

On Manliness and Masculine Identity

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Napoleon's Empire, nude male bodies, and masculine identity

Representations of the nude male body during the First Empire abound, from Antonio Canova's depiction of *Napoleon as Mars the Peacemaker* (1806) to Prix de Rome winners such as François-Joseph Heim's *Theseus, Conqueror of the Minotaur* (1807) and Léon Pallière's *Ulysses and Telemachus Slaying Penelope's Suitors* (1812). Abigail Solomon-Godeau has argued that this plethora of male nudes—sometimes reclining and/or expiring—signifies the beginnings of a feminization of the genre of the nude in response to political and societal shifts.

Perhaps. But considering the importance given to the female nude in art historical scholarship, the surfeit of male nudes on display at the Salon during the first two decades of the nineteenth century is staggering. Most significantly for my argument is that the majority of such paintings and sculptures represent the nude male body with unashamed inclusion of pubic hair and/or penis (pubic hair was elided from images of the nude female). Of these, many depict battle scenes. Given this blatant celebration of the combative male body, I posit that there is something more at stake in these works than a “feminization” of the nude. The paintings and sculptures that are my focus affirm rather than deny the sex of the male bodies depicted. In exploring how such representations helped to construct an Imperial masculine identity, my paper argues that this surplus of displayed male bodies stakes a claim for masculine authority in the period of rebuilding and militarization following Napoleon's assumption of power.

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Tatouages: Victor Hugo ou le nom à fleur de peau

Les personnages de l'œuvre romanesque de Victor Hugo sont des monstres, des parias, des reclus de la société, des misérables. Or chaque personnage porte, inscrit à même le corps, un signe distinctif ou un tatouage qui le différencie des autres : c'est Gilliatt et sa fleur de lys, ce sont les noms gravés en traces hideuses et ineffaçables sur le sein de Habibrah, c'est aussi l'entaille à même le visage de Gwynplaine ou encore le numéro de bague qui fait à jamais de Jean Valjean un paria qui n'ose signer son nom propre. Signes imaginaires ? politiques ? exotiques ?

Notre propos est d'étudier l'inscription de ces greffes, excroissances, taches, traces, tatouages, entailles, blessures qui font de chaque corps tatoué, de chaque visage peint ou entaillé, un corps singulier. Le corps de chaque personnage devient ainsi un lieu signifiant : l'espace où vient se greffer sur l'épiderme l'identité de chacun, le nom propre ou son *incarnation* qui se grave ainsi de façon *saillante*.

L'écriture n'est-elle pas alors le corps de la trace et/ou la trace du corps ? La question du nom propre, en effet, ne s'attache pas seulement à un personnage ici ou là, mais c'est toute l'œuvre de Victor Hugo qui est concernée. Car il n'est pas jusqu'au nom même de Victor Hugo

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qui ne soit inscrit au cœur de l'œuvre, dans le *corps* de l'œuvre – écrite ou peinte – le nom de Hugo, qui vient, lui aussi, s'incruster en une empreinte indélébile.

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Making Men: Between (La Cousine) Bette and a Hard Place

Among the key traits through which we might understand constructions of masculinity, an exemplary text serves as a point of entry for their enumeration, Balzac's *La Cousine Bette*. We find therein not only the very essence of masculinity through vitality and vitalism and physical aspects through virility and manly allure, but crucially the tension between honor and dishonor, and indeed a form of amour courtois, that is, the spiritual love and devotion for la dame vowed by a particularly devoted chevalier (the maréchal de Hulot). However, alongside the importance of honor, other tensions and oppositions come into alignment as well: discipline versus excess, virility versus weakness, and dignity versus ridicule. At the core of these oppositions flows the movement of vital energy, focused or dispersed, creatively or destructively, to which the function of national temperament must also be linked. Finally given that Balzac considered himself to be involved in a scientific discursive project in his writings, these constructions have as much to do with burgeoning scientific discourse as they do with the socio-cultural norms that promote particular constructions of the masculine.

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Revolutionary Verlaine: Unmasking the Erotics of Gender

Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud have often been characterized as very unequal poetic partners: Verlaine, the talented but conventional and only occasionally original lyricist, and Rimbaud, the boldly brilliant innovator and visionary. While Rimbaud's status as a revolutionary genius is beyond question, the idea of Verlaine as a more or less traditional and unadventurous fashioner of beautifully sonorous but inconsequential verses has been increasingly recognized as an over-simplification and a cliché. *Femmes* and *Hombres* are a case in point. Written in the last years of his life, they were unlike any poems produced by Verlaine's forebears or contemporaries. The poet's uncensored unleashing of libido provides content that is certainly radical, but the casting of this erotic content in a form that is true to prosodic codes yet exuberantly playful and inventive produces a text that is nothing less than revolutionary. Extending research on these works I've previously presented at this conference, I shall relate the idea of masked identities evoked in the early poem "Clair de lune" to the veiling and unveiling of erotic gender interactions and attractions across his *œuvre*, culminating in *Femmes* and *Hombres*.