic nationalism and blood brotherhood. While the passage does not give any compelling reasons to legitimate France's invasion and supremacy, this gap is filled by the Corsican sea goddess symbolically giving herself to France. Appealing to a typically nineteenth-century world view, Bartoli uses the climax of his novel to emphasise Corsica's new, but always predestined, position as an integral part of France.

While the novels' versions of history are due as much to the authors' imagination than to factual events, early Corsican writers typically voice concerns about the accuracy of historiography. Bartoli expresses such anxieties through his hero Alfonso, who exclaims upon seeing North Africa:

> Qui dirait, en contemplant cette nature sauvage, […] qu'ici, dans ces contrées, il y ait eu autrefois des empires florissants? Je ne puis y croire. […] Je doute de la véracité de l'histoire. Volontiers j'admettrais que tout ce qu'on a écrit sur ce pays est de la fable, du roman. Soupçonnerait-on que là-bas, dans le lointain, ait existé Carthage?[2]

Despite expressing doubts about historical accuracy, Bartoli chose an example of ancient historiography that was verfied in the nineteenth century, when the ancient city was excavated. This allows him to present both the uncertainty and the validation of the historical truth discussed in his book. Most early Corsican authors strive to appear truthful in their representations of history, insisting on the exactitude of their claims. The (re-)discovery of Corsica's true history is a major

[1] *Diana Colonna,* p. 355.
[2] Ibid. p. 224.

theme in nineteenth-century Francophone Corsican writing, as in these examples from *La Mort de Vannina* and *Quand j'étais bandit:*

> [L]e more Othello est une fiction, une légende vénitienne, le corse [sic] Sampiero est une histoire, une véritable histoire.[1]

> Parmi eux [les bandits] je connus la véritable histoire de la Corse et la vie de ses bandits. Ils me racontaient les exploits de Théodore, de Gallochio, de Sarrochi, de Borghello, d'Arrighi, de Serafino, de Santa-Lucia et de tant d'autres, et me les donnaient en exemple pour leur bravoure et leur honnêteté.[2]

This discourse of the 'véritable histoire de la Corse,' combined with ethnology, served to reimagine Corsica's history, often reorienting it towards France. The pronounced emphasis on authenticity and truthfulness reveals that early Corsican authors sought to shape and recreate an identity for their island that would be compatible with their endorsement of French rule.

The island's identity is generally redefined in relation to France, firmly attaching it to the mainland and all the while comparing and contrasting margin and centre. An overview of the most common themes in the narratives reveals that most writers' understandings of Corsicanness were worked out in relation to their ideas of France. Out of thirteen volumes, ten revolve around the relationship between France and Corsica and ten set up the Corsican social system of bandits, vendettas and honour in contrast to a conception of French civilisation and citizenship. Eight books describe Corsican characters moving from the first value system to the second, becoming French - whether that changes them for better or worse. Six works focus on folklore and nostalgic descriptions of good old Corsica, while another six depict Corsica's fight for independence from earlier invaders, mostly the Genoese. There seems to be a consensus whereby early Francophone authors see Corsica as oscillating between the poles of Italy/Genoa and France, departing from the first and gravitating towards the second. Within this logic, Corsica is defined against Italy and finds its identity in relation to France. The practice of writing in French about nineteenth-century Corsica inaugurates an insular self-understanding that separates itself from cultural and linguistic Italian roots and becomes attached to the French *patrie adoptive*.

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[1] *La Mort de Vannina*, p. 12.
[2] *Quand j'étais bandit*, pp. 129-30.

Writing in the midst of historical, political and social change

The aforementioned turn away from Italy and towards France is well documented in the books. Tonelli's creation of a half-Italian, half-Corsican *métisse* who becomes best friends with a French woman from Paris exemplifies this well, as seen in the *métisse*'s statement:

> Le soir, je me couche après avoir jeté un coup d'œil sur la mer; avant, je regardais du côté de l'Italie, maintenant mon regard se perd du côté de la France. Son horizon me paraît plus éclatant.[1]

This reorientation towards France is shown to filter into all aspects of Corsican life, particularly language. Arrighi shows a whole collection of Italian scribbles and poems scratched on Bastia's prison walls by criminals awaiting the death sentence; in a parallel, he insists that the lawyers condemning them should speak French: 'Ces sortes de citations excentriques il faut les laisser aux avocats italiens […]. Revenez à la loi française.'[2] Symbolically, Corsican/Italian - authors do not tend to differentiate between the two - becomes the language of the dead, whereas French is for the living and the future. Corsican culture belongs to the past as French progress rushes in – and yet, the old Corsican ways remain omnipresent and are frantically recorded before they disappear forever. Nineteenth-century Corsican authors are aware of numerous changes on the island and many novels speak about the disruption of traditional ways of life. Authors are divided over the disappearance of traditional Corsican culture: some only note it, others applaud it, and some develop nostalgia for the good old days. Peretti is most critical, establishing a strong opposition between traditional Corsican society, seen as Catholic and virtuous, and French post-revolutionary society, presented as atheistic and riddled with vices. Only Napoleon Bonaparte, according to him, could reconcile these contradictions. Whereas Peretti openly complains about the French influence on Corsican mores, most authors simply accept it and embrace the changes in their culture. Colombani begins his novel with a lengthy discussion between father and son about this topic:

> Heureuse la Corse si elle savait garder intactes les mœurs domestiques […]! Le temps approche où il ne nous en restera plus que le doux souvenir. Avec la civilisation qui nous vient de la France, avec ces manières sémillantes, auxquelles on attache tant de prix, nous acquérons généralement, hommes et femmes, plus d'esprit pour nous produire, plus d'aisance dans le commerce et la vie. Mais nous perdons cette ingénuité, […] cette rude franchise qui accusait la trempe mâle et forte du caractère de nos jeunes gens; cet amour de l'indépendance qui nous a fait admirer du monde entier. Notre idiome insulaire lui-même,

[1] Philppe Tonelli, 'Le Roman de deux inconnues' in *Les Amours corses*, p. 20.
[2] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, p. 253.

> dont nous ont nourris les seins féconds d'une mère généreuse, s'en va par lambeaux, dédaigné, avili. Dans cent ans d'ici, un étranger qui viendrait visiter la Corse, la quitterait après l'avoir vainement cherchée, et dirait avec tristesse aux habitants de ces chères montagnes […]: 'Hélas! vous n'avez plus ni patrie ni langue!' […] Les contemporains du vieux Brocca, imbus comme lui des préjugés d'une autre époque et partisans des principes qui ont fait leur temps, […] s'associent unanimement à ces regrets stériles […]. Les jeunes gens, au contraire, les camarades de Pietrino, adeptes de la nouvelle école, Français de cœur comme d'origine, protestaient tacitement contre des assertions dont ils savaient la source éminemment louable, mais empreinte, à coup sûr, du pessimisme le plus outré […]. Quelle douleur pour un jeune Corse d'avoir à combattre les vues et le système d'un père qu'il adore! […] Mais le sang qui coule dans ses veines est du sang français, et ce qu'il vient d'entendre lui semble un procès violent, insupportable, contre la grande nation qui a tant de droits à sa reconnaissance, à ses sympathies, à son amour. […] Le vieux Brocca comprit […] il connaissait les tendances de Pietrino, ses prédilections pour la France, son caractère opiniâtre comme celui d'un Corse, impétueux et bouillant comme celui d'un Français.[1]

It is telling that Colombani begins his book with this debate, even more so since the novel then follows Pietrino's coming-of-age and Frenchification. Colombani shows that everything has changed on Corsica in the space of one generation - language, culture, mores - and uses his novel to wrestle with this cultural revolution. Although the narrative accepts and embraces Corsica's Frenchification and shows a Corsican hero who successfully assimilates to and thrives in French culture, Colombani also expresses a certain nostalgia about the disappearance of the insular ways. Corsican society is shown to be full of tensions and conflicts. Through the oppositions of father and son, old and young, the author presents different problems the islanders are facing, portraying them as divided into two factions. While the destruction of traditional insular ways of life is accepted from the outset and presented as inevitable, the question of Corsican identity is foregrounded and problematised. Wanting to distil and retain authentically Corsican features, Colombani seeks to create new expressions of Corsicanness, compatible with Frenchness. The rest of the novel shows Pietrino taking his father's advice seriously and searching for an often uncomfortable middle ground, allowing him to retain his Corsican identity while also conforming to the French way of life. After multiple pressures and problems, Pietrino finally succeeds in Paris: 'Selon la recommendation de son père, prise au sérieux et à la lettre, *en devenant Français il était resté Corse*.'[2] Like Colombani, most Corsican authors accept and support the Frenchification of their island. Yet, most narratives display

[1] J.-P. Colombani, *Les Aventures d'un jeune Corse, Roman historique* (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1867), pp. 2-4.
[2] Ibid. p. 25. Italics in the original.

tension: while the change from Corsican to French culture is seen as inescapable and even applauded, a tendency to search for, retain and recreate an authentic Corsicanness becomes ever more significant.

Many authors are painfully aware of their situation as Corsicans in between cultures and of the tensions and fluctuations inherent in their status. Corsican identity is felt to be unstable and unreliable – explaining why early Francophone Corsican literature grapples so much with definitions of Corsicanness. A passage from Tonelli's *Les Amants du Fium'Orbo* describes this position in-between countries and cultures:

> Certainement, nous n'aimons pas les Italiens, mais l'Italie nous aime tant! Les Français, eux, ne nous aiment guère, et nous, Corses, nous aimons tant la France! Que l'Italie nous affectionne parce qu'elle croit être notre mère et que ses intérêts généraux la poussent à nourrir cette affection, la chose paraît raisonnable pour elle, mais que nos frères de la mère-patrie ne voient en nous que des êtres impossibles, des ambitieux, des quémandeurs constants, alors que nous donnons si volontiers notre vie pour cette terre commune, ainsi que toute notre intelligence, la chose nous paraît bizarre, pour ne pas dire humiliante, pour nous.[1]

The Corsican literary imaginary has reorganised itself around France, defining itself in relation to the nation, but the French collective imagination has not undergone the same process – it remains fuelled by notions of difference between Corsica and France. Corsican authors are aware of numerous changes (political, cultural, linguistic) and tend to see their island as irrevocably caught up in the process of assimilation to the French mainland. Their efforts to rewrite Corsica's history and understand their identity in relation to France ultimately serve to relocate Corsica within the narrative of the French nation. And yet, French intellectuals follow a different train of thought. Corsica is stuck on the peripheries of a world that it aspires to yet seemingly cannot reach. This leads to a troubling instability of identity and constant efforts to (re)define Corsicanness and Frenchness among Francophone Corsican authors. While French authors are unsure about Corsica's status with respect to the nation and more often prefer to separate it from the French self, Corsican authors take France as their point of departure in redefining Corsicanness. Notably, many Corsican writers take Parisian literature about Corsica as the starting point for their explorations of identity.

[1] Philippe Tonelli, 'Les Amants du Fium'Orbo' in *Scènes de la vie corse: Seppa* (Paris: Librairie Mondaine, 1890), pp. 261-2.

Parisian literature as basis for identity exploration

Parisian Corsican fiction served as a source of inspiration, or simply as material for imitation to most Francophone Corsican authors. The delay in publishing - there are twenty-four years between the publication of the first Parisian and the first Corsican prose works - indicates this. The chosen language of writing also shows that many Corsican novels were probably created with reference to existing Parisian classics. As suggested above, Francophone Corsican authors wrote mostly for Parisian consumption, since the majority of the island's population would not have been literate in French.[1] Furthermore, the recurrence of stereotypical and obvious book titles reveals that insular authors were aiming to fill a specific niche in Parisian literature: the Corsican novel. Nine out of thirteen titles contain the words 'Corse/Cyrnos' and eight contain key words associated with the island (such as 'veuve,' 'bandit,' 'makis,' [sic] 'vendetta') or recognisable place names and Corsican personalities. Other book titles are obvious references to earlier Parisian publications: Tonelli's pseudo-ethnological study *La Femme corse* (1885) seems to have been inspired by Daudet's *Étude de femme corse* (1874); Arène's *Le Dernier Bandit* (1887) can be seen as a follow-up to Maupassant's *Bandits corses* (1880) and *Un Bandit corse* (1882), completing the progression from many bandits to one bandit to the last bandit. Most nineteenth-century Corsican authors wrote in relation to an already existing genre and canon of authors, and with a specific audience in mind.

The number of literary references Corsican authors include in their texts further indicates the intertextuality between Corsican and Parisian writing. Next to abundant references to classical Greek and Roman sources (Homer being especially popular), Corsicans also refer to well-known international writers (Cervantes' *Don Quichotte* is mentioned five times by separate authors, Shakespeare is referred to five times, there are two references to George Gordon Byron and some to various Italian authors, such as Dante and Tasso) and famous French (or Francophone) authors who did not write fiction about Corsica: in order of frequency, Molière, Lamartine, Rousseau, Voltaire, La Fontaine, Beaumarchais, Hugo, Michelet, Mme de Staël, de Sainte-Pierre, Stendhal. This list gives valuable insights into nineteenth-century curriculums at French *lycées* as well as early Francophone Corsicans' general mental canons. There are also references to non-fictional works by French or Francophone authors about Corsica, such as Rousseau's *Projet de constitution pour la Corse* (1765) and Voltaire's *De la Corse* (1769), as in Nicolai's *La Mort de Vannina:*

> Il n'est peut-être aucun peuple au monde chez lequel l'amour de la patrie ait été porté à un plus haut point qu'en Corse; ce témoignage nous est donné par Voltaire et Rousseau, et

[1] French was only majoritarily used among insular speakers and readers since the 1950s. See *Encyclopædia Corsicae*, p. 813.

> nous ne connaissons personne qui ait fait avec plus de vérité, que ces deux immortels auteurs, l'étude des hommes et des nations.[1]

Rather than emitting doubts about the accuracy of truth claims emitted by foreign writers that often only remotely knew Corsica, Francophone greats are accepted as authorities on the subject and their writings as historical sources. The same goes for French canonical literary sources, which serve as the main basis for Corsican literary explorations of the island. The only Parisian author and his Corsican work referred to by name is Mérimée's *Colomba*. Both Monti (*Gennara*) and Tonelli (*Seppa*) depict this novel as the catalyst that inspires a Parisian tourist to visit Corsica:

> Un soir, il [son ami Corse] lui apporta un livre.
> - Ceci a trait à mon pays, lui dit-il; lisez-le monsieur Pérard, vous verrez comme c'est beau, la Corse.
> Le livre avait pour en-tête: *Colomba*. S'étant couché, il l'ouvrit. Soit magie du style, soit intérêt de l'action, il ne s'endormit pas avant de l'avoir complètement lu. Le lendemain, il revit son ami.
> - Vous avez raison, lui dit-il, de me vanter votre pays […].
> - M. Mérimée, qui l'a visitée, lui a rendu justice. Pourquoi n'iriez-vous pas y soulager votre affliction? […] Vous verrez comme nous aimons les étrangers, nous les recevons chez nous, en frères.
> La lecture du roman, l'assurance de son ami l'enflammèrent du désir de voyager en Corse.[2]

The book that arguably had the biggest impact on canonical Corsican fiction equally influenced insular writing. Corsican authors not only saw Mérimée as an inspiration, they also accepted his vision of Corsica as a truthful recording. Furthermore, Tonelli's figure of the reader-tourist shows that he is writing for a Parisian public, introducing his readers to his island and its highlights. It is curious that a Parisian novel serves as the basis for Tonelli's exploration of Corsicanness. Yet, the fact is that Francophone Corsican fiction, just like its Parisian counterpart, developed in the wake of *Colomba*'s success, and within the framework it offered for reading the island. *Colomba* defined the Corsican novel well into the twentieth century: as late as 1932, Marcaggi wrote a work entitled *Colomba: La Vendetta romancée et ses sources authentiques d'inspiration.*[3]

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[1] *La Mort de Vannina*, p. 3.
[2] *Gennara*, pp. 132-3.
[3] This is the title mentioned in Sandra Culioli's anthology *La Corse et la vendetta. Tome 1: Le Romantisme* (Ajaccio, DCL Éditions, 2001), p. 323. She is probably referring to Jean-Baptiste Marcaggi, *Les Sources de 'Colomba'* (n.p.: n.pub., 1928).

Over and above references by name to canonical authors, there are many resemblances in the contents of Parisian and Corsican novels. The subject matter of Corsican books can often be traced back to Parisian sources. Five Corsican authors reproduce and elaborate on passages from Maupassant, three rework Mérimée, three refer to Daudet and one to Dumas. For instance, Tonelli offers two rewritings of Maupassant's *Un Échec* (1885) in *Les Amants du Fium'Orbo* (1890) and *Marie-Madeleine* (1890). Evidently dissatisfied by the unsuccessful ending of Maupassant's coach ride of seduction, Tonelli reimagines two similar scenarios where a man and a woman, who according to social etiquette should not be together, share a coach and end up exchanging intimacies in it. These scenes are complete with all the décor Maupassant originally added, such as the exhilarating odours and the sexualised nature of Corsican landscape.[1] There are other passages of insular fiction that strongly resemble canonical works. Bartoli's *Diana Colonna* (1885), in one of its many digressions, refers to the legend Dumas used as basis for *Les Frères corses* (1844): 'Que deux compères, d'après la croyance populaire, se gardent bien de se promettre que celui des deux qui mourra le premier reviendra voir l'autre. Le serment a son effet. Le mort retourne.'[2] Another instance of thematic imitation is found in Arrighi's *La Veuve d'Arbellara* (1856), which refers to Mérimée's *Colomba* (1840) in two ways: first, the narrative is set in Arbellara, the village Mérimée visited in 1839 and that he later used for his descriptions in *Colomba*.[3] Secondly, Arrighi's cast of main characters mirrors the logic repartition of *Colomba*: Pietrino/Orso, the male Corsican hero torn between the tradition of the vendetta and the values of the French military; Scraffigna/Colomba, his female counterpart and temptress, embodying vengeance and death, and Fioravente/Lydia, the hero's intimate friend who encourages him to do the right thing. Once more, the Corsican writer was obviously dissatisfied with the ambiguity of the canonical narrative and rewrote it with a more unequivocal outcome. Whereas Mérimée left Orso's true identity quite open and fluid, Arrighi seeks to fix Pietrino's character as much as possible, killing the vengeful female protagonist before the end of the narrative and leaving no doubts about the Frenchness of Pietrino's value system. Marcaggi's pseudo-historical *Fleuve de sang* (1898) is another cross-reference to Mérimée's *Mateo Falcone* (1829), mirroring the set-up of father Mateo and son Fortunato: a bandit asks for refuge by a shepherd's family whose adolescent son François offers him his services. The father's promise in *Fleuve de sang* can be understood in connection with Fortunato's betrayal of Corsican values in *Mateo Falcone:*

[1] Philippe Tonelli, 'Marie-Madeleine' in *Scènes de la vie corse: La Vierge des makis* (Paris: Librairie Mondaine, 1890), pp. 233-4 and *Les Amants du Fium'Orbo*, p. 260.
[2] *Diana Colonna,* p. 174.
[3] *Venus d'Ille. Colomba. Mateo Falcone,* p. 179.

> - Vous le savez, d'ailleurs, ce n'est pas dans notre famille qu'on peut trouver des traîtres. […]
> Te conduiras-tu en homme, en vrai Corse sûr et loyal?
> - Oui, oui, fit François, énergiquement, de la tête.[1]

Other than the sons' names starting with the same letter, the triangle of trust and honour between bandit, father and son obviously repeats Mérimée's first Corsican story. The last Francophone Corsican novel of the nineteenth century still refers back to the first great success in canonical Corsican literature.

Besides alluding to the storylines of canonical Corsican fiction, regional authors also follow the itinerary of famous French tourists in their novels. The traveller in Tonelli's *Seppa* (1890) works through the same logic and a similar list of possible destinations as the couple in Maupassant's *Une Vie* (1883), scorning the attractions of Italy, Switzerland, England and France, and finally choosing Corsica.[2] Monti, Tonelli, Arène and Marcaggi appear to have read Daudet's and Maupassant's travel fiction, since they portray the same places and *lieux de mémoire* depicted in their works. *Gennara* (1884), *Le Naufrage de l'oncle Joseph* (1887) and *À bord de l'Euxène* (1890) refer to the shipwreck of the Sémillante described by Daudet in *L'Agonie de la Sémillante* (1869). Tonelli even has a French tourist visit the naval graveyard Daudet wrote about and the lighthouse Daudet stayed in.[3] *À bord de l'Euxène* and *Le Dernier Bandit* (1887) mirror Maupassant's description of the mysterious *calanche* stones in *Histoire corse* (1881). *Gennara* and *À bord de l'Euxène* talk extensively about the touristic attractions of Bonifacio and follow the itinerary of Maupassant's tour of the town's sea gate, sheer cliffs and sea caves in *Une Vendetta* (1883) and *Phoques et baleines* (1883). Corsican authors obviously took Parisian classics, as well as canonical authors' most recently published works, as a basis for their own writings about Corsica. They situated their narratives in a universe that had already been created by Parisians, showing that it was French canonical authors who first shaped Corsican *lieux de mémoire* and distinctive features.

Other than copying Parisian ideas, Corsican authors also imitated Parisian style. It is no accident that all ten regional authors either produced the genres of *roman de mœurs* or *roman historique*, i.e. two of the most prominent genres in nineteenth-century French writing, according to the *Dictionnaire universel des littératures*.[4] The form of the novel - and especially the two subgenres mentioned above - was of paramount importance for Francophone Corsican writers and came to denote an act of identity creation. On the one hand, Corsican authors were obviously imitating

[1] *Fleuve de sang*, pp. 27-8.
[2] *Seppa*, pp. 6-7.
[3] Philippe Tonelli, 'À bord de l'Euxène' in ibid. pp. 236-7.
[4] *Dictionnaire universel des littératures*, pp. 3259 and 3267.

whatever French canonical authors produced; for instance, Arrighi quotes statements from François Fénélon and Voltaire about how to structure a good plot.[1] On the other hand, the very idea of writing a novel was associated with Frenchness: early Francophone Corsican authors apparently felt that writing a French novel somehow makes you French, turning the genre of the *roman* into an expression of identity. Tonelli's *Le Roman de deux inconnues* frequently refers to the concept of the *roman*, and his two heroines imagine that the letters they exchange constitute a novel, which in turn expresses who they are: 'car nous vivons de notre secret, de notre roman, de notre amitié surnaturelle, en nous transmettant nos pensées, nos impressions les plus délicates, en livrant notre âme coupable au hasard d'une plume.'[2] The writers' novel and their personal lives are deeply interconnected; Hélène and Valéria see the creation of their novel as an expression of their unity and as a recreation of who they are. This concept can be applied to the community of the first Corsican authors writing in French, thus shaping and expressing their new communal identity. It is especially significant that it is a Frenchwoman and a Corsican reinventing their selfhood together, an authorial choice which points to the intertextuality and deliberate continuity between canonical and insular literature. Corsican authors saw writing in French as a way of achieving communion with their Parisian counterparts and elaborating in collaboration with them a new Corsican identity that was dependent on French definitions.

However, because the French novel was a new and somewhat foreign genre for Corsican authors, there were frequent misunderstandings about what exactly a *roman* was. Especially early writers (Arrighi, Bartoli, Peretti), but also Marcaggi, had trouble staying within the limits of the Parisian-defined genre. Their storytelling is often extremely poor and the narrative progression is not necessarily ensured. Arrighi is a prime example of this: in 286 pages, almost nothing happens; his 'novel' is essentially the report of a court trial whose main subject is already dead when the narrative begins. The author frequently forgets chronology and presupposes knowledge of facts and events that he only explains chapters later, but inserts other stories, facts and essays that have no relation to the narrative.[3] Peretti has the same predilection for stories within the story and takes a whole chapter to retell the life of Sainte Félicité.[4] Marcaggi's storytelling suffers from a surfeit of characters and events combined with extremely poor character building, to the point that the reader forgets who is who and loses any sense of logical progression to the narrative. These texts devote much space to useless digressions; for instance, Arrighi includes six pages on the practice of duelling

[1] See *La Veuve d'Arbellara* for references to Fénélon, François de Salignac de La Mothe, (p. 56) and Voltaire (p. 116).
[2] *Le Roman de deux inconnues*, p. 65.
[3] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, pp. 208-15.
[4] Leonard Cassien de Peretti, *La Veuve de Cyrnos ou Le Premier Commandement de l'Église* (Paris: A. Josse, 1860), pp. 99-105.

in France, thirty-one pages about the structure of the justice system, fourteen pages about prisons on Corsica, two pages on rhetoric and public speaking and a fourteen-page long discussion about the relative merits of the French or the English army.[1] Peretti inserts two chapters that are essentially sermons on the church's commandments and faithfulness to God.[2] Likewise, Bartoli abuses about a good half of his novel to engage in ethnology or theology. Even the dialogues are often masked lessons and essays without any relation to the plot; Arrighi and Bartoli use discussions between minor characters to sermonise about points that seemed important to them, such as their insistence on Roman Catholicism as the only true religion. Early Francophone Corsican novels sometimes resemble a collection of essays and sermons that would have served better as articles in newspapers or religious tracts. Additionally, Corsican authors' style is often extremely poor, especially Arrighi's and Bartoli's. Limited vocabulary, frequent repetition of identical structures and formulations, as well as mistakes using French tenses reveal that these authors learnt French as a foreign language and struggled to write in it. Of course, other Corsican authors such as Marchi, Colombani, Tonelli, and in particular Monti, produced good and sometimes excellent examples of French novels and seem to use the language with ease. Personally, I would see Monti's *Gennara* as the masterpiece of nineteenth-century regional Corsican novels, combining evocative prose, a skilfully-woven plot, and strong emotive images of the island. It is, like some other Corsican works, reminiscent of great Parisian writers.

Colombani, Monti, and Tonelli seem inspired by Balzac in their lengthy descriptions, endless intrigues, and in-depth psychological analysis of their characters. *La Vierge des makis* even verbatim hints at Balzac's *Illusions perdues* (1836-43).[3] Monti's *Gennara* is reminiscent of Flaubert in its realism and elaborates on the themes of famous *romans d'apprentissage*, such as Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869) or Rousseau's *Émile ou De l'éducation* (1762) – incidentally, *Gennara*'s male protagonist is called Émile. Thus, some Corsican authors successfully imitated great Parisian writers and produced 'real French novels.' Yet, the *Encyclopaedia Corsicae* argues that even these successes remain imitations without real artistic innovation:

> Ces éléments [le français comme langue étrangère et la majorité des Corses ne parlant que le Corse] ne sont pas sans effet sur la création littéraire: avoir un style, c'est s'écarter de la norme. Or, s'agissant du français, le premier souci des Corses a été d'acquérir cette norme, et de l'appliquer avec le plus de respect possible. De là l'existence au siècle passé [XIX^{e}] de bons auteurs corses en langue française, mais pas de grands écrivains à proprement parler.

[1] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, pp. 68-74 , 172-84, 223-232, 234-38, 240-44, 256-270, 175-6, 131-145.
[2] *La Veuve de Cyrnos*, pp. 5-15, pp. 86-92.
[3] *Marie-Madeleine*, p. 186.

> Les grands textes en français sur la Corse sont alors le fait d'écrivains de passage, à commencer par Mérimée, plutôt que de Corses écrivant en français.[1]

While this statement is not entirely fair, it probably reflects the majority of nineteenth-century Corsicans' writings in French. One should add that nineteenth-century regional authors faced the further disadvantage of their peripheral position, which ultimately may have been a bigger factor than language difficulties in the lack of recognition of their works as great literature.

Lastly, Corsican writers were obviously inspired by French ideas about novels and morality. Since the French moralists, it had been a received opinion that reading literature could change one's character, for better or for worse. Arrighi paraphrases Voltaire, explaining his choice not to depict the initial murder in *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, even though it is the starting point for the narrative:

> Il est impossible, a dit un écrivain français, que des tableaux de supplices sanglants n'endurcissent […] pas de tendres imaginations. Il a suffi souvent de la lecture d'un roman pour dénaturer le caractère d'un jeune homme, pour amener une révolution radicale dans ses idées et ses goûts, ses mœurs.[2]

Peretti and Colombani express similar hypotheses, foregrounding the idea of the novel and of its influence on the readers' character. Hence the idea, apparently common among early Corsican writers, of using the novel as a tool to civilise their compatriots and to teach them moral lessons:

> [L'auteur] a voulu prouver que la vengeance des lois est toujours la meilleure. […] Maintenant, les jeunes gens profiteront-ils de la leçon morale qu'il [ce livre] renferme? Nous disons les jeunes gens, car c'est pour eux, c'est pour leur offrir un utile enseignement que ce livre a été écrit.[3]

Naturally, the above quotation alludes to the vendetta, the main characteristic of uncivilised Corsica. The few insular authors whose works addressed their compatriots rather than the Parisian public - in particular Arrighi - wanted to use the genre of the novel for good, employing it as a civilising force that would change their fellow Corsicans' mores. The very fact of perceiving their traditional culture as savagery shows just how far these writers had internalised the world views propagated in canonical literature. Their interest in imitating a French genre, at least in some cases, went above

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[1] *Encyclopædia Corsicae,* p. 813.
[2] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, p. 116. Voltaire originally stated: 'Il est impossible que des tableaux, des récits de supplices sanglants n'endurcissent pas de jeunes cœurs, ne flétrissent pas de tendres imaginations. […] Le cœur s'endurcit à la lecture des romans.' Quoted in Pierre Claude Victoire Boiste, *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française, Volume I* (Brussels: Imprimerie Tencé Frères, 1828), p. 588.
[3] *Avant-propos* to *La Veuve d'Arbellara,* p. iii.

and beyond a political statement or an attempt to integrate the circle of French writers. Linking the concepts of *roman* and of *mission civilisatrice*, writing a novel in French meant placing oneself in the service of France's goal to civilise Corsica. The roman as a genre seems to have been of particular importance for Corsican writers, encapsulating the ideas of Frenchness, morality and the civilising mission. These factors lead to a somewhat predictable auto-exoticism in Corsican Francophone writing.

Seeing Corsica through French eyes

The novels show that nineteenth-century Corsican authors were aware of the presence of French travellers on their island; seven out of thirteen works mention tourists attracted by Corsica's savage reputation. Arrighi describes such a traveller:

> Ce touriste était venu en Corse pour faire des études de caractère, noter sur son album tout ce qu'il pourrait recueillir de traits, de mœurs et d'aventures tragiques, interroger la douloureuse légende des familles, les tombeaux des morts, remuer jusqu'à la boue ensanglantée des cimetières, enfin, enregistrer avec soin ce que les inimitiés présentaient d'épisodes dramatiques. La biographie de Sgraffigna ne pouvait donc manquer de l'intéresser au plus haut degré. Il trouvait que ce caractère répondait parfaitement à l'idée qu'il s'était formée de la vendetta corse.[1]

Although tourism is rarely the main subject matter of Corsican writings, authors frequently insert references to travellers. Arrighi uses the tourist's curiosity in order to describe the character of the vengeance-thirsty Scraffigna, portraying a Corsican through the eyes of a Frenchman. Such descriptions of the self through the eyes of the other show just how aware Corsican writers were of the gaze of Parisian readers, and how their narratives reproduced this way of seeing their island, consciously or not. For instance, Monti uses the eternal French tourist Pérard as a means to include stereotypical auto-exoticising material into his book that otherwise would not have found a place in it. Although entirely unrelated to the narrative of *Gennara*, Monti includes a whole chapter of Pérard's diary, recounting the Frenchman's holiday adventures with Corsican bandits - including a night chase, ghost stories, a clichéd wake and a shootout with the police, plus the added death, gore and vendettas.[2] One gets the impression that many insular authors thought a Corsican novel would not meet readers' expectations if it did not contain the exoticising clichés created by canonical authors earlier in the century. This literary phenomenon highlights the psychological *dédoublement* of the auto-exoticising author: Monti presents and sees Corsica from two opposing perspectives at

[1] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, p. 20.
[2] *Gennara*, pp. 251-280.

the same time, that of an insider and an outsider. His way of perceiving and understanding the island differs enormously depending on which role he takes. As a Corsican narrator, he writes a *roman de mœurs* entailing first-hand knowledge of Corsican society and its internal mechanisms, which does not include any references to common clichés. As a French narrator, he only notes glaring stereotypes, vendettas and bandits. Monti offers the reader two perspectives; that of a Corsican on his own society, and that of a French traveller to Corsica. These allow for fascinating insights into the phenomenon of auto-exoticism, which seems to entail a split personality on the part of the author, since Monti's identity holds two people - or at least two people's views - within one person. This split is especially obvious with later, more exclusively auto-exoticising authors such as Tonelli. The author's hybridity finds its expression in the themes of exile and in the perceived impossibility to commit to either one identity, Corsican or French. In his three books, Tonelli creates as many as seven different characters with the same predicament of being simultaneously Corsican and Parisian and yet experiencing these personalities in opposition to each other. Typically, Tonelli paints Corsicans who move to the capital and assimilate to the Parisian way of life, insisting that they cease to be true Corsicans and can never again live on Corsica:

> Aurèle d'Aëtone […] [faisait] du journalisme, de temps à autre, à Paris, pour l'amour de l'art, motivant ainsi son séjour prolongé dans la capitale. […] [A]u milieu de cette vie pleine d'insouciance, il ne songeait nullement aux rochers escarpés de son île. […] Puis un beau jour, une toquade, un rien, la voix du sang peut-être, l'avaient poussé à revoir son pays, son île de Corse qu'il aimait profondément mais où il ne pouvait vivre.[1]

Tonelli tends to focus on a perceived inability to live on Corsica, paired with the impossibility of leaving one's Corsican roots behind. This failure to reconcile two different identities leaves his characters stranded between France and their native island, exiles in both spaces. One wonders if there is autobiographical material behind Tonelli's Parisian-Corsican characters, given that he was a Corsican writer who had moved to Paris, only to continue writing about his island. Aurèle is an author, who returns to Corsica as a tourist – just like the Corsican narrator of *Une Tombe dans les makis*, coming back to the island as a traveller in search of poetic inspiration:

> Les jours que j'y passai […] je consacrai à explorer, en touriste, les environs […]. Craignant, cette fois, la nostalgie du continent, dont j'avais quitté trop brusquement les mille agitations

[1] *Marie-Madeleine*, p. 150.

> factices, je résolus de m'aventurer seul, au-delà de Cervione, pour me créer ainsi une distraction continue et pour m'abandonner à l'enivrement de la poésie.[1]

The Parisian Corsican has become a stranger in his own country, using it for literary inspiration, but unable to stay there for longer. Tellingly, the narrator looks for things a French traveller would expect from Corsica (the clichéd grave in the maquis). Once he has located them, he feeds back stereotypical stories to his Parisian readers, only to return to the capital himself. Auto-exoticism almost always seems to involve a split or at least ambivalent hybridity in the person of the author, who simultaneously embraces an insider's and an outsider's viewpoint to his own culture.

While almost all novels contain some stereotypical material, the works nearer the end of the century rely almost solely on such clichés. Tonelli's stories are overloaded with tourists and their Corsican itineraries. *Seppa* is almost entirely dedicated to tourists' experiences on Corsica: there is the Parisian René who lives the adventure of his lifetime on the island, alongside French and English tourists who go on a pleasure cruise there. The following quotation shows a Corsican auto-exoticising in order to impress a French girl and become her guide:

> Pierre sourit et raconta quelques anecdotes corses pour dépeindre les mœurs des insulaires, ses compatriotes; il décrivit des paysages charmants […]. Il parla ensuite des curiosités naturelles de l'île, entre autre les fameux calanche de Porto.[2]

Pierre has come to know his homeland through the mental map of the French travellers he is trying to astonish; the delivery of expectedly stereotypical material is the core of his strategy to seduce the French other. The figure of the tourist reveals the Corsicans' tendency for auto-exoticism in imitation of the centre's exoticism, understanding themselves through the eyes of the foreigner. Having internalised canonical representations of their island, insular authors now replicate the same discourse. Confirming Fanon's theory, Corsican natives tend to write for the centre and according to Parisian expectations; reiterating all the clichés and stereotypes about their island that canonical literature had established in the first place.

At the same time, such auto-exoticising representations encouraged and recognised a real touristic vogue for Corsica among Parisians. Like their canonical counterparts, Corsican authors actively encouraged tourism to their island, inviting their readers to discover Corsica through imagined and actual voyages. Insular writers advertised Corsica in their novels and Arène and

[1] 'Une Tombe dans les makis' in *Les Amours corses*, pp. 148-9.
[2] *À bord de l'Euxène*, p. 180.

Marcaggi even wrote tourist guides to the island.[1] Yet again, literature and tourism were intertwined and Corsican authors invited travellers to their island, often promising them refreshment and healing. While Marchi and Colombani also depict Corsica as vivifying, Tonelli in particular emphasises Corsica's power to rejuvenate the French tourist. This is best seen in *Seppa*, which describes René's experience of travel to Corsica and begins as follows:

> René d'Arcade s'ennuyait. Paris l'assourdissait […]. La satiété, terme des longues jouissances, détendit ses nerfs jusqu'à la mollesse des sens […]. René était donc arrive à la période de l'engourdissement qui le rendait apathique, indifférent. Il se mourrait d'ennui. Et pourtant il voulait vivre encore… sans savoir comment! Quelque chose l'appelait dans une autre atmosphère.[2]
>
> L'idée était lumineuse. Traverser la mer, atterrir sur une île verte mais aux rochers escarpés, courir dans la montagne où il rencontrerait assurément quelques fugitifs […]. Contempler, au loin, assis au pied d'un arbre séculaire, au bord même d'un frais ruisseau, Paris avec ses dômes et sa fourmilière. Rêver des choses de l'autre monde dans une atmosphère remplie d'enchantements […]. Oublier ensuite ce passé débordant de joies bêtes, insipides qui ne vous laissent rien dans l'âme et qui vous brisent le corps. Renaître enfin d'une vie nouvelle et pleine d'un je ne sais quoi qui donne encore des illusions.[3]

Tonelli describes Corsica much like those canonical exoticist writers who tended to juxtapose Paris' morbidity and new life found in the colonies. The island is seen as the antidote to the Parisian *malaise*, allowing the writer to acquire the illusion of a new identity. Like Daudet, Tonelli's hero goes to Corsica to find reinvigoration for body and soul. *Seppa* simply repeats the schema in which the Parisian is refreshed on exotic Corsica – just that the novel is written by a Corsican, and not a Parisian author. It is therefore a prime example of auto-exoticism.

While René's adventure is sometimes narrated in ironic overtones, the story generally confirms the Parisian myth of rebirth on Corsica. René finds all the excitement and clichéd elements he expected, including savage nature and half-savage insulars with strange mores. The narrative focuses on the Parisian's encounter with the indigenous girl Seppa, whose exotic otherness motivates him to rape her. Forced by Seppa's brother to ritually marry her, René is allowed to leave the girl for dead after the ceremony and leave for Paris without any further form of reparation.

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[1] Jean-Baptiste Marcaggi, *En voyage. Carnet de route (En Corse)* (Ajaccio: Robaglia et Zevaco, 1894) and *L'Île de Corse. Guide pratique* (Ajaccio: Éditions du Syndicat d'Initiative, 1906). Arène collaborated for the second edition of *Guide pratique* in 1908.
[2] *Seppa*, pp. 3-5.
[3] Ibid. pp. 8-9.

Seppa is left behind to live a reclusive widow's life while René takes up his former existence in the capital:

> Apres avoir parcouru le pays […], il rentra à Paris. […] Seulement son cœur ne souffrait plus de ce dégout de la vie, de cet état morbide du corps qui lui faisait éloigner les bruyants divertissements. […] Il reprit sa vie, non celle d'autrefois, mais celle d'un homme préoccupé et envahi par une idée fixe. Paris lui paraissait un autre monde, plus souriant, mais plus banal que celui de la Corse qui ne cessait de hanter son esprit. Il [la] revoyait au milieu de ses mélancolies fréquentes […]. Puis, au milieu de cette vision profonde, attachante, apparaissait Seppa, la pauvre bergère qui entrait dans une nouvelle vie au milieu des spasmes d'amour et de larmes, il la voyait épouvantée et souriante, il la sentait morte et nerveuse dans ses bras, il respirait son haleine sauvage et pure, il touchait son corps tout imprégné de suavité qui le rendait fou, et cette morbidesse de la chair excitait encore davantage ses sens naguère pleins de mollesse et de désenchantement. Il revoyait tout cela […]; il retombait encore dans une profonde méditation, en fermant les yeux comme pour être transporté de nouveau dans cette terre perdue au milieu des flots et inondée par les rayons d'un soleil éclatant.[1]

The Parisian traveller has obtained what the exotic myth had promised: Corsica has given him new life. Once more, Tonelli's work is reminiscent of famous exoticists such as Loti, who frequently wrote about renewal in exotic lands by means of a love affair with indigenous women (e.g. *Aziyadé,* 1879; *Le Roman d'un Spahi,* 1881; *Le Mariage de Loti,* 1882; *Madame Chrysanthème,* 1887). The parallels are striking: in each case, the Frenchman takes sexual advantage of a submissive colonial subject; their relationship serves to reinvigorate the man but cannot last and most often ends with the (figurative) death of the woman. Seppa is therefore a colonialist narrative, showing a coloniser who has lived out his wildest fantasies on exotic terrain and gained life through the death of the colonial object - notice how Seppa's 'nouvelle vie' is equated with death. Only in this case, Seppa is a thoroughly colonialist story written by an indigenous author who takes for granted and further propagates the power-imbalance perpetuated in canonical literature.

Most nineteenth-century Corsican works have auto-exoticising aspects, repeating clichés that readers are already familiar with and buying into the world view created by Parisian literature. Early Corsican authors tend to advertise their island to potential tourists by promising them exactly the stereotypes they would expect. Much like their canonical counterparts, Corsican works depict the island as a perfect holiday location for adventurers and frequently show French tourists on

[1] *Seppa,* pp. 58-60.

Corsica and their search for and experiences of what they imagine to represent the authentically Corsican. Starting with nature and landscape, Corsican works more or less repeat the pattern set by the Parisian greats. Early novels give little attention to descriptions of nature; these become more frequent in the last third of the century. Those writers who portray landscape show the same ambivalence present in canonical literature: Corsica's nature is seen as heaven and hell, fertile and savage, life-giving and death-bringing. Peretti, Colombani, Monti, Bartoli, and Tonelli describe Corsica in terms of these opposites; Arène generally presents the island as mostly agricultural and fundamentally non-threatening, while Nicolai and Marcaggi tend to emphasise Corsica's savage and dangerous aspects:

> René, saisi d'admiration, se demandait si c'était bien là la Corse sauvage où les bandits poussent comme des cryptogames, où les cris de la vendetta légendaire emplissent les échos des vallons, il se demandait aussi si Dieu n'avait pas placé, là, sur les bords de cette nappe d'eau, son paradis terrestre où l'amour exhala son premier râle.[1]

Depictions of Corsica's nature generally oscillate between the opposite poles of savagery and beauty. Within the second category, the island appears as a lost paradise, as in this quotation by Bartoli:

> Sous ce climat fortuné, où les ardeurs du soleil sont tempérées par la brise des montagnes, par les zéphyrs de la mer, les jours s'écoulent sans nuages; la joie y est sans tristesse. […] 0 [sic] fortunés habitants des champs! Qui ne jalouserait votre bonheur! Leurs jours s'écoulent dans la joie; ils sont exempts de préoccupations, d'inquiétudes. […] Leur vie frugale se contente de pain, de laitage; comme boisson, ils ont l'eau claire d'une fontaine, le courant limpide d'un ruisseau.[2]

Bartoli's portrait mixes reflections about the advantages of rural and provincial life (a nostalgia frequently entertained in nineteenth-century French literature) with the promise of a land of plenty. Much like in Daudet's descriptions, Corsica becomes an 'île-paradis,' an exotic space preserved from the advance of modernity and self-sufficient. Again, there is a slippage between the provincial and the colonial space; Corsica is oscillating between both spheres. At other times, the island's descriptions echo colonial discourses more clearly, especially in Tonelli's writings, where the land is sexualised and described as a woman ready be conquered. This is most evident in his rewritings of Maupassant's coach ride, which combine sexualised descriptions of nature with sex scenes inside the coach.

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[1] *Seppa*, p. 17.
[2] *Diana Colonna*, pp. 9-10.

> La voiture suivait le littoral plein de richesse et de poésie. À droite, la mer immense avec son ondulation paresseuse toute empourprée des premiers rayons du soleil. Les vagues venaient mourir, sans gémissements, sur le rivage ensablé […] pour donner des caresses à la nature amoureuse en son réveil. À gauche, toute la vie, frémissante comme une femme possédée d'amour. […] [L]a voiture allait toujours, sous cette atmosphère imprégnée de senteurs marines et de parfums terrestres, au milieu de cet enchantement qui pénétrait le voyageur.[1]

Tonelli obviously copies Maupassant, one of the most colonialist canonical authors, as shown in the previous chapter. Like his Parisian role model, the passage also establishes a link between Corsica's nature and the characters' behaviour, hinting that the island influences those who set foot on it. Montesquieu's idea that the soil influences its inhabitants is also present in regional Corsican writings, as expressed by Bartoli:

> Ciamanacce […] se trouve dans le creux d'un vallon. Des montagnes abruptes, des collines aux pentes rapides, dangereuses, l'entourent de toutes parts. Ce sont des forts naturels, redoutables; ils le protègent contre toute incursion étrangère. Une rivière le baigne; c'est un torrent rapide, aux bords escarpés. Le sol est aride, ingrat. Il a une fâcheuse influence sur la population. Celle-ci, en effet, est dure, batailleuse. Rarement se passe-t-il une année sans assassinats.[2]

As stated above, Corsican works generally focus more on descriptions of people than on portrayals of nature. However, when the island's nature is depicted, this usually serves to make a point about its inhabitants' character. Most often, Corsica is shown as savage in order to explain the islanders' savage behaviour - conforming to canonical discourses about the authentically Corsican, starting with nature and finishing with people and mores.

Any element canonical literature identifies as truly Corsican is repeated by insular authors. Ten out of ten authors write about the themes of honour and vengeance; nine out of ten associate Corsica with violent deaths and six out of ten portray bandits. These statistics give a fair impression of just how stereotypical nineteenth-century Corsican fiction is, and how far insular authors' representations were shaped by Parisian ideas. The cliché of the savage, bloodthirsty and hot-headed Corsican created by canonical authors is perpetuated ad infinitum, as exemplified in *Gennara*:

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[1] *Les Amants du Fium'Orbo,* p. 260.
[2] *Diana Colonna,* pp. 93-4.

> Nos caractères sont aigris, sont féroces. La haine de l'ennemi se transmet de père en fils, et cette haine, qui nous rend aveugle, nous pousse à nous venger de tout ce que nous regardons comme une injustice, comme un attentat à nos droits. Jamais cette île ne perdra ses mœurs.[1]

Insular authors continue to give French readers the impression that vendettas are the only distinctively Corsican phenomena. The point is not that there is no factual truth to these stories; vendettas and bandits did exist on Corsica. Yet, authorial choices were made to give these elements prominence, when Corsican writers could have presented any number of other things to their readers. Nonetheless, they insist on perpetuating exactly the definitions of Corsicanness found in canonical literature. This fixation on repeating already existing discourses is best seen in Bartoli, who lists pseudo-ethnological explanations of all known stereotypes in a fourteen-page-long digression figuring deathbed scenes, voceri by Corsican women, family honour, the practice of vengeance, iconic widows and their sons raised for the vendetta, killings, villages in states of war and bandits.[2]

Corsican authors not only reuse clichés, but also characters. Insular fiction sports a set of types that readers of canonical fiction were already familiar with; in general, the protagonists are more one-dimensional than their prototypes. Given that rapid socio-political and cultural change generated an anxiety over the instability of Corsican identity within the new construct of the French nation, insular authors either show protagonists that are split in two - as seen in Tonelli's novels - or else resort to reductive caricatures, translating their attempts to generate and fix meaning. Regarding one-dimensional figures, insular novels usually sport the stereotypical Corsican man, obviously modelled on famous canonical savages such as Mateo Falcone, Piombo, or Pietri: strong, coldblooded and controlled by the Corsican codex of honour and the strong emotions of love/hatred, which are surprisingly permeable. The bandit, as described in this quotation from *Le Roi de la montagne,* is a particularly iconic figure that finds wide-spread employment in Corsican fiction, especially with writers later in the century:

> Avec des cheveux longs et une barbe hirsute, toute noire, il possédait des yeux plus noirs encore, au regard aigu, plutôt brutal que bestial. Dans cette frondaison de poils emmêlés on distinguait à peine la bouche et, lorsqu'elle s'ouvrait, elle laissait entrevoir des dents, dont il ne manquait pas une, jaunes et pointues. Brusco était petit et trapu, avec un cou ramassé de sanglier, et des pieds et des mains habitués aux rudes marches et aux rudes besognes. Ce corps brut était recouvert d'un vêtement en poil de chèvre, cent fois déchiré, cent fois

[1] *Gennara*, pp. 262-3.
[2] *Diana Colonna,* pp. 134-48.

> rapiécé. […] C'est vieux, c'est défroqué, mais ça n'en abrite pas moins son homme et ça fait souvent l'admiration du voyageur snob qui passe.[1]

Of course, not all men in Corsican fiction are bandits. Especially earlier authors take great pains to produce Frenchified protagonists, like Arrighi's or Colombani's Pietrinos. Other writers use the same basic type, but employ it to create a heroic figure (Bartoli's Alphonso, Marchi's Joseph, Nicolai's Sampiero). However, most novels present one-dimensional male characters to the reader and paint them with a good measure of auto-exoticism. This becomes particularly obvious in the last third of the century, when Corsican fiction produces almost exclusively stereotypical savage males like the one described above by Monti. The dimension of the traveller admiring the Corsican bandit makes the author's auto-exoticism all the more obvious; he knows the expectations of French literary tourists and consciously meets them. Corsican prose adds another layer to the cliché of the male that canonical writers had not yet explored: the dominant figure of the brother watching over his sister's virginity. Balzac's and Mérimée's focus on the father-daughter relationship is replaced by a pairing of brother and sister - a dynamic explored already in *Colomba*. Remarkably many Corsican works sport a brother discovering his sister's lost virginity and taking drastic measures (threatening) to kill his sister and/or her lover/rapist. Initially, this strand of action plays into the same schema as *Mateo Falcone*, portraying the uncompromising nature of Corsican honour that Parisian readers have shuddered at since Mérimée's classic. It also adds a new element to the idea of Corsican family honour. Furthermore, it serves to introduce the subject of the Corsican woman and to attract the readers' attention to her beauty, purity and vulnerability, as well as to her potential sexual exploitability.

Next to the bestial male, Corsican authors emphasise female characters, who are generally beautiful and/or savage, typically falling into exactly the two categories decried by feminist critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar: saints or monsters.[2] Like Mérimée, Balzac and Sue, insular authors tend to describe the Corsican women's mesmerising beauty, but also their dangerous unpredictability. Bartoli creates a semi-goddess in *Diana Colonna*:

> À sa taille élancée, à son visage gracieux, à ses yeux noirs, étincelants, on l'aurait prise pour une déesse; elle en avait la démarche, toute la beauté. Sa chevelure tombait en cadence sur

[1] *Le Roi de la montagne,* pp. 49-50.
[2] Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1979).

> les épaules, au gré des vents. A sa course folle à travers cette campagne boisée, on aurait dit Diana dont elle portait le nom, parcourant les forêts de l'Œta.[1]

Bartoli's comparison with a Greek goddess is only one instance of a wider framework of representations in which insular writers set up the ideal of the saint-like, pure and submissive Corsican woman. This ideal finds another expression in Tonelli's *La Vierge des makis*, which aligns the female protagonist Léria with Mary the Mother of God or Christ himself. Because of her saintly attitude and purity, Léria is able to reconcile her community, eventually shedding her own blood as atoning sacrifice.

> On aurait dit que la voix de Léria, son image sainte et la grandeur de son âme, avaient jeté une espèce de confusion étrange dans l'esprit surexcité des assistants, et que la colère sourde, la haine et la vengeance qui régnaient en eux, avaient fait place, instantanément, à une accalmie surnaturelle, incompréhensible même, étant donné le caractère ferme, inébranlable, des Corses.[2]

This exemplary Corsican woman is referred to as 'la plus noble, la plus vertueuse, la plus sainte des femmes.'[3] The image of the saint is in stark contrast to Tonelli's second novel contained in the same book, *Marie-Madeleine*, which recounts the fall of a pure widow into sexual immorality. While *La Vierge des makis* is an allusion to Saint Mary, *Marie-Madeleine* hints at Saint Mary Magdalene, famously associated with prostitution.[4] Tonelli's combination of these contrasting characters exemplifies the split between two categories of females in Francophone insular literature. Corsican authors often add an exotic/colonialist dimension to their female characters, enhancing their sensuality and vulnerability and suggesting that they are available for possession through seduction and/or rape. *Seppa* is the best example for this dynamic, endorsing a power imbalance between Frenchman and Corsican woman:

> Cette enfant, innocente, […] semblait se livrer à cet inconnu inconsciemment, sans analyse, mais avec un sentiment d'intimité qui ressemblait à un acquiescement […]; elle n'avait plus la force de résister à ce transport que René qualifiait d'amour et qui l'enivrait si étrangement. Cette sensation primitive avait engendré, dans la rutilance du rêve, d'autres sensations plus violentes, des désirs sans fin, une lascivité avec toutes ses extravagances. Le sang corse bouillonnait en elle, […] la rendait plus lâche dans ses désirs, plus nerveuse dans

[1] *Diana Colonna,* p. 15.
[2] *La Vierge des Makis,* p. 110.
[3] Ibid. p. 90.
[4] See for example Henri Lacordaire, *Sainte Marie-Madeleine* (Paris: Poussielge-Rusand, 1860), pp. 15-6.

> ses étreintes; elle voyait pour la première fois un homme semblable, avec le teint clair, l'habit fin, le langage doux et passionné. […] René semblait s'assouvir comme un homme affamé. L'idée que cette jeune fille était vierge de corps et d'âme le rendait presque brutal. Il la mordait et palpait sa chair comme un avare son trésor.[1]

Firstly, Tonelli shows a colonial - one might almost say mixed-race - sexual encounter with no consequences for the French rapist and the implicit consent of his exotic object. Secondly, he portrays the loss of innocence and the awakening of primitive instincts in a typical Corsican girl. What really determines the outcome of this encounter, it seems, is not so much the force of the rapist as the instinctual make-up of his target. Seppa is not portrayed as a victim of rape, but as a victim of her own, typically Corsican, instincts. This reinforces the cliché of the Corsican woman as an incalculable and primitive being prone to give in to, and be driven by, her primeval desires.

Instinctual abandon is the most important aspect of the portrayal of Corsican women in insular literature. In their monster type, they are usually shown to be controlled by their primitive, animalistic nature, which comes out clearly in their endorsement of the vendetta. Many authors, first of all Bartoli, portray women as the main instigators and perpetrators of vengeance. Women, and particularly widows, provoke and desire killings; the men who execute them are merely weapons at their disposal. Similar dynamics can already by observed in Mérimée's *Colomba*, where the female lead does all she can to inspire vengeance in her brother. Colomba's fierceness had impressed Parisian readers precisely because she was a woman. Her character contained traits a nineteenth-century woman should have, such as beauty and graciousness, as well as elements completely foreign to the French ideal of civilised femininity, such as her forcefulness and vindictiveness. Locating stereotypically Corsican attitudes in a female exterior allowed Mérimée to shock his readers and create a sense of both attraction and danger. Corsican authors employed the same strategy, creating a myriad of vengeful female monsters and even blaming the vendetta on women in general. These type-casts tend to be more one-dimensional than Colomba, as can be seen in Arrighi's Scraffigna, the antagonist of Frenchified Pietrino:

> Pour compléter la peinture du caractère de cette vieille femme, véritable incarnation de l'esprit de vengeance, dont le type n'est malheureusement pas un être de raison, ni une création de roman, […] [v]oici comment on s'exprimait dans un mémoire judiciaire en parlant de cette femme: 'Ses pensées sont des projets de meurtre; les vengeances, les seules joies de sa vie. Pareille à ces divinités barbares pour lesquelles il n'y avait point de libations plus agréables que le sang des victimes humaines, il faut aussi du sang pour

[1] *Seppa*, pp. 37-8.

> l'apaiser. Née pour le mal, elle ne respire que la haine: la haine est la condition de sa vie, la cause des malheurs d'un village entier, un obstacle permanent au retour de la paix et de la sécurité au sein des familles décimées par le meurtre.'[1]

While Scraffigna occupies the same position in the plot as Colomba - next of kin to the possible avenger and the main force inciting him to vengeance and opposing his civilised ideals -, her character is much less ambivalent. She is ugly, old, and evil. Scraffigna's evil nature is overstated to the extreme in episodes that attempt to fix her identity as much as possible; Arrighi insists she was born with canines already formed in her mouth; she dies without having received her last rites and instead talks to the priest about her vendetta; no grass ever grows on her grave and the locals believe she is cursed for eternity. The canines are not the only indicator that Scraffigna belongs to the animal realm; Arrighi also compares her to a tiger, just like Colomba. Other metaphors associate the old woman with demonic forces and the devil in person. 'Sgraffigna était la vengeance personnifiée, la vengeance habillée en femme.'[2] Not content with Arrighi's overstatement of the female monster, Tonelli took things even further and created the first female avenger in Corsican literature in *Benedetta*. At the demand of her dead lover's mother, Benedetta braves the maquis and finds her lover's killer, stabs him and cuts off his hand to bring back to the widow. The story is described in gruesome detail and ends with the two women burning the hand on a bonfire, accompanied by a ghostly apparition of their victim. The strategy of shocking readers through female violence was well exploited by Corsican authors, who seemed to outbid each other in a competition to draft even more cruel female characters. Insular women come to personify Corsica's savage and brutal side.

The figure that best embodies the island's desolation is the widow, a recurring character in many Corsican works. The widow can be both angel - like Arrighi's and Peretti's brave women who do the right thing - and demon, inciting others to vengeance as in Arrighi, Monti and Tonelli. However, it is through the abandoned widow that writers communicate the desperation of Corsica's situation and the harsh reality of a land ruled by blood honour and vendettas. Her helplessness calls for a strong saviour figure and opens up the possibility of depicting France as the knight in shining armour. Women and widows in particular come to represent Corsica as a whole: a land caught between beauty and bestiality and in need of external help. Setting out to explore what is authentically Corsican, regional literature never really manages to get away from the road already set out by Parisian fiction, instead giving in to auto-exoticism. The question 'what is Corsica' is

[1] *La Veuve d'Arbellara,* pp. 86-7.
[2] Ibid. p. 111.

ultimately answered with 'the vendetta,' making this vengeance rite the most characteristic element of the island's identity and the main signifier of the difference between France and Corsica.

From Genoese 'oppression' to French 'liberation'

Next to accusing particular social groups - such as women -, blame for the vendetta is generally attributed to the abuse of power by the Genoese government. As shown above, insular authors tend to qualify the four hundred years of Genoese rule on Corsica as oppression, and many of them identify the Corsican fight for independence against Genoa as one of the most important moments in the island's past. History is simplified to the extreme, representing the Genoese as essentially evil, as in Bartoli's description: 'Ses habitants [de Gènes] sont cruels, traîtres; ils savent au besoin se servir du venin, du poignard d'un sicaire. C'est le plus infâme, le plus lâche, le plus déloyal de tous les peuples.'[1] Most Corsican fiction paints the world in black and white, showing the poor islanders versus their Genoese oppressors. And since all Corsican authors agree that the vendetta is an evil that plagues their island, it is convenient to represent it as an outcome of Genoese rule, as in this passage from *Gennara*:

> D'où vient la vendetta? De l'oppression génoise. Si la justice avait été justice et non prostituée, nous aurions ressemblé aux autres peuples […]. Mieux que personne je connais l'esprit de nos villages. Il suffirait de quelques administrateurs probes et intelligents pour ramener les Corses à des idées de modération.[2]

This opinion, which Arrighi and Marcaggi state just as vigorously, is not new; non-fictional French authors had long since expressed the hypothesis that the Corsicans started to carry out their own justice because the Genoese courts would not dispense justice to the islanders. Félix Bertrand, a French advocate employed in Bastia from 1858 onwards, wrote in 1870:

> La Corse, il y a à peine quelques années, se débattait encore sous le poids d'une oppression sanglante. Le banditisme, dont l'origine remonte à l'invasion génoise, semblait défier la société et accuser la civilisation d'impuissance. […] Cette rébellion qui paraît si étrange, lorsqu'on songe qu'elle est parvenue à se maintenir dans un département français, en plein XIX^{e} siècle, n'a pu être définitivement vaincue que sous le gouvernement actuel.[3]

Both quotations offer a remarkably similar analysis of the situation: Corsica's savage mores and problems stem from the time when Genoa owned the island. Left to their own devices, the Corsicans are caught in moral paroxysm; they need outside help and a firm government to civilise them. By

[1] *Diana Colonna,* p. 354.
[2] *Gennara,* p. 263.
[3] *La Vendetta, le banditisme et leur suppression,* pp. 1-2.

inference, France, the homeland of civilisation, should play this role. As mentioned in the section on historiography, Corsican authors tend to rewrite history in such a way that Corsica appears destined to be liberated by France; in Monti's words: 'Ils restèrent des citoyens libres en devenant français.'[1] Marchi, Nicolai, Bartoli and Tonelli do their best to show continuity between Corsica's fight for independence from Genoa and its annexation to France. This evident contradiction is often smoothed over in the character of Sampiero:

> Le Banni [Sampiero] aimait la Corse; […] devançant son temps, il ne voyait sur la carte du monde que la France qui put combler de sa gloire le bras de mer qui séparait son île de l'Europe.[2]

French rule and Genoese oppression are juxtaposed in the person of Sampiero, suddenly making France's power seem an improvement worth aspiring to. Firmly attaching Corsica to France, Francophone insular authors tend to understand their island's annexation as liberation and sometimes even paradoxically equate it with Corsican independence. Conforming to France's self-image as the most civilised of nations, Corsican authors identify France with progress, advancement and humanism, seeing France and its capital Paris as 'reine de la civilisation.'[3] Only France can do what Genoa was unable to achieve, pacifying the island and bringing justice and civilisation to its somewhat primitive inhabitants.

Buying into the *mission civilisatrice* proclaimed by Parisian authors, Corsican writers show the French government pacifying and civilising their savage compatriots. Eight out of ten authors propagate typical colonial discourses about the necessity to educate and humanise Corsica's inhabitants. Since the vendetta is the main signifier of insular backwardness, they support the French in their fight against this purportedly savage practice, as seen in these passages by Bartoli and Arrighi:

> Aussi qui dirait les ravages que fait la vendetta dans ce malheureux pays? Des familles entières s'éteignent, disparaissent; elles sont détruites par le fer d'un assassin. Leurs noms mêmes sont oubliés. Qui mettra un terme à ce fléau destructeur qui ensanglante la Corse? C'est le gouvernement.[4]

> [L]e droit de se venger soi-même n'est écrit que dans le code des peuples sauvages […]. Or la raison dit que sous un gouvernement juste et fort, la vengeance privée n'a plus ni motif ni

[1] *Quand j'étais bandit*, p. 101.
[2] *La Mort de Vannina*, p. 8.
[3] *Les Amours corses*, p. 32.
[4] *Diana Colonna*, p. 145.

> excuse […]; elle doit disparaître entièrement devant un pouvoir judiciaire ferme et incorruptible.[1]

French rule is justified through the ideal of the civilising mission: France's rigorous and just government will forever end the vendetta and civilise the Corsicans. Special attention is paid to the praiseworthiness of the French justice system on the island; Arrighi in particular devotes his whole book to showing that French judges are trustworthy, urging his fellow Corsicans to submit to their benevolent authority. In order to legitimise France's ownership of Corsica, and to create a stable relationship between island, mainland and insular identity, Corsican authors follow the strategies seen in canonical literature. In an auto-exoticising movement, they accept the definition of their compatriots as savages in need of civilisation, and consequently welcome France as a magnanimous educating power. Corsica is seen as dependent upon France and Corsican authors accept this dependency as justification for French rule. This, of course, is 'unqualified assimilation' as analysed by Fanon, whereby the first native intellectuals of any given colony copy dominant trends of central colonial discourses, completely estrange themselves from their root culture, and even call for the coloniser to overturn it.[2]

Nineteenth-century insular writers generally support France's self-proclaimed goal to civilise Corsica by eradicating the vendetta, even though some (especially Monti) do not agree with the methods used (prohibition of weapons for Corsicans, multiplication of police patrols, arbitrary arrests, involvement of French cavalry, armed forces etc.). Many writers speak out for tighter control of the island by the French government; some authors (Arrighi, Monti, Tonelli) are even in favour of suspending the Corsicans' right to vote, on the grounds that Corsican culture is not yet adapted to democracy and that elections only cause violence. Again, the opinions voiced by these writers curiously resemble Bertrand's argumentation in his essay on *La Vendetta, le banditisme et leur suppression*. The government official devotes six pages to explaining the '[d]angers des réunions publiques' on Corsica, arguing that public meetings - and elections in particular - arouse violent passions in the Corsicans and invariably lead to murders.[3] The islanders are consequently denied access to French citizenship and assigned the role of children in need of parental guidance. Some authors suggest that France's civilising mission must be achieved, if necessary, by force. These writers (particularly Arrighi and Marcaggi) tend to paint the French authorities as peace-keeping forces and Corsica as a war-zone:

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[1] *Avant-Propos* to *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, pp. iii - iv.
[2] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 86.
[3] *La Vendetta, le banditisme, et leur suppression,* pp. 104-110.

> Une collision sanglante était à craindre […]. Les Barilli voulaient tout saccager, tout exterminer à Marignana. Ils furent contenus à grand-peine par deux brigades de voltigeurs. Le village était occupé militairement, le port des armes apparentes interdit, les rassemblements défendus. Les voltigeurs avaient établi leur quartier général à Marignana. Ils procédaient chaque jour à l'arrestation arbitraire de nombreux parents de Massoni, comme coupables de recel et les expédiaient dans les prisons d'Ajaccio. Le bandit était devenu invisible.[1]
>
> Le conflit, conflit sanglant, était évité grâce à l'attitude énergique des voltigeurs qui mettaient les gens en état d'arrestation à la moindre velléité belliqueuse.[2]

Marcaggi's book paints the killings around the community of Marignana in such a way that French military presence and a general clampdown seem necessary. In the end, the government wins; all bandits are executed and the remaining inhabitants are so impressed that they never want to wage vendettas again. Marcaggi, the last Corsican writer of the nineteenth century, repeats exactly the same discourse Arrighi propagated forty-two years earlier, describing a Corsican community in turmoil and insisting that a few exemplary condemnations suffice for the whole population to change its ways. Following this suppression, all of Arbellara's inhabitants lay down their weapons and return to agriculture, creating lasting prosperity and peace for the community. Repression and military force are justified on the grounds of the *mission civilisatrice*, since France's clampdown is shown to miraculously change native culture – without need for further explanation. The idea seems to be that the end justifies the means, whereby French military involvement will somehow transform the Corsicans into mature human beings and result in material ease and peace for the island. The French are shown to be an indispensable peace-keeping force without which the natives would not be able to let go of the primitive ways of life from which they suffer. In Arrighi's words,

> Nous voulons être assimilés aux autres départements de la France continentale pour les droits politiques et les institutions judiciaires […]. Une vigoureuse répression est nécessaire, tant pis pour ceux qui ont des démêlés avec la justice.[3]

Arrighi implies that the Corsicans want to have access to citizenship; on the understanding that savages are only fit to be subjects, but civilised men have the right to citizenship. His somewhat paradoxical logic proclaims that repression will transform primitive Corsicans into civilised Frenchmen. This, then, completes France's mission statement on Corsica: to rule a savage people by

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[1] *Fleuve de sang,* pp. 75-6.
[2] Ibid. p. 84.
[3] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, p. 159.

force and mould them into mature human beings, on the understanding that they will be given the right to French citizenship once their transformation is complete. Of course, this is typical colonialist logic, justifying colonial rule through the necessity to educate and humanise its subjects. Many Francophone Corsican authors seemed to believe in this *mission civilisatrice*.

From Savages to Frenchmen

While positing an initial gap between civilised Frenchmen and savage Corsicans, insular authors generally insist that their compatriots can be educated and become fully-fledged French citizens. Having interiorised the discourse of the civilising mission, Corsican writers believe in its success and are eager to show that it is bearing fruit. Apart from police and judiciary action, Corsican prose fiction identifies three further instruments of assimilation: three sources show Frenchification through the school system, six mention (temporary) emigration to France and six books insist on the importance of military service for the Corsicans' education. Of course, schooling is linked to emigration in so far as Corsicans had to go to the continent to receive higher education for much of the nineteenth century, a fact that is echoed in the novels. Emigration to the continent was also necessary for Corsican men who completed their military service, the aspect most emphasised by Corsican writers. It is perhaps not coincidental that military service is the factor mentioned most often in the creation of mimic men - famously, Mérimée's Orso - in canonical literature. Insular works also show the French army offering education on several levels, providing linguistic, practical and moral instruction for Corsicans:

> - As-tu connu le caporal Antonorsi? Eh bien! il est à la veille d'être nommé sous-lieutenant.
> - Qui, lui? demanda Pietrino. Au régiment il ne savait pas même faire un o avec un morceau de roseau.
> - Oui, mais il a suivi l'école du régiment avec tant d'assiduité, d'ardeur et de profit, qu'au bout de deux ans il pouvait le disputer en instruction et spécialement en comptabilité, aux meilleurs sergents majors de l'armée.[1]

The military is seen as an institution that instructs savages and peasants, providing them with basic education and a different – and specifically French – outlook on life. The integration of Corsicans into the French army is highly controversial; Peretti and Monti criticise the military service as corrupting men's characters, whereas other writers (notably Bartoli and Tonelli) praise the exploits of Corsican soldiers in France's - often colonial - endeavours and create the myth of the Corsicans' special aptitude for battle. In any case, there is a consensus that the military makes Corsicans into Frenchmen, for better or for worse. In general, Corsican writers follow Mérimée's description of the

[1] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, p. 217.

army's effects on Orso, showing Corsicans whose mind-set was changed, causing them to despise the vendetta and prefer civilised French ways of settling disputes, as in the following passage by Tonelli:

> François Quillini venait de rentrer au village […] après avoir accompli ses sept ans de service militaire. Il y revenait avec l'esprit nouveau d'un homme ayant vécu en terre de France. Il avait appris à hausser les épaules devant une niaiserie et à ne conserver nullement le souvenir des querelles locales, souvent si bêtes dans leurs débuts. Certes, il se promettait de ne point changer sa nouvelle nature […]. Quillini regarda son fils et se demanda s'il était devenu fou. Son séjour sur le continent l'avait complètement changé, lui, si bouillant dans son jeune âge.[1]

Fittingly named, François has been civilised and educated by his stay in France. The ultimate sign of François' conversion to Frenchness is his resolute non-endorsement of his father's vendetta, a commitment he upholds unfalteringly all the way through the narrative. François is just one of many protagonists in Corsican novels who are shown to have completely assimilated to France.

Corsican writers revisit the crucial question posed - and largely unresolved - in canonical literature of whether Corsicans can truly become French. As seen in the previous chapter, the Parisian greats had remained sceptical in their analysis, painting the Corsicans as mimic men surrounded by ambivalence and at best uneasily admitting the civilised insulars into the national self. Corsican writers, in turn, create Frenchified insulars, but do their best to highlight that these are not ambivalent mimic men and insist that they can become French. In order to get this message across, insular authors rewrite similar scenarios to those explored in canonical works; eight out of ten authors portray Frenchified Corsicans with identity conflicts and then show how these are overcome. Most obviously, *La Veuve d'Arbellara* reimagines *Colomba*'s all too ambivalent mimic man Orso. Following the pattern established by Mérimée, Arrighi attempts to fix the mimic man's identity and to make him fully French. The initial set-up is identical: Pietrino/Orso comes back from his military service to find that his next of kin has been killed. Tradition assigns him the role of avenger and a close female family member (Scraffigna/Colomba) works hard to arouse his anger. Caught between Corsican vengeance traditions and his French military ideas of honour and civility, Pietrino is given moral support by captain Fioravente (replacing Lydia):

> Cependant, chez le neveu [Pietrino], le Corse luttait toujours contre le soldat. […] Chaque fois […] que la tante Sgraffigna le ramenait au milieu des traditions et des tristes souvenirs

[1] *Les Amants du Fium'Orbo,* pp. 246-8.

> de sa famille, les mauvaises pensées l'emportaient. Qu'il se fût rencontré alors avec Domizio, qu'on l'eût placé dans une embuscade, et le sergent d'Afrique devenait assassin […]; il aurait vengé la mort de Laurenzio […]. Mais lorsque, au contraire, il repassait dans son esprit les observations si justes, si sensées du vieux capitaine, lorsque, se reportant par la pensée sur le continent ou sous la tente, il y retrouvait des idées et des sentiments si opposés à ceux de la vieille Sgraffigna, Pietrino rejetait loin de lui tous ces projets homicides, toutes ces tentations funestes qui, sans ce contrepoids salutaire, l'eussent déjà entraîné au crime.[1]

Like Mérimée, Arrighi identifies two conflicting influences on Corsican protagonist, insular tradition and continental civilisation. Mérimée shows Orso as torn between these values and leaves the outcome of his internal struggle open, putting a big question mark behind the interrogation whether Corsicans can become truly French. Arrighi, on the other hand, only uses Pietrino's internal conflict as a starting point for his argument. In the remainder of his book, Pietrino decides to help the police arrest Domizio and then patiently trusts the French judges to punish him. This plan works without any further complications, allowing Arrighi to show that Pietrino has managed to shake off his Corsican side completely. He has been saved by French reasoning, his time in France and the lessons learned in the French army, including - remarkably - during his time fighting in overseas colonies.[2]

Colombani's Pietrino is another example of a Corsican writer's attempt to answer to Parisian scepticism. Colombani starts his novel by insisting that the Corsicans have changed and are no longer bandits or mimic men:

> Je n'oserais pas vous présenter, non plus au public dont je redoute le jugement, un de ces Corses d'autrefois […], le fusil en bandoulière, bardé de pistolets et de poignards, courant le maquis, semant la mort à pleines mains: insignes dont il est convenu d'affubler cet être, aujourd'hui fantastique, appelé le *Bandit corse*. Assez d'autres ont amusé leurs lecteurs à nos dépens et nous ont prêté beaucoup de travers et d'exploits. Le jeune homme dont il est ici question est un Corse de nos jours, qui ne ressemble guère à celui dont on nous a si souvent donné le portrait ou plutôt la caricature. Formé à l'école française, il revêt le manteau de la civilisation moderne, et ce manteau ne lui sied pas trop mal.[3]

Colombani enters into dialogue with Parisian literature, but in his efforts to resist the stereotype of the bloodthirsty primitive Corsican, he ends up accepting the French civilising mission and its

[1] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, p. 91.
[2] Pietrino has served valorously in Africa and specifically Algeria, see ibid. pp. 33 and 42.
[3] *Dédicace à Monsieur Pasqualini* in *Les Aventures d'un jeune Corse*, p. iv. Italics in the original.

necessity on Corsica as the very basis for his argument. Merely, he insists that primitive practices belong to the past and that France's undertaking has already been successful. Colombani tries to resist Parisian discourse while at the same time accepting its general premises and thus paradoxically ends up supporting the claims of the *mission civilisatrice*. What matters most for the author is to show that complete Frenchification has been achieved in the Corsicans and that they should be considered real French citizens. His narrative works on the same pattern as Arrighi's, showing a young Frenchified Corsican forced to discover and fight his last shreds of savagery. The story follows Pietrino's education and civilisation, from primary school on the island to secondary and higher education in France, and then has him face his Corsican instincts in a final challenge to be overcome. This showdown happens when Pietrino is already representing the French nation at the consulate in Genoa, further accentuating his internal conflict. The young French ambassador falls victim to a myriad of intrigues and denunciations orchestrated by his lover's evil stepmother and her accomplices. In the end, his lover is forced to enter a nunnery, putting an end to their hopes of marriage. Pietrino's first instinct is to avenge this cruelty and to kill his foes, but his childhood mentor discourages him from doing so:

> Fou d'amour, ivre de colère, blessé dans son décorum autant que dans son cœur, il voulait […] demander compte à ses ignobles persécuteurs. […]
>
> 'Je le dois à mon honneur! disait-il avec un accent terrible. Je le dois à la pauvre enfant qui m'attend sans doute pour la venger. […] Les misérables! […] ils ont oublié qu'un Corse sait vivre et mourir. Eh bien! […] Il y aura du sang versé! Oui! il y aura du sang!...'
>
> Le chanoine […] assista avec une terreur secrète aux soubresauts de cette imagination en délire. […]
>
> ['M]on ami, ajouta l'abbé Scippioni, si vous trouvez au fond de votre raison la puissance de banner de votre cœur la pensée qui le gangrène je vous aiderai à gravir les degrés de l'échelle sociale. Vous deviendrez aussi grand par la position que vous l'êtes déjà par le talent, par le génie.' [1]

Following the trend, Colombani shows a Frenchified Corsican in his make-or-break moment. If Pietrino gives in to his desire for vengeance, he effectively remains a mimic man and his French education only a *façade*. However, Colombani wants to show that Pietrino has become truly civilised. The Corsican's anger subsides quickly and he follows the abbot's advice, forsaking his ideas of vengeance. In the end, Pietrino's transformation is complete and his resolve recompensed. God

[1] *Les Aventures d'un jeune Corse,* pp. 198-200.

smites all the evildoers and gives him the satisfaction of divine vengeance. The cutting out of the vendetta (la gangrène) of a Corsican's character by means of reasoning proves to be the key to becoming French. Colombani names social advancement as Pietrino's motivation for complete assimilation - an incentive equally cited by many other Corsican authors. Pietrino is rewarded by a high social position in the capital, making him the Frenchman par excellence:

> En paix avec sa conscience, le jeune Corse, dont les ennemis sont tombés […] ne tarda guère à se consoler de ses déboires et de ses longues vicissitudes. Il rejoignit à Paris l'abbé Scippioni, qui lui eut bientôt procuré une haute position sociale, où il fait valoir aujourd'hui ses talents et ses vertus.[1]

In the famous words of Eugen Weber, many insular novels chart the progression of Corsican characters from savages to Frenchmen, successfully resolving any internal conflicts in the process of their assimilation. Attempting to fix their characters' and their own identity, Corsican authors give different answers to questions already explored in canonical fiction. Their message is that Corsica is (becoming) French at the time of their writing and that its inhabitants should (soon) be seen as fully integrated French citizens. Insular authors insist that the islanders are (almost) on the same level of civilisation as the French; these writers probably understood themselves as the first generation of fully civilised, fully French, Corsicans. Yet, in order to answer the question 'can Corsicans become French?' in the affirmative, Corsican writers tend to buy into canonical discourses of France's civilising mission and thus end up supporting established power structures.

Writing back to the centre

Early Corsican authors' auto-exoticism has been amply documented. It is now necessary to search for potential acts of resistance to the dominant discourse, examining whether there are challenges to the framework of representations set up by Parisian authors. While Corsican authors generally justify French rule on Corsica through the discourse of the *mission civilisatrice*, the novels express some minor resistances to the process. Of course, the French system is not necessarily portrayed as perfect; authors differ especially in terms of political opinions and tend to attack or defend particular forms of French government. However, there is remarkably little opposition to the fact that France rules Corsica, independently of the kind of regime it is under. The instances of resistance found in Francophone Corsican literature are almost always aimed at a certain regime, but hardly at French rule ipso facto. However, two works offer a curious mix of acceptance of French rule and resistance to it: Peretti's *La Veuve de Cyrnos* and Monti's *Le Roi de la montagne*. Both novels paradoxically place these conflicting discourses side by side.

[1] *Les Aventures d'un jeune Corse,* p. 222.

Peretti starts out by taking for granted that Corsica is ruled by France and places his resistance firmly within the framework of a French Corsica. There is only one point in the novel where Corsicans officially oppose the French government, in a declaration that they will remain Catholics despite the revolutionary decrees to abolish religion. Peretti describes an insurgence against French power in Bastia during which the people force the French authorities to leave the town, storm the citadel and create an *assemblée populaire*. Once this act of resistance is accomplished, the Corsicans' first move is to affirm the following in a letter to the *Assemblée nationale*:

> Le peuple de Bastia […] regarde comme le plus grand de ses avantages d'être Français et libre, et proteste de vivre et mourir tel. Mais son attachement pour la religion […] l'oblige de déclarer […] qu'il sera toujours constant dans les sentiments qu'il vient de manifester.[1]

Peretti's resistance is based around the Catholic faith, decrying revolutionary atheism and the ensuing immorality that the French introduce on Corsica. This subverts the hegemonic discourse of France as bringer of civilisation. Corsica is shown to have been in good moral shape before the French arrived. Rather than bringing civilised mores to the island, revolutionary France is destroying Corsican morality and to corrupting its inhabitants. Unlike any other author, Peretti refers - if only briefly - to Corsica's defeat and annexation by France, putting the abolition of insular religion in context:

> Ces tristes événements [l'abolition révolutionnaire de la religion] qui suivirent de près la réunion de la Corse à la France n'étaient certes pas de nature à resserrer les liens d'amitié formés à peine entre les deux pays. Les Corses, attachés à leur foi, durent considérer leurs frères du continent comme des conquérants barbares, puisqu'ils étaient impies; et il fallut sans doute que Napoléon apparût alors comme un puissant médiateur pour réconcilier la fille avec la mère.[2]

This passage is characteristic of the novel in that it merges intrinsically conflicting discourses. On the one hand, the relationship between France and Corsica is characterised in familial terms, first compared to friendship, then qualified as a blood relationship between equals (brother/brother) and finally as a bond between superior and subordinate family members (mother/daughter). These images - combined with the final verb 'réconcilier' - give the impression that Corsica's union with France is natural, predestined and unthinkable otherwise; therefore repeating established colonialist discourses. On the other hand, Peretti's text is the only Corsican novel that names France's conquest

[1] *La Veuve de Cyrnos*, p. 31.
[2] Ibid. pp. 24-5.

of Corsica, thus implying a relationship of dependence that began against the islanders' will. This is brought out again in the figure of the widow's dying husband:

> Le père, glorieux débris des guerres sanglantes que sa patrie soutenait depuis trois siècles contre la république de Gênes, avait, comme les héros de l'ancienne Rome, tour à tour manié la charrue et l'épée. Mais, après la défaite de Ponte-Nuovo et la réunion de la Corse à la France, le vieux guerrier s'était, non sans murmure, résigné au joug de la conquête imposée à tous les insulaires.[1]

This is the first character description in the novel, placed directly after an initial sermon/chapter on the commandments of the church. Peretti starts his narrative by evoking Corsica's fight for independence and brandmarking French rule as oppression. This beginning could have made for some explosive material and served to set up an act of literary resistance to French rule. However, after presenting this possible resistant to the reader, Peretti immediately has the husband die of illness, quickly putting an end to any opposition to French rule. The rest of the story focuses on the widow and her three sons, all of which support French rule and are willing to fight the Revolutionary Wars with enthusiasm. Peretti offers no further explanation for this change of heart from one generation to another, content with juxtaposing two opposing positions. While the novel shows the widow's courageous resistance to state-imposed atheism, the question of Corsica's Frenchness is never mentioned again. The discourses of resistance and submission are left to stand, without further comment; the only resolution the author offers is the perspective of Napoleon reconciling Corsica and France through the *Concordat*. If Peretti challenges French rule, he does so within the framework of its very acceptance, resolving his resistance to the Republic through his adherence to Napoleon's Empire.

Monti's *Le Roi de la montagne* is the most seditious Corsican work of the nineteenth century, and yet it remains riddled with ambivalence and paradoxes. In highly subversive language, Monti describes the bandit Théodore's rebellion and guerrilla war against the French authorities. The story begins with a betrayal of trust by a monarchist Corsican: the brigadier, pretending to be Théodore's friend, encourages him to prove his accuracy by shooting one *Louis* in a competition and later takes the coin with the monarch's destroyed face as grounds for Théodore's capture. Importantly, the villains in the novel are either Corsicans working for the king or non-Corsicans representing the Monarchy. Monti thus subverts the standard discourse that French forces are needed on Corsica and only there for the good of the population, on the contrary showing arbitrary abuse of power by the French police force. Disgusted with the Monarchy and its perversion of rule

[1] *La Veuve de Cyrnos*, pp. 16-7.

and justice on Corsica, Théodore assembles an army of bandits with the goal to wage war against the agents of French power and in particular the police force: 'Nous opposerons aux fusils des gendarmes les fusils des bandits, et si j'en crois mes pressentiments, la victoire nous sourira.'[1] His army founded and trained, Théodore leads them to war against the gendarmes, attacking strategic bases. Monti describes violent revolts and battles with the bandits as glorious victors, destroying the symbols of monarchic power. He also grants Théodore's actions legitimacy through democratic elections: the bandits create a constitutional counter-Monarchy, electing Théodore king, drafting a constitution, holding competitions for the positions of lieutenants etc. Monti subverts the discourse of the civilising mission that vilifies bandits as savage evildoers, showing that Théodore's rule is constitutional, founded by a democratic decision and relying on Republican principles. The population is shown to support the bandits, covering Théodore's tracks, supplying him with provisions, and welcoming his army as liberators. The Corsicans are presented as preferring a democratic counter-regime to a French Monarchy they have not consented to. The bandit king's competition with the French for Corsica's rule at least theoretically opens up the possibility of an independent Corsica with its own state. Monti characterises the island's situation as colonial to some extent, juxtaposing bandits and gendarmes in terms of rightful natives versus foreign oppressors:

> Le gendarme a pour lui la science de la discipline, mais il n'a que cela. Il ne possède ni le tir sûr du bandit, ni son agilité, ni sa connaissance des lieux. Il n'est pas Corse, il vient du continent, il est donc dépaysé. Savoir qu'on peut mourir en terre étrangère, c'est perdre une partie de sa bravoure. En outre, il ne reconnaît pas la langue du pays. Ce qui fait la faiblesse du gendarme fait donc la force du bandit.[2]

There is the idea of natives on the one hand and colonisers on the other, characterising the Corsicans as indigenous and the French as alien. Insular resistants are shown to have a rightful cause, whereas the gendarmes fight a lost battle on foreign soil. Théodore's revolt is effectively an uprising against colonial power, supported by the majority of the islanders:

> Les autorités ont frémi devant cette levée qui s'annonce presque comme une insurrection. Partout sont données des ordres sévères, les troupes sont consignées, mais il n'intervient pas de décision énergique. C'est qu'on a peu de confiance dans le gros même de la population et qu'il importe avant tout de rester dans les villes qu'on occupe. Il faut même

[1] *Le Roi de la montagne*, p. 68.
[2] Ibid. pp. 90-1.

> que l'on paraisse n'éprouver aucune inquiétude de ce mouvement et l'on estime qu'il convient de se poser en sauveurs.[1]

The government Monti describes has the characteristics of a colonial power, ruling foreign territory against the will of its inhabitants, thinking strategically about its occupation and pacification, and self-consciously posing as saviour. The novel shows colonial discourses for what they are, thus subverting hegemonic representations. And yet, Monti does not go all the way in his resistance: he shows Théodore's rise to power, his first military successes and the pinnacle point of his coronation. However, the bandit's challenge to French rule is presented as only 'presque comme une insurrection.'

Yet again, this opposition to (colonial) power is riddled with conflicting discourses. Monti follows Peretti's schema, placing his resistance within de facto adherence to French rule and merely directing his insurgency against one particular kind of French government, this time the Restoration. And while Théodore's army competes with the French for the rule of Corsica, Monti does not go so far as to state the idea of Corsican independence. In fact, he never describes the situation as a conflict between two nations (France and Corsica), but only between opposing powers (bandits/police force; Empire/Monarchy). Corsica's status as French territory is never called into question. Monti makes it clear from the outset that Théodore sees himself as French, as seen in this conversation with the monarchist brigadier at the very start of the novel:

> [Théodore] déboucha une vieille bouteille de vin.
> - A la santé de l'Empereur! dit-il.
> - A la santé du roi!
> - A notre santé!
> - A la nôtre!
> Leurs verres se choquèrent.
> - Et nous voilà bons amis, quoique d'opinion politique différente, dit le brigadier, mais la France c'est la France, et nous sommes avant tout Français, n'est-ce pas?
> - Si Français que, si mon instruction militaire avait été plus grande, j'aurais devancé l'appel [à la conscription].[2]

Monti's hero supports Napoleon Bonaparte and postulates an essentially French definition of Corsicanness. His rebellion is, yet again, directed towards a particular French regime rather than

[1] *Le Roi de la montagne*, pp. 87-8.
[2] Ibid. p. 24.

French rule in general. Théodore understands his uprising not as a fight against French domination, but as a battle against the enemies of the rightful French Emperor:

> La Corse, qui n'a cessé de lutter contre les Génois parce qu'ils étaient assassins et voleurs, acceptera-t-elle le joug des ennemis de l'empereur? De ces ennemis qui se sont enrichis de ses dépouilles et qui ne doivent leur élévation qu'à la trahison? […] Vivre dans l'esclavage, c'est mourir deux fois. Nos maîtres actuels ont emprisonné, dans un îlot de l'Océan, le plus grand homme des temps passés et présents, Napoléon Bonaparte, Empereur. En le frappant, ils ont frappé la Corse entière. Est-il un seul d'entre nous qui n'en ait ressenti l'injure? en est-il un seul qui n'en ait subi les conséquences? Que ceux-là, qui sont véritablement braves et veulent se venger, viennent à nous.[1]

The main emphasis in Théodore's mission statement is on avenging Napoleon. The bandit king remains faithful to the First Empire and would be content if his island was ruled by a Napoleonic France. Monti's story contains historical truth; the bandit Théodore actually existed and for a time challenged the French gendarmerie - however, the motives Monti grants him for his actions may be entirely invented.[2] In Monti's vision of history, Théodore's revolt is inspired by Republican values and his reign comparable to Napoleon's First Empire; his rebellion is therefore inscribed into the continuity of Corsica's common history with France. Towards the end of the book, the focus sways to the French authorities, showing the prefect of Corsica in discussion with his head general:

> - Vienne une insurrection, [dit le général,] on verra alors ce dont je suis capable, et comment on enlève les forêts et les villes.
> Encore plus calme, le préfet dit:
>
> - L'île est française, essentiellement française. Elle ne songe nullement à s'insurger: elle veut simplement la tranquillité.[3]

Monti ends on that note and never shows who was right, the general or the prefect. The novel's last pages predict that Théodore's power will only last four years and that he will be betrayed and die in the end. While Monti has cast Théodore as a martyr, the prefect's statement rings out ambivalently, depending on how it is read: is Corsica essentially French? Do or don't the people want an

[1] *Le Roi de la montagne*, pp. 78-80.
[2] It is a fact that Teodoro (Théodore) Poli (1797-1827) was a bandit from Guagno famous for being proclaimed 'roi des bandits' and evading the French authorities on the island for a number of years, before finally being caught and killed. See *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse,* pp. 792-3.
[3] *Le Roi de la montagne*, p. 116.

insurrection? Through this ambiguity, Monti challenges the language of colonial power and implicitly opens up questions about Corsica's national affiliation that he had declared closed in the beginning.

In conclusion, both Peretti and Monti share an awareness of Corsica's situation as a subdued territory and sometimes analyse this as a colonial situation. *La Veuve de Cyrnos* and *Le Roi de la montagne* show instances of acute resistance to French rule and its underlying discourses. However, these works remain ambivalent in that pro-French and anti-French positions are allowed to coexist unquestioningly. The paradoxes of simultaneous resistance to and acceptance of France's supremacy are left to stand, compromising the extent of the novels' literary oppositions. With regards to the corpus of nineteenth-century Francophone fiction, authors show the validity of old Corsican ways of life and criticise the new culture that France is seeking to promote on the island. This mainly involves criticism of certain political regimes (Revolution, Republics, Empires, Restorations), French immorality (atheism, sexual promiscuity), and insecurities about legitimate use of French power. All in all, however, Corsican writers fit into Fanon's paradigm of the first generation native intellectual who tends to imitate the coloniser's discourses without questioning them on a fundamental level. While this auto-exoticising tendency applies to most nineteenth-century Corsican literature, its authors did find ways of circumventing or at least complementing stereotypical representations. Many texts retrace trends in canonical Corsican literature and only a minuscule part really confronts hegemonic discourses; nevertheless, most authors are interested in creating an image of Corsicanness that goes beyond mere repetitions of clichés.

The creation of a distinctly Corsican nationalism

Overall, writers show the successful assimilation of Corsicans to the French way of life, which often goes along with the obliteration of Corsican traditions. Rather than worrying, like their Parisian contemporaries, whether Corsicans can ever become French, Corsican authors worry about how Corsica can remain true to itself in becoming French. Colombani expresses these concerns about authenticity through the character of Pietrino's father, who is supportive of his son's education and Frenchification, but only with reservations:

> N'allez pas croire, mes amis, que j'aie pour la France une haine inexcusable. Comme vous, je sens tout ce que nous devons à cette nation chevaleresque et magnanime. Les bienfaits dont elle nous comble, la gloire incomparable qui nous est commune avec elle, nous dédommagent sans doute avec usure des revers et des déceptions de nos ancêtres. Faut-il, pour cela […] oublier un passé qui nous honore, abdiquer la sainte religion des souvenirs et déchirer les pages de notre histoire insulaire? Est-ce tromper la France que de redire avec vous ce qu'était la Corse d'autrefois, […] les mille vertus que nous ont léguées nos pères?

> Est-ce outrager la France que de conseiller à la jeunesse imprévoyante qui m'écoute la conservation précieuse de ces mêmes vertus? Non, détrompons-nous. Ecoutez les conseils d'un vieux patriote, qui aime son pays par-dessus tout […]. Soyez Français; je le suis avec vous. Servez fidèlement la France et l'Empereur, c'est votre premier devoir, votre obligation la plus sacrée. Mais si vous voulez, enfants, que la mère-patrie ne vous déclare point indignes de son adoption, si vous voulez que le monarque ne rougisse point de vous appeler ses compatriotes et ses sujets, en apprenant à devenir Français, n'oubliez jamais de rester Corses. Il y a dans ces deux peuples qui n'en font qu'un une somme de vertus inestimables.[1]

Colombani describes the merging of two separate entities, France and Corsica, into one. Brocca, while sceptical, fully accepts this process and already identifies with the French nation, qualifying French patriotism as the Corsicans' highest duty. He does not resist French rule and in many ways repeats the discourses of the civilising mission according to which magnanimous France has called her new subjects into civilisation. At the same time, there are concerns about Corsica's identity, wondering how the islanders can stay true to themselves in becoming French. This central interrogation moves most Francophone Corsican authors. Accepting their island's incorporation into the French nation as a given, insular writers seek to define and understand Corsicanness within this new framework. There may not be much evidence of literary resistance to the central discourses justifying French rule, such as the mission civilisatrice. However, if they do not subvert such representations, Corsican writers complement them through the creation of a specifically Corsican nationalism that goes beyond the exotic caricatures proposed by Parisian fiction. Many insular authors share a concern to develop a distinctly Corsican identity within the accepted framework of French rule.

Corsican patriotism and nationalism are significant themes in nine out of thirteen novels, and for eight out of ten authors. It is important to point out that the term 'nationalism' in this context does not refer to the creation of a discourse aimed at separating France and Corsica. On the contrary, early Corsican authors' literary patriotism consisted mainly in taking French rule for granted, while inventing ways of expressing Corsica's unique attributes within the context of its incorporation into France. The schema often followed resembles the ideas of 'petite et grande patrie' frequently proposed in nineteenth-century school manuals about the regions: love for 'la petite patrie' will lead to devotion for greater France.[2] Tellingly, the first ever French novel written by a Corsican starts on a chapter entitled 'L'amour de la patrie' that fittingly begins with: 'Il n'est peut-être aucun peuple au monde chez lequel l'amour de la patrie ait été porté à un plus haut point

[1] *Les Aventures d'un jeune Corse*, pp. 4-6.
[2] *Ils apprenaient la France,* p. 8.

qu'en Corse.'[1] Patriotism remains a *fil rouge* in Francophone Corsican literature until its climax around 1885.

Those writers who were keen to create new representations of Corsicanness propose various definitions of the Corsican nation, other than the auto-exotic material already mentioned above. Several authors (Arrighi, Peretti, Monti, Bartoli) define Corsica through its Catholicism, as seen in Peretti's description of the ideal islander: 'L'amour de la religion s'alliait dans son cœur avec l'amour de la patrie. Patrie et religion étaient pour lui deux synonymes.'[2] Others (especially Monti and Bartoli) draw up page-long lists of genealogies in order to show the Corsicans' noble ancestry and ancient heritage.[3] Monti even metaphorically represents Corsica through a rock formation in the form of the island in the ceiling of a cave.[4] The most original way of expressing Corsica's identity is Bartoli's embodiment of the island in the form of a sea goddess:

> Tout à coup à leurs yeux effrayés, s'offre une femme gigantesque, au regard vif, intelligent, fièrement assise sur un rocher, baignant ses pieds dans la mer. D'une main elle tenait une lance; de l'autre, elle s'appuyait sur une épée. Sur sa tête, que surmontait une tour, s'ajustait la peau d'un lion. Autour d'elle folâtraient des génies. L'un d'eux, monté sur un mouflon, soutenait une corne d'abondance, garnie de pampres, de raisins. Un autre portait sur le dos une corbeille pleine de fruits; il y en avait de toutes espèces. Un troisième recevait les caresses d'un chien, emblème de la fidélité. […] Abbatucci, d'une voix tremblante, lui demanda enfin qui elle était.
>
> - Je suis la Corse, répondit-elle.[5]

This goddess appears to Corsican characters in an impasse, showing them the way and the nation herself, rewriting Corsica's past and pointing them towards the future. Like many other French provinces, Corsica is personified in the form of a woman. Her attributes combine the masculine side of war and the feminine side of provision and plenty. Two out of three genies express an abundance of local produce and point towards Corsican agriculture, the development of which was an important theme to Bartoli. Even more striking than the sea goddess herself is the account of Corsican history she corroborates with her authority (this will be examined below). Other than that, Corsica is often represented through its famous men, impersonated particularly often by Napoleon Bonaparte (eight out of ten authors), Sampiero Corso (six out of ten) and the bandit Théodore (six

[1] *Joseph Brandini,* p. 3.
[2] *La Veuve de Cyrnos*, p. 17.
[3] *Diana Colonna,* pp. 217-9.
[4] *Gennara*, p. 259.
[5] *Diana Colonna*, pp. 351-2.

out of ten). It is also worth noting that Arrighi, Peretti and Marcaggi wrote six biographies and/or other non-prose works about Napoleon Bonaparte, pointing towards the prominence of the Emperor in their definitions of French Corsica.[1] As in canonical works, the absence of depictions of Pascale Paoli is noteworthy; only one source mentions him in passing. Insular authors were probably uncomfortable with his opposition to French rule and Napoleon I, and preferred to omit this controversial character from their representations of Corsicanness. Apart from the bandit Théodore - more local, less dangerous, and more fit for auto-exoticist exploitation -, Francophone Corsican authors chose figures that could be regarded as reconciling France and Corsica on an international level. Napoleon is generally presented as a conqueror who united Corsica with France (and the wider world), thus creating a new definition of Corsicanness: 'vous Corse, vous né à quelques lieues seulement du berceau de l'Empereur, vous qui respirez l'air qu'il a respiré dans son enfance et foulez ce sol d'où il s'élança à la conquête du monde.'[2] Consequently, Corsicanness is not only frequently linked to the person of Bonaparte, but also to the project of Empire. The same strategy is usually followed with Sampiero, who comes to represent Corsica's independence and its inclusion into the French nation at the same time, as seen in Nicolai's description:

> Sur cette terre classique des grandes choses, où tous les cœurs battent instinctivement aux seuls noms de Patrie et de Liberté, le souvenir de Sampiero s'est perpétué d'âge en âge et nous est parvenu jeune de gloire et brillant de l'auréole de l'immortalité. Plus que jamais, le nom […] se trouve aujourd'hui sur les lèvres de tous ceux qui sentent le besoin de se retremper dans le culte du passé pour les luttes de l'avenir.[3]

Nicolai uses a figure from the past to give meaning to the present, and conveniently reinterprets a historical character so as to foreshadow Corsica's unification to France. He thus manages to bind together the otherwise conflicting ideas of Corsica's freedom, the fatherland and French rule. It is characteristic of insular authors to emphasise the ideas of both liberty and Frenchness in their characterisation of Corsicanness.

Lastly, the concept of race starts to become more prominent and to take on its particular nineteenth-century flavour, coming to mean less a lineage of ancestors than a particular ethnic

[1] See Arrigo Arrighi, *Histoire de Pascal Paoli*. According to the *Dictionnaire historique de la Corse*, the real focus of this work is Napoleon Bonaparte (p. 72). Leonard Cassien de Peretti, *Bonaparte ou La France sauvée, Poème en vingt-quatre chants* (Paris: Maillet-Schmitz, 1858). Jean-Baptiste Marcaggi, *Une Genèse; La Genèse de Napoléo; Le Souvenir de Napoléon à Ajaccio*; *Le Berceau de Napoléon*.
[2] *La Veuve d'Arbellara*, p. 134.
[3] *La Mort de Vannina*, pp. 1-2.

group and its (perceived) physical, mental, and emotional characteristics.[1] This slippage between different meanings of the word 'race' can be observed in Corsican literature. Monti's *Le Roi de la montagne* initially uses the term to connote 'family' or 'lineage,' as seen in grandmother Manonna's praise:

> Merci, mon Dieu, s'exclama-t-elle […], pour avoir permis que notre race se perpétuât. C'est une race sans pareille. Ses femmes sont sages, dévouées, bonnes conseillères, et ses hommes sont la bravoure, la loyauté, la bonté. Ils n'ont pas peur de la mort et savent mourir. Malheur à leurs ennemis! […] Ils sont agiles comme le mouflon, robustes comme le taureau, braves comme le lion.[2]

On the one hand, Manonna is singling out her particular family and opposing it to their enemies, by inference seen as inferior. On the other hand, there is a larger sense in which Manonna's family is representative of all Corsicans, underlined by the use of the mouflon, Corsica's heraldic animal. Initially talking about one particular family, Monti creates a generalised profile of the Corsican 'race' by extension. The same stratagem underlies Manonna's description of Théodore, her grandson:

> Tu ressembles à ton père comme ton père ressemblait au sien, et comme eux deux, […] tu es brave, confiant, généreux et beau. Ils étaient si pareils que, lorsque ton grand-père mourut, ma douleur s'apaisa devant le portrait vivant qu'il me laissait en notre fils. Ta taille est moyenne, tes épaules sont larges, tes cheveux noirs poussent dru. […] Un teint brun et coloré revêt ton visage allongé, et je touche le premier duvet d'une barbe qui sera noire.[3]

While describing one Corsican man in particular, Monti also establishes a Corsican type, underlining the ideas of heredity and continuity. A statement about an individual therefore takes on ethnological significance, all the more since the individual described is the second most popular personification of Corsica, as seen above. Théodore and his family showcase the physical and mental attributes of all Corsicans and the word 'race' comes to resonate with racial theories that had gained popularity since the 1850s.

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[1] See the various definitions of 'race' proposed in *Le Petit Robert.* The uses of the term in insular writing oscillate between the following descriptions: 'Famille, considérée dans la suite des générations et la continuité de ses caractères. […] Communauté plus vaste considérée comme une famille, une lignée. […] Groupe ethnique qui se distingue des autres par un ensemble de caractères physiques héréditaires. […] (XIX^{e}) Dans la théorie du racisme, groupe naturel d'hommes qui ont des caractères semblables (physiques, psychiques, culturels, etc.) […] => ethnie, peuple.' Josette Rey-Debove, Alain Rey (ed.), *Le Petit Robert de la langue française 2006* (Paris: Maury, 2005), pp. 2147-8.

[2] *Le Roi de la montagne,* p. 10.

[3] Ibid. p. 9.

Diana Colonna illustrates the same semantic slippage of the word 'race.' Like Monti, Bartoli starts out writing a novel about one particular family that comes to signify Corsicanness. Bartoli recounts the glory of the noble counts of Ornano, charting their heir Alfonso's search for a suitable wife. True to the idea of 'race' as lineage or ancestry, Bartoli offers interminable lists of ancestors and Corsican noblemen and comments on their many virtues:

> [L]a famille d'Ornano remonte à la plus haute antiquité. Si […] on considère la longue suite d'hommes illustres qu'elle a donnés à la Corse, à la France, à l'Italie; si on examine les postes élevés qu'elle y a occupés, […] on comprendra aisément toute la noblesse de son origine. […] Nés pour commander aux autres, […] le talent, la bravoure seuls leur en frayèrent le chemin. Cette ligne de conduite, ils se la transmirent de génération en génération. Le père apprit au fils l'histoire de ses ancêtres, le fils retraça après les exemples de ses pères. Cette sage discipline les maintint toujours dans le chemin de l'honneur, de la gloire; elle fit éclore ces mâles vertus qui leur ont assuré une gloire immortelle […]. [L]es comtes [d'Ornano] eurent aussi un grand amour de la patrie. La Corse les regardait comme ses pères; elle avait en eux des défenseurs vaillants, généreux.[1]

Bartoli gives Corsica roots in Antiquity and a recognisable founding family, imitating the founding myths of the great classical nations, such as the Greek *Iliad* and the Roman *Aeneid*, therefore elevating the Corsicans to the same standing. The emphases on continuity between the generations and the d'Ornanos' universal significance as fathers of all Corsicans serve to link the ideas of family and race, thus interconnecting the concepts of lineage and racialism. Bartoli writes a family history that also serves as a genesis for the Corsican nation, following the (mis)fortunes of the counts of Ornano in order to define Corsicanness. Within this framework, Bartoli defines specifically Corsican racial attributes and characteristics, creating a profile for the Corsican 'race' – seamlessly managing the transition from family to nation. Consequently, Bartoli includes five pages on supposedly typical features of 'la nation Corse,' bestowing upon the islanders such attributes as justice, hospitality, valour, fighting spirit, heroism, honesty, strength, consistency, modesty, trustworthiness, and friendship. Extrapolating characteristics from one family and then generalising them to be true of the whole nation, Bartoli reaches the conclusion that 'la nation Corse sera le premier peuple du monde.'[2] Finally, Corsica is presented as a nation of blood ties and as an organic community: '[l'hospitalité] est un excellent moyen d'entretenir l'amitié, de resserrer les liens du sang. C'est qu'en

[1] *Diana Colonna*, pp. 3-4.
[2] Ibid. pp. 146-9.

Corse, toutes les familles sont alliées les unes aux autres.'[1] Bartoli's writings thus demonstrate the uneasy combination of nationalism and racialism so typical of the long nineteenth century.

The multiple attempts to create Corsican nationalism show that insular authors were no longer content to see themselves on the peripheries of the French state, but wanted to re-centre the world around them. This is often done through the rewriting of history; Monti and Bartoli offer the most complete and complex reimagining of historical events. *Gennara* devotes a whole chapter to the origins of Roquani/Bonifacio, symbolically charting the genesis of the Corsicans as a people back to pirates who founded a colony in its bay. Echoing stereotypical descriptions, Corsica is described as a desolate place:

> Le sol, d'un blanc de chaux, semblait un produit de fournaise, un résidu sans nom. Par tâches y poussait une herbe maigre, dans tous les coins où la pierre n'avait pas été empiétée. Du haut des collines, l'œil s'étendait, sans qu'aucune végétation barrât l'horizon. Pas un vestige humain d'ailleurs au milieu de ce désert.[2]

In accordance with the place they inhabit, the earliest Corsicans are described as savages; the very bestiality of their imaginary ancestors thus serves to explain common nineteenth-century stereotypes:

> Cruels d'ordinaire, ils […] avaient pour habitude de ne pas faire des prisonniers, et tout ce qu'ils trouvaient de vivant […], ils […] brûlaient sur la place publique. Sinistres torches humaines qui hurlaient, en flambant, pendant que les pirates […] s'enivraient en embrassant leurs femmes.[3]

Monti then goes on to show how Genoa subdued the pirates and made Bonifacio into a Republic, all the while only mildly civilising its inhabitants. Claiming that the town has remained unchanged by the passing of time, Monti achieves his version of insular history on an auto-exoticising note.

Bartoli also reinvents the Corsicans' origins, but his version of history differs from Monti's clichéd account; where Monti describes pirates, Bartoli proposes classical grandeur. Bartoli's writings in particular show a Corsican nationalism that is no longer content to live in France's shadow. In one of the most interesting literary reinventions of Corsicanness, Bartoli attempts to create a definition of Corsica able to surpass the glory of the civilising nation. Rejecting the common view of Corsica as a marginal entity, Bartoli aims to recentre the island on the world map and in

[1] *Diana Colonna*, p. 178.
[2] *Gennara*, pp. 39-40.
[3] Ibid. p. 42.

world history. *Diana Colonna* also challenges the idea that the Corsicans are still in a state of savagery and instead proposes to see them as an ancient and honourable civilisation with grandeur akin to that of Athens and Rome. This is achieved through the creation of a Corsican national epic in the style of the great classical founding myths. References to Greek and Roman culture and history abound, showing the author's classical education and his willingness to integrate Corsica into the centre of the old world: 'Nous sommes au centre du vieux monde, presque aux portes de Paris, de Rome. […] Qui n'admirerait aussi la situation privilégiée de notre île?'[1] Reinventing Corsica as a classical civilisation, Bartoli rewrites the island's past in order to give meaning to its present and future. Linking the Corsicans to other great peoples of Antiquity achieves the purpose of anchoring the island's identity in recognised historiography, especially since the Greek and Roman civilisations were often understood as the precursors to the French Empire. Creating a founding myth for the Corsican nation, Bartoli calls them by their classical name, 'les enfants de Cyrnos,' and rewrites Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The imitation is obvious not only because there are literary references to the *Iliad*, but also because the narrative follows the same structure and repeats the same key ideas as Homer's duology.[2] The first part of Bartoli's narrative rewrites the siege of Troy on Corsican ground. Diana Colonna, Alfonso's fiancée, is presented as the fairest woman of all time. After Alfonso's abduction by pirates, all the noblemen pursue Diana and each is ready to abduct her to fulfil his desire. Diana is held in the fortress of Forcone (the Corsican Troy) and the story follows the city's siege, the various alliances between Corsican clans and their combats. The male hero is showcased in epic fights and Bartoli's duels clearly imitate the *Iliad*'s famous war and death scenes and its celebration of masculinity. Despite the warriors' valour, the fortress remains impregnable until a traitor infiltrates enemy soldiers into the castle by night, imitating the famous Troyan horse stratagem. The gates are opened from within, causing the city's fall and the female hero's captivity. Bartoli's retelling not only replicates the main action, but also famous characters from the Iliad and gives them Corsican parallels (Helena/Diana, King Agamemnon/Comte Colonna, King Priam/Comte d'Ornano, Achilles/Ferri-Pisani and Hector/Eamolino). The second part of the narrative is a rewriting of the *Odyssey*: after the city has been destroyed and peace has returned, the male hero seeks his way back home to his lover and has to face trials on sea and land. Yet again, Bartoli simply created Corsican versions of Homer's characters (Odysseus/Alphonso, Penelope/Diana, Calypso/Attala). The story follows Alphonso through strange lands, shipwrecks, imprisonment, meetings with magical creatures and temptations on his way home to his fiancée Diana. On his homecoming, Diana is about to be married by force to the winner of a sporting competition, since everyone thinks that Alphonso has died. Alphonso disguises himself and enters his hometown unrecognised, just in time to win the

[1] *Diana Colonna,* p. 152.
[2] Ibid. pp. 142, 207, 213-4.

sporting contest and claim Diana's hand. Revealing his true identity, the hero is reunited with his lover. The noble d'Ornano family heir has found a wife and the lineage is secured. Alphonso and Diana become the metaphorical parents of all Corsicans, fulfilling the function a founding family. Bartoli's rewriting of the great Greek epic enables him to give Corsica a national legend and creation myth that the islanders can identify with.

Setting Corsica's story next to other great national epics allows Bartoli to recentre the island in history and to create continuity between the succession of the great Empires of the past and Corsica's future status. Over and above its obvious imitation of Homer's sagas, *Diana Colonna* is littered with references to classical culture and history. It deplores the fall of the great Empires of the past (Macedonian, Greek, Roman) and engages in exoticism about their former splendours. Other than following the fashion for the rediscovery of classical civilisations and artefacts, Bartoli also adheres to the well-established trend to justify a nation's supremacy by tracing it back to classical roots; e.g. France was often seen as heir to the Roman Empire. Bartoli uses this popular strategy to detach Corsica from the margins and to present it as the next great Empire in world history. To this end, he develops a particular reinterpretation of history: he suggests a logical progression from the ancient Empire of Alexander the Great, to the Greek Republics, the Roman Empire, the sovereignty of the Catholic Church and finally Corsica via Napoleon. The *Iliad*, seen as the highest expression of Greek civilisation, served the Romans to link their civilisation to ancient Trojan roots. Virgil wrote the *Aeneid*, explaining how the last survivor of the city of Troy went on to become the founder of Rome, making his family the founding fathers of the Roman Empire. Bartoli takes the legend up again and shows - with some contortions - how Alphonso d'Ornano is the legitimate founder of Corsica's civilisation and its future Empire. Bartoli argues that the Roman Catholic Church superseded the Roman Empire and therefore posits Christianity as the next great Western Empire: 'Rome périt. Seule la religion que Saint Pierre a prêchée, dont il a établi le siège dans cette ville, subsiste à tant de ruines; un jour elle remplaçait ce colosse, l'empire romain.'[1] Alphonso not only relives the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but also uncompromisingly accepts the Catholic faith in exile and thus becomes the fifteenth-century founding father of a great lineage and the metaphorical forefather of all Corsicans. Bartoli points out that this lineage would eventually yield Napoleon, creator of the next great Empire, which Bartoli does not see as French, but as Corsican. The Corsicans are presented as the descendants of Greece and Rome and are elevated to the status of a classical civilisation that brought about a great Empire. This vision is consolidated by the appearance of the Corsican sea goddess - another reference to Homer's mythical world of classical deities - who retells the island's history and positions it on a level with other great classical

[1] *Diana Colonna,* p. 268.

civilisations. *Diana Colonna* thus defines Corsica (via Napoleon I and France) as taking the God-appointed succession to the Empires of Greece and Rome, making Napoleon akin to Alexander the Great and other conquerors. However, Bartoli's vision of Corsica as a great Empire ruling the Western world via Napoleon is slightly incapacitated by the fact that he is writing in 1885, after the definite fall of the Bonaparte clan and under the Third Republic. And yet, Bartoli is eager to characterise Corsica as a future world power, attempting to maintain Corsican centrality in world politics:

> Aussi de hautes destinées sont réservées à mes enfants; leur intelligence les fera toujours primer. Advienne que voudra - que la France soit en république ou qu'elle ait un empereur, - mes fils marcheront toujours à la tête du mouvement. Ils ont tout pour réussir. Rien surtout ne leur résistera quand ils auront développé l'agriculture, l'industrie. Ce jour-là, qui n'est pas éloigné, ils seront les maîtres de la France.[1]

This prediction by the sea goddess proves Bartoli's willingness to overthrow the established hegemony of French domination and to move Corsica from the subjugated peripheries to the ruling centre, making *Diana Colonna* one of the most extreme cases of literary resistance to French supremacy. Yet, like most other Corsican texts, Bartoli situates this resistance within the framework of French Corsica. Its elaborate literary framework aside, *Diana Colonna* never opposes French rule as such; Bartoli even qualifies France and Corsica as mother and daughter and presents the island as 'partie intégrante de son territoire,' as seen in the passage discussed on page 119.[2] Embracing Corsica's Frenchification, Bartoli's concern is simply to place the island at the top of the nation's ruling hierarchy.

It has been shown that one central goal - and one way of subverting colonial representations - many Corsican authors share is the creation of a distinctly Corsican nationalism and a distinctly Corsican identity. While most works only contain minor subversions of the Parisian-defined view of Corsicanness, there are some attempts to detach the island from its clichéd reputation and its eternal reliance on the French civilising presence. Not content to see themselves on the peripheries of the French nation, the first generation of Corsican regional authors attempted to recentre the world around their island. *Diana Colonna* represents the climax of a wave of literary Corsican nationalism that sougth to find positive expressions of Corsican identity and attempted to move beyond the stereotypical power imbalance between civilised France and savage insulars proposed in Parisian fiction. After *Diana Colonna*, Corsican authors disregarded such subversive attempts and

[1] *Diana Colonna,* p. 356.
[2] Ibid. p. 355.

tended to return to reductive auto-exoticism, following the *fin-de-siècle* trend to more exotic and simplistic descriptions set by Daudet and Maupassant. Tonelli is only marginally interested in proposing definitions of authentic Corsicanness, while Arène and Marcaggi altogether forsake such concerns for a more predictable auto-exoticism. The Third Republic, then, is a watershed for Francophone Corsican literature, heralding the consolidation of Corsica's peripheral status and its belittling alongside many other provinces and colonies.[1] Following the pattern set by Parisian authors, the further time advances into the Third Republic, the more exoticist and clichéd literary expressions of Corsicanness become. By the end of the nineteenth century, Corsica has finally been fixed in its status *vis-à-vis* France as an exotic possession - and this in canonical and regional prose fiction alike.

[1] See *Ils apprenaient la France.*

Alsatian narratives

'Fifty years ago [i.e. around 1830] Alsace-Lorraine was as French as any other French province.' - Ligue Patriotique des Alsaciens-Lorrains, [1871?][1]

The following Alsatian works were published from the annexation of Alsace to France in 1648 to its return to Germany in 1871:

1745 Antoine Bret, Claude Villaret, *La Belle Allemande ou Les Galanteries de Thérèse*

1834 Louis Spach, *Henri Farel: Roman alsacien*

1835 Honoré de Balzac, *Le Père Goriot*

1837 Honoré de Balzac, *La Maison Nucingen*

1838 - 1847 Honoré de Balzac, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*

1839 Gérard de Nerval, *Le Fort de Bitche: Histoire de la Révolution française* (reprinted in 1854 in *Les Filles du feu* under the name *Émilie*)

1855 Emile Erckmann, *Le Bourgmestre en bouteille*

1857 Erckmann-Chatrian, *L'Illustre Docteur Mathéus*

1858 Erckmann-Chatrian, *Gretchen*

1860 Erckmann-Chatrian, *Myrtille: Conte de la montagne*

1862 Erckmann-Chatrian, *Confidences d'un joueur de clarinette*

1864 Erckmann-Chatrian, *L'Ami Fritz*

1865 Erckmann-Chatrian, *Histoire d'un homme du peuple I* (*volume II* was only published in 1871, due to problems with censorship under the Second Empire)

1867 Erckmann-Chatrian, *Les Bohémiens d'Alsace*

1867 Erckmann-Chatrian, *La Comète*

1873 Alphonse Daudet, *La Dernière Classe: Récit d'un petit Alsacien*[2]

[1] This quotation comes from a propaganda booklet printed by the Ligue Patriotique des Alsaciens-Lorrains, *The Question of Alsace-Lorraine* (London: Polyglot Printing Company, [1871?]), p. 25.

[2] Daudet's short story falls outside of the proposed timeframe. It is included at the end of the chapter as a case study, in order to show just how different Alsace's literary depiction became post-1871. *La Dernière Classe* was one of the first stories written in French about Alsace after its annexation to Germany and remains one of the most important literary monuments to the region. It is also one of the rare works about Alsace written by a canonical author. Therefore, it was chosen as a case study amongst the wealth of material published about Alsace within the context of literary revanchism that colours the *roman francais sur l'Alsace* after 1870.

Contexts and backgrounds

Contrary to Corsica, hardly any Parisian authors showed interest in Alsace before 1870. Whereas the nineteenth century witnessed a literary vogue surrounding the island, Alsace was almost completely overlooked. No canonical writer devoted any pages to describing the province, and only Nerval and Balzac created Alsatian characters in their fiction. A few minor authors, living in Paris, depicted the region; their works will be analysed alongside canonical sources. While Corsican authors began to produce French literature from the middle of the nineteenth century, there is only one Francophone Alsatian writer before 1871. The first generation of Francophone Alsatian authors emerged much later, some at the very end of the nineteenth century, and in the majority during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The reasons for this lack of Francophone regional authors are mostly historical. Alsace, being a border zone and not an island, had much closer ties to Germany than Corsica did to Italy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Alsace was scarcely integrated into France; this was obvious in terms of language. Only a small elite was able to speak French; the overwhelming majority of Alsatians communicated exclusively in their local German dialects. High German remained the main language of schooling on every level of education until well into the middle of the nineteenth century.[1] Nerval, travelling through Strasbourg in 1839, still complained: 'Il faut bien l'avouer, on parle moins français à Strasbourg qu'à Francfort ou Vienne, et de plus mauvais français, quand on le parle. Il est difficile de se faire comprendre.'[2]

Alsatian authors traditionally wrote in German for two reasons. Firstly, Alsace remained culturally and economically turned towards Germany for much of the century; consequently its authors tended to seek recognition on the German, rather than on the French market. Secondly, Alsace had a long-standing literary tradition in German. As Adrien Finck states, '[i]l faut […] rappeler que la littérature d'expression allemande représente en Alsace la tradition la plus ancienne et la plus prestigieuse.'[3] Indeed, many of its authors are counted among the most important writers in the development of German poetry and literature, which had its epicentre in the German South including Alsace (Reinmar von Hagenau, Gottfried von Strassburg, Sebastian Brant, Jörg Wickram, Johann Fischart).[4] Even after Alsace's annexation to France, it remained an important scene for German literary creation, since many German intellectuals continued to study in Strasbourg.[5] The

[1] Georges Holderith, *Poètes et prosateurs d'Alsace: Une Anthologie* (Strasbourg: D.N.A. & ISTRA, 1978), pp. xiv-xv.
[2] Gérard de Nerval, quoted in Jérôme Kocik (ed.), *Voyage en Alsace* (Urrugne: Pimientos, 2005), p. 29.
[3] Adrien Finck, *Littérature alsacienne, XX^e Siècle/Elsässische Literatur, 20. Jahrhundert* (Strasbourg: Salde, 1999), pp. 6-10. See *Syndrome Alsacien* for a discussion of the contemporary dissociation between the Alsatian dialect and the German language (which leads to much the same confusion as already observed with regards to the relationship between Corsican and Italian) and its ideological motivation, pp. 26-31.
[4] Ibid. p. 7.
[5] David Hill (ed.), *Literature of the Sturm und Drang* (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), pp. 9-10.

beginnings of the movement of German Romanticism must be sought in the group of German thinkers that surrounded the young Johann Wolfgang von Goethe during his studies in Alsace's capital: Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Heinrich Jung, Jakob Lenz, and Heinrich Leopold Wagner were all among the literary avant-garde that formed around him from 1770 to 1775.[1] Needless to say, contemporary Alsatian writers were inspired by this circle of German authors; François Igersheim states that their influence was still felt during the nineteenth century:

> Le cercle strasbourgeois d'étudiants allemands qu'avaient fréquenté Herder et Goethe […] allait pourtant avoir 'une influence capitale pour l'histoire intellectuelle [alsacienne].' Que cette époque ait servi de 'matrice' et de référence pour les générations ultérieures d'Alsaciens, Louis Spach, Edouard Reuss, Louis Schneegans, Auguste Stoeber, n'étonnera pas.[2]

Although Alsace's literary glory had grown fainter following its annexation to France, Germanophone literature had not yet been replaced with Francophone writings, and most nineteenth-century Alsatian authors still wrote in German. The first regional work of prose fiction in French was published in 1834; its author was to remain the only Alsatian to write in French until the very end of the century.

Given that French regimes had progressively taken measures to better integrate Alsace into the nation since 1789 (administrative restructuration, moving of the customs barrier from the Vosges to the Rhine, more emphasis on schooling), a first generation of Francophone Alsatian authors could have emerged in the last third of the nineteenth century, had it not been for the return of Alsace to Germany in 1871.[3] The annexation caused Alsace's French-speaking elites to relocate to France, while the new German government created incentives for Alsatians to continue writing in German. The next Francophone works by regional authors were written by the so-called 'optants,' Alsatians who had migrated to Paris, and most often their offspring, who began to write bitter works about a home province they had never seen.[4] The nature of their writings is very different from pre-1871 material: because of its highly political and revanchist traits, this literature could be regarded as a genre in its own right. Hence, Alsace's annexation to Germany in 1871 will be

[1] Philippe Boyer, *Le Romantisme allemand* (Paris: MA Éditions, 1985), p. 7.
[2] *L'Alsace et ses historiens,* p. 35.
[3] *Poètes et prosateurs,* p. xiv.
[4] See *Nationaler Anspruch und regionale Identität,* p. 44.

taken as a cut-off point for this research. Besides, the post-1871 works have already been scrutinised in an in-depth, 640-page analysis by Julia Schroda.[1]

This chapter will chronologically examine the works listed above for their significance in representing Alsace to the French centre, showing how the region's image developed from its first depiction in French literature to the sudden disruption caused by the province's loss in 1871. Chronicling the discovery and exploration of Alsace in French prose fiction, this research will chart the literary creation of a space, of its place within the national imaginary, and finally the formation of a myth, using the tools of postcolonial analysis in order to better understand the nation's imagined relationship with Alsace and vice-versa.

1648 – 1744: Hesitant exploration

For almost one hundred years after Alsace's annexation to France, there was no literary echo of the province. This was partly due to a literary snobbishness about the provinces in general; until the nineteenth century, they were usually not seen as suitable subjects for literary exploration. Simon Davies claims that the great majority of eighteenth-century novels either mocked the provinces 'or accorded them no attention at all.'[2] Alsace was not a part of the French experience; very few writers gave any attention to it. The only works written about the region were rare travel accounts (the genre itself showing that the province was regarded as far away and foreign) and pseudo-sociological studies, such as J. de l'Hermine's seventeenth-century memoirs about '*l'Alsace, province d'Allemagne*' in which he gives a 'discours général [… sur l]es coutumes, modes et meubles des Allemands.' In his efforts to describe '*[l]e caractère alsacien,'* de l'Hermine naturally starts with: 'Pour dire quelque chose du génie de la nation allemande…'[3] This discourse did not change much over the next onehundred years. An abundant number of sources show that it was commonplace during most of the eighteenth century to refer to the Alsatians as 'les Allemands' and to Alsace itself as '[la] France allemande.'[4] To eighteenth-century Frenchmen, it was commonplace to think of Alsace as outside of France - or at least, outside of real France. Voltaire stated in 1754: 'l'Alsace est une terre qui est en France et non une terre de France.'[5] Alexandre-Frédéric-Jacques Masson de Pezay, military teacher of Louis XVI and *homme de lettres,* remarked in his travel journal of 1772:

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[1] See *Nationaler Anspruch und regionale Identität.*
[2] Simon Davies, *Paris and the Provinces in Eighteenth-Century Prose Fiction* (Oxford: Alden Press, 1982), pp. 92-3.
[3] J. de l'Hermine, *Guerre et paix en Alsace au XVIII^e siècle: Les Mémoires de voyage du Sieur J. de l'Hermine,* ed. by Michelle Magdelaine (Toulouse: Privat, 1981), pp. 33, 36, 184.
[4] Claude Muller, *Le Beau Jardin de la France: L'Alsace au XVIII^e siècle. Les Évènements, les lieux, les hommes* (Nancy: Éditions Place Stanislas, 2008), pp. 191-2.
[5] Quoted in ibid. p. 193.

> La terre que je foule à présent, province d'Allemagne, n'a rien de commun avec moi. Hier j'étais citoyen, je suis étranger aujourd'hui. Idiome, costume, change, usages, mœurs, tout me dit que je suis expatrié. J'ai fait deux pas de plus, je suis au bout du monde.[1]

This idea of Alsace as a French possession, but not a French land, characterised French thinking about the province until the 1789 Revolution and beyond.

Around 1745: Antoine Bret, Claude Villaret - *La Belle Allemande ou Les Galanteries de Thérèse*

Unsurprisingly, the first novel ever written in French about Alsace is entitled *La Belle Allemande ou Les Galanteries de Thérèse*. Published around 1745, it represents the first literary document that portrayed Alsace to French readers. Significantly, the novel falls under the genre of *roman libertin*, known for its abundance of pornographic scenes, making it an illegal read under French censorship laws until the Revolution of 1789.[2] *La Belle Allemande* is one example of a trend for pornographic underground novels that reached its peak during the middle of the eighteenth century.[3] It is probably a collaboration between two authors who had embarked on equally unsuccessful literary careers in the capital, Antoine Bret (Dijon 1717 – Paris 1792) and Claude Villaret (Paris 1716 – Paris 1766).[4] Predictably, neither of them openly admitted to its authorship.[5] However, both authors are known to have written similar pornographic material, as well as co-authored a comedy, which makes their collaboration for *La Belle Allemande* highly plausible.[6]

Despite being an underground book, *La Belle Allemande* is probably the Alsatian novel whose reception is most well-documented, thanks to Robert Darnton's research into French clandestine literature.[7] Since its 1745 edition (the earliest remaining copy, not the earliest publication), the novel was reprinted at least twelve times by various publishers, under three different names, either anonymously, or designating Villaret or Bret as its author. It was often republished between 1745 and 1803, after which it sunk into oblivion for eighty years, before being rediscovered in 1882. Its most recent reprint, in English translation, dates from 2009.[8] The novel

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[1] *Le Beau Jardin,* p. 193.
[2] *Dictionnaire universel des littératures*, *Volume 2*, p. 2067.
[3] Marc-André Bernier, *Libertinage et figures du savoir: Rhétorique et roman libertin dans la France des Lumières (1734-1751)* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2001), p. 8.
[4] Bernard de Villeneuve, 'Introduction' in [Bret, Antoine, Claude Villaret?], *La Belle Alsacienne ou Telle mère, telle fille,* ed. by Villeneuve (Paris: Bibliothèque des Curieux, 1923), p. iv.
[5] Ibid. p. ii.
[6] Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XVIII^e siècle* (Nîmes, C. Lacour: 1991), pp. 1048, 1237. Also see Allwyn Charles Keys, *Antoine Bret (1717-92): The Career of an Unsuccessful Man of Letters* (Auckland: Auckland U.P., 1959), pp. 8, 69.
[7] Robert Darnton, *The Corpus of Clandestine Literature in France 1769-1789* (London: Norton, 1995).
[8] Claude Villaret, Antoine Bret, *La Belle Allemande ou Les Galenteries de Thérèse* (Whitefish: Kessinger, 2009).

underwent various title changes, from the original *La Belle Allemande* to *Adeline ou La Belle Strasbourgeoise, sa vie privée et l'histoire de ses aventures galantes* (1797), to *La Belle Alsacienne ou Telle mère, telle fille* (1801), respectively describing the protagonist as German, Strasbourgeoise and Alsatian. Although titles and authors' names vary, there is no doubt that all copies reproduce the same text faithfully, with the exception of occasional altered words or phrases (e.g. change of place names; Strasbourg instead of Colmar).[1] There is evidence to suggest that *La Belle Allemande* significantly influenced French readers' ideas about Alsace. It is listed among the 720 titles on Darnton's *Basic Checklist of Forbidden Books* during the twenty years preceding the French Revolution. He has located twelve different illegal book dealers selling *La Belle Allemande* between 1769 and 1789 alone: one respectively in Bar-le-Duc, Loudun, Marseille, Orleans, Rennes, Roanne, Toulouse, Tours, and four in Paris.[2] In those twenty years, these dealers ordered 86 copies of *La Belle Allemande* from the *Societé Typographique de Neuchâtel* (Switzerland) alone.[3] We can judge that the Alsatian's *aventures galantes* were well distributed and eagerly read over a large area of the hexagon. The fact that the book was reprinted so frequently, and particularly during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, leaves no doubt that it had a considerable impact upon the French literary consciousness. Whatever ideological content the novel offers about Alsace and the Alsatians was widely received among the French reading public. Truth claims about Alsace in *La Belle Allemande* would make up a substantial part of its contemporary readers' knowledge - in the Saidian sense - about the province.

The novel, reflecting eighteenth-century writing standards, coupled with the fact that its authors had in all probability never been to Alsace, does not represent the regional space. Although the story begins in Colmar (or, in subsequent editions, in Strasbourg), the heroine quickly migrates to Paris, where the main thrust of the story is set. *La Belle Allemande* is written from a centralised, Parisian standpoint, allowing the twenty-first century reader insights into the capital's outlook on the Alsatian periphery at the time. It reflects the binary divide between centre and periphery so typical for eighteenth-century literature about the provinces and, later on, the overseas colonies.[4] Paris is represented as synonymous with progress and the future, while the provinces, and Alsace in particular, are seen as sterile and backwards. Thérèse expresses this opinion with regards to her mother's fate:

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[1] *Introduction*, p. vi.
[2] Ibid. p. 24.
[3] *The Corpus of Clandestine Literature*, p. 24. The *Societé Typographique de Neuchâtel* (Switzerland) is one of the few publishing houses that supplied France with illegal literature whose original order lists still exist. There were other clandestine publishers, but their inventories have been lost.
[4] *Paris and the Provinces*, pp. 92-3.

> [Elle avoit] les dispositions nécessaires pour jouer dans le monde un rôle intéressant, si, comme moi, son étoile l'eût conduit à Paris […] mais que faire de tout le mérite imaginable, reléguée dans le coin d'une petite ville d'Alsace? Ma mère ressentit toute la malignité de l'influence des astres, qui avoit resserré ses perfections dans des limites si étroites. [Elle étoit] [v]ictime de l'obscurité dans laquelle elle vivoit.[1]

Mother and daughter seek to escape their limited environment and move to Paris in search of social advancement, representing the case of the provincial trying to find success in the capital, a motive well-exploited in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century fiction.

The narrative describes the life of an Alsatian prostitute who moves to Paris to make a career, giving the authors ample space to include pornographic scenes. Thérèse does not arrive in the capital as just any provincial, but is specifically presented as German – showing that Alsace was considered as a foreign territory with a specific nationality. This conception showed clearly in the title until 1797 and continued to be present in the novel's content thereafter. The idea that Alsatians are, in some cultural sense, Germans, seems to have been taken for granted by contemporary observers and underlies much of Thérèse's erotic appeal:

> Ma mère connoissoit à-peu-près la carte de Paris; différentes relations l'avoit [sic] mise au fait des mœurs de ses habitants; elle savoit le cas que l'on y faisoit de tout ce qui venoit de loin. Cette raison la porta à me faire conserver mon habillement d'étrangère, c'étoit en quelque sorte m'afficher par le coté le plus séduisant […]. Je m'apercevois que le peuple me considéroit avec cette avidité qu'il a pour les objets dont la nouveauté le frappe. […] [J]e puis, sans être taxée de vanité, me croire assez bien faite; ajoutez à cela un visage qu'on trouve passable, une tête ornée d'une chevelure cendrée, & d'une longueur prodigieuse, dont les grosses tresses me tomboient sur un juste-au-corps à l'allemande, qui servoit encore à relever la finesse & l'élégance d'une taille bien prise. Tout cela devoit avoir quelque chose d'assez piquant pour exciter la curiosité de me connoître de plus près.[2]

Thérèse can present herself as a novelty and foreigner, precisely because Alsace has not yet found its place on the imaginary map of eighteenth-century France. The girl's German identity finds its expression in cultural and ethnic characteristics, such as hair colour and traditional dress. Thérèse is not an exception; naughtily-dressed Alsatian women were currently arousing the curiosity of eighteenth-century French men, as Claude Muller proves by collecting dozens of soldier's quotations such as: 'Les femmes [en Alsace] […] sont habillées à l'allemande. Cette manière de se mettre leur va

[1] N. a., *La Belle Allemande ou Les Galanteries de Thérèse* (Paris: n. pub., 1774), pp. 4-5.
[2] Ibid. pp. 37-8.

très bien et fait paraitre leur taille.'[1] *La Belle Allemande* represents the first time that this trend is reflected in prose fiction. The traditional Alsatian/German female dress and hair style it introduces to French readers were to remain stereotypical symbols of Alsace in the French imaginary for centuries to come.

Importantly, Thérèse's success in the capital is caused by the fact that she is not just any provincial, but a foreigner who can entice the Parisians with her exotic attire. Consequently, *La Belle Allemande* serves as a point of reference in the tracing of a literary tradition of internal exoticism about Alsace. If one defines an exoticist attitude as a superficial gaze directed towards people, objects and places understood to be outside the self, picking out the picturesque, colourful and enticing, yearning for the seduction of intense sensations of and encounters with difference, then Alsace is an exotic space for Bret and Villaret. 'The beautiful German' becomes the object of the Parisians' exoticist fantasies about German/Alsatian women, testifying to the covetous outlook of a society onto a territory that had only fairly recently entered into its possession. The girl is set up as an object for the conqueror's gaze, strategically positioned, her foreign attributes enhanced skilfully to create a perfect other to the French self-consciousness.

It is significant that the transgressive elements in the story do not come from the centre itself, but from a periphery understood to be its exotic other. Sexual transgression and exotic location are linked, making Alsace a geographic sphere of deviant otherness. Given the time-honoured link between pornography and exoticism, Bret and Villaret's internal exoticism about Alsace appears as a pre-nineteenth-century version of colonial Orientalism, just closer to home. In line with this logic, the first French novel with an Alsatian main character portrays a prostitute. Indeed, Muller's research has revealed that stereotypes about unrestrained Alsatian women circulated freely in eighteenth-century French travel literature: 'La plupart des voyageurs étant des soldats, […] surgit à tout propos la mention des femmes […] dans un parfum plus d'exotisme que d'érotisme.' [2] An anonymous soldier reported in 1721:

> L'on peut dire que les filles sont toutes généralement fort belles. Leur taille est fine et bien prise […]. [C]omme elles aiment fort la bonne chère et qu'elles sont fort assujetties à leur bouche, pouvant aller au cabaret faire partie de souper ou dîner avec des hommes, […] l'on

[1] Quoting an unknown soldier in a letter from 1782. Muller collects citations of French soldiers stationed in Alsace in *Le Beau Jardin,* p. 193.
[2] Ibid. p. 193.

> en vient facilement à bout dans le vice, surtout les officiers français qui sont libéraux et qui aiment à brusquer l'aventure, ce qui est fort du goût des filles de ce pays.[1]

Most likely the authors of *La Belle Allemande* were inspired by such depictions in their characterisations of Alsatian women. Their work propagates a typically colonialist outlook on the indigenous women of conquered lands. Alsace is portrayed in the form of a sensual woman existing only to be sexually possessed by the Parisians. Representing Alsace as female in this way automatically links it with character traits traditionally associated with women: they are by definition other, sensual, luxurious, tempting; but also passive, dependent and submissive. Following the same logic, the Parisian self is cast in the role of the man: strong, rational, active, dominant and therefore predestined to conquer and control the female territory. The first French novel about Alsace represents the region as a non-French space willing to be subdued and conquered by France.

The novel not only focuses on the exotic sensuality of its main character, but also on the Alsatian girl's consent to becoming a sexual object for the Parisians. Thérèse is described as by nature promiscuous and uninhibited:

> Née dans le sein de la volupté, élevée & familiarisée dès mon enfance avec les jeux de l'amour le moins formaliste, je dois tout au goût des plaisirs. L'inconstance, le caprice, la légèreté, la foiblesse, la sensualité, voilà les sources où j'ai puisé mon élévation.[2]

The Alsatian is an instinctual being, naturally inclined to promiscuity and unwilling or unable to resist her inborn desires. Over and above social values, her life is determined by her close connection with her nature and instincts. Thérèse's lifestyle may well reflect the authors' phantasmal views on Alsatians/Germans as a whole, as the title suggests. Alsace comes to denote the 'sein de la volupté' and Germans are presented as prone to sexual immorality: 'Les Allemands, animaux flegmatiques, sont apparemment plus indulgens que d'autres sur plusieurs articles.'[3] Germany on the whole, and Alsace in particular, are identified with unrestrained sexual pleasure, again underlining the animalistic nature of its inhabitants. The myth of the sexually promiscuous German/Alsatian woman seems to have been widely propagated throughout the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Jules Laforgue, some 150 years later, still comments on the instinctive moral leniency of German women:

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[1] *Le Beau Jardin,* p. 193.
[2] *La Belle Allemande*, p. 2.
[3] Ibid. p. 5.

> l'Allemande est plus naïve que la Française et plus naturelle, par conséquent plus facile et plus animale et plus spontanée. Elle n'a pas comme la Française civilisée ce scepticisme qui fait les trois quarts de la vertu féminine.[1]

Parisians, albeit more civilised, can take advantage of Thérèse's animalistic desires at leisure and with a clean conscience. The fact that the first French novel about an Alsatian is pornographic is significant in the sense that *La Belle Allemande* denotes the centre's discovery of, and desire for, a foreign other. Thérèse's relationship with Parisian men characterises, metaphorically speaking, the relationship between Alsace and France as Bret and Villaret perceived it. It is a dependency in which Alsace exists in order to be exploited and enjoyed by the centre, whereby the province's consent to this power imbalance is taken for granted: Alsace wants it, too. For almost one hundred years after *La Belle Allemande*, there are no further literary representations of the province. The next fictional work to describe Alsace is dated from 1834 – and its portrayal has changed considerably.

1834: Louis Spach - *Henri Farel: Roman alsacien*

Henri Farel is the first work of French prose fiction consciously depicting Alsace and its identity. It was written by Louis Spach, the first Alsatian author to produce a French novel about his province, at a time when his compatriots still wrote in German. As Eros Vicari judges, '*Henri Farel* demeure dans l'histoire de la littérature alsacienne parmi les œuvres les plus significatives d'une période littéraire.'[2] It was published in Paris in 1834 under the pseudonym Louis Lavater, with the clearly-stated intention to present the Alsatian periphery to the capital:

> [J]'ai tenté d'appeler l'attention du public sur une province frontière, peu visitée, peu connue dans son intérieur, province originale par ses souvenirs, sa position, la nature amphibie de ses habitants, la variété et la beauté de son sol, qui se suffit à lui-même.[3]

The idea of Alsatians as hybrid beings will remain a *fil rouge* throughout the text, referring to Alsace's, as well as the author's, identity. Louis (or Ludwig) Spach (Strasbourg 1800 – Strasbourg 1879) had the unusual privilege of receiving some education in the French language during his teens. This later enabled him to leave for Paris - after years of indecisive studying in Strasbourg – and work as a tutor and later secretary for rich French families. He had already developed a passion for German Romantic literature during his time at Strasbourg University; his stay in Paris enabled him to meet several important French intellectuals and familiarise himself with contemporary French

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[1] Jules Laforgue, *Œuvres complètes: Tome III, Œuvres et fragments posthumes* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 2000), p. 784.

[22] Eros Vicari, *L'Histoire de la littérature en Alsace* (Strasbourg: La Nuée Bleue, 1985), p. 97. The period alluded to is 'Le roman alsacien au XIX^{e} siècle.'

[3] Louis Lavater (Spach), *Préface* to *Henri Farel: Roman alsacien* (Paris: A. Guyot, 1834), pp. vii-viii.

literature.[1] After seventeen years in the capital, Spach returned to Strasbourg, assuming a position as *archiviste du département du Bas-Rhin,* which he held for the rest of his life. Spach was a member of numerous literary societies in Strasbourg and Paris, engaged in journalism, and wrote several novels in French and German. However, Alsace's unique position put him on the cultural margins of France and on the political margins of Germany. He had little success as a writer and did not secure a prominent place in the French or German literary canons. Try as he might, he did not manage to insert himself into the mainstream of either national tradition, showing the difficulty of being an author on the peripheries of national literature.[2]

The reception of *Henri Farel* in terms of publishing records and readership is not as well documented as that of *La Belle Allemande.* However, some contemporary reactions to the publication of the novel have been recorded. There are two surviving reviews in the Parisian *Journal des débats,* receiving it favourably enough, but responding dismissively to a perceived German influence:

> Le style est élevé et noble, quoique trop souvent empreint de *germanisme:* il est vrai que c'est un roman alsacien; le titre même le dit.[3]
>
> Son style n'a pas encore la netteté française, et il se ressent plus que je ne voudrais de la patrie de l'auteur; l'éclat des figures y fait trop souvent tort à la [illisible] des idées: ce qui est tout-à-fait un défaut allemand.[4]

Unfortunately, what was meant by 'trop […] empreint de *germanisme*' cannot be inferred from the context. It is possible that this judgement was caused less by Spach's style, than by the critic's prejudices about Alsatians/Germans. In any case, the passages elucidate that the 'patrie' of an Alsatian was still understood to be Germany. The critic's rejection of *Henri Farel,* precisely because it is too German, seems highly ironic in light of the turn the French outlook on Alsace would take after 1871.

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[1] Spach met François-René de Chateaubriand, Victor Cousin, Jean-François-Casimir Delavigne, Saint-Marc Girardin, François Guizot, Alphonse de Lamartine, Adolphe Thiers, Abel-François Villemain. See Marcellin Berthelot et al, *La Grande Encyclopédie: inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts* (Paris: Société anonyme de la grande encyclopédie, 1885-1901), p. 355; Jean-Pierre Kintz (ed.), *Nouveau dictionnaire de biographie alsacienne* (Strasbourg: Fédération des Sociétés d'Histoire et d'Archéologie d'Alsace, 2000), p. 3675; *L'Histoire de la littérature en Alsace*, p. 93.

[2] Historische Commission bei der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie, Band 34* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1892), p. 703.

[3] St.-M., 'Variétés', *Journal des débats,* 26 August 1834, p. 4. Italics in the original.

[4] St.-M., 'Variétés', ibid., 22 October 1835, p. 3.

Among the restricted Francophone Alsatian readership - mostly made up of nobility and wealthy industrials -, the novel did not fare much better. References to members of the Alsatian elite, the Pfeffinger family of Dettwiller, were too explicit to remain unnoticed. Eros Vicari claims that '[l]es vicissitudes et l'immoralité des personnages, dont certains pouvaient être identifiés à des personnes du lieu, provoquèrent scandale et réaction hostile.'[1] The Alsatian literary scene also reacted with hostility to Spach's French novel, coupled with his demand to put an end to Germanophone Alsatian literature. Spach's idea that Alsatian intellectuals should stop functioning in German led to a polemic that allows valuable insights into the region's identity at the time. The intellectual Charles-Henri Graf retorted: 'Nous, Alsaciens, sommes vraiment des Allemands et le resterons et devrons le rester et ne pas nous mêler d'écrire en français […]. Maintenir autant que possible le germanisme en Alsace, c'est là le vœu de mon patriotisme.'[2] In a similar vein, the theologian and writer Edouard Reuss replied in an essay entitled *We speak German [Wir reden deutsch]* in 1838:

> We should preach and sing, write and talk, pray and rhyme, in German. […] That is our patriotism. In our view, only one people [*Volk*] lives on both sides of the Rhine; battles and international transactions might tear it apart and separate it through customs barriers and barricades, but they will not divide the hearts. Our only adversary is the one who, forgetting our origins, […] heretically dares touch the holy good of our nationality.[3]

The reactions of Spach's contemporaries show just how much Alsatian intellectuals were still attached to Germany and the German language, demonstrating the difficulty of his situation as a Francophone writer in this border zone. Indeed, it appears that Spach's position was unsustainable; in any case, the author returned to writing in German a few years after *Henri Farel*'s publication, as will be shown further on.

Henri Farel's rather complex and lengthy plot charts the private life of a bourgeois family in Alsace over a period of about ten years. The first part describes a love triangle between M. de Wangenheim, a rich industrialist, his much younger wife Minna, and his business associate Henri. This delicate balance between professional success and emotional life is further disturbed in the second part of the novel, by the arrival of the young and handsome Alfred from Paris. While M. de Wangenheim conspires behind the scenes, Alfred uses Minna for an insincere romantic adventure, resulting in Henri's suicide. According to Spach's *Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen*, *Henri Farel* is

[1] *L'Histoire de la littérature en Alsace,* p. 97.
[2] Quoted and translated by Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace*, p. 425.
[3] Cited in *Geschichte des Elsass*, p. 24. My translation.

an autobiographical novel.[1] It is based on a romance Spach claims to have had in his student years with the wife of the owner of a cotton manufacture in Dettwiller, much to the dismay of her husband's business associate. In *Henri Farel*'s fictionalised account of his personal experiences, Spach takes the role of Alfred, a half-Alsatian, half-French student of literature from Paris, accentuating the fact that he saw himself and his work in terms of cultural hybridity.

This hybridity is obvious in the literary influences on *Henri Farel.* Spach drew on two separate national literary traditions, German and French, and the main link between these spheres is undoubtedly Romanticism. *Henri Farel* is littered with literary references: Spach cites twenty authors, of which ten German (Gottfried August Bürger, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Goethe, Herder, Emmanuel Kant, Theodor Körner, August Lafontaine, Martin Luther, Friedrich von Schelling, Friedrich Schiller), five French (Jean-François De La Harpe, Casimir Delavigne, Alphonse de Lamartine, Pigault-Lebrun, Voltaire), one Alsatian (Johann Arnold), one English (Byron), one Italian (Vittorio Alfieri), and three sources of ancient wisdom (Epicurus, Virgil and the Ecclesiastes). Judging from the proportion of German authors, German literature remained Spach's main domain of interest and scholarship. The two authors he mentions most often are the two great German Romantics, Goethe and Schiller. Besides quoting them and digressing into descriptions of their works, Spach even includes a scene where Alfred and his Alsatian university companions, 'autour d'une table où circulait la bière mousseuse, […] se prirent à discuter la prééminence de Schiller et de Goethe.'[2] This proves how much inspiration Spach drew from the German Romantic movement, and in particular from Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774). Generally speaking, Goethe was a major reference for Spach's generation of Alsatian writers; but Spach was the only one to translate this inspiration into French.[3] Goethe and Spach have in common an interest in the promotion of Alsace on a national level. After all, Goethe made Alsace famous in Germany: processing impressions from his years of study in Strasbourg, he produced Romantic poems that celebrated the region and his Alsatian lover Friederike Brion. The *Sesenheimer Lieder* (1770/71) had deeply engraved the beauty of Alsace in the German national imaginary. Inspired by Goethe, Spach now embarked on an endeavour to make Alsace famous among French readers.

Henri Farel inserts itself into the French Romantic movement, profiting from the vogue for Romanticism in France at a time when German Romanticism had outlived its prime. An important branch of French Romanticism notably focused on finding the self through an examination of the

[1] Ludwig Spach, 'Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen von Ludwig Spach', ed. by Franz Xaver Kraus, in *Jahrbuch für Geschichte, Sprache und Literatur Elsass-Lothringens*, *vol. 15* (Strasbourg: n. pub., 1899).
[2] *Henri Farel I,* pp. 107-8.
[3] *L'Alsace et ses historiens,* p. 35.

other. It was marked by a fascination for all things foreign or far away, leading to imaginary or real journeys to strange places: 'À chaque fois, semble-t-il, on nous propose un voyage différent. Nous sommes "ailleurs": exotisme spatial, temporel, mais voyage aussi dans l'irréel ou irrationnel, aux pays de la Différence.'[1] *Henri Farel* inscribes itself into a tradition of Romantic travel writing that initiated its readers to the Orient and France's overseas colonies, proposing Alsace as yet another 'pays de la Différence' to the French public. In this context, *Henri Farel*'s resemblances with George Sand's *Indiana* (1832) acquire new significance. The similarities in the plot line are obvious and have been pointed out by scholars: a love triangle with an intruder, set on the margins, ending in suicide.[2] *Indiana* is Romantic in its dramatic emotions, but also in terms of its exotic location: the Île de la Réunion, a territory ruled by France but not necessarily seen as French, whose charm lies in its otherness. Spach proposes Alsace as a similar outlying and somewhat exotic space to his readers, consciously inscribing it in the Romantic and exoticist tradition. It is therefore hard to tell where France stops and where its colonies begin – the peripheral space (including Alsace) becomes a grey area that cannot be clearly labelled as one or the other.

Henri Farel mixes traits of the *roman historique* and the *roman psychologique* in its aspiration to describe a specific historico-social milieu, namely nineteenth-century Alsace. It may therefore be described as a *roman de mœurs*, a category famously associated with Balzac: 'Le roman de mœurs […] fait de la présentation réaliste des conduites humaines, situées historiquement et socialement, l'essentiel de sa matière et de son argument.'[3] Spach's endeavour may have been inspired by Balzac's *La Comédie humaine,* which had been inaugurated by the publication of *Le Dernier Chouan ou La Bretagne en 1800* (later entitled *Les Chouans*) in 1829.[4] This novel also focuses on a peripheral region, making Brittany - despite its outlandish and exotic feel - a symbol of the Celtic roots of French national identity. Balzac then went on to depict the mores of another marginal province in the following year: Corsica in *La Vendetta* (1830). It does not seem far-fetched that Spach decided to publish a study of Alsace - yet another region on the peripheries of French thought - as a logical follow-up, true to the tendency to present Alsace as on a par with other exotic and outlying spaces. *Henri Farel*'s literary make-up reveals a duality between Germany and France, but also shows Spach in close dialogue with the Parisian centre, firmly resolved to inscribe Alsace into the national imaginary.

[1] *Dictionnaire historique des littératures,* p. 1410.
[2] *L'Histoire de la littérature en Alsace*, p. 97; *Le Nouveau Dictionnaire des auteurs*, p. 3589.
[3] *Dictionnaire historique littératures,* p. 1399.
[4] *Dictionnaire universel des littératures,* p. 317.

In line with Spach's analysis of Alsace as a marginal space, *Henri Farel* sets up a dichotomy between Paris and Alsace. All the way through the novel, there is an opposition between 'la capitale' and '[l]a province perdue;' between Paris and Strasbourg, 'une ville de la frontière,' or Liebershofen, 'un village écarté.'[1] A power imbalance is equally implied in the narrative, in that the main characters' lives ultimately depend on decisions made in Paris (peace, war, business loans, love affairs). Moreover, Alsace is shown to be everything Paris is not, and vice versa. This does not mean that Spach describes Paris in positive terms. Spach's vision of Paris aligns itself with that of exoticist writers such as Loti or Gaugin, who saw the capital as rotten and corrupted. He belongs to a generation of authors who sought refuge from modernity in the peripheries, be it the provinces or the colonies. Nevertheless, this focus on peripheral purity does not make these spaces any less marginal, as they are always viewed through a Parisian lens. Similarly, Spach's Alsace is described with reference to and in opposition to Paris; the province depends on the Parisian framework to become thinkable. Consequently, the depiction of Alsace in *Henri Farel* reveals at least as much about the identity of the centre as it does about Alsace itself.

The marginal author endeavours to present Alsace to the centre as a fascinating peripheral other. Acknowledging that Alsace is not yet anchored in the French imaginary, Spach tries to render his province knowable and graspable for his readers. *Henri Farel* is an attempt to make the French take possession of Alsace emotionally and intellectually. Consequently, Spach underlines at the beginning of the novel that his native province is just as worthy of attention as other places of oriental predilection:

> Mignon a chanté avec une touchante mélancolie: Connais-tu le pays où fleurissent les citronniers? Byron chanta sur le même ton: Connaissez-vous le pays où s'élèvent le myrte et le cyprès? Je ne sais combien de poètes ont, après eux, répété la même question. Qu'il me soit permis d'ajouter un chaînon encore à cette longue chaîne d'interrogations plus ou moins poétiques: Connaissez-vous l'Alsace?
>
> Je la connais, moi, c'est un beau pays. […] Le fer dort au sein de ses monts, dont la cime se couronne de sapins à longue chevelure secouée par l'ouragan, et d'un feston de nobles châteaux encore grands sous le lierre qui cache leur ruine; dans les entrailles de la terre et sur ses sommités, les symboles de la force. Les vignes couvrent les collines, le blé ondoie comme une mer dorée dans la plaine; le Rhin bondit sur ses flancs, large, impétueux, profond; il flotte comme une ceinture; […] du sein des villes et des bourgades, des flèches gothiques s'élancent, hardies et sveltes, vers le ciel; des hommes forts marchent au pied de

[1] *Henri Farel I,* pp. 68, 114, 271-2.

> ces obélisques chrétiens, et portent sur leur front la trace de leur origine. Oui, c'est un beau pays que l'Alsace! […] [D]u haut des Vosges cette noble vallée se déroule avec les suaves ondulations de ses collines, la nappe brillante de ses plaines […] au centre de cet immense jardin s'élève, comme un phare lointain, la cathédrale majestueuse, l'œuvre d'Erwin, la pyramide aérienne. [1]

In his introduction to the province, Spach directly aligns Alsace with foreign and exotic countries. The quotations chosen for the opening lines are allusions to Goethe and Byron and combine Romanticism with exoticism, suggesting that Alsace is just as worthy of exoticist interest as other conventionally outlandish and colourful spaces - in this case, Italy and Turkey.[2] The passage creates an internal exoticism about Alsace, which consists in repeating traditional oriental and colonialist discourses and projecting them onto the region. Metaphors that describe Alsace in similar ways to France's overseas possessions run throughout the text: the province is situated by the sea - even if only a sea of wheat - and is traceable through its 'phare lointain.' The most obvious images link Alsace to Egypt, lending it metaphorical obelisks and pyramid, thus superposing onto the province images of Napoleon's campaigns in Egypt and Syria, evidently colonial enterprises in Oriental lands. The image echoes the Luxor Obelisk being transported to Paris at the time of *Henri Farel*'s composition - its placement at the heart of the French capital pointing to France's self-image as a colonial nation. *Henri Farel* shows that Alsace has its own symbols worthy of being transported to the capital, and its description of elements emblematic of the region defined the province for many subsequent authors and for a generation of French travellers (see the section on canonical authors' journeys through Alsace). The two-fold exclamation 'c'est un beau pays,' combined with the description of Alsace's natural resources - iron, stone, wood, wheat, strong natives - also show Alsace as a land full of riches, there for the taking. Next to its treasures stands an allusion to the moment France initially took possession of Alsace in 1648: Spach's reference to the region as 'cet immense jardin' alludes to Louis XIV's supposed exclamation about the land he had just conquered: 'quel beau jardin!'[3] In this context, Spach fails to mention that the picturesque castle ruins were for the most part caused by Louis XIV's orders to destroy all strongholds on the Vosges in order to render Alsace defenceless. Again and again, Spach presents Alsace as conquered territory, ripe for exploitation and exoticist admiration by the centre, and advertising it alongside other outlandish

[1] *Henri Farel I,* pp. 57-60.
[2] Spach alludes to Goethe's *Urmeister* (1777), where Mignon sings about her native Italy, and Byron's lines from *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), describing Turkey. Goethe and Byron travelled the Mediterranean for inspiration, and are known for the oriental descriptions of their travels.
[3] Clive Coates, *An Encyclopaedia of the Wines and Domains of France* (Berkeley: California U.P., 2000), p. 518.

destinations throughout the novel. For instance, the first time Minna travels to Paris and meets Alfred - a young boy at the time -, he has just been studying a map:

> - Vous voyagiez donc, dites-vous? Est-il permis de savoir en quels lointains climats? Est-ce sous les orangers d'Italie, ou les palmiers d'Afrique?
>
> - Pas si loin aujourd'hui, madame; j'étais de votre côté, sur les bords du Rhin.'[1]

The figure of the Parisian tourist is extremely important in *Henri Farel,* which also depicts the lone male adventurer so typical of colonialist literature. As a student, Alfred's parents send him to Alsace to live with the Wangenheims, hoping that his frail constitution might be strengthened there. This, of course, reiterates the idea that the peripheries are somehow invigorating for the Frenchman. It is through Alfred's eyes that the reader comes to discover the province:

> C'étaient les premières montagnes qu'il vit, en descendant les Vosges. Il avait pris un guide, et quittant la grande route, il s'enfonçait dans les sentiers de la forêt. A chaque rigole d'eau pure, qui se glissait en murmurant comme des colombes amoureuses sur la pente des prairies, il s'arrêtait; […] à chaque échappée de vue il battait des mains, et laissait errer ses yeux sur la plaine mollement ondulée, […] couchée à ses pieds sous ce hale vaporeux, qui idéalise les objets, parce qu'il les voile avec coquetterie. Une énorme paroi de rocher, qui formait une voûte en se penchant sur le chemin, l'arrêta plus long-temps; il se plaisait à mesurer ces masses rougeâtres, tapissés de plantes grimpantes dans leurs enfoncemens […]. Il s'adressa a son guide; celui-ci lui répondit en patois allemand.[2]

Alfred, the adventurer from Paris, explores Alsace. Countless descriptions of colonialised territories show a male explorer who - often with the help of a native guide - defies savage nature on his way to take possession of the colony. Alfred is stepping into their footsteps on ideologically more virgin soil, discovering the exoticist must-haves of savage forests, rocks and springs in Alsace, rather than overseas. Yet again, internal exoticism about Alsace is created as the province presents herself to the Parisian traveller as a veiled nudity to be desired and unveiled. In good colonialist style, Alfred's discovery of exotic territory is mixed with erotic encounters with indigenous women; as Schon observes, 'l'exotisme est associé à […] l'intérêt érotique pour la "belle indigène" […], au rapport condescendant et obsessionnel à l'autre.'[3] This dynamic can be observed in Alfred and Minna's relationship. Initially attracted by Minna's otherness, assiduously wooing her for the exotic experience - even imitating specifically German practices of courtship -, Alfred leaves her as soon as

[1] *Henri Farel I,* p. 321.
[2] *Henri Farel II,* p. 65.
[3] *L'Auto-Exotisme,* p. 13.

he is sure to possess her affection. The theme of the foreign beauty gives Spach the opportunity to reuse an element of internal exoticism about Alsace that was already present in *La Belle Allemande:* the enticing Alsatian woman in her traditional dress. Spach has Minna turn up to a ball in Alsatian costume and observes the men's reactions: '[On] put entendre les complimens flatteurs […] sur sa tournure coquette et séductrice, et les acclamations qui la reçurent à son entrée au salon, et le bruit étourdissant de l'orchestre, qui engloutissait les murmures approbateurs.'[1] Spach takes up Bret and Villaret's representation of Alsace in the form of a sensual woman and even hints at some Alsatians' involvement in sexual libertinage with regards to Minna's husband. The relationship between Alsatian and Parisian ends as expected: Alfred simply leaves her - no strings attached - and turns to the next exotic beauty (this time Italian), although his leaving has disastrous consequences for Minna. This idea of amorous encounters with native women of no consequence for the coloniser is part and parcel of Orientalism, and, as we see, internal exoticism.

Spach's creation of internal exoticism about Alsace is intriguing. There are no literary precedents of Parisians writing about Alsace, yet Spach simply transposes the discourses of French overseas exoticism onto the province. He sees his native Alsace through what he perceives as the eyes of the centre, and his descriptions correspond to those a Parisian author would have used in travel literature about the colonies. Therefore, Spach's world-view represents a mind-set of auto-exoticism in line with Schon's definition:

> [L]'auto-exotisme naît d'un double sentiment d'attachement et de rejet à l'égard des cultures d'origine. […] [L]e regard que portent le/la narrateur/trice sur son environnement quotidien semble être le regard de l'Autre, de l'étranger, regard extérieur jamais totalement assimilé par celui qui l'emprunte.[2]

Spach's descriptions of his native province and thus of himself indeed seem to come from the viewpoint of a foreigner. In his quality as an Alsatian writer, he is a part of the Alsatian other he describes to the Parisians - but he has also become other to himself in espousing the French way of seeing his own province. Schon calls this paradox 'l'Autre intériorisé.'[3] Spach has adopted and articulated the capital's gaze on Alsace, internalising exoticist representations and transferring them onto his homeland. Fanon argues that the first colonial literary productions in the coloniser's

[1] *Henri Farel II,* pp. 35-6.
[2] *L'Auto-Exotisme,* p. 16.
[3] Ibid. p. 17.

language tend to imitate 'the dominant trends in the literature of the colonising power,' a tendency confirmed by *Henri Farel.*[1]

The fact that Spach casts himself in the figure of the Parisian makes his auto-exoticism even more obvious. His autobiographical work proves that Alfred is a placeholder for the young Spach himself, at least with regards to his relationship with the family, his occupation as a student, his passion for literature, and his to-and-fro between Paris and Alsace. Spach not only sees his province through the eyes of the centre; he becomes a central Parisian. Similar mechanisms seem to be present in Spach's auto-exotic movement and that of Corsican writers, such as Tonelli, examined earlier. The peripheral Francophone author simultaneously embraces an insider's and an outsider's viewpoint on his own culture, leading to tensions and even fragmentations within his identity. Hybridity is a major theme in *Henri Farel*; Spach's initial remarks about the amphibious nature of the Alsatians can also be applied to him as a writer. Spach experienced himself as somehow belonging to both worlds, but not truly to either, and struggled to reconcile the tensions of his ambivalent nature. This is obvious in his literary development. He started to write in German, but soon turned into an obstinate partisan of the French language and furiously campaigned for Alsatian literature to be in French. In an article in the *Album Alsacien* on 8 April 1838, Spach advised his colleagues: 'brisez vos harpes allemandes!'[2] This proclamation remains his most famous statement. Ironically enough, Spach published a collection of German poems the following year.[3] In his autobiography, Spach also comments on this sense of duality: 'Strangely enough, the antagonism between my two natures and my double identity could never be reconciled.'[4] The predicament of feeling Alsatian and Parisian at the same time and yet experiencing these personalities in opposition to each other caused a lasting identity crisis in Spach, which translated itself into his literary work and notably into the character of Alfred. Tellingly, the character Spach most closely identifies with is a metisse, half-French, half-Alsatian, likely reflecting the hybridity and tornness Spach himself experienced:

> [O]n dirait qu'Alfred est fractionné en deux pour toute chose, et qu'il y a en lui incapacité de jamais former un ensemble. J'ai souvent pensé que son origine y était pour quelque chose; Français du côté de son père, Alsacien, c'est-à-dire Allemand par moi, ces deux nationalités si diverses se prennent en lui corps à corps, et loin de se fondre, se heurtent comme sur un champ de bataille.[5]

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[1] *Beginning Postcolonialism,* p. 86.
[2] Quoted in *L'Alsace et ses historiens*, p. 184.
[3] Louis Spach, *Gedichte* (Strasbourg: n. pub., 1839)
[4] *Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen,* p. 64. My translation.
[5] *Henri Farel I,* p. 339.

Over and above symbolising Spach's fractured nature, Alfred also allows the author to envisage his own transformation from Alsatian to French. Growing up, Alfred undergoes a complete assimilation to the centre's culture and subjugates his German side. During his studies in Strasbourg, Alfred becomes more and more the image of the 'Français incarné': 'Au milieu d'une population allemande, l'élément gaulois reprenait en lui le dessus; il semblait se raidir contre l'influence étrangère, précisément pour la maîtriser.'[1] Spach concentrates and finally settles the power struggle between centre and periphery within one person. It is through the transformed Alfred that Spach lives out his fantasy of becoming the conqueror and writing from the centre – no longer a mimic man, but a true Frenchman.

During his time as a student in Strasbourg, Alfred discovers his literary vocation. His project resembles the work of other typical exoticist writers, as he sets out to find inspiration on the peripheries and then uses this foreign material in order to renew French literature. This yet again exemplifies the French self-understanding as a colonising nation in terms of cultural appropriation, taking possession of that which is outside, then assimilating and incorporating it into the nation's ever expanding self. The text shows Alfred noting down his exotic impressions in a travel journal and inquiring about Alsace's native - i.e. German - artistic and literary traditions:

> [Il pouvait] entrevoir, derrière cette brume, un pays riche en aspects pittoresques, multiples, variés [...] qui tous réclamaient leur part de gloire, et jetaient leurs noms, inconnus jusqu'ici, aux pieds d'Alfred, et semblaient lui crier:
>
> "Porte-nous au sein de la grande cité, dispensatrice de toute renommée; conte […] à tes compatriotes […] nos chants mystérieux comme le rivage septentrional où ils résonnent; […] fournis-leur toutes ces pierres, tout ce marbre informe, qu'ils le taillent, qu'ils le broient, qu'ils tirent de nos *runes* inintelligibles les sons prophétiques de l'avenir! Qu'ils attirent notre philosophie aérienne sur la terre solide, qu'ils l'habillent de beaux vêtemens! Nous pétrirons les statues, qu'ils y mettent le feu de Prométhée!"[2]

This passage shows a contemporary exoticism about Germany and the perceived Nordic culture of a mysterious land filled with symbols, chants, mist and obscure philosophy. Alsace falls into this exotic sphere and can serve as raw material for French art - the art of a conqueror inspired by the conquered realm. This reflects the common colonial assumption that the art of marginal spaces is somehow culturally inferior and cannot stand on its own, but necessitates a French poet to remould and refine it, as already expressed about Corsica by Maupassant. The role Spach assigns to Alfred

[1] *Henri Farel II,* p. 114.
[2] Ibid. pp. 103-5. Italics in the original.

brings out yet again the ambiguity of his character. At first, he is called to be a cultural mediator who will transport Alsace's Germanic culture to the centre, perhaps reflecting Spach's earlier work: he had written countless articles in Parisian journals and reviews with the aim of introducing the French world to German writers and poets.[1] Yet, Spach also casts Alfred in the role of the Parisian writer himself, showing him at work reshaping Alsace's raw material:

> Alfred travaillait nuit et jour; pas d'heure, pas de minute qui ne lui apportât une idée neuve, et voici le procédé qu'il suivait pour la faire sienne. Il la laissait arriver d'abord à lui sous son attirail grotesque ou nuageux, il l'accueillait, il lui faisait bonne mine, il cachait le fou rire, qui s'emparait quelquefois de lui […]; il avait l'air d'un ministre d'état voluptueux, recevant avec condescendance, sur son ottomane, une naïve campagnarde: l'idée toute fraîche, toute neuve, tout innocente, était entrée dans sa tête, il fermait la porte sur elle, la déshabillait, et lui disait: Restez là, vous êtes à moi! Puis la fusion intime opérée, loin de se refroidir, il y prenait goût, il faisait descendre l'idée de sa tête à son cœur, et son amour pour elle devenait passion; puis ne pouvant la laisser sortir tout effarée, il découpait pour elle un nouveau costume, élégant, un peu maniéré […]. [E]nfin l'idée, reçue comme nymphe du Danube ou de la Spree, s'échappait idée-mère, idée hardie, idée nationale, et Alfred souriait comme s'il l'avait produit.[2]

Alfred acts like any exoticist writer would, taking possession of elements of a subjugated culture, importing them into the centre and giving them new shape. Except that in this case, the culturally colonised territory is closer to home: the rivers symbolise different German states, the Spree connoting Berlin and the Prussian centre of influence, and the Danube representing southern Germany and Austria. The French thinker is seen as necessarily superior to their native cultures, which remain grotesque and laughable until a French mind sharpens and polishes them – in the previous quotation, French authors are likened to the Greek god Prometheus, humanity's educator and cultural father. However, the foreign idea has an attractive novelty and freshness; cultural absorption is seen as renewing for the French mind. The second significant feature of the quotation is the sexual aspect of Alfred's relationship with the idea, which comes to him in the form of a

[1] Desiring to make German writings more widely known in French circles, Spach wrote about German literature, press and poetry for the Parisian journals *Le Temps*, *L'Universel* and *La Chronique de Paris*. Spach worked for the Alsatian-Parisian publishing house Treuttel et Würtz, writing all articles on German literature in their *Encyclopédie des gens du monde: Répertoire universel des sciences, des lettres et des arts*. He also collaborated for the Strasbourg-based *Album alsacien: Revue de l'Alsace littéraire, historique et artistique* and the *Revue d'Alsace*, writing on German press reports as well as Alsatian history and literature. See *L'Alsace et ses historiens,* pp. 90-1; *Nouveau dictionnaire de biographie alsacienne,* p. 3675; *La Grande Encyclopédie*, p. 365.

[2] *Henri Farel II,* pp. 105-6.

nymph. Nymphs were nature deities first associated with Greek mythology, but also widely represented in German Baroque and Romantic art. They were seen as the embodiment of rivers, trees, caves, but could also be read as incarnations of fruitfulness and sexuality. In addition to their erotic force, nymphs were commonly believed to inspire poetry and art.[1] Typically, Nerval would portray a half-naked Lorely, the nymph of the Rhine, as a spiritual incarnation of Germany.[2] The Alsatian/German idea, therefore, comes to Alfred in the figure of a foreign woman. This feminisation and sexualisation of the other are, of course, topoi characteristic of exoticist and colonialist discourses. The subjugation of the nymph is described using specifically sexual vocabulary, with strong connotations of sexual abuse. Alfred's rape of the innocent nymph resembles René raping the helpless Corsican *bergère* in Tonelli's *Seppa;* in both cases, this sexual experience is seen as normal and even invigorating for the Frenchmen. Through this intimate fusion, Alfred incorporates a foreign idea into the national self, operating a cultural migration. Spach characterises France as a nation that invades other cultures, absorbs them into itself and then creates out of this fusion a new and truly French identity. The text shows that Spach's idea of Frenchness necessarily involves colonialism, cultural as well as territorial.

These considerations lead to the last important point about *Henri Farel:* how the novel envisages the relationship between Alsace and France. *Henri Farel* shows a keen interest in historiography, joining the quest for national origins and cohesion so typical of many nineteenth-century *romans historiques.* Not unlike Corsican authors, Spach's depiction of Alsace strives to embed the region within the framework of national history, often retelling historical events despite their irrelevance to the plot. This motivation to rewrite history is echoed by the following quotation: 'il est remarquable que l'époque la plus poétique de l'histoire moderne n'ait trouvé dans le monde littéraire que des échos estropiés, des versificateurs pâles et des orateurs plats.'[3] This statement, made early on in the novel, shows Spach's inspiration to be a story writer worthy of his subject matter. *Henri Farel* charts the First French Empire, from the height of Napoleon Bonaparte's power to his downfall in 1815. Spach uses a fictional narrative in order to convey a particular interpretation of history and thereby to advance a specific definition of the nation. This interest in historiography comes from the need to redefine the nation in such a way that Alsace can become a part of it.

Henri Farel's depiction of national identity shows Napoleon's empire-building as the main source of cohesion for the nation. The entire novel is marked by a fascination for Napoleon Bonaparte and for the concept of military glory, representing France through the power and the

[1] Elisabeth Décultot et al, *Dictionnaire du monde germanique* (Paris: Bayard, 2007), p. 672.
[2] Gérard de Nerval, 'La Loreley: Souvenirs d'Allemagne' in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Lahure, 1867), p. 427.
[3] *Henri Farel I,* p. 70.

conquests of a charismatic leader. Napoleon's conquering mentality did not strike Spach as problematic. He paints the Emperor's subjugation of rulers and territories quite matter-of-factly and perceives it as glorious. France, as a concept, is closely associated with Napoleon and military honour. M. de Wangenheim even adopts a business strategy based on Napoleon's approach: 'Il nous faut avancer, comme Napoléon, qui est entré dans le Portugal, parce qu'il est entré en Espagne, qui entrera en Russie, parce qu'il est entré en Allemagne, et qui arrivera à la monarchie universelle, tout en jouant quitte ou double.'[1] One cannot help but wonder how far the French Emperor and his conquests constituted Spach's way of thinking France. Could French identity mean nothing more than following a charismatic leader into battle? Spach's underlying idea seems to be that France needs continual military successes and acquisitions of new territories to assure its identity as a nation. *Henri Farel* was written only four years after the French conquest of Algeria - an exploit that was important for France's self-image as a victorious, conquering nation and an event that fuelled a new boost of colonialist discourses.[2] These ideas found an echo in *Henri Farel,* which understands the French self as fundamentally caught up in conquest and Imperialism - not only overseas, but, under Napoleon I, specifically within Europe. Only in relation to the conquered and colonised can France realise its own identity as a nation. Once again, one can observe the movement of 'colonial reinvention' mentioned in chapter one with reference to Parisian writers' strategies of reconciling tensions between ethnic and civic conceptions of French national identity. Spach makes use of the same idea in order to resolve contradictions within Alsatian identity, pertaining to the juxtaposition of a German ethnic community and French nationalism.

Having defined France as synonymous with Empire and Imperialism, Spach's initial characterisation of Alsace links it to Germany. This is revealed in Alfred's slip of the tongue when talking about his mother: 'Ma mère est Allemande, je me trompe, elle est Française, mais Alsacienne.'[3] Just like earlier sources, Spach postulates an affinity between Alsace and Germany that sometimes leads to confusion, since Alsatians and Germans share an ethnic identity: 'le caractère germanique, qui là [en Alsace] s'est cramponné au sol et aux habitants, et demeure indélébile sur leur front et dans leur langue.'[4] In Spach's view, Alsace is to be understood as a French possession and is fittingly described as 'sol de France,' 'partie de l'empire français' and, most tellingly, as belonging to 'les cent cinquante départemens de l'empire français'- showing a confusion between French provinces and colonies.[5] At the time the novel was set, Napoleon's Empire spanned large

[1] *Henri Farel I,* p. 288.
[2] See Jean-Pierre Rioux (ed.), *Dictionnaire de la France coloniale* (Paris: Flammarion, 2007), pp. 25-6.
[3] *Henri Farel II,* p. 69.
[4] *Henri Farel I,* p. 74.
[5] Ibid. pp. 59, 67, 188.

parts of Europe, all divided into smaller territorial entities labelled as *départements français.* Contemporary historians understand the First French Empire as exclusively associated with European soil and count exactly 130 *départements* at its peak in 1812.[1] The number of 150 cited by Spach is only reached by adding all of France's overseas colonies at the time to its European possessions. It appears that Spach simply counted all territorial entities ruled by France and called them *départements*. Clearly, the border between what the French nation and its possessions was very hazy in Spach's mind. Alsace is situated in a vague space between *département* and *colonie*, between the nation and its conquests.

Simultaneously, Spach makes room for Alsace within the nation precisely through its definition as Empire. It is by means of the Napoleonic Wars that Alsatians are shown to identify with the French Empire for the first time. *Henri Farel* contributes to the *mythe napoléonien,* according to which the Emperor's charismatic leadership and military exploits seduced the glory-hungry Alsatians and turned them into fierce French patriots. Spach's version of history foregrounds the people's readiness to join Napoleon's imperialistic endeavour:

> Il voyait autour de lui le tourbillon des victoires impériales entraîner jeunes et vieux […] Henri, avec son imagination romanesque et fougueuse, était séduit, subjugué par l'homme du destin, et se serait vendu à lui corps et âme.[2]

Henri Farel presents the Napoleonic Wars as the first unifying element between Alsace and France. Glorifying Napoleon and joining his troops allowed the Alsatians to identify to a certain degree if not with France, then at least with the French Empire they were helping to enlarge. Spach couples Napoleon's Imperialism with the propagation of nationalism, as emerges from the following quotation:

> Qu'il s'y joigne une idée nationale, une idée qui entre dans la tête du dernier mendiant, alors c'est un frémissement électrique qui vous saisit, […] vous comprenez que l'individu peut se fondre dans un tout […] et jouir d'un bonheur personnel encore, précisément par sa fusion dans une masse. Or, cette idée nationale, vous la trouviez dans la ville fortunée [de Strasbourg], à la glorieuse époque dont nous parlons.[3]

The passage is inserted into a description of Strasbourg as a springboard for Napoleon's conquests and more specifically during the celebrations of his future marriage to Marie-Louise of Austria. The

[1] Jean-François Sirinelli, Daniel Couty (ed), *Dictionnaire de l'histoire de France* (Paris: Armand-Collin, 1999), p. 515.
[2] *Henri Farel I,* p. 61.
[3] Ibid. p. 66.

'idée nationale' that Spach feels no need to qualify any further seems to be based on a unity forged through war and expansion, and military glories lived under a strong leader. Spach's ideas of Frenchness, Imperialism and nationalism turn out to be closely connected, if not pertaining to one and the same entity. With respect to Alsace's belonging to France, Spach solves the tension between exotic other and national self by defining France in terms of Imperialism. Alsace can merge with the nation by partaking in the imperial endeavour, finding its place within the Empire through the conquest of further territories.

Spach's Alsatians feel French only as long as Napoleon is in power and while France's imperial extension on the continent is secured. After Napoleon's final defeat in 1815, Spach's Alsatian characters show no interest whatsoever in France. Henri would have preferred for Alsace to be annexed to Germany, rather than live under the Restoration Monarchy:

> [L]a France […] va recevoir les Bourbons pour la seconde fois, et tout sera dit! […] Ah! n'aurait-il pas valu cent fois mieux recevoir en libérateurs les nobles alliés, dresser des arcs de fleurs sur leur passage, y placer nos femmes et leur dire: Embrassez-les, et faites notre paix![1]

'[L]es nobles alliés' denote the Seventh Coalition, led by Prussia, which would achieve the founding of the German Confederation. The word choice 'libérateurs' indicates that Alsace is once again seen as a subjugated territory under foreign rule. As soon as France is no longer defined as an Empire under a charismatic ruler, the Alsatians' affinities go back to their German roots. Formerly so enthusiastic about Napoleon's successes, the Alsatians are shown to have lost all interest in France after his fall: 'ni Henri ni madame de Wangenheim ne s'inquiétaient depuis quelque temps des fils qui se nouaient ou se dénouaient de l'autre côté des Vosges.'[2] The whole concept of France is now seen as geographically situated on the other side of the mountains and no longer concerning Alsace. Towards the very end of the novel, not long before his suicide, Spach shows Henri watching a military exercise:

> [Henri] voyait défiler d'un œil hagard ces riches uniformes […]. [L]a musique militaire criait à ses oreilles avec des sons discordans et rauques; ce mouvement guerrier le navrait par le souvenir de ses belles années, lorsqu'il avait eu foi encore dans ce quelque chose que les jeunes hommes appellent *gloire.*

[1] *Henri Farel II,* pp. 6-7.
[2] Ibid. p. 146.

> - Au moins, si l'on se battait en un coin du monde, se dit-il, s'il y avait une mort honorable à donner et à recevoir; mais des années d'une apathique torpeur ont pris la place de ces jours de bataille.[1]

Disillusioned with France's dreams of Empire, disorientated with regards to nationalism, disappointed by his relationship with Minna, Henri commits suicide. This is the moment Spach chooses to end his novel and therefore the presentation of his province to his Parisian readers, leaving them with the now somewhat unsatisfying image of Alsace's continuing otherness to France.

Could *Henri Farel* be analysed as an act of literary resistance, valorising Alsace's German cultural heritage and resisting patronising comparisons to Parisian high culture? Spach certainly manages to import ideas of German Romanticism into Parisian literature through their association with Alsace. However, he calls attention to Alsace as a cultural sphere by depicting it as fundamentally other to the French self and in so doing exoticising it and any ideas connected with it. What may have started out as resistance thus descends into auto-exoticism, into a conscious or unconscious adoption of the coloniser's cultural values, finally causing the author to depict himself as other. The nature of Spach's representations of Alsace is still dictated by the hegemony of Parisian discourses; the culture of the centre remains the only frame of reference for his depiction of Alsace. *Henri Farel* is the first example of Alsatian auto-exoticism in Francophone literature, and thereby confirms the suspicion that French provinces can be analysed and understood through a postcolonial framework.

1835 – 1847: Honoré de Balzac's Alsatian characters in *La Comédie humaine*

Alsace in and of itself is not a part of the provincial France Balzac depicts in his novels. While he declared that one of his literary goals was to 'peindre le pays tout en peignant les hommes, raconter les plus beaux sites et les principales villes de la France,' Balzac never dedicated any of his writings to a description or exploration of Alsace.[2] Jared Wenger has charted Balzac's literary map of France; it includes some seventeen provinces, but neither Alsace nor Corsica.[3] While Balzac does paint the occasional Alsatian character in Paris, he does not go so far as to foreground their origins or their journey from the province to the capital - as he did with other famous provincial Parisians, such as Lucien de Rubempré, Rastignac, or the Corsican Piombo family. His Alsatians simply appear in Parisian society at one point or another; their roots are not seen as important and their presence is taken for granted. Aside from a few minor characters who are given a few lines each, there are two Alsatian characters in Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, appearing at the same time: the banker

[1] *Henri Farel II,* p. 294.
[2] *Préface* to *Une Fille d'Eve I*, p. 15.
[3] See *The Province and the Provinces*.

Nucingen and his ex-boss, the baron Aldrigger are first introduced in *Le Père Goriot* (1835). Both characters appear in books that Balzac ordered into his *Scènes de la vie parisienne* and that are not meant to be descriptive of France's regions - unlike the *Scènes de la vie de province.*

Jean-Baptiste Aldrigger is the only true Alsatian Balzac ever bestows with a biography (Nucingen's origins are more complex, as will be shown shortly). This rather satirical characterisation is only three pages long and tells the story of an enterprising man from Strasbourg, who made a fortune during the Revolution - no more details are given - then married a rich German lady and was made baron by Napoleon. We further learn that he had an apprentice called Nucingen at his bank in Strasbourg, and that Aldrigger finally ruined himself financially because of his blind faith in Napoleon's success - a mistake that his former apprentice knew to avoid. Yet again, Napoleon appears as a pillar of identity creation, and as a symbol of its instability:

> D'Aldrigger fut alors baronifié par S. M. l'Empereur et Roi, car sa fortune se doubla; mais il se passionna pour le grand homme qui l'avait titré. Donc, entre 1814 et 1815, il se ruina pour avoir pris au sérieux le soleil d'Austerlitz. L'honnête Alsacien ne suspendit pas ses paiements, ne désintéressa pas ses créanciers avec les valeurs qu'il regardait comme mauvaises; il paya tout à bureau ouvert, se retira de la Banque et mérita le mol de son ancien premier commis, Nucingen: 'Honnête homme, mais bête!'
>
> […] '*Foilà ze gue z'est gué t'afoir drop cri anne Nappolion,*' dit-il en voyant le résultat de sa liquidation.[1]

Balzac highlights a few common stereotypes about Alsatians, first of all their fervour for Napoleon Bonaparte and second of all their honesty and naivety. The passage also gives a foretaste of the transcription of a typically Alsatian accent. Balzac amuses himself by literally transcribing the pronunciation of his Alsatian characters into a French with German tonality, as he later explains about Nucingen: 'Les germanismes de monsieur de Nucingen ont déjà trop émaillé cette Scène pour y mettre d'autres phrases soulignées difficiles à lire.'[2] Creating difficulty for the reader in deciphering the Alsatian-German accent, Balzac renders a sense of alienation from a foreign speaker. Alsace remains contextually associated with Germany, not only through Aldrigger's German wife, but also through phonetics. Nucingen's characterisation 'honnête […], mais bête' seems to be a central element in Aldrigger's character, since he trustingly comes to Paris after his insolvency and asks his former apprentice for help. Naively, he is double-crossed by Nucingen and bled dry by his wife, who

[1] Honoré de Balzac, *Scènes de la vie parisienne: Le Père Goriot* (Paris: Bureaux du Siècle, 1856), pp. 64-5.
[2] Honoré de Balzac, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes: Où mènent les mauvais chemins* in *Œuvres complètes de M. de Balzac, Vol. 12* (Paris: Furne, 1842-1848), p. 48.

uses the money left to adopt a luxurious Parisian lifestyle. Aldrigger's story is only told at the moment of his death, with his last thoughts still fixed on the financially uncertain future of his wife and daughters. He is a marginal character; yet, he remains the only truly Alsatian representative in Balzac's work.

The baron Frédéric de Nucingen is a more important and widely used character in Balzac's universe. He appears for the first time in *Le Père Goriot* and has several other mentions and side roles all over the *La Comédie humaine* [*Melmoth reconcilié* (1835), *Illusions perdues* (1836-43), *Les Comédiens sans le savoir* (1846), *Le Député d'Arcis* (1854)]. Balzac focuses on his household and financial affairs in *La Maison Nucingen* (1837) - in which, surprisingly, Nucingen is not the most important character - and finally writes the baron's biggest role in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838-47), although Nucingen's character is only developed in the first and second parts of the story, *Esther ou Les Amours d'un vieux banquier* (1838) and *À combien revient l'amour aux vieillards* (1842). The reader is first introduced to Nucingen during a conversation between Rastignac, Madame de Beauséant and Mme de Langeais, on the subject of Goriot's daughters:

> La seconde n'est-elle pas, dit la vicomtesse en regardant madame de Langeais, mariée à un banquier dont le nom est Allemand, un baron de Nucingen […], un riche banquier qui fait le royaliste [?][1]

Rather than narrowing down Mme de Beauséant's statement to Alsace, Balzac's first description of Nucingen associatively links the baron to Germany. Nucingen's Alsatian origins are only revealed later on in the narrative. The reader already learns in *Le Père Goriot* that Nucingen is a ruthless banker and an uncaring husband; themes on which *La Maison Nucingen* expands in more detail. The baron's character did not undergo significant changes between the former and the latter work, probably because Balzac already had the story of *La Maison Nucingen* in mind when he wrote *Goriot.*[2] According to these novels, Nucingen has no private or emotional life. He married Delphine de Goriot for money and treats her like a status symbol: 'Nucingen ne se cache pas pour dire que sa femme est la représentation de sa fortune, une *chose* indispensable, mais secondaire dans la vie & haute pression des hommes politiques et des grands financiers.'[3] While her husband's only passion is money, Delphine is deeply unhappy and is therefore easily courted by Rastignac. Rather than becoming upset at the fact that his wife has a lover, Nucingen makes Rastignac his business partner with bonuses and unloads unto him the charge of keeping his wife entertained. He also uses Delphine's affair to blackmail her and secure her fortune for himself. One wonders if Balzac read and

[1] *Le Père Goriot,* p. 19.
[2] See Anthony Pugh, *Balzac's Recurring Characters* (Toronto: Toronto U.P., 1974), pp. 173-4.
[3] Honoré de Balzac, *La Maison Nucingen* (Paris: Flammarion, 1904), p. 12. Italics in the original.

was inspired by *Henri Farel* when he thought up the Alsatian Nucingen, since the first volume of Spach's novel shows exactly the same love triangle: the older husband, a cunning businessman and his attractive, but emotionally starved wife welcome a newcomer who soon becomes the wife's lover. The husband decides to use him as a business partner and in so doing secures financial gain and control over his wife's life.

Just like M. de Wangenheim, Nucingen's top priority in life is money, and therefore his job. Starting out as Aldrigger's apprentice in Strasbourg, it is not disclosed how he managed to own a bank in Paris. Balzac makes it clear that Nucingen does not gain money in altogether honest ways; *La Maison Nucingen* describes how he fraudulently increases his fortune through fake bankruptcies, ruining many a client and using straw men - among them, Rastignac - to invest his money without attracting attention. Thanks to his ruse, his cool calculation and his foresight, Nucingen holds an important position in the Parisian financial world and is characterised as 'un des plus riches capitalistes de France, le plus profondément habile de ceux qu'on a fini par nommer assez énergiquement des Loups-cerviers.'[1] When the reader first meets the baron, he is already a part of Parisian high society and has a certain influence on the capital's financial and political scene. Nucingen upholds this position because he has no other ideals or convictions apart from money; he adapts to every political regime, feigns support for any leader in charge and comes out unscathed and even with profit when governments collapse. Bixiou characterises Nucingen's strategy as follows: 'Ouvrard est le seul qui ait deviné cet Alsacien, fils de quelque juif converti par ambition: "Quand Nucingen lâche son or, disait-il, croyez qu'il saisit des diamants!"'[2] This passage is important, because it shows Nucingen's divided identity as a Jew and/or Alsatian. Although Aldrigger qualifies the baron as Alsatian ('*Ch'édais pien sir te de droufer le quir din Elsacien!*'[3]), the main characteristics Balzac gives Nucingen are recognisable Jewish clichés. In terms of personality and culture, Balzac draws a bad caricature of a stereotypical Jew and not so much of an Alsatian, qualifying him as 'ancien juif d'Alsace' and 'maître d'avarice.'[4]

It appears that Nucingen's character was based on a real man, the Jewish Parisian banker Beer Léon Fould.[5] The resemblances between the real and the fictional character are striking: Fould was a Germanophone Jew from Lorraine who was born around the same time as the fictional Nucingen, started an apprenticeship in a bank close to Metz at roughly the same age, then founded his own bank in Paris and enriched himself through several semi-legal bankruptcies and other

[1] *La Maison Nucingen,* p. 396.
[2] Ibid. p. 24.
[3] *Le Père Goriot,* p. 65.
[4] *La Maison Nucingen,* p. 115.
[5] Bernhard Blumenkranz, *Histoire des Juifs en France* (Toulouse: Privat, 1972), pp. 180-181.

speculative business operations that resemble those described in *La Maison Nucingen*. It seems that Balzac had a stereotypical Jewish character in mind and simply replaced Fould's native German-speaking Lorraine with the equally Germanophone Alsace. Nucingen's only recognisably Alsatian side is his terribly hard to understand accent - which, again, links him not only with Alsace, but also with the Yiddish-speaking and the wider German-speaking world. In *Le Père Goriot* and even in *La Maison Nucingen*, the baron remains a side character; his presence is necessary for the narrative to evolve, but Balzac does not pay much attention to developing Nucingen's personality. The Alsatian/Jew remains a one-sided cliché, used as a necessary background to the plot, but not as a real protagonist.

Things change slightly with *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes,* when Balzac decides to add a new twist to Nucingen's character and makes him more central to the story - although he is by no means the main protagonist -, once again linking an Alsatian character to libertinage. According to Anthony Pugh, *Splendeurs et misères* was Balzac's most-read work, which means that readers at the time would have been most familiar with the new Nucingen described in it.[1] Balzac focuses on Nucingen's Alsatian side more than in previous works, playing on his ridiculous accent and finally also painting him as 'honnête mais bête.'[2] The baron's main *raison d'être* is comic relief; Balzac turns him into an absurd figure, making the otherwise cunning banker suddenly appear stupid, naïve and clumsy. This is achieved, rather comically, through romance: Nucingen encounters the former courtesan Esther van Gobseck, Lucien de Rubempré's lover, and falls hopelessly in love with her. Ever since their first meeting, Nucingen spares no expenses and no ridicule to find and conquer his mysterious sweetheart, his tactics ranging from car-chases to secret agents. Even his own wife ridicules his lovesickness and his efforts to please Esther and it is obvious to the reader that the courtesan will never have any real affection for him. Nucingen, so used to tricking others, this time falls for Vautrin and Esther's trickery himself and does not realise that he is being used to refloat Lucien's fortune. Nucingen spends enormous sums on Vautrin's agents in order to find Esther, and then invests even more money to house and entertain her. Love has made Nucingen blind; his sincere belief in Esther's passion makes him ridiculous from start to finish - he is now presented as Esther's 'bichon d'éléphant' - and hinders him from seeing that he is everyone's dupe.[3] In reality, Esther not only dislikes Nucingen, but is so distressed that she had to prostitute herself to him that she commits suicide the next morning. This is all the more tragic since it comes to light that same day that she is the heiress of Gobseck's millions, an inheritance which would have enabled her to

[1] *Balzac's Recurring Characters,* p. 329.
[2] Remarkably, in *Le Père Goriot,* Nucingen did not yet speak with an Alsatian accent. Perhaps Balzac's journey through Alsace in 1845 inspired him to add this feature to his character.
[3] Honoré de Balzac, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes. À combien l'amour revient aux vieillards* (Paris: Houssiaux, 1853-55), p. 578.

break her liaison with Nucingen and marry Lucien. The baron's world falls apart when he joyfully comes to tell Esther of her inheritance and realises that she only loved him for money:

> - *Elle héride de sedde milions*. […]
>
> - Ah! bien, votre règne est bien fini, vieux saltimbanque! lui dit Europe en regardant le baron avec une effronterie digne d'une servante de Molière. Hue! vieux corbeau d'Alsace! Elle vous aime à peu près comme on aime la peste!... Dieu de Dieu! des millions!... mais elle peut épouser son amant! Oh! sera-t-elle contente! […]
>
> - *Ele me drombait...* s'écria-t-il les larmes aux yeux. *Ele me drombait!... ô Esder… ô ma fie… Bedde que che suis! Te bareilles fleirs groissent-éles chamais pir tes fieillards. Che ne buis ageder te la chênesse! 0 mon tié!... que vaire? que tefenir. Ele a reson, cedde grielle Irobe? – Esder rige m'échabbe… vaud-ile hâler se bantre? Qu'ed la fie sans amure?... sans la flâme tifine ti blézir que c'hai i goûdé?... Mon tié…*
>
> Et le Loup-cervier s'arracha le faux toupet qu'il mêlait à ses cheveux gris depuis trois mois. Un cri perçant jeté par Europe fit tressaillir Nucingen jusque dans ses entrailles; il se leva […]. Dès la porte de la chambre, le malheureux amant aperçut Esther roide sur son lit, bleuie par le poison, morte! Il alla jusqu'au lit, et tomba sur ses genoux.
>
> - *Ti has réson, elle l'avait tid!... Ele ed morde te moi.*
>
> Paccard, Asie, toute la maison accourut. Ce fut un spectacle, une surprise et non une désolation. Il y eut chez les gens un peu d'incertitude. Le baron redevint banquier, il eut un soupçon, et il commit l'imprudence de demander où étaient les sept cent cinquante mille francs [qu'il avait donné à Esther].[1]

This last important scene devoted to Nucingen shows both the ridicule and the shallowness of this character. Balzac uses Nucingen in order to drive the action forward and to get a few laughs at the cost of the stereotypically stupid provincial and his thick accent, but he is not interested in the Alsatian/Jew in terms of character development. This is evident in the way Balzac has Nucingen overcome his amorous disappointment: after Esther's death, Nucingen simply turns back into the one-dimensional character he has always been, as if the episode of his first love had no influence on him. In later works, Nucingen is mentioned again here and there, and the attentive reader can follow his social progression to *Pair de France* and even *Grand Officier de la Légion d'Honneur*, amassing ever more honours, titles and capital, and using more people to his own ends just like before - he

[1] *À combien l'amour revient aux vieillards,* pp. 583-4.

finally marries Rastignac to his daughter without batting an eyelid. Strikingly, Balzac shows an Alsatian with real and lasting influence in the capital and who remains a part of the Parisian landscape. This is not presented as problematic, contrary to the Corsican Piombo – perhaps because of Nucingen's political malleability, and also because of the international ubiquity of Jewish characters. The keen sentiment of a threat to the national self represented by Piombo is non-existent with regards to Nucingen. In this respect, Nucingen is perceived as harmless – as if it was of no consequence for the identity of the nation whether one German/Alsatian/Jewish character becomes a member of Parisian society.

Over and above portraying Alsace, Balzac uses Aldrigger and Nucingen as easily explicable and widely utilisable background characters to fit his literary needs. On the one hand, he wanted someone to ridicule and to carry comic relief; a role perfectly suited to Aldrigger and Nucingen as clichéd provincials. On the other hand, Balzac needed a heartless, string-pulling character to keep the action going; a role filled perfectly by Nucingen, the stereotypical Jew. Specific character traits such as Aldrigger and Nucingen's thick Alsatian accents make their parts more believable, but do not testify to a real interest in representing the province on the author's part. Nevertheless, this says something about Balzac's view of Alsace: *La Comédie humaine* uses the province as a territory that has no real part in the national story and is not necessarily meaningful for Balzac's enterprise of writing the nation. Nevertheless, it exists as a marginal repository ready to be exploited when necessary.

1838 – 1866: Canonical authors' journeys through Alsace

This section is entitled 'journeys through Alsace,' and not 'to Alsace,' since most famous Parisian writers only passed through the province on their way to Germany; Alsace was rarely the primary destination of their travels. Whereas not many canonical authors wrote fiction about Alsace, a good few of them left travel descriptions of the province. In order to better understand these journeys - and the short impressions of Alsace that the travellers noted in passing - it is necessary to say a few words about the fascination with Germany in the contemporary literary scene. According to Charles Grivel's paper on the image of Germany in nineteenth-century French literature, the land to the east of the Rhine served as a source of inspiration for French artists from the First to the Second French Empire:

> [L]es Français en Allemagne vont chercher de quoi nourrir leurs revendications, moins politiques que sociales, moins révolutionnaires qu'imaginaires. On traduit de l'allemand les textes fondateurs, on visite les lieux qui appellent la ferveur: deux générations se pressent successivement sur les bords du Rhin, de Chateaubriand à Hugo, de Madame de Staël à

> Dumas, Gautier ou Nerval. […] [L]e pays rhénan signifie maintenant comme un lieu de surgissement des forces intérieures et nocturnes. […] L'Allemagne [… semblait], à la fois adéquate et incertaine, connue et impénétrable, proche et inaccessible [… il en résultait] la fascination mais aussi la répulsion. [1]

Much of Germany's exotic appeal was carried by the wild, colourful and emotionally intense movements of German Romanticism and Fantastic. For instance, Nerval translated Goethe's works into French and, according to Charles Dedeyan, was most influenced by the great Romantic E.T.A. Hoffmann, the founder of fantastic realism – whose work also inspired Charles Nodier, for example.[2] Generally, scholars accept that Romanticism became popular in French literature around 1820, experienced its climax in the following twenty years and dried out around 1843.[3] It is precisely during this period that the frontrunners of the movement travelled the world searching for exotic impressions and intense emotions. While it is true that the overseas came to denote the exotic more obviously and more pungently in nineteenth-century French literature, one must not forget that Germany, and the North in general, also had an outlandish appeal to many French authors. Although many canonical authors ventured overseas to engage in Romantic Orientalism, a good few also travelled to Germany and, in passing, visited Alsace.

Preceded by the historian Edgar Quinet in 1826, Mérimée examined Alsace in his function as *inspecteur général des monuments historiques*. Nerval, as the most germanophile French writer, was also the first one to visit Alsace in 1838, together with Alexandre Dumas - on their way to Germany, of course. Followed Victor Hugo in 1839, Honoré de Balzac in 1845, Théophile Gautier in 1858, Hippolyte Taine between 1863 and 1866, Alphonse Daudet around 1866, as well as Alfred de Vigny, Sainte-Beuve and Eugène Sue.[4] While some of these French tourists only wrote letters, several of them later published travel memoirs that mention Alsace. Nerval wrote *La Loreley: Souvenirs d'Allemagne* in 1852, Dumas *Causeries d'un voyageur* in 1854, Hugo *Le Rhin* in 1858, Gautier *Loin de Paris* in 1865, and Taine's travel notes were published posthumously in 1896 under the title *Carnets de voyages: Notes sur la province*.

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[1] Charles Grivel, 'Erckmann-Chatrian et l'Allemagne du roman populaire,' in François Marotin (ed.), *Erckmann-Chatrian entre imagination, fantaisie et réalisme: Du conte au conte de l'histoire. Actes du colloque international de Phalsbourg (22-24 octobre 1996)* (Phalsbourg: Éditions du Musée de Phalsbourg, 1999), pp. 204-6.

[2] Charles Dedeyan, *Gérard de Nerval et l'Allemagne: L'Allemagne dans l'œuvre littéraire de Nerval* (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement supérieur, 1957), p. 554.

[3] *Dictionnaire historique des littératures,* pp. 1291, 1410.

[4] See *Voyage en Alsace*, pp. 5, 7, 21, 31, 45, 49.

While these non-fictional sources will not be studied in detail, some insight into them will help gauge the Parisians' general understanding of Alsace as a place and its perceived affinity to Germany. All of the aforementioned travel accounts describe Strasbourg. Other commonly noted themes are, in order of frequency: the Rhine, Strasbourg's cathedral with its bell tower and view over the Alsatian plains, the look of city and village streets with typical houses, German-looking people who speak German or at least do not speak French well, folkloric costumes, *brasseries*, beer and German-type food. There are also frequent mentions of Romanticism and/or the Fantastic, complete with references to Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Goethe, Schiller and Hoffmann. Although all travellers locate Strasbourg in France, they have no hesitations to call it German. Hugo claims that '[o]n sentait l'approche de Strasbourg, la vieille ville allemande,' whereas Nerval states: '[s]i nous voulons observer une ville allemande, retournons à Strasbourg.'[1] Likewise, the writers do not shy away from characterising Strasbourg's population as German; Taine even claims to recognise specifically German features in the cathedral's statues: 'Considérez le corps nu d'Eve, au portail du milieu: une bonne Allemande charnue.'[2] Hugo specifies what this German type looks like in his description of Strasbourg's town centre: 'tout autour, un cordon de vieux toits assez pittoresques; à quelques pas de ma fenêtre, une lanterne-potence au pied de laquelle baragouinent quelques gamins allemands, blonds et ventrus.'[3] Taine characterises the Alsatians' language as German without a second thought: 'Il est curieux de voir les Strasbourgeois discutant en allemand au café.'[4] All in all, Parisian travellers feel rather alienated in Strasbourg, aware that they no longer share cultural or linguistic references with the people around them. While they know that Strasbourg is politically French, they freely employ the idea that the city is culturally German. In their understanding, the Alsatians belong to a different ethnic group, which spreads eastward over the Rhine.

Other than that, the travel accounts do not find many interesting things to say about Alsace; they are generally limited to a short description of Strasbourg before passing on to other, more fascinating, German lands on the other side of the Rhine. In terms of prose fiction, the outcome of canonical authors' journeys through Alsace is extremely poor. While Balzac gave a new twist to Nucingen in the year of his stay in Strasbourg, it is going far to say that his experience of Alsace inspired him to (re)create this character in *Splendeurs et misères.* Daudet only used his travel impressions to create revanchist literature after 1870, when the loss of Alsace suddenly caused

[1] Victor Hugo, 'Le Rhin,' Gérard de Nerval, 'La Loreley: Souvenirs d'Allemagne,' both quoted in *Voyage en Alsace,* pp. 23, 36.
[2] Hippolyte Taine, 'Carnets de voyages: Notes sur la province,' quoted in ibid. p. 55.
[3] Hugo in ibid. pp. 30-1.
[4] Taine in ibid. p. 52.

popular interest in a province that had seemed hardly noteworthy before. The only author to write a work of fiction following his stay in Alsace was Nerval.

1839: Gérard de Nerval - *Le Fort de Bitche: Histoire de la Révolution française*

It is probably not a coincidence that the most germanophile of all nineteenth-century French canonical authors was also the only Parisian great to write about Alsace before 1871. His interest in the province was, in large part, due to his interest in all things German. Nerval's special relationship with Germany started at an early age, when his mother's premature death and burial there in 1810 caused a life-long attachment to Germany in the author.[1] Translating Goethe's *Faust* at twenty and publishing an anthology of German Romantic poetry at twenty-two, Nerval was well acquainted with the movement of German Romanticism.[2] In 1838, Nerval travelled to Germany - via Alsace - for the first time, together with Alexandre Dumas. There, the authors found inspiration for their collaborative drama *Léo Burckart* (1839). It appears that this same trip also inspired Nerval to write *Le Fort de Bitche*, a story concerning Alsace's identity. Several other journeys to Germany followed, interrupted by bouts of mental illness. Without doubt, Nerval felt connected to the German Romantics because of their emotional instability and intensity, and to its fantastical authors because they embraced insanity – characteristics of Nerval's personality that led to numerous mental breakdowns and finally suicide. All in all, German authors and literary movements had a significant influence on Nerval's literary work, making him, in some ways, a Franco-German writer.[3] Philippe Destruel argues that Germany took the role of an adoptive mother and of a second intellectual fatherland in Nerval's emotional universe.[4] Thus, Nerval exclaims at the sight of Germany: 'l'Allemagne! la terre de Goethe et de Schiller, le pays d'Hoffmann; la vieille Allemagne, notre mère a tous!...'[5]

Under the impression of his time in Alsace in 1838, Nerval must have thought up *Le Fort de Bitche: Histoire de la Révolution française,* published in 1839 in the newspaper *Le Messager*. However, Nerval's authorship is controversial; Auguste Maquet, known for his collaboration with Daudet, claims to have written the story in Nerval's stead:

> J'ai encore écrit pour Gérard, qui ne pouvait arriver à tenir ses engagements, […] *Le Fort de Bitche*. Dans ce dernier travail dont Gérard fournissait le plan, il me fut aisé de comprendre

[1] Nerval's father had been posted to Germany as military doctor for the *Armée du Rhin* and his mother had followed him.
[2] Gérard de Nerval, *Poésies allemandes: Klopstock, Goethe, Schiller, Burger. Morceaux choisis et traduits par M. Gérard* (Paris: Bureau de la Bibliothèque Choisie, 1830).
[3] *Nerval et l'Allemagne*, p. 657.
[4] Philippe Destruel, *Les Filles du feu de Gérard de Nerval* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), p. 331.
[5] From 'Loreley: Souvenirs d'Allemagne,' quoted in *Voyage en Alsace*, p. 22.

> combien ce cerveau surexcité avait pris de vertige et d'ombres noires. Son plan confinait à la folie. Le dénouement était insensé. Je lui dis. Gérard persista […]. Je le laissai faire.[1]

Whether or not Maquet wrote the story, the above quotation is noteworthy because his comments show how unthinkable the narrative appeared to Nerval's contemporaries, perhaps indicating the story's initial reception by the public. It seems that *Le Fort de Bitche* fell into oblivion until 1853, when Nerval urgently needed a sixth narrative with a female heroine in order to finish the collection of short stories that was to be published under the title *Les Filles du feu* in January 1854. It is in this context that he remembered *Le Fort de Bitche* and wrote to his editor in October 1853:

> J'ai absolument besoin d'une nouvelle pour terminer [le volume] […]; faites-la donc couper bien vite. Il faut que quelqu'un aille au cabinet de lecture 156 Galerie de Valois et demande le Messager de 1839. Il feuillettera et il trouvera une nouvelle […] intitulée: Le Fort de Bitche. Il faudra mettre au lieu de ce titre le nom de l'héroïne [Émilie].[2]

Nerval's somewhat hasty decision-making suggests that *Émilie* can stand on its own and does not require to be read in context with the other stories contained in the volume. Although *Les Filles du feu* has been thoroughly researched and commented, *Émilie* is usually the part that receives least scholarly attention. It is also commonly misread; the average Parisian reader may not recognise that it concerns Alsace, since Nerval never uses the words 'Alsace' or 'Alsacien.' One has to be familiar with Alsace's geography and the minor town of Haguenau in order to realise that Nerval is describing Alsace, and not Germany. Several scholarly interpretations recognise Alsace as a subject matter, but ignore the fact that *Émilie*'s protagonists are Alsatians. Both Dedeyan and *Le Nouveau Dictionnaire des œuvres* present Émilie's family as Germans who happen to live in Alsace; Destruel avoids pronouncing on the matter.[3] This confusion is partly understandable - for once one comprehends that some protagonists are Alsatians who feel passionately German, this makes the storyline explosive material; 'insensé, confiné à la folie,' as Maquet remarked.

The narrative describes the courtship and marriage of Émilie, an Alsatian woman from Haguenau, to Desroches, a French soldier. Their wedding is ultimately ruined by the fact that Desroches turns out to be the killer of Émilie's father, a resistant who volunteered to fight in the Prussian army. However, despite the title, the main thrust of the narrative describes the problematic

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[1] Quoted in Gustave Simon, *Histoire d'une collaboration. Alexandre Dumas et Auguste Maquet: Documents inédits, portraits et fac-similes*, (Paris: Georges Crès & Cie, 1919), p. 15.
[2] Michel Brix, *Nerval journaliste (1826-1851): Problématique; méthodes d'attribution* (Namur: P.U. de Namur, 1989), p. 195.
[3] See *Nerval et l'Allemagne*, p. 562; Laffont, Robert, Valentino Bompiani (ed.), *Le Nouveau Dictionnaire des œuvres de tous les temps et de tous les pays, Vol. II* (Manchecourt: Laffont, 1994), p. 2788, and *Les Filles du feu de Nerval*, p. 89.

identity of Émilie's brother Willhelm. *Émilie* does not attempt to describe Alsace as a region in any way; for the most part, it is set in Lorraine and only one scene takes place in Haguenau. The fort of Bitche is the main setting for the narrative; all dramatic events take place there. One of the main themes of the story is the question of Alsace's nationality and its belonging to France. Although the story's original title points toward the French Revolution, the narrative is set in 1813 and describes the same period *Henri Farel* is so passionate about: the Napoleonic Wars. Spach represented the Alsatians as culturally German, but nevertheless willing to enlist in the French army under Napoleon and join the national endeavour of conquering Europe. Nerval describes exactly the opposite of this fusion between Alsace and France in Napoleon's campaigns.

To begin with, the narrative situates Alsace on the other side of the border, postulating that it does not really belong to France. This becomes clear when Desroches looks from Metz to the Vosges and contemplates the landscape:

> Devant lui la vieille citadelle [de Metz], […] à ses pieds […] la vallée qui se déploie […]; enfin, la chute de la Moselle et ses blanches écumes, ses détours étincelants au soleil, puis, tout au bout, bornant le regard, la chaîne des Vosges, bleuâtre comme vaporeuse au grand jour, voilà le spectacle qu'il admirait toujours d'avantage, en pensant que là était son pays, non pas la terre conquise, mais la province vraiment française, tandis que ces riches départements nouveaux, où il avait fait la guerre, n'étaient que des beautés fugitives, incertaines, comme celles de la femme gagnée hier, qui ne nous appartiendra plus demain.[1]

Nerval's protagonist is looking from Metz towards Germany, defining the chain of the Vosges as the final frontier of France – notwithstanding the fact that Alsace lies behind the Vosges, seen from his standpoint. The Vosges are presented as France's natural barrier and as the ultimate limit of truly French territory. Alsace, positioned beyond this natural obstacle, does not constitute a part of true France. In keeping with this logic, the French military base in Bitche (Lorraine), at the foot of the Vosges, is described as a 'forteresse de frontière.'[2] Anything that lies beyond this border is no longer French, but conquered land. Alsace is put on a par with other colonies, rich enough to exploit, but perhaps only a momentary gain. Using colonialist rhetoric, the conquered territory is likened to a sexually appealing woman. Conceptual links to *La Belle Allemande* become obvious once more, depicting Alsace as a woman possessed by France without belonging to the family of the nation. According to *Émilie*'s representation, the Alsace of the Napoleonic Wars is no more French than before.

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[1] Gérard de Nerval, *Les Filles du feu: Émilie* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1856), p. 267.
[2] *Émilie,* p. 271.

Nerval's Alsatians are characterised as Germans who live under French political control because they have been forced into submission, and not out of choice. Conscription into Napoleon's army is not presented the way Spach sees it - as a glorious adventure that brings the Alsatians closer to France. Rather, Nerval shows conscription to be a problem of conscience for the Alsatians. This comes out in the problematisation of Willhelm's identity, which constitutes the main focus of the narrative. Willhelm has managed to resist obligatory conscription by ruse, but is found out and taken to task by French soldiers:

> - Vous n'êtes donc pas Français?
>
> - Non, dit Willhelm, avec effort et satisfaction à la fois, je suis né à Haguenau; je ne suis pas Français, je suis Allemand.
>
> - Allemand? Haguenau est situé en deçà de la frontière rhénane, c'est un bon et beau village de l'empire français, département du Bas-Rhin. Voyez la carte.
>
> - Je suis de Haguenau, vous dis-je, village de l'Allemagne il y a dix ans, aujourd'hui village de la France; et moi je suis Allemand toujours, comme vous seriez Français jusqu'à la mort, si votre pays appartenait jamais aux Allemands.
>
> - Vous dites là des choses dangereuses, jeune homme, songez-y.
>
> - […] [M]on sentiment à moi est de ceux qu'il importe, sans doute, de garder dans son cœur, si l'on ne peut les changer. […] Oui, je l'avouerai, je ne me sens point de haine contre les peuples que vous combattez aujourd'hui. Je songe que si le malheur eût voulu que je fusse obligé de marcher contre eux, j'aurais dû, moi aussi, ravager des campagnes allemandes, brûler des villes, égorger des compatriotes ou d'anciens compatriotes, si vous aimez mieux, et frapper, au milieu d'un groupe de prétendus ennemis, oui frapper, qui sait? des parents, d'anciens amis de mon père […]. D'ailleurs, il y a assez de sang versé dans ma famille, mon père a répandu le sien jusqu'à la dernière goutte, vous voyez […]. Mon père était sergent dans l'armée prussienne, et il a défendu longtemps ce territoire que vous occupez aujourd'hui. […]
>
> Tout le monde était fort attentif à ces dernières paroles de Willhelm, qui arrêtèrent l'envie qu'on avait, quelques minutes auparavant, de rétorquer ses paradoxes touchant le cas particulier de sa nationalité.[1]

[1] *Émilie,* pp. 281-2.

Nerval puts two conflicting views on the borders of the nation - and therefore on Alsace's identity – side by side. As seen earlier in Desroches' contemplation of landscape, Émilie's lover perceives Alsace as a French possession, but not as a part of the national self. In the above quotation, Willhelm articulates the same view more forcefully, stating that Alsace is German, albeit ruled by France against its inhabitants' will. This point of view is opposed by the French soldier, who points to the objective political situation, defining Alsace as two French *départements*, Haut- and Bas-Rhin; he obviously thinks this fact is enough to make the region a part of the nation. Far from taking the discourse of French Alsace for granted, Nerval's narrative problematises Alsace's status and juxtaposes conflicting statements about its identity. The story uses Willhelm's identity crisis to pinpoint these issues and to question Alsace's Frenchness, as well as the rightfulness of military conscription in the region. Willhelm, the story's main character, is extremely critical of France's military actions in Napoleon's campaigns, calling attention to the fact that Alsatians are coerced to exercise cruelty against their own kin, to the point where they end up killing their own family members who live in the rest of Germany. This is the reason for Willhelm's attempt to evade conscription. Initially too afraid to resist openly, the confrontation with Desroches' comrades, coupled with the fact that his sister wants to marry a French soldier, finally causes Willhelm to articulate his problematic identity and owe up to the fact that he feels German.

It is clear why Willhelm's confession of his German sentiments is regarded as dangerous. It is perhaps less evident why he understands Alsace to be German; indeed, his ideas concerning national identity seem paradoxical to the soldiers. Haguenau, like the rest of Alsace, had been annexed to France in the seventeenth century - and yet, Willhelm insists that it was a German village just ten years ago. There is a two-fold explanation for Willhelm's statement. Firstly, the Treaty of Munster which gave France control over Alsace had been ambiguous; paragraphs 87 and 89 formally maintained Alsace under the immediate sovereignty of the German Emperor, while conceding that it would be de facto possessed by France.[1] As such, Alsace could have been technically regarded as German until the Emperor had to abdicate in 1806, after suffering defeat by Napoleon. The ambiguous clauses of the Treaty became void and the dissolved Holy Roman Empire of German Nation lost any claim it might still nominally have had to Alsace. Although the aforementioned ten years would only be an approximate value – the narrative being set in 1813 -, Willhelm might refer to this as a perceived change of nationality. Secondly, Willhelm's father's episode points to the story's original title *Histoire de la Révolution française*. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, the European monarchs united forces to fight against the French Republican army. In the course of this conflict, Prussian and Austrian allies, led by the Alsatian general Wormser, managed to

[1] *Une Histoire de l'Alsace,* pp. 84-5.

reconquer parts of Alsace, among them Haguenau, and were welcomed as liberators by the inhabitants. It is historically correct that Alsatians volunteered to join the allied German armies, and that they tried to defend Haguenau when France attempted to take it back. When the French reconquered the town, many local families fled to Germany, together with the retreating army. This had been a traumatic episode in the political life of the young French Republic and had led to mistrust of Alsatians among France's ruling elites.[1] The narrative alludes to these events in its references to Willhelm's father and its title. Nerval uses the historical episodes of the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars to pinpoint some Alsatians' desire to be apart from France and to be reunited with their German compatriots. However, Nerval also depicts Alsatians who are not too concerned about their roots or their nationality. Willhelm's sister Émilie, for example, happily agrees to marry a French soldier, going against the norms of her society and the better judgement of her brother. Yet again, the narrative shows conflicting views amongst Alsatians; for instance, the mayor of Haguenau asks Émilie to change her mind:

> [A]ussi lui dit-il bien bas, la veille de son mariage:
>
> - Pourquoi n'épousez-vous donc pas un bon Allemand?
>
> Émilie paraissait peu tenir à ces distinctions.[2]

Nerval's narrative foreshadows countless post-1871 works in which marriages between Alsatian women and German soldiers were condemned. The original dynamics in *Émilie* are reversed, problematising liaisons between Alsatians and French soldiers. At first, the narrative merely shows two conflicting opinions; however, the *denouement* confirms the mayor's warning and makes Émilie seem short-sighted and naïve. Her choice in marriage leads to disastrous consequences when she finds out that the very soldier she married killed her father in a battle for the fortress of Bitche during the Revolutionary Wars. The revelation of these circumstances leads Willhelm to his ultimate crisis and the climax of the narrative, in which he puts on his father's old uniform and challenges Desroches to a duel:

> [N]e m'appelez pas frère, mais ennemi!... Regardez, je suis un Prussien! Je suis le fils de ce sergent que vous avez assassiné. […] [D]onnez-moi la revanche de cette partie!... Allons, ce n'est pas un duel, c'est le combat d'un Allemand contre un Français; en garde! […] C'est cela […], tuez aussi le fils […]!... Le fils est un Allemand… un Allemand![3]

[1] *L'Alsace et la Révolution,* pp. 96-7.
[2] *Émilie,* p. 277.
[3] Ibid. pp. 286-8.

Desroches honourably declines Willhelm's challenge, but Émilie's father's death stands irreparably between the spouses. Both recognise that their relationship has become impossible; Desroches commits suicide and Émilie retires to a convent. *Le Fort de Bitche* therefore problematises the union between France and Alsace and questions how far the region should be seen as a part of the nation. The narrative brings to light uncomfortable historical truths that influence the relationship between France and its Alsatian border zone; if France and Alsace are to marry, these episodes must be faced and lived with. Through the opposition of different characters' views, Nerval questions whether the Alsatians are able to stop feeling German and embrace the French nationality. The tensions demonstrated in *Le Fort de Bitche* show how difficult it would be for any given factor – be it the enthusiasm of the French Revolution or the glory of the Napoleonic Wars – to fully unify France and Alsace. At least within the framework of the narrative, underlying tensions are only resolved in lasting alienation and death. It is now easier to understand why Maquet was scandalised by Nerval's narrative and particularly its ending.

Nerval is the only Parisian author to problematise Alsace's belonging to France in a work of prose fiction. He is equally the only Parisian great to take an interest in Alsace before 1871. The views expressed through the character of Willhelm may be a result of Nerval's engagement with contemporary German literature. Indeed, since Napoleon shattered the German Empire in 1806, literature and nationalism often went hand in hand. This movement increased during Napoleon's occupation of many German states, which was perceived as foreign oppression. German thinkers and writers embraced the struggle for a self-directed political incarnation of the German nation, which was defined in terms of language:

> [L]es milieux militaires, politiques, littéraires et intellectuels forment ainsi une alliance tacite contre Napoléon, scellée par une fièvre patriotique où l'on diagnostique communément l'éveil du 'sentiment national.' […] [L]a littérature des guerres de libération a une arme sacrée et commune aux patriotes dans un pays démembré: la langue allemande.[1]

This national fervour culminated in a first upheaval in 1815, led by intellectuals and writers. Following the failure of this incentive, the longing to have all German-speaking territories united under one democratic government continued to smoulder in German literature, leading to the Revolutions of 1848 and later facilitating Bismarck's task. It is not unlikely that Nerval came into contact with the ideas of German nationalism through his love for German literature. It is unclear how far Nerval agreed with such ideas or how far he identified with the views expressed by Willhelm in *Émilie*. However, Nerval had a tendency to relate too well to his main characters – possibly in part

[1] *Dictionnaire du monde germanique*, p. 443.

related to his mental illness. In the preface to *Les Filles du feu,* Nerval describes his period of madness prior to the book's publication:

> Il est, vous le savez, certains conteurs qui ne peuvent inventer sans s'identifier aux personnages de leur imagination. […] [L]'on arrive pour ainsi dire à s'incarner dans le héros de son imagination, si bien que sa vie devienne la vôtre et qu'on brûle des flammes factices de ses ambitions et de ses amours! C'est pourtant ce qui m'est arrivé.[1]

This tendency to merge self and other remained one of Nerval's most distinctive traits, best expressed in the caption he wrote underneath a photographic portrait of himself in 1854, the year of *Les Filles du feu*'s publication: 'Je suis l'autre.'[2] Like many of Nerval's works, *Émilie* is about the destabilising process of losing oneself in the other, or finding the other within the self – and all the questions, complexities and impossibilities this causes. Regarding Alsace, Nerval discovers a German other within the French self, once again blurring all boundaries and subverting any prior attempts to depict the region's belonging to the nation as normal. Predictably, this leads to disorientation, chaos and destruction; finally, *Émilie* ends on the impossibility of merging self and other, causing Desroches' suicide.

1855-1870: Erckmann-Chatrian's pre-war Alsatian universe

Emile Erckmann (Phalsbourg 1822 – Lunéville 1899) and Gratien Alexandre Chatrian (Abreschviller 1826 – Villemonle/Paris 1890) are commonly referred to under their composite names and often mistaken for Alsatian authors. Nevertheless, both were born and raised in Lorraine, on the linguistic and cultural border between the Francophone and Germanophone world.[3] They met in Erckmann's native Phalsbourg and became involved in Republican circles and literature together. Both moved to Paris, where their collaboration was cemented; Erckmann was the principal writer and Chatrian took the role of editor and marketer.[4] Thanks to Chatrian's skilful marketing, the 1860s brought them literary success in the capital.[5] Erckmann-Chatrian became a recognisable name in Paris, described by Zola in 1866 as 'un artiste qui a déjà beaucoup produit et qui a réussi à fixer l'attention

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[1] *Préface* to *Les Filles du feu,* pp. iii-iv. The statement is a response to Dumas' descriptions of Nerval's presumed multiple personality disorder.
[2] Charles Le Brun, 'Gérard de Nerval ou La Maladie de Dieu' in *Les Cahiers du moulin*, Vol. 4, April 2004, p.5.
[3] *L'Histoire de la littérature en Alsace,* p. 99.
[4] See *Nationaler Anspruch und regionale Identität*, pp. 45-6.
[5] In 1864, the *Ministère de l'Instruction Publique* acquired 1500 copies of their novel *Le Fou Yégof* for public libraries, 1866 marked the selling of over one million copies of their *Romans nationaux*, Jules Vallès, Zola, Lamartine and Barrès read and publicly commented on their works, and Hetzel finally bought the copyrights for all of their writings in 1868. See Pierre-Pascal Furth, 'Chronologie d'Émile Erckmann et d'Alexandre Chatrian,' *Revue littéraire mensuelle*, 549-550 (1975), pp. 133-4.

publique.'[1] While rather widely read at the time, Erckmann-Chatrian never made it into the French literary canon. They are almost forgotten in French scholarship and do not tend to appear in encyclopaedias of French literature.[2] Although their name has sunk into oblivion in national circles, some of Erckmann-Chatrian's novels have become iconic for Alsace and are still published as 'Alsatiques' and sold by local libraries in Alsace and Lorraine.

However, Erckmann-Chatrian did not only, and not even primarily, write about Alsace. In terms of their geographical reference points, Phalsbourg and the Vosges are the centre of their universe, though they often stray further eastward into Alsace, Germany, and sometimes even further afield to the most important international settings of nineteenth-century French history, such as Waterloo, Vendée and even the Orient.[3] The contents of Erckmann-Chatrian's fiction also range far wider than Alsace. Their collection of *Romans nationaux* retells the history of France from the perspective of the common man, mingled with the promotion of Republican values, showing Erckmann-Chatrian's keen interest in historiography and redefining of the nation. Next to their national novels, they also produced a cycle of *Contes fantastiques* and folkloric or regional writings (*Contes vosgiens* and *Contes des bords du Rhin*), celebrating the idyllic world of their childhood. The majority of their works about Alsace fall into the last category.

During their lifetime, Erckmann-Chatrian were largely perceived as Alsatian authors writing about their region. Zola, commenting on the entirety of their works up to 1866, understands them all as describing Alsace:

> Ce peuple [les personnages d'Erckmann-Chatrian] vit dans un petit coin de la France, dans le fond de l'Alsace, ayant des mœurs d'une autre époque et vivant une vie qui n'est pas la nôtre. […] [I]ls habitent à des millions de lieues de Paris, et vous ne trouverez en eux rien de moderne.[4]
>
> On m'a dit qu'Erckmann-Chatrian travaille en ce moment à un [nouveau] récit […]. Je tremble de voir reparaître les Alsaciens. […] Pour l'amour de Dieu, quittez l'Alsace et étudiez la France, étudiez l'homme moderne.[5]

[1] Émile Zola, *Mes haines: Causeries littéraires et artistiques. Mon salon* (Paris: Charpentier, 1879), p. 199.
[2] See Yves Pincet, 'Erckmann-Chatrian à travers les morceaux choisis dans les manuels scolaires' in *Erckmann-Chatrian entre imagination, fantaisie et réalisme,* p. 356.
[3] See Pierre-Pascal Furth, 'Erckmann-Chatrian, écrivain alsacien?,' *Europe: Revue littéraire mensuelle 549-550* (1975), p. 35.
[4] *Mes haines*, p. 186.
[5] Ibid. p. 200.

Over and above proving that Zola considered Erckmann-Chatrian's oeuvre to be about Alsace, his criticism shows the perceived distance between province and capital at the time, as well as an obvious lack of interest in the region. Jules Vallès strikes the same vein in the following comment:

> Cette encre sent la bière; et toujours des parfums de lard et de choucroute! […] Avec son talent, il [Erckmann-Chatrian] peut et doit aller partout, et c'est de l'enfantillage vraiment que d'interner dans le pays de la choucroute une aussi originale et puissante personnalité. […] Pourquoi s'emprisonner dans ce carrick et rester toujours Alsacien?[1]

Even narratives that were not obviously or definitely not set in Alsace were read as Alsatian stories. *L'Ami Fritz* is a case in point. Published in 1864, it remains Erckmann-Chatrian's most-sold, most-reprinted and most famous novel.[2] It was received early on as the novel that best expressed Alsatianness. Zola's comments clearly show that he considered its subject matter to be Alsace:

> [L]'auteur s'attarde en longues descriptions; il refait le tableau qu'il a fait cent fois, il vous montre ce peuple alsacien, ivrogne et travailleur, que nous connaissons maintenant aussi bien que lui![3]

Parisian readers took *L'Ami Fritz* as representative of Alsace, to the point that it became fundamental to the cult of the lost province after 1871, as Julia Schroda claims.[4] Today it is still celebrated as the literary symbol of Alsace par excellence, occupying the place of honour in Alsatian bookshops, giving its name to recipe books and folkloric festivals.[5]

However, it is not at all clear that *L'Ami Fritz* is, in fact, an Alsatian novel. Scholars contest the widely-held belief that it is set in Alsace and locate the action in the neighbouring German Palatinate.[6] Indeed, the novel provides several clues as to the political status of the region it is describing: set in 1832, with Landau as the only recognisable city, its heroes call themselves Bavarians, pay in Gulden and not in Francs and collect taxes for the Bavarian king. The only logical explanation for these phenomena is that *L'Ami Fritz* is set just south of Alsace, in an area of the Palatinate that was under Bavarian rule since 1815. Yet, the toponyms in the novel correspond to

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[1] Jules Vallès in *Le Progrès de Lyon,* 28 February 1864. Quoted in Laurent Boyer, 'Aspects de la presse forézienne sous le Second Empire' in n.a., *Études Foréziennes, Mélanges I* (Saint-Etienne: Centre d'Études Foréziennes, 1968), p. 147.
[2] Louis Engel, *À la table de l'ami Fritz: Recettes populaires d'Alsace et de Lorraine dans l'œuvre d'Erckmann-Chatrian* (Strasbourg: La Nuée Bleue, 2007), p. 9.
[3] *Mes haines*, p. 191.
[4] *Nationaler Anspruch und regionale Identität*, p. 44.
[5] For instance, the Alsatian town of Marlenheim stages *L'Ami Fritz*' wedding every year for countless French and German tourists: http://www.mariage-ami-fritz.fr/html/index.php
[6] See *Erckmann-Chatrian, écrivain alsacien?,* p. 35.

towns and villages that are well and truly situated in Alsace and the Vosges.[1] The focal point of the novel is a town called Hunebourg, in reality the name of an Alsatian castle west of Neuwiller-lès-Saverne.[2] Although it was a ruin in 1832 and certainly did not house townsfolk, Erckmann-Chatrian imagined it as a town in at least one other story, *La Comète,* in which its belonging to France is made explicit through the decorative use of tricoloured flags.[3] To add to the confusion, the town of Hunebourg is described in such a way that Erckmann's native Phalsbourg (Lorraine) clearly comes through, lending the novel autobiographical traits and bringing it back to the epicentre of Erckmann-Chatrian's literary work.[4] Last but not least, all three possible locations were a part of the territory that was annexed to France in 1648 alongside Alsace before they were split up again.[5] *L'Ami Fritz* plays on the apparent similarities between the political regions of Alsace, Palatinate and the Germanophone part of Lorraine, amalgamating them into one space. It emphasises their resemblances to the point of frustrating any attempt at delimitating France and Germany, as Grivel argued:

> Pourquoi la France (ou l'Alsace) se représente-t-elle en Allemagne? […] [E]n deçà et au-delà [du Rhin], identiques et déplacés, nous sommes en un même lieu, mais en un lieu partagé. [...] Destruction de la différence. Et (ré)installation dans le 'bon vieux temps' unitaire, unifié, inqualifié – *zeitlos, heimatlich*. Telle est la structure du récit erckmannien.[6]

Erckmann-Chatrian's strategy consists of deliberately blurring geographical markers and delimitations. Pierre-Pascal Furth emphasises their tendency to give every town, whether in Alsace, Lorraine or Germany, the familiar look of Phalsbourg, Erckmann's home - thus making emotional, rather than topographical, connections with places that feel like home to them.[7] This collage of two or sometimes three layers - a narrative space made up of the stated location, Erckmann's, and sometimes Chatrian's, memories- leads to a superposition of geographical elements and a blurring of borderlines. The resultant merging of spaces allows Erckmann-Chatrian to present Alsace as both unproblematically French and a part of 'notre vieille Allemagne.'[8] Like Nerval, Erckmann-Chatrian have conflicting perspectives on Alsace's nationality coexist; yet these do not oppose each other, but

[1] Although some of them have several namesakes across Germany, their constellation and the distances the protagonists travel between them limit possible combinations in such a way that the action could not be set outside of France.
[2] See Jean-Daniel Schœpflin, *L'Alsace illustrée IV* (Paris: Éditions du Palais Royal, 1974), pp. 490-1.
[3] Erckmann-Chatrian, 'La Comète' in *Contes choisis* (Paris: Hachette, 1949), p. 168.
[4] *À la table de l'ami Fritz,* p. 55.
[5] *Geschichte des Elsass,* p. 23.
[6] *Erckmann-Chatrian et l'Allemagne du roman populaire*, pp. 214-6. Italics in the original.
[7] *Erckmann-Chatrian, écrivain alsacien?*, pp. 37-8.
[8] Erckmann-Chatrian, *L'Ami Fritz* in *Gens d'Alsace et de Lorraine,* ed. by Jean-Pierre Rioux (Paris: Omnibus, 1993) p. 120.

somehow overlap and merge into a harmonious whole. In a somewhat exotic depiction of a culturally German French province, Erckmann-Chatrian's fiction links Alsace's sauerkraut, traditional costumes, architecture and language to the same phenomena on the other side of the Rhine. By means of the superposition of several actual spaces, Erckmann-Chatrian create an imagined, timeless and borderless ideal Alsace that neatly combines national self and other in a celebration of a harmonic golden age. It is for this reason that it is so difficult to distinguish which of Erckmann-Chatrian's narratives are actually set in Alsace.

Erckmann-Chatrian's literary strategy of border-smudging of course largely profited from the rather vague ideas their Parisian readers had about Alsace and its geography. The amalgamation and blurring of Alsace, Lorraine and Germany also meant that Erckmann-Chatrian's publications could profit from the faint exoticism that still surrounded Germany's image.[1] At the start of their literary career, Chatrian presented the authorial duo to potential editors as disciples of the German fantastic author Hoffmann, in order to be published more easily and appeal to a wider readership.[2] Alsace and Lorraine were purposefully associated with Germany, 'pour flatter le goût germanophile du public vers le milieu du XIX^{e} siècle.'[3] Furthermore, Erckmann was inspired by Orientalism in his depictions of Alsace: in the highly autobiographical *Les Années de collège de maître Nablot,* Erckmann recounts his discovery of Hugo's *Les Orientales* as a boy: 'Je n'avais rien lu de pareil: ce style coloré, pour nous peindre les scènes de la vie de l'Orient, puis l'originalité, le pittoresque des tableaux du moyen âge, me tiraient les yeux de la tête.'[4] This discovery is followed directly by a scene of the boy roaming through the Alsatian countryside and inventing spontaneous odes to its nature. Erckmann-Chatrian thus contributed to the creation of an internal exoticism about Alsace with similar features to conventional Orientalism: colourful descriptions, paintings of typical scenes and places, caught up in a medieval timelessness. The authors made use of Alsace's established foreign flair and turned it into a strategy for selling books, appealing to a readership with rural nostalgia and a longing for the good old times. Presenting to the Parisian public shaken by modernity a timeless enclave of natural living, Erckmann-Chatrian followed the same pattern as exoticist and colonialist literature in general.

Erckmann-Chatrian's faintly exotic and definitely nostalgic stories about an ideal Alsace are defined by manifold descriptions of traditional provincial living, crafts, village and small town society, the recurrence of seasons, the beauty of nature, as well as a celebration of friendship, conviviality,

[1] Grivel starts by exploring the image of Germany in nineteenth-century French literature before re-considering Erckmann-Chatrian's work in the light of his findings. See *Erckmann-Chatrian et l'Allemagne du roman populaire*, pp. 203 -218.
[2] See ibid. p. 212.
[3] Jean-Pierre Rioux, *Erckmann-Chatrian ou Le Trait d'union* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), p. 57.
[4] Erckmann-Chatrian, *Les Années de collège de maître Nablot* in Erckmann-Chatrian, *Contes et romans nationaux et populaires IX* (Paris: Hachette, 1963), p. 511.

joie de vivre and food. Alsace is presented as a remote, self-contained, isolated province whose similarity with Germany only adds to its authenticity and local flair. What is noticeable about most of Erckmann-Chatrian's Alsatian stories before 1871 is that there is nothing special about them. The storylines are extremely restricted; nothing - or at least nothing noteworthy - ever happens in Alsace. The most major events in the plot lines are romances, weddings and other folkloristic village feasts. Other than that, the characters eat well - good, stereotypical German food - and drink even more beer and wine. Vallès does not call Erckmann-Chatrian's Alsace 'pays de la choucroute' without reason; even place names are *sauerkraut*-themed (St-Jean-des-Choux) and the authors celebrate local food to the extent that the most recent work on Erckmann-Chatrian in the *Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire de Strasbourg* is a recipe book entitled *À la table de l'ami Fritz: Recettes populaires d'Alsace et de Lorraine dans l'œuvre d'Erckmann-Chatrian*. While Erckmann-Chatrian may pretend to literary realism in their in-depth descriptions of taverns, timber-framed houses, vineyards and beer festivals, their description of Alsatian life remains superficial and stereotypical:

> Et Théodore allait ainsi […] derrière le village, longeant les buissons, parcourant les petites allées bordées de palissades, s'échappant sur la plaine fraîchement fauchée, regardant les maisonnettes avec leurs constructions bizarres, irrégulières, leurs escaliers extérieurs, leurs balustrades vermoulues, leurs basses-cours, leurs grands toits avancés […]. Il s'assit sur un baril et se dit: 'Ah! qu'il fait bon ici!' […] [E]t tout cela […] prenait à ses yeux une signification étrange, un charme indicible.[1]

Erckmann-Chatrian's Alsatian characters are as simple as their plot lines: humble and lovable people, who mainly care about living the good life, eating, drinking, and merry-making, and who furthermore show a singularly German attachment to the concepts of work and duty. They are endearing to the reader, but not challenging or thought-provoking in any way. Erckmann-Chatrian take great care to describe the Alsatians as fundamentally inoffensive and mostly apolitical in their thought-lives, albeit happily integrated into an all-French décor of tricoloured flags. Rather than developing their characters in the course of the narrative, Erckmann-Chatrian focus on the décor. Each character's looks are usually described in great detail when they are first introduced, sporting folkloric costumes and colourful attire. Of course, Erckmann-Chatrian amply reuse the theme of the sensual Alsatian woman in stereotypical dress:

> [I]l songeait à Gretchen, à la jolie Gretchen, si fraîche, les lèvres humides et roses, les grands yeux bleus si riants, si limpides… l'éclat de rire si franc!... Qu'elle lui paraissait belle alors, et comme son cœur galopait! Il lui semblait la voir courir d'une table à l'autre, et verser la bière

[1] Erckmann-Chatrian, 'Gretchen' in *Contes vosgiens* (Paris: Hetzel, n.d.), p. 71.

> dans les grandes chopes luisantes, le bras haut, blanc comme de l'ivoire… la taille bien cambrée, les deux tresses de ses blonds cheveux flottant jusqu'au bas de sa petite jupe coquelicot.[1]

Like *La Belle Allemande* some one hundred years earlier, Gretchen is cast in the role of the stereotypical, blond, and sensual Alsatian woman. Erckmann-Chatrian add to the cliché an association of Alsatian women with food and drink, as best charted in *L'Ami Fritz's* love affair with Sûzel, who wins his heart with her bakery. Angels Santa goes so far as to state that food prepared by Alsatian women usually is a placeholder for sex in Erckmann-Chatrian's stories: 'nourriture, sexe et femme font partie de la même réalité.'[2] Depicted through Erckmann-Chatrian's female figures, Alsace connotes sensuality, fertility, nutritional opulence and picturesque beauty.[3]

There is one exception to this general depiction of Alsace as France's charming other: Erckmann-Chatrian's only politicised novel about the region, *Histoire d'un homme du peuple,* whose publication started in 1865 as a serialised novel and subsequently encountered problems with censorship.[4] Only the first part, set in Alsace, was published in France; the second part, set in Paris and describing the Revolution of 1848, was published in London as late as 1871.[5] Erckmann-Chatrian used *Homme du peuple* to spell out their vision of Alsace's national belonging and identity - next to token idyllic descriptions of the province, of course. Jean-Pierre Clavel, its hero, is Erckmann-Chatrian's only Alsatian protagonist to ever step beyond the restricted circle of his region and to see France and the capital.[6] *Homme du peuple* is the novel that deviates most from Erckmann-Chatrian's usual representation of Alsace, putting a national agenda into an Alsatian work.

The narrative starts in 1837 and ends in 1848. It follows the orphan Jean-Pierre's adoption, childhood and early adulthood in Saverne, allowing Erckmann-Chatrian to paint yet another portrait of Alsatian town life. At the end of his apprenticeship, Jean-Pierre moves to Paris and is confronted with the world of politics. The young man learns about France's past and present and soon becomes a staunch Republican. The story culminates in the Revolution of 1848 and ends on the proclamation of the Republic, concluding Erckmann-Chatrian's cycle of *Romans nationaux,* which traces the history of French Republicanism from the Revolutionary Wars, the First Empire and Napoleon's fall, to the

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[1] *Gretchen,* p. 70.
[2] Angels Santa, 'Un Roman d'amour: L'Ami Fritz' in *Erckmann-Chatrian entre imagination, fantaisie et réalisme*, p. 253.
[3] Ibid. p. 253.
[4] *À la table de l'ami Fritz*, p. 79.
[5] See *Chronologie d'Erckmann-Chatrian,* p. 135.
[6] *Erckmann-Chatrian, écrivain alsacien?*, p. 48.

Revolution of 1848. Although it is the last book in the series, Erckmann-Chatrian insist that the cycle is not complete:

> [C]'est le livre du peuple français. Tu verras le commencement de la Révolution; le commencement, car elle n'est pas finie, elle continuera jusqu'à ce que nous ayons la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité. Beaucoup de chapitres manquent.[1]

Erckmann-Chatrian used several novels - although typically not Alsatian stories - in order to inculcate their readers with Republican ideas, making it easy to see why *Homme du peuple* eventually fell victim to censorship. Like previous writers, Erckmann-Chatrian rewrote history in order to inscribe Alsace into the nation; offering yet another view on how Alsace could become a part of the French self.

Homme du peuple is unusual in that Jean-Pierre's fate can be seen as an allegory for Alsace's political situation. In *L'Ami Fritz*, Erckmann-Chatrian had postulated the notion of 'la vieille Allemagne' as the Alsatians' cultural fatherland. The first scene in *Homme du peuple* describes the orphan Jean-Pierre after his father's death. His mother is never mentioned in the novel, thus strengthening the association between the figure of the dead father and the dead fatherland. This may be an allusion to the destruction of the German Empire, or else to the outcome of the Thirty Years War, which contributed to its de facto dissolution and left Alsace defenceless. The first scene in the book describes Jean-Pierre's quarrelling relatives, who each only care about their own profit, cannot come to an agreement and in the end refuse to care for the orphan. These might be representing the splintered German states and fractions whose leaders cared more about their own gain than about defending Alsace or assuring the national family's unity. At first, Jean-Pierre is taken in by the widow Rochard - perhaps a personification of the moribund Monarchy - who cannot look after him any longer. Finally, the distraught orphan is adopted by the widow Marie-Anne Balais, the only person to take a real interest in his well-being. It is not by coincidence that his adoptive mother is named Marie-Anne*;* she is one of the two embodiments France's national emblem is given in the novel. Jean-Pierre is eternally grateful and cuts all ties with his biological family, perhaps allegorically signifying Alsace's irreversible attachment to France as its adoptive mother. Growing into a young man, the Alsatian has not yet understood his place in society; he is plagued by loneliness and wonders what his purpose in life is. This may reflect the Alsatians embracing their adoption by France, but their initial inability to see the bigger picture and to understand their role in a Republican nation. Indeed, Jean-Pierre's environment is cut off from the rest of France, in terms of a circulation

[1] Erckmann-Chatrian, *Histoire d'un homme du peuple*, in *Contes et romans nationaux et populaires*, p. 156.

of goods, news and population. Erckmann-Chatrian resolve this issue by having Jean-Pierre migrate to the capital, where he is enabled to understand the nation and Alsace's part in it.

After his first amorous disappointment, Marie-Anne instructs Jean-Pierre to move to Paris. The Alsatian's migration allows Erckmann-Chatrian to juxtapose the spheres of Alsace and Paris and to celebrate the capital's grandeur.

> A mesure que nous approchions de Paris, tout changeait […]. Moi, j'ouvrais les yeux, je ne respirais plus, je pensais: 'Me voilà donc près de Paris; je vais entrer dans cette grande ville dont j'entends parler depuis que je suis au monde, d'où reviennent tous les bons ouvriers, tous les gros bourgeois, tous les gens riches, disant: "Ah! ce n'est pas comme Paris!" […] Oui, ils avaient raison, Paris est quelque chose de nouveau pour les hommes.'[1]

Alsace appears backwards and primitive compared to the capital, the home of progress and new ideas. Confronted with and connected to real France, the Alsatian is amazed by its grandeur and otherness. After this initial estrangement, the novel works a *rapprochement* between previously opposite spheres: the Alsatian becomes Parisian. Jean-Pierre's stay in the capital not only serves to accentuate the differences between Paris and the province, it also provides an education for the politically ignorant Alsatian. Yet again, the capital serves as France's educator: 'Paris soulève le problème de l'éducation en province. […] Ce qui distingue donc Paris de la province, c'est la conscience politique des artisans et des ouvriers qui ne se laissent pas duper comme les paysans de la province.'[2] It is in Paris that Jean-Pierre receives political instruction about what it means to be French, and is subsequently transformed from peasant to Frenchman. As soon as Jean-Pierre starts work in the capital, he notices that all of his colleagues discuss political issues and regularly listen to debates that he cannot understand. Back in Alsace, nobody cared about politics, to the extent that Jean-Pierre has never heard of the Revolution and does not know the Marseillaise, even though it was composed in Strasbourg. Erckmann-Chatrian repeat their common theme of a politically uninvolved and uninterested Alsace; but this time, this is presented as a situation that needs to be changed.

M. Perrignon, a colleague, decides to help the Alsatian out of his civil immaturity, lending him newspapers and a book about the French Revolution. Erckmann-Chatrian use Jean-Pierre's learning curve to expose the history and teachings of French Republicanism that they feel so strongly about. In the context of Perrignon's tutelage, the reader encounters the second impersonation of France's national emblem, in the form of Perrignon's wife Marianne, a faithful woman who together

[1] *Homme du peuple,* p. 94.
[2] *Erckmann-Chatrian, écrivain alsacien?,* p. 50.

with her husband aims to arm future generations for the Republican battle. Perrignon's supervision, his reading material, together with the frequent political debates he overhears, gradually form Jean-Pierre into a politically aware citizen:

> Cette nuit-là, jusque passé minuit, je lus le livre [sur la Révolution Française] que m'avait prêté M. Perrignon. Je ne savais pour ainsi dire rien de notre Révolution, j'avais seulement entendu maudire Robespierre à Saverne, et dire qu'il guillotinait les gens comme des mouches. Mais toutes les grandes actions, toutes les belles lois, toutes les victoires de ces temps, personne ne m'en avait parlé. […] Non! de tout cela je ne savais pas un mot, et de temps en temps je m'écriais en moi-même: 'Comment ne nous a-t-on jamais rien appris de notre propre histoire?'[1]

This passage marks Jean-Pierre's transition from ignorant provincial to French citizen, showing his identification with a community that transforms his self-awareness into an acceptance of the collective whole of the nation (nous, notre). The nation is seen, following the Republican ideal, as the outcome of a collective deliberation. In order to become a part of it, provincials must be educated into politically mature individuals. Erckmann-Chatrian advocate free education for every Frenchman and promote schooling as the main tool to create national sentiment in the masses:

> [L]'instruction [… doit être] un droit pour tous les Français […] ; un Français à vingt ans doit s'écrier en lui-même:
>
> - Quel bonheur pour moi d'être né plutôt en France qu'en Russie, en Espagne, ou partout ailleurs! mon pays m'a donné de l'instruction; il m'a montré mes droits et mes devoirs. Ailleurs, je ne serais qu'une brute; ici, je suis un homme! […] [C]eux qui n'ont pas d'instruction n'ont pas de patrie. Ils sont toujours pour celui qui leur donne du pain, qu'il s'appelle Jacques, Jean ou Nicolas, qu'il soit Anglais, Russe ou Français. Ils se moquent de leur pays, ils ne connaissent qu'un homme. Ceux qui doivent l'instruction à la patrie mettent leurs devoirs envers elle au-dessus de tout.[2]

Weber states that the process of French nation-formation was far from finished in the nineteenth century, underlining that as late as 1870, many of the hexagon's inhabitants would have seen themselves as French subjects, but not as Frenchmen.[3] Around that time, Erckmann-Chatrian defined the Alsatians as French subjects without awareness of national identity, in need of being

[1] *Homme du peuple,* pp. 157-8.
[2] Ibid. pp. 184-5.
[3] *Peasants into Frenchmen,* p. 486.

transformed into citizens through education. In Erckmann-Chatrian's opinion, a feeling of national belonging is achieved through schooling. Erckmann was a friend and supporter of Jules Ferry, who advocated compulsory primary schooling in France as a means to turn ignorant peasants into citizens and later adopted a similar strategy in the colonies.[1] The quotation above underlines the difference between bestial ignorance and citizenship, advocating the same strategy of Frenchification through education for Alsace that was later promoted in the colonies. France thereby becomes the educator of the masses, with a duty to teach provincials and natives alike in order to assimilate them into the nation.

Jean-Pierre is a prime example of the success of this formula. During his childhood and adolescence in Alsace, he felt alone and did not understand his place in the world as an orphan. On his arrival in Paris, Jean-Pierre felt like an outsider, alone and homesick, unsure of his place in a society that was foreign to him. Because of his Alsatian background, he had remained ignorant and cut off from the nation, but as soon as he is educated, Jean-Pierre begins to feel French. Once his Republican education is complete, he has found new meaning in life, sees himself as a child of *la patrie* and a fully integrated member of the *peuple*, as the novel's title suggests. He has found his place in the world as child and servant of the fatherland; France has now fully replaced his old family:

> Nous ne sommes pas seulement ici pour nous seuls, nous sommes ici pour la patrie! Ceux qui n'ont pas de famille, pas de richesses, pas d'amour… eh bien! ils ont la patrie; ils ont quelque chose de plus grand, de plus beau, de plus éternel: ils ont la France! Qu'elle prenne seule notre vie. Et puisque nous sommes pauvres, qu'elle soit pour nous l'amour, les richesses et la famille![2]

Once Jean-Pierre comes to see himself as a citizen, he does not miss Alsace anymore; France has become his home and he considers himself as belonging to the nation. His enthusiastic support for the Revolution of 1848 is the logical conclusion of his learning curve. As the book ends with Lamartine's proclamation of the Republic, the reader is left to draw the final parallels between Jean-Pierre's and Alsace's destinies. *Homme du peuple* demonstrates how Alsace and France could and should be linked through education. The Alsatians' old German fatherland is dead, but their adoptive *patrie* is beckoning. Erckmann-Chatrian postulate that once the Alsatians are made aware of the idea of French citizenship with its rights and duties, they will embrace Republicanism and become a source of hope for the nation. Erckmann-Chatrian insist that France has the duty of educating its

[1] See *Chronologie d'Erckmann-Chatrian,* p. 136.
[2] *Homme du peuple,* p. 152.

peripheries' inhabitants into politically mature citizens who will then choose to become a part of the Republican nation. Underlying this representation, of course, is the classical colonial schema whereby the centre functions as educator and the peripheries are cast in the role of immature children. This, in a nutshell, is Erckmann-Chatrian's strategy for integrating Alsace into the French nation and their 1865 prognosis of the province's future. It is still caught in timelessness, backwards, cut off from the nation, other and exotic, as in most of their folkloric depictions. And yet, the possibility of Alsace's integration into the Republican nation is seen as imminent. However, France had to be defined as a Republic and actually become a Republic before this could happen. Ironically, the second part of *Homme du peuple,* blueprinting Alsace's future assimilation to the nation through education, fell victim to the Second Empire's censorship and could not be published before the province was lost to Germany. It is equally ironic that Ferry indeed introduced compulsory primary schooling, but only after Alsace had ceased to be a part of France. And yet, Erckmann-Chatrian lastingly shaped Alsace's representation in the French imaginary during the pre-war years - perhaps more than any previous author. Their Alsatian writings largely contributed to the formation and solidification of stereotypes about the province and were perhaps the first literary works that succeeded in alerting a larger French readership to Alsace's existence. Erckmann-Chatrian mark a milestone for the integration of Alsace into the myth of the French nation – a process that only truly took off after 1871, as will be shown in the following section.

The break of 1870: the Franco-Prussian war and Alsace's restitution to Germany

The war of 1870 and Alsace's re-annexation to Germany caused a great awakening to Alsace in French literature. In over 200 years, from Alsace's annexation to France in 1648 to its loss in 1871, only five authors created prose fiction about the province. In the thirty years from 1871 until the end of the nineteenth century, the number of authors writing about the lost province grew to over twenty and rose again exponentially from 1900 to the end of the First World War.[1] The contrast between the former ignorance of Alsace in the French literary scene, and the sudden emphasis on the lost province after 1871 is so stark that scholars generally assume that 'the French Alsatian Novel is a literary genre born after the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine [to Germany] in 1871.'[2] This is, of course, an erroneous assumption, as this chapter has proven. Nevertheless, it is not incorrect to say that an entirely new way of writing Alsace emerged after 1871, which might be read as its own genre. For the first time, Alsace appears as intrinsically French and the previously common association of the province with Germany is obliterated entirely. Alphonse Daudet's 1873 *La*

[1] See *Nationaler Anspruch und regionale Identität,* pp. 35-8.
[2] Ibid. p. 1.

Dernière Classe can be seen as the first example of this new approach to Alsace, which is why it is included here as a case study.

1873: Alphonse Daudet – *La Dernière Classe: Récit d'un petit Alsacien*

The author commonly said to have invented the new genre of the 'French Alsatian novel' is Alphonse Daudet, with his famous short story *La Dernière Classe: Récit d'un petit Alsacien*.[1] As we have seen, Daudet is by no means the first French author to write about Alsace. He is, however, the third, and last, Parisian great to take an interest in the province, and the only one who became famous for his literary homage to Alsace. The reason for the great popularity of Daudet's story is without doubt the political situation at the time it was published; French national pride had been deeply hurt over the loss of the province. Daudet chose a strategic moment in national history to give a strategic message: that Alsace was indeed French - in spite of everything -, and that the Alsatians wanted to remain French. The narrative is told from the perspective of an Alsatian boy who attends his last French lesson before the handover of his school to German teachers. It describes the boy's sorry thoughts, the regret of the villagers, as well as the French teacher's last message to his Alsatian pupils – evidently aimed at engraving love for France in the attendants' memories:

> Ma dernière leçon de français… Et moi qui savais à peine écrire! Je n'apprendrais donc jamais! Il faudrait donc en rester là! Comme je m'en voulais maintenant du temps perdu, des classes manquées… Mes livres que tout à l'heure encore je trouvais si ennuyeux, si lourds à porter […] me semblaient à présent de vieux amis qui me feraient beaucoup de peine à quitter […]. [C]eux du village étaient venus s'asseoir au bout de la salle. Cela semblait dire qu'ils regrettaient de ne pas y être venus plus souvent, à cette école. C'était aussi une façon […] de rendre leurs devoirs à la patrie qui s'en allait […]. Ah! ç'a été le grand malheur de notre Alsace de toujours remettre son instruction à demain. Maintenant ces gens-là sont en droit de nous dire: Comment! Vous prétendez être Français, et vous ne savez ni parler ni écrire votre langue! […] Nous avons tous notre bonne part de reproches à nous faire.[2]

Daudet's narrative takes for granted that the Alsatians' true fatherland is France. Whereas previous narratives proposed different ways in which to integrate Alsace into the nation, Daudet does not even pose the question. Alsace is shown to be an integral part of the French self, though its political status has changed. Germany has become the other that dominates and politically oppresses a foreign people. Unlike many subsequent French Alsatian novels, Daudet acknowledges the fact that the Alsatians speak German, yet does not deem it necessary to discuss their apparent similarities

[1] *Nationaler Anspruch und regionale Identität,* p. 35.
[2] Alphonse Daudet, 'La Dernière Classe: Récit d'un petit Alsacien' in *Contes du lundi* (Paris: Lemerre, 1873), pp. 21-22.

with the people on the other side of the Rhine. He diverts any attention that might have been devoted to exploring such uncomfortable questions through the narrative emphasis on the Alsatians' regret at being separated from their French fatherland.

Like Erckmann-Chatrian, Daudet comments on the need for education in the forging of French citizens. This allows him to blame the Alsatians – rather than France's defeat – for the present situation. The fault for everything lies with the natives: they have been lazy and have not put enough effort into learning French and culturally assimilating to France. However, Daudet makes the Alsatians look so rueful and well-meaning that the French reader cannot be angry at them for their shortfall. One should pay close attention to the disjointed link between language and national identity proposed in the narrative. In the passage above, Daudet attempts to refute the common argument according to which Alsace was German because its inhabitants spoke German, by postulating that the Alsatians' language has no bearing on their true identity. His implicit definition of nationality goes along Fustel de Coulange's argumentation in his famous 1870 essay *L'Alsace est-elle allemande ou française?*, which based the Alsatians' Frenchness on their political sentiments, arguing that they were French simply because they wanted to be French, notwithstanding any ethnic or linguistic criteria.[1] This acknowledgement that there is nothing uniting Alsatians and Frenchmen in terms of culture or language leaves an uncomfortable narrative void; the story never answers the question why the Alsatians would want to be French. Daudet pulls the reader past this awkwardness through a celebration of the grandeur of France and its language, giving ideological reasons for the Alsatians' otherwise inexplicable desire to be French:

> M. Hamel se mit à nous parler de la langue française, disant que c'était la plus belle langue du monde, la plus claire, la plus solide: qu'il fallait la garder entre nous et ne jamais l'oublier, parce que, quand un peuple tombe esclave, tant qu'il tient bien sa langue, c'est comme s'il tenait la clef de sa prison. […] La leçon finie, on passa à l'écriture. Pour ce jour-là, M. Hamel nous avait préparé des exemples tout neufs, sur lesquels était écrit en belle ronde *France, Alsace, France, Alsace.* Cela faisait comme des petits drapeaux qui flottaient tout autour de la classe, pendus à la tringle de nos pupitres. Il fallait voir comme chacun s'appliquait, et quel silence! […] Alors il se tourna vers le tableau, prit un morceau de craie, et […] écrivit aussi gros qu'il put: 'VIVE LA FRANCE!'[2]

Unsurprisingly, Daudet's text carries strong colonialist overtones; its publication coincides with the heyday of France's self-view as a great colonial nation. Especially the idea of the French language as

[1] Fustel de Coulanges, *L'Alsace est-elle allemande ou française? Réponse à M. Mommsen* (Paris: Dentu, 1870).
[2] *La Dernière Classe,* pp. 23-5.

the most beautiful, clear and solid betrays a worldview that sees France as the centre of the world and the highest form of civilisation. Logically, it is France's duty to educate and Frenchify the rest of the world, including the Alsatians. In tune with France's role as educator and parental nation, the Alsatians are cast in the role of children: Daudet writes from the point of view of a child and depicts a class of willing learners. The tearful story of the small Alsatian boy awakens paternal instincts in the readers, prompting them to take care of these child-like natives who so badly want another chance with France. Daudet conveys an image of Alsace as an abandoned child to be rescued by a caring France, a motive that was to be reused frequently in years to come, most often depicting Alsace as France's lost daughter.

The ensuing comment on language and national identity directly contradicts Daudet's definition of Frenchness above. Whereas he postulated earlier on that nationality was independent of language, he now infers that 'un peuple' is recognisable by 'sa langue.' This move from civic to ethnic nationalism within a few lines perfectly expresses the contradictions inherent in nineteenth-century French nationalism. In its patriotic fervour, Daudet's narrative is equally incoherent with regards to Alsace's linguistic situation; after all, the narrator stated earlier on that the Alsatians were unable to speak or write in French – surely they should therefore be excluded from the community of the 'peuple?' Yet, the strong images of prison and key pull the reader past such incommensurable contradictions, making them miss the irony of M. Hamel's comment about the preservation of a language among an ethnic minority as an ultimate sign of national belonging. After all, the Alsatians' preservation of the German language over fourhundred years was one of the main arguments the Germans used to prove their German patriotism. While Bismarckian Germany rejoiced over Alsace's deliverance from French slavery, Daudet turned the picture on its head, presenting the Alsatians as French prisoners of the Germans.

The rest of the narrative is devoted to symbolic enactments of French nationalism, complete with flags, exclamations and indoctrination. The association between France and Alsace is set up for eternal repetition (*France, Alsace, France, Alsace*…), assiduously replicated and internalised by the Alsatian pupils who, inspired by their teacher's discourse, have taken the good resolution to remain French in every way they can. Daudet's narrative also offers perspectives for the future: it implicitly suggests that the narrator's generation will grow into strong men willing to fight for France, thus fuelling the revanchist spirit of the years leading up to World War One. Daudet sets the tone for a new representation of Alsace that can easily be read in postcolonial terms, because it relies on a certain discourse in order to justify the political (re)conquest of a territory that was initially seen as foreign. The truth content of this discourse is far less important than the political action it seeks to

justify. *La Dernière Classe* quickly became a point of reference for the French national imaginary: not only was it reprinted numerous times over the next fourty-eight years, and included in school manuals to be taught to primary pupils, but it also served as a prototype for a host of little-known authors who tried to make a career out of writing patriotic stories about lost Alsace. The story's resounding success served to obscure and push into oblivion everything that had been said and thought about Alsace in French literature or politics before 1870 - to the point that Daudet is nowadays recognised as the author who invented French writing about Alsace.

1871 – 1918: 'Le roman français sur l'Alsace' and the fate of pre-1870 sources

While Germany celebrated the long-sought-after reintegration of Alsace into the nation, the French literary scene inaugurated the cult of the lost province. Inspired by Daudet's depiction, a whole host of texts was born that consolidated the myth of lost Alsace, often cast in the role of a child or a defenceless woman. If the success of *La Dernière Classe* did not lead any other Parisian big names to write about Alsace, the lost province became a favourite theme of many minor French authors. Book titles or pseudonyms were chosen in reference to well-known pre-1871 literary depictions of Alsace. Suzanne Gobron published novels under the penname 'Suzel,' in homage to *L'Ami Fritz'* famous Alsatian lover. Paul Lenglé called his book *Thérèse, Histoire d'une Alsacienne* (1895), showing the identification of the name with Alsace since the publication of *La Belle Allemande,* and Paul Bertnay entitled his novel *Orphelins d'Alsace: Les millions de l'oncle Fritz* (1897), perhaps a combination of Balzac's baron de Nucingen, Erckmann-Chatrian's *L'Ami Fritz* and *Homme du peuple*.[1] While such naming may appear to create a continuity between the depictions of Alsace before and after 1871, the post-1871 literature of the French Alsatian novel sports an utterly different depiction of Alsace. Suddenly there was a cult of French Alsace, meaning that the region's historical connections with Germany were often wilfully obscured in history- and story writing. Not only was Alsace now described as quintessentially French, but the level of political involvement in post-1871 literature about Alsace was equally unprecedented. In many cases, the distinctive feature of this new genre was war propaganda. Most often, the authors' goal was to stir up revanchist sentiments against Germany, over and above any concerns for literary merit.[2]

However, some pre-1870 prose works about Alsace also made a come-back after 1871. *La Belle Allemande* had sunk into oblivion and had not been reprinted since 1803. It was rediscovered and republished under the title *La Belle Alsacienne ou Telle mère, telle fille* in 1882, in the course of the new vogue for works about Alsace. The title is reminiscent of an iconic image at the time: an Alsatian beauty in chains, mourning over her imprisonment and waiting for her liberator from France

[1] See *Nationaler Anspruch und regionale Identität,* pp. 36-7.
[2] See ibid. for a thorough analysis of post-1871 literature about Alsace.

- as seen, for example, in Jean-Jacques Henner's famous painting of 1871, *L'Alsace: Elle attend*.[1] The earliest - and highly exotic - work of French literature about Alsace was used to fuel the desires for reconquest of the province, putting a colonialist novel in the service of revanchism. Balzac and Nerval died before 1871. It is unlikely that Balzac's work was read more or less eagerly because of his Alsatian characters. Nerval, next to Daudet the only other canonical author to have written about Alsace, was completely ignored, most certainly because his message contradicted the hegemonic discourse. *Le Fort de Bitche,* and more surprisingly *Émilie*, a part of the famous and well-studied *Les Filles du feu,* were obliterated and have received little to no scholarly attention to this day.

Erckmann and Chatrian's lives were changed dramatically by the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. The war of 1870 struck the authors at the height of their success; they lost their home province the moment their Republican dreams came true. Neither of them took the annexation well and their friendship ended during the following years. Erckmann wandered back and forth between Lorraine, Paris, Brittany and the Orient; Chatrian married and remained in the capital. Until the 1880s, both worked independently, but kept up their public profile as Erckmann-Chatrian. Their alienation grew, caused by their differing opinions concerning various issues such as France's colonialism under Jules Ferry (Chatrian would have preferred a more revanchist attitude), Erckmann's temporary stay in German Phalsbourg (for which he was accused of collaborating with the enemy) and a legal dispute concerning obscure questions of copyright.

During this last period of activity, Erckmann wrote several stories about the plight of oppressed Alsace, marked by hatred of Prussian-led Germany and invocations of a future *revanche.* Chatrian successfully adapted several older works for theatre; the most renowned was *L'Ami Fritz,* now advertised as commemorating lost Alsace.[2] Chatrian cut any references to Germany from the original text, renamed certain secondary characters in order to have a greater number of French names in the play, composed patriotic songs for Sûzel, and relocated the action to the French-sounding Clairefontaine to avoid confusion about the setting.[3] Right from its premiere at the *Comédie française* in 1876, the play was a resounding success. Even Zola - having criticised the novel and judged that Alsace was not worthy of literary depiction before 1871 - suddenly argued that it was a wonderful subject for a play: 'Je sais parfaitement que *L'Ami Fritz* a réussi grâce au charme du sujet, au côté poétique de cette idylle.'[4] Having previously claimed that Alsace was too far removed from Parisian life to be of any significance to French readers, Zola now found that '[o]n se trouve

[1] Jean-Jacques Henner, *L'Alsace: Elle attend* (Paris: Musée Jean-Jacques Henner, 1870).
[2] *Le Trait d'union*, pp. 140-1.
[3] Jean-Pierre Schlegel, *Erckmann-Chatrian: L'Ami Fritz à la comédie française* (Metz: Serpenoise, 2004), pp. 15-6.
[4] Émile Zola, *Nos auteurs dramatiques* (Paris: Charpentier, 1889), p. 415.

enfin devant un coin du monde réel.'[1] *L'Ami Fritz* was reproduced for seventy-two years without interruption, with René Hervil's first cinematographic version coming out just after World War One, marking Alsace's reunification to France.[2] Theatrical and cinematographic re-readings of *L'Ami Fritz* lastingly defined Alsace for the Parisian public. Alongside several other pre-war works by Erckmann-Chatrian, *L'Ami Fritz* found use in another domain: the school manuals of the Third Republic. Whereas none of Erckmann-Chatrian's novels had been used as reading material during the Second Empire, extracts from their pre-war stories were frequently used after 1871, engraving the lost provinces into the minds of every school child.[3] At the end of World War One, the *Revue littéraire* wrote about these school books: 'N'est-ce pas en partie grâce à leurs livres [à Erckmann-Chatrian] qu[e …] les souvenirs et le culte de la chère Alsace sont restés si vivants dans tous les cœurs?'[4] Of course, Erckmann-Chatrian were generally thought to be Alsatians and *L'Ami Fritz* was seen as the novel that best and alone expressed Alsatianness.[5]

As for the only Alsatian who wrote in French about his province before 1870, Louis Spach chose to remain in Alsace and accept German nationality. Rather than migrate to France or express objections against Alsace's occupation, Spach turned with the wind and supported the new authorities, even publishing his resentments against Alsace's ex-French government. Consequently, the new regime lavished distinctions onto him: doctorate in philosophy from the prestigious University of Tubingen; honorary professorship of letters at the University of Strasbourg; medals of honour from the states of Baden, Bavaria, Hesse and Wurttemberg.[6] The man who had so furiously campaigned for Alsatian literature to be in French, advising his compatriots to 'brise[r] vos harpes allemandes,' now returned to writing in German: *Heinrich Waser* (1875), *Dramatische Bilder aus Strassburgs Vergangenheit* (1876). In the autobiography he wrote towards the end of his life, Spach claims that he never really felt French and was never interested in French politics: 'I did not care about politics in the least, never even read the local newspaper and only felt a half-hearted belonging to France.'[7] He draws a distinction between the Alsatians and the French in terms of race - Teutons and Gauls - and qualifies the Alsatians before 1871 as 'subjects subdued by France.'[8] Furthermore, Spach qualifies the German efforts to reconquer Alsace which he had witnessed during

[1] *Nos auteurs dramatiques,* p. 403.
[2] *L'Ami Fritz à la comédie française,* p. 15.
[3] Jean-François Chanet, 'Erckmann-Chatrian dans les revues d'enseignement primaire sous la III[e] République' in *Erckmann-Chatrian entre imagination, fantaisie et réalisme*, p. 330.
[4] Quoted in ibid. p. 331.
[5] Ibid. p. 330.
[6] *Nouveau dictionnaire de biographie alsacienne,* p. 3676.
[7] *Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen,* p. 41. My translation.
[8] Ibid. pp. 49, 58. My translation.

his lifetime (notably in 1815 and 1871) as in the spirit of 'just war between peoples [*Völker*].'[1] Of course, it remains doubtful how sincere Spach's flatteries were. In any case, he kept his position as archivist in Strasbourg, working for the German authorities until his death in 1879.

Making Alsace French

Having read two centuries of literature against history, I have demonstrated how Alsace progressively slipped from belonging to the exotic nation on the other side of the border to being included in the French self-definition – just after it was politically relinquished to Germany following the 1870 war. I have charted the literary creation of a myth, complete with all its detours and paradoxes, showing how an internal exoticism about Alsace was created, commercially exploited and finally abandoned in favour of representations that banned all non-French elements and insisted on Alsace's belonging to France. As with nineteenth-century literature about Corsica, this examination of identity at the margins has led back to questions about French identity, highlighting a fluidity of the national self that seemed alarming to contemporary authors. This exercise has once again proven that the borders of nineteenth-century France were far more permeable than one supposes nowadays. The French national imaginary - as shown through literature - remained unclear for a long time on where exactly lay the boundaries between the national self and its territorial conquests.

Leading up to 1870, two centuries of authors struggled to define Alsatianness and imagine different relationships between France and its 'German' province. Attempting to envisage the introduction of the Alsatian periphery into the imaginary circle of the nation, French prose fiction grappled with the question under which paradigms Alsace could become French. A number of different discourses and models of integration were proposed in various works of literature, resulting in tensions and inconsistencies. No discourse remained firmly in place, challenged by subsequent writings calling into question previously received opinions. Bret and Villaret suggested a view of Alsace as a conquered territory and an exotic other ready to be exploited by France. Spach defined France in terms of Empire, which allowed him to integrate Alsace into a nation of conquerors, following Napoleon's lead to greater expansion still. Nerval problematised the Napoleonic myth and its unquestioning acceptance of Alsace's belonging to France, representing the province as a conquered land whose possession remained uncertain. Balzac felt no need to enquire into or explain Alsace's relationship with France. The presence of his Alsatian characters in Paris is taken for granted – however, these are not perceived as threats to national unity, as with Balzac's Parisian Corsicans. Erckmann-Chatrian described Alsace as unproblematically bound to France and

[1] *Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen,* p. 40. My translation.

envisaged the linking element between Alsace and France to be - or at least to become – Republican education. This overview shows that there was no consensus in the discourses surrounding Alsace's status within France – even though the elements that made up Alsatian internal exoticism tended to reappear (blond girls in stereotypical outfits, beer, typical houses and landscapes, a vague Romanticism, and so on).

It was only after the province's loss to Germany at the end of the proposed time period that a discourse about Alsace's Frenchness suddenly solidified. A hegemony of representations was created that now presented the territory as firmly belonging to the French national self, concluding the literary creation of a myth. The complex and non-linear progression of internal exoticism about Alsace before the Franco-Prussian war examined in this chapter serves to put into context the genesis of the French Alsatian novel after 1871. It helps us appreciate the jump from disparate pre-war depictions to a sudden hegemonic consensus. Having lost a territory which had formerly been viewed as a colonial conquest, that same territory was now mythically presented as firmly belonging to the national self. Alsace's cultural and linguistic situation was ignored in favour of creating an ideal image of a lost province whose inhabitants were as French as any Parisian. The post-1870 literature of the French Alsatian novel had serious consequences for the reunion of Alsace to France in 1918. Frédéric Hoffet emphasises that revanchist literature had distorted the image of Alsace to the point that French soldiers, who thought they were rescuing their lost siblings in 1918, were shocked to find that they spoke German.[1] In David Harvey's words, the 'lost children' the French had hoped to save were suddenly perceived as suspicious 'enemy aliens.' In part, the Frenchmen's false expectations concerning Alsace built up in literature led to the vehement post-war *épuration* of the region examined in Harvey's paper.[2]

[1] *Psychanalyse de l'Alsace,* pp. 145-6.
[2] David Harvey, 'Lost Children or Enemy Aliens? Classifying the Population of Alsace after the First World War,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34 (1999), pp. 537-554.

Conclusion

This study has examined nineteenth-century French prose fiction about the peripheral regions of Alsace and Corsica, observing the processes of their discursive incorporation into the imagined French landscape. Drawing on sixty-two primary sources, of which around forty per cent were written by unknown regional authors, this research has analysed the first ever works written in French about Alsace and Corsica. Contributing to the field of French studies by unearthing forgotten material, this thesis has applied a new theoretical framework to the study of France. Using tools from postcolonial criticism, it has revealed the genesis of a fictional relationship between France and the aforementioned regions and found remarkable similarities to the French colonial imaginary. An examination of early Parisian literary sources about the provinces revealed how canonical writers imagined Alsace and Corsica as spaces of internal exoticism. Analysing the first Francophone authors from these regions showed that they frequently imitated Parisian greats, consequently perceiving their own origins as outlandish and creating auto-exoticist self-portrayals.

Corsican texts span almost the whole century, starting with the first canonical representation of Corsica in 1829 and ending with the last insular source in 1898. Corsica was clearly represented as exotic by nineteenth-century canonical writers including Mérimée, Balzac, Dumas, Sue, Daudet, and Maupassant. These famous Parisian-based authors showed great interest in the island between the 1830s and 1880s, creating a vogue for outlandish and colourful descriptions of Corsica that lasted for around fifty years. From the earliest depictions, there was a high degree of consensus about a Corsican internal exoticism that conceptualised the island as different from the French self, thereby justifying its rule by France. Typical exotic images coined by Parisian authors include an obsession with the vendetta and its savagery, iconic bandits, unrestrained women between beauty and bestiality, adventures in jungles or deserts, as well as rejuvenation and rebirth on the island. These ploys made appear necessary the presence of a civilising force on Corsica with a mission to discover, chart and possess the island, hand in hand with pacifying and educating its inhabitants. The general tendency to exoticise and to foreground Corsica's imperial appropriation became even more prominent during the last third of the century.

The fictional output about Alsace during the same time period was comparatively small, leading to an extended timeframe of investigation, beginning with the first work of prose fiction about the province in 1745 and ending on its earliest revanchist depiction in 1873. The only notable French authors to mention Alsace in their prose were Balzac, Nerval, and Daudet, whose discourses vary to significant degrees. Balzac grants his Parisian Alsatian characters a mild otherness that

enables him to mock certain stereotypical character traits, but he does not problematise their belonging to the capital's society. While he may not have thought of Alsace as truly French, Balzac does not discuss the region's relationship vis-à-vis the national self, taking the province's possession for granted. Conversely, Nerval focuses on Alsace's controversial place within the French self and opens up its national belonging as a subject for debate. Daudet, spurring on the desire to repossess the province after its secession from France in 1871, makes Alsace appear as naturally French as possible, while conceding that it retains some foreign features, such as language – thus making Alsace's futre reappropriation and complete Frenchification appear necessary. No canonical author describes the region in detail. It was the minor authors Bret and Villaret who, in the first work written in French about Alsace, discovered the province as an exotic beauty and presented her to the Parisian public in the form of a prostitute, thus linking the appropriation of a foreign territory and its fantasised exploitation. Over a century later, the marginal writers Erckmann-Chatrian depicted the region in great detail for their Parisian readers, enhancing its exotic flair while ultimately envisaging its inhabitants' education and Frenchification by the centre. Combining the portrayal of Alsace by canonical and minor French authors, there emerges an internal exoticism about the region with distinctive identifiers such as Germanic accents or words, beautiful blondes in suggestive regional costumes, jolly fellows, beer and local food, traditional lifestyles and housing, deep forests, misty plains and wide rivers, complete with references to a greater Germanic-Nordic Romanticism. France appears as a benevolent teacher or parental figure, or as an accepted proprietor whose authority and ownership remains unquestioned. While most pre-1870 depictions were folkloric, one should not overlook the link between folklore and internal exoticism, since folklore aims to present marginal territories in their distinctive and colorful otherness, making them objects for central consumption. A literary foregrounding of Alsace's Imperial appropriation only happened after France lost the province in 1871. The last third of the century saw the consolidation of a movement that proclaimed the need for Alsace's reconquest. Whereas earlier works had consistently seen Alsace as a conquered land, writers now forged the myth of an eternally French Alsace, preparing the region's military repossession and justifying its control by France in virtue of its supposed inseparability from the national self.

My research has highlighted the existence of an internal exotic, and not only in terms of folkloric regional images. The implications of the discursive strategies underlying these images are far more important than their outer shapes, since such representations entail questions of power. The Alsatian and Corsican internal exotic fulfill the same function as colonial exoticism: they serve to justify the regions' ongoing domination by the French centre. Nineteenth-century prose fiction about Alsace and Corsica sports the main elements of colonialist representations as enumerated by

McLeod.[1] A binary division between national self and marginal other is omnipresent in Parisian sources, often accompanied by a drive for cultural assimilation of the other, as best seen in Mérimée's and Dumas' depictions of the French *mission civilisatrice* on Corsica. Alongside such ubiquitous calls to extinguish Corsica's vendettas, Erckmann-Chatrian and later Daudet aim at a political and cultural assimilation of Alsace. The concept of travel routinely signifies the cultural distance between centre and periphery, finding its expression in narrators travelling to the exotic space – seen in Mérimée's, Dumas', Daudet's and Maupassant's literary voyages to Corsica -, or characters travelling from the margins to the capital – as is the case for many Corsican characters, but also for Bret and Villaret's *La Belle Allemande,* Balzac's Alsatian bankers and Erckmann-Chatrian's Jean-Pierre Clavel. The margins are frequently seen as bound up in backwardness or atemporality: Erckmann-Chatrian's Alsace is an indefinite, timeless space and Maupassant's Corsica is located at the origins of mankind. The primitivism of the margins can either appear problematic – the first two thirds of the century see Corsica as morally depraved - or regenerative – Daudet finds an original purity on the island, and Erckmann-Chatrian develop a nostalgia for Alsace's innocent backwardness. The regions are either history-free or their history is rewritten to fit the purposes of the centre, as with Mérimée's, Dumas', Daudet's and Maupassant's willful obscuring of Corsica's past and Daudet's imagined Alsatian fervor to remain French. Nerval's *Émilie* is the only exception to this rule, since it points towards inconvenient realities of Alsace's history as factors that complicate its integration into the nation. Excepting *Émilie,* French rule is generally described as stable and unchallenged in both regions; while this is particularly true for Erckmann-Chatrian's compliant Alsatians, Mérimée's and Dumas' Corsicans remain suspect, continually necessitating peace-keeping interventions. The Alsatian and Corsican peripheries are feminised and eroticised consistently in early Parisian prose fiction – as seen most obviously in Brett and Villaret's Alsatian prostitute and Mérimée's sensual but disconcerting Colomba. Corsica in particular is equated with humanity's strongest, but also most primitive forces, such as sexuality and death. Alsace and Corsica appear alternately in the shape of submissive or unrestrained and dangerous women, in need of being controlled by a strong male counterpart. Aside from imagining the relationship between centre and peripheries in sexual terms, Parisian authors frequently depict Alsace's and Corsica's inhabitants as children in need of a parental guide – best exemplified in Daudet's tearful boy in *La Dernière Classe*. Alsatians and Corsicans are increasingly depicted through racial stereotypes, either sporting a Montesquieuian equation of land and people as seen in Maupassant's Corsican stories, or racist typecasting as with Daudet's inherently lazy Corsicans and Balzac's innately greedy and shrewd, honest, but silly, Jewish Alsatian. Nineteenth-century Parisian prose fiction produced depictions of

[1] See *Beginning Postcolonialism,* pp. 44-46.

Alsace and Corsica whose underlying conceptual frameworks correspond to imperialist discourses about France's overseas colonies. In the domain of literary discourses, there are important parallels between internal exoticism and nation-building, overseas exoticism and Imperialism. Over and above a fascination with inner others, exoticist portrayals of Alsace and Corsica were used to underpin the peripheries' domination and assimilation by the centre. In McLeod's words, a 'colonising of the mind' took place in nineteenth-century canonical literature about these regions, imposing certain ways of perceiving Alsace and Corsica that justified their continual dependency on Paris.

This mental colonisation had its effects on the literary creations of regional authors who wrote in French for the first time and largely imitated the discourses produced in Paris. As with canonical literature, the amount of regional literary output about Alsace and Corsica was unequal. While the nineteenth century saw a boom of Francophone insular literature – particularly during the last third of the century - only one Alsatian author wrote about his region before 1871. The large amount of Corsican works – thirteen books by ten authors - allowed for thorough and conclusive comparisons with canonical literature, whereas the lack of Alsatian writings meant that conclusions had to be drawn on the basis of only one novel. The influence of Parisian literary figures on Corsican authors is obvious. All thirteen Corsican works contain countless intertextual references to canonical writings. Insular writers often engaged in auto-exoticism, seeing their island through the eyes of Parisian authors and readers, and conforming to dominant discourses. Their writings generally support French domination of Corsica on the grounds of the islanders' perceived savagery and inability to control themselves. Novels written towards the beginning and the end of the century particularly emphasise the Corsicans' savage nature and make French control and interventionism seem necessary, propagating the myth of a French *mission civilisatrice* on Corsica. The overwhelming majority of Corsican authors restated Parisian-generated truth claims and proclaimed France's moral superiority, reusing the identifiers of Corsican internal exoticism listed above. However, insular texts were also concerned with redefining Corsican identity. Not content to see themselves on the peripheries of the French nation, the first generation of insular authors tried to recentre the world around their island. Colombani, Monti and Bartoli in particular attempted to construe Corsicanness in such a way that Corsica appeared more central to Western history – all the while perpetuating exoticist clichés. These attempts highlight the fragility of Franco-Corsican identity constructs which attempted to Frenchify the island while aspiring to revalue native roots. Following the canonical *fin-de-siècle* trend to more colourful and simplistic descriptions of the island, the last five Corsican books of the century returned to reductive auto-exoticism. The further time advanced into the Third

Republic, the more Corsica became fixed in its status as France's exotic possession, in insular and Parisian sources alike.

As for the only Alsatian author to describe his province in French, Louis Spach's work remains ambiguous about the status of Alsace within France, self-consciously demonstrating the paradoxes of a territory caught between two nations. His novel cannot be straightforwardly classed as auto-exoticist, for one because no Parisian great had written about Alsace before Spach. An imitation of canonical works about his province, as was the case for Corsican writers, was therefore impossible. Instead, Spach turned to the German greats for inspiration, borrowing elements from the High German literature that was still deeply rooted in his region. Perhaps not incidentally, Spach most often cites Goethe, the celebrated Romantic who had made Alsace famous in Germany. Writing to the Parisian centre, Spach sought a renewal of French literature through a fertilisation with German ideas. He is a pioneer of sorts, and his novel could be classed as subverting the status quo of French literary hegemonies made at the centre to some extent. Yet, Spach's work reenacts a conventional relationship between coloniser and colonised as defined by Fanon, casting France as the dominant central force and Alsace as the passive periphery. His work consequently produces an exoticist view of Alsace, imitating general discourses about France's overseas possessions and transferring them onto Alsatian soil. This is best seen in *Henri Farel*'s opening paragraphs, which link Alsace to other exotic destinations of predilection and urge French poets and travelers to discover the region. While Spach does not copy prior internal exoticist works about Alsace, he embraces a French imperialist outlook, imitating the colonialist discourses in circulation at the time and applying them to his home province. *Henri Farel* may therefore well be seen as an auto-exoticist work, testifying to its author's mentally colonised self-conception.

Overall, this analysis has revealed that Alsace and Corsica were often perceived through the same conceptual framework as overseas colonies. This was true not only of Parisian authors writing about the outskirts, but also of many marginal authors seeking to represent their territories in the language of the centre. Similar processes of discursive colonisation were at work in texts about Alsace and Corsica, even though the specific symbols of both provinces were quite different in nature (ferocious bandits versus beer-loving village folk). This divergence is entirely admissible within a postcolonial framework of analysis, as long as both territories can be shown to be represented in a way that furthers the imperialist project of French (self-) expansion. This is clearly the case, since both Alsace and Corsica appear as initially non-French, marginal territories whose possession and assimilation to the French centre is depicted as morally desirable and necessary. Different choices of imagery were used to the same effect, in view of a justification and

perpetualisation of French rule over the Alsatian and Corsican peripheries. At the end of the nineteenth century, a hegemony consolidated that can be classified as imperialistic. The definite exoticisation of Corsica, as well as the sudden Frenchification of Alsace, served the same end: to justify France's continued control (or regain of control) over the territories in question. Corsica was fixed in its status as exotic possession, its complete othering fitting the framework of traditional colonialist discourses. Alsace was proclaimed completely French and literary representations of the province suddenly ceased to include recognisably foreign elements. However, this discursive Frenchification served to justify reconquest, deliberately distorting reality in order to legitimise ensuing military actions.

Beyond the primary conclusions to the research question listed above, this thesis has shed light on a number of secondary themes in nineteenth-century French collective imagination. Firstly, it has emerged that authors' understandings and definitions of the nation were far from fixed, often leading to divergent depictions of Alsace and Corsica. In the course of the century, different self-images were proposed and played out against each other, often in rapid succession: France was described alternately in civic or ethnic terms, either associated with specific political regimes and their representants (Republics, Monarchies, Empires) or attached to criteria such as racial attributes, language and religious orientation. Depending on each given definition, the expanse of the French self could vary significantly, ranging from a very narrow delineation around the Parisian centre in accordance with an ethnic-linguistic point of view, to almost unlimited scope as a result of the ideas of universalism and Empire. This thesis reveals that the borders of nineteenth-century France were far more fluid and permeable than one supposes nowadays. The French national imaginary - as shown through literature - remained unclear for a long time on where exactly lay the boundaries between the national self and its territorial conquests. Against this background of oscillation and insecurity of France's ideological and geographical shape, the most lasting self-definition proposed during the nineteenth century was undoubtedly imperial. A conception of the nation as Empire was present all throughout the century, then came to the fore and finally persisted after 1870, when the arrival of the Third Republic heralded a long period of relative political stability. It was the Third Republic's insistence on national Imperialism that enabled contemporary thinkers to reconcile contradictory self-definitions, allowing them to think beyond the precarious territorial cohesion of what is nowadays understood to be France, to the annexation and assimilation of further overseas territories and exotic people groups. 1870 is therefore a watershed for national identity-making, the French colonial endeavour, and the depiction of the regions alike.

As seen in the individual chapters, the advent of the Third Republic was a milestone for the literary depiction of Alsace and Corsica. Despite unequal output and dissimilar timeframes in writing, the timeline of discourse development concerning these peripheries is analogous. In this representative chronology, both provinces were relatively recent conquests at the start of the nineteenth century. The first time the Parisian cultural centre took notice of its outlying possessions, they were unsurprisingly depicted as foreign. Thus, the first prose works about Alsace and Corsica, from their beginnings until about the middle of the nineteenth century, mark a literary discovery of the exotic other. Around the middle of the century, under the Second Empire, there ensued an imaginary appropriation of the other, which entailed a *rapprochement* of regions and centre, and a feverish examination of how to envisage Alsace's and Corsica's transition from otherness to Frenchness. Slippages, loopholes and redefinitions of self and other materialised in the portrayals of both regions – until about 1870. With the beginning of the Third Republic occurred a definite fixation of discourses surrounding Alsace and Corsica that legitimised French control over both territories. Thus, Martin Evans' two phases of French overseas expansion are equally confirmed with regards to regional literature – at least about Alsace and Corsica: the centre's acquisition of knowledge (roughly 1789 – 1871) was followed by the consolidation of imperial nationalism (from around 1871 into the twentieth century). The climax of French literary nation-forging in the regions coincided with the height of French colonialism. Given the correspondence of these phenomena, one should ask whether this was really coincidental, or if there was a deeper ideological linkage between France's nation-formation and its colonial endeavour. Alsatian and Corsican regional depictions simply replicated exoticist discourses that circulated about the colonies. Since peripheral provinces were often perceived through the same conceptual framework as overseas territories, this analysis suggests that French nation-building was interlinked with France's larger imperial project. This was certainly the case regarding representative strategies; however it appears possible that nationalism and Imperialism were linked beyond literature, and relied on the same philosophies, ideologies, and ultimately the same definitions of French nationhood. From the case studies of Alsace and Corsica, we might draw wider conclusions about nation-building and colonialism, deducing that these processes were largely interconnected, rather than separate, in nineteenth-century France.

The awareness of nineteenth-century France's instability, the insecure attachment of its territorial components and the often permeable boundaries between 'French' regions and conquered territories, should incite us to analyse the processes of French nation-building from a postcolonial perspective. The present research has shown that a postcolonial approach is not only viable, but indeed necessary in order to understand the incorporation of the regions into the national self - in Charles Forsdick's words, the Francophone should be brought back to the French

mainland.[1] This research has proven the existence of an internal exotic about the regions of Alsace and Corsica, and over a long period of time. It should be a start to reviewing regional folklore for its exoticising qualities and to shed fresh light onto otherwise often clichéd and voluntarily ignored studies of nineteenth-century regionalisms. For future researchers, it would be interesting to review the discursive constructions of other French regions from a postcolonial perspective. Remembering Barère's statement from 1794, the Basque Country and Brittany appear as spaces of particular interest, since they are the other two regions in his list of the '[q]uatre points du territoire de la République […] qui paraissent les plus contraires à la propagation de l'esprit public.' Yet, a postcolonial analysis of mainland France could and should be extended to most – at least most marginal – regions. The present examination of Corsica and Alsace is only a humble starting point for a project of much larger scope. And even Alsace's literary examination is not yet complete: pre-1871 material about Alsace has been analysed, and Julia Schroda has written an in-depth summary of the main themes of the revanchist French Alsatian novel. Nonetheless, it would be useful to review this material from a postcolonial point of view, revealing how it justified and drove the French desire to repossess Alsace and the role it played in the French understanding of World War One. Another possible avenue of research would be comparing and contrasting Alsatian and Corsican Francophone material with literary sources in the regions' original languages, examining what views of Alsatianness and Corsicanness were construed in Germanophone and Italophone fiction. Focusing in on individual authors and books, a lot of research remains to be done on all the little- or unknown regional authors and prose texts unearthed in this thesis. There is no information about many Corsican authors, and only few academic sources treating Alsatian literature. An analysis of particular writers and works would be a worth-while scientific endeavour. Finally, this thesis has answered some pertinent questions, but opened up an even larger field of answers to be sought.

[1] See *French Studies and the Postcolonial Turn*, pp. 527-30.

Appendices: brief summaries of story lines

Corsican prose fiction by Parisian writers

Mérimée's *Mateo Falcone* describes a Corsican father killing his own son after the child betrays the Corsican code of honour for money, helping the police arrest a fleeing bandit. Balzac's *La Vendetta* portrays the lives of the Corsican Piombo family, having moved to Paris after killing all but one members of the Porta family. Years later, Piombo's daughter falls in love with and marries the last survivor of the Portas, against her father's will. Piombo excludes her from his family and indirectly causes her death through poverty and starvation. In *Colomba,* Mérimée tells the story of a vengeance-hungry Corsican sister who attempts to incite her civilised brother to betray the values he has learnt in the French army and kill his father's alleged murderers. Dumas' *Les Frères corses* describes Corsican twins, one of whom has embraced French civilisation and pacifism and moved to Paris, whereas the other has remained an insular savage. When one brother dies in Paris, the other comes to the capital to avenge him, apparently alerted by his dead sibling's ghost. *Comte de Monte Cristo* is a set of novels by Dumas, primarily concerned with the Frenchman Dantès' quest for vengeance. His Corsican servant, Bertuccio, plays no small role in acting out Dantès' vengeful schemes. Sue's *Les Enfans de l'amour* describes the quest for vengeance of a Corsican servant against his Parisian master, stretching over several decades, and involving elaborate schemes including his master's illegitimate children. Daudet's first four Corsican short stories (*Le Phare des Sanguinaires, L'Agonie de la Sémillante, Les Douaniers, Les Oranges*) predominantly capture Corsican moods, land- and seascapes from the perspective of a traveller. *Mari-Anto* narrates a French civil servant's desire-filled relationship with a Corsican woman. *Le Bandit Quastana* tells two French civil servants' comical competition to arrest a Corsican bandit, eventually resulting in the suspect's escape. Daudet's novel *Le Nabab* is mainly concerned with the protagonist's attempts to become a part of the Second Empire's social elite, making use of wealth won in the colonies. When his fortune runs dry, he attempts to refloat it on Corsica. Maupassant's *Le Monastère de Corbara* narrates the author/narrator's journey to a Corsican monastery and his meeting with a priest who used to be a Parisian acquaintance. *La Patrie de Colomba* mixes narrations of crossing the sea and landing on Corsica with comments on the Corsicans' political positions between monarchism and Republicanism. *Une Page d'histoire inédite* embellishes a legend according to which Napoleon Bonaparte's life was saved by an old Corsican woman before his rise to power. *Bandits corses, Histoire corse* and *Un Bandit corse* recount the author/narrator's hike through Corsica, guided by bandits, which allows Maupassant to combine depictions of Corsican landscape with tales of

vendettas and banditry. In *Voyage de noce,* and old lady retells her memories of her honeymoon on Corsica. *Phoques et baleines* describes a traveller's exploration of Bonifacio and its sea caves. Maupassant's novel *Une Vie* describes the unhappy marriage and life of a French woman. Only a part of the novel is set on Corsica, describing her honeymoon; this section largely copies from, and elaborates on, Maupassant's Corsican short stories. *L'Exil* is a short contemplation of Arab exiles on Corsica. *La Main* tells the story of an Englishman who settles on Corsica and decorates his house with numerous souvenirs and artefacts from his travels to the Americas. One object, a shrivelled hand belonging to a man he killed, comes back to life on Corsican soil and strangles the Englishman. *Une Vendetta* describes a Corsican widow's quest for vengeance, which involves training her dog to mangle her husband's killer. *Le Bonheur* tells the story of a French couple who wed against their parents' consent and lived their whole lives in hiding in the Corsican wilderness. *Vérités fantaisistes* is a commentary on contemporary Corsican politics. *Un Échec* describes a man and a married woman travelling in an overnight coach through Corsica. Inspired by the island's sensual odours, they almost give in to sexual temptation. Daudet's novel *L'Immortel* focuses on an aspiring academic's search for glory. The protagonist's son has an affair with, and later marries, a Corsican duchess. The short story *La Polenta* recounts exoticist travel impressions of the Corsican coast. Daudet's *Rose et Ninette* is centred around a Parisian author's divorce and his deteriorating relationship with his daughters. Part of the novel is set on Corsica, the new prefect of which happens to be the Parisian's ex-wife's new husband.

Corsican prose fiction by insular writers

Marchi's hero Joseph Brandini fights against Genoese power on Corsica, but inadvertently falls in love with the daughter of an enemy general, causing a conflict of conscience between patriotism and romance. This conflict is resolved when his lover's father reveals that he is originally French and renounces to serve for Genoa, upon which the Franco-Corsican couple get married. Arrighi's *La Veuve d'Arbellara* lost her husband in an honour killing, but is courageous enough to seek justice from the French court instead of continuing the vendetta. French rule on Corsica is validated when the killer is justly punished. Peretti's *La Veuve de Cyrnos* continues to live out her Catholic faith in secret in the aftermath of French-imposed revolutionary atheism on Corsica, remaining faithful in spite of social pressures and grave personal losses. Colombani's *Les Aventures d'un jeune Corse* tells the professional and romantic misfortunes in the education, social advancement and Frenchification of a gifted young Corsican who ends up succeeding in Paris after a detour in Genoa. In Nicolai's *La Mort de Vannina*, a young Napoleon reimagines the Corsican hero Sampiero killing his wife. Monti's *Le Roi de la montagne* recounts the legendary bandit Théodore's rise to power and his uprising against French armed forces on Corsica. *Gennara* tells the unhappy love story of two Corsicans,

intertwined with a deploring of the wrongs of Napoleon III's Empire. Bartoli's *Diana Colonna* is essentially a Corsican retelling of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, where a young Corsican hero is exiled to Africa while the island's noblemen war for the hand of his fiancée. The young man sales back across the sea, endures all sorts of adventures, and arrives just in time to compete for and win her hand. Tonelli's *Les Amours corses* is divided into two shorter novels (*Paul Angeli* and *Le Roman de deux inconnues*), eight short stories, three songs and a poem. *Le Roman de deux inconnues* records the correspondence between two female penfriends from Paris and Corsica and their amorous adventures. *Paul Angeli* describes a young Corsican's struggle with love, marriage and social integration on the French mainland. After a romantic let down, Paul returns to his native Corsica and becomes a tax collector. The overarching theme of the remaining elements in the volume is the folkloristic and touristic exploration of Corsica with its bandits, maquis, graves and vendettas. Arène's *Le Dernier Bandit* is a collection of short stories, three of which (including the cover story) are set on Corsica. The last bandit, is, of course, Corsican and experiences an unhappy love affair with a gendarme's daughter which ends with their deaths. The other two narratives show insular landscapes and deaths on land and sea. Tonelli's *La Vierge des makis* plays out the social tensions in a Corsican village in the midst of a vendetta, which are eventually relieved by a saintly girl's peace-making efforts. The volume contains a second novel, *Marie-Madeleine*, which is essentially a story of seduction and scheming, involving two Frenchified Corsican men and an Italian woman. Tonelli's *Seppa* again includes several short stories alongside the cover story, which are all centred around Corsican stereotypes, folklore, romance and French tourists' adventures on the island. *Seppa* itself tells the story of a French tourist who rapes, then ritually marries and immediately leaves a Corsican virgin before returning to France unscathed. Lastly, Marcaggi's *Fleuve de sang* tells the allegedly true story of an endless vendetta in a small Corsican community.

Alsatian prose fiction

Bret and Villaret's *La Belle Allemande* describes the life of an Alsatian prostitute who comes to Paris to make a career and profit from her exotic reputation. Spach's *Henri Farel* follows the life of a Swiss newcomer settling in Alsace, including his unhappy marriage, his platonic relationship with an Alsatian woman, his business partnership with a scheming evildoer, and his suicide. The novel describes nineteenth-century bourgeois Alsatian life, society, and political events in great detail. Balzac's baron de Nucingen is the only high-profile Alsatian character in his *La Comédie humaine,* a member of Paris' banking elite, mainly depicted in *Le Père Goriot*, *La Maison Nucingen* and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes.* Nerval's *Le Fort de Bitche* (*Émilie*) narrates the impossible marriage between an Alsatian woman and a French soldier. Revealing that the husband killed his wife's father in a military operation years earlier, Nerval explores the tensions and pressures of

Alsatian identity within Napoleonic France. Erckmann-Chatrian wrote many short stories exploring Alsace's traditional life styles and landscape. In most of them, the emphasis is not on the narrative, but rather on the décor and the scenes set before the reader's eyes. In *Le Bourgmestre en bouteille* two men on a wine-tasting journey drink a special wine that gives them illusions. *L'Illustre Docteur Mathéus* narrates an Alsatian doctor's quest to convince the province's inhabitants of his latest scientific theories. His peregrination through the region allows Erckmann-Chatrian to present different Alsatian towns and areas. *Gretchen* describes a young man's declaration of love and the ensuing happy marriage. *Myrtille* is a tale of a traveller's child found and raised by Alsatian parents, who finally leaves the security and abundance of her home village for the excitement of a traveller's life. *Confidences d'un joueur de clarinette* is another Alsatian village tale, showing the young Kasper's efforts to court his love interest Margrédel. *L'Ami Fritz* describes Alsatian town and village life with all its feasting, drinking, and harvesting, including a love story between the bourgeois Fritz and the farmer's daughter Sûzel. *Histoire d'un homme du peuple* is the only overtly political Alsatian novel, narrating an Alsatian's childhood in the province and his move to and coming-of-age in Paris. The Parisian Alsatian becomes a convinced Republican and witnesses the Revolution of 1848. *Les Bohémiens d'Alsace* narrates the easy and idyllic life of a traveller in Alsace, which is somewhat disturbed by the Revolution. Witnessing events as outsiders, the travellers decide that they would rather relocate to the Black Forest when the Revolutionary authorities give them family names and attempt to make them work. *La Comète* describes an Alsatian village feast, mocking the revellers' superstition.

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