

Exoticism and the City

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Parisian Exoticism at *l'Hôtel Pimodan* and *la rue de la Doyenné*

Jacques Lacan speaks of the mirror stage as the stage of development wherein identity is constructed and the *I* sees itself as fragmented for the first time. Paris was such a mirror or *imago* for Gautier and Nerval, two writers inextricably associated with topographical representations of the city. Gautier and Nerval became, through the medium of writing, spectators of themselves and transcribers of space. During the wild hashish parties at the *Hôtel Pimodan* and the romantic bohème of la rue de Doyenné, the writers mediate self and surroundings, often confusing the two. The result is the creation of a marginalized *Exotic*, characterized by the fluidity of its transformations between familiar and unfamiliar, interior and exterior. Through spatial and textual confusion, they are able to quit the quotidian reality of metropolitan existence to inscribe themselves fully within the realm of the exotic.

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"*Sur son terrain*": Eugène Sue's Criminal Chronotopes

Among the founders of the modern French crime genre, the feuilletoniste Eugène Sue is known for his melodramatic marriage of seamy realism with socialist optimism, but he also established a spatial imaginary with lasting influence. The title alone of his best-known novel inspired localized tributes ranging from Féval's *Les Mystères de Londres* (1844) through Léo Malet's *Les Nouveaux mystères de Paris* (1954-59) to Wagner's sci-fi series *Les Futurs mystères de Paris* (1998).

Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-3) famously opens in the labyrinthine streets of the Cité, where the criminal Le Chourineur slows his steps, feeling at ease in a terrain forever hence associated with Chevalier's "classes dangereuses." With its seedy taverns, sinuous alleys, and underground rat-holes, the Cité is the center of Paris's mysteries and miseries, in contrast to the utopian farm to which Rodolphe brings the innocent Fleur-de-Lys in order to enable her escape from an underworld identity. Thus the pre-Hausmannian city center is opposed to provincial agrarian space in the novel that constructed the modern French criminal imaginary.

Yet the recognizable binary of Paris/Province oversimplifies a novelistic topography that has often been reduced to a Marxist strain of interpretation, in which vertical space exists as mere representation for historical forces. Using the recent work of critics and historians like David Pike, Richard Maxwell, Christopher Prendergast, and Dominique Kalifa, my paper will argue that temporality cannot be dissociated from the novel's other spaces of criminality and class reform: 1) the sinister cave under the "Cœur-Saignant" cabaret, in which Rodolphe is trapped amid flooding waters, inspiring similar subterranean scenes in later Second Empire crime novels; 2) the Algerian farm to which the tamed savage Le Chourineur is sent to provide patriotic manpower in quelling native rebellion; and 3) Madame Pipelet's apartment house at the rue du

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Temple, site of shady congregations and indirect inspiration for Constant Guérout's 1884 serial, *L'Affaire de la rue du Temple*.

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The Colonies in Paris: The World of Alexandre Privat d'Anglemont

The writer and journalist Alexandre Privat d'Anglemont was one of the most colorful personalities of the Paris bohemia of the 1840s and 50s. He was a close friend of Baudelaire, Nerval, Théodore de Banville and Murger. His eccentricities were the subject of many articles and anecdotes, but his life was and remains full of mystery. In two books titled *Paris inconnu* and *Paris anecdote*, as well as countless articles in the press, Privat set out to explore the world living below the ordinary city. In his *Les Dessous de Paris*, Privat's close friend Alfred Delvau advised anthropologists to renounce going to distant lands in search of primitive cultures and begin exploring the depths of their own cities, where they can find "les sauvages de la civilisation, ces Peaux-Rouges du Paris moderne. On serait bien scandalisé contre l'écrivain qui essaierait de vous prouver que les sauvages en casquette et en bourgeron bleu qui passent dans votre rue... sont aussi curieux à observer que les oranglouts de l'archipel malais ou que les habitants de la province de Khorazan." The adventurer, instead of undertaking distant voyages, needs only to step out of his door and plunge into the "Parisian ocean." He will soon recover from the desire of travelling elsewhere.

The theme of savages and barbarians invading Paris had been a staple of literature since the Revolution, when the first waves of immigration from the provinces to the capital had begun. What differentiated Privat's work from the bulk of this literature was the familiarity and sympathy that he had with the inhabitants of the underworld of the city – who often, in other cases, provoked disgust and presented a problem to be solved. In the preface of his *Paris inconnu*, he presents his book as a response to the work of moralistic writers who demanded nothing less than "la destruction de Paris."

Who was Privat d'Anglemont? He was born in Guadeloupe from a free mulatto woman in 1815. His father was unknown, a situation not uncommon in the colonies at the time, since marriage among different races was prohibited throughout the nineteenth century. His mother was the owner of two properties with 15 slaves and 4 servants, and at the time of her death in 1835 (when Privat was 19 years old), the amount of her inheritance came to almost 90,000 francs, which was divided between Privat and his brother. In my paper, I will explore the conditions and politics of being a mulatto living in Guadeloupe, and in Paris, during the nineteenth century. I will also examine the political and literary activities of a number of colonials living in Paris in the 1840s and 50s, such as Cyrille-Auguste Bisette's "Société des Amis des Noirs," who launched several journals in France addressing the colonial question: *La Revue des Colonies*, *La Revue Abolitionniste*, and *Le Martyrologe colonial*. I will also attempt to show how Privat's relation to the inhabitants of the Paris underworld was largely determined by his experiences in Guadeloupe and the analogy between the Paris *lumpenproletariat* and colonial subjects, and provides a counterpoint to the exotic fascination that this world exercised on so many writers of his generation.

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Guide, Contre-Guide: Guidebooks and Parisian Identity during the Universal Expositions

In the preface to his 1878 *Guide sentimental de l'étranger dans Paris*, Louis Ulbach, literary critic and editor, proposes “de faire passer son lecteur pour un véritable Parisien, par la révélation de certaines clefs.” This guide, written for that year’s Universal Exposition, addresses non-Parisian visitors and promises, unlike more typical guides, to warn tourists against what *not* to do and to render them “aussi Parisien que le plus Parisien entre nous.” Ulbach’s humorous counter-guide to the city raises serious questions of what it means to be initiated to the Parisian community, and whether non-Parisians can create their own Parisian identity, especially at a moment when the city was filled with foreign travelers and “exotic” expositions. Nine years earlier, for the 1867 Universal Exposition, an incredible list of literary and intellectual figures authored the massive *Paris-Guide*, dedicated to “la vie, multiple, variée, débordante, la vie de Paris dans Paris et dans le monde.” An important, politically complex encyclopedia to the city for foreigners and citizens alike, *Paris-Guide* is not concerned with helping others “become” Parisian themselves, but with writing and establishing *the* Parisian identity.

This essay aims to explore how these two rich examples of the nineteenth-century literary guidebook tradition, written for two Universal Expositions, address the question of urban identity. Studying these works together helps us to better understand Paris during both historical and political moments in which the guidebooks were conceived, how, more generally, literature can shape identity, and whether these guidebooks count as literature in the first place.