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**The novels of French noblewomen émigrées in  
London in the 1790s. Memory, Trauma and  
Female voice in the émigré novel.**

**Laure Philip**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in French**

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### **Declaration**

This thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

## **Abstract**

French émigré literature is both under-explored and under-valued by scholars. This thesis aims to rehabilitate the female émigré novel within its nineteenth-century landscape, putting to the fore its originality and pertinent contribution to contemporary movements such as Romanticism and the realist novel. Recent work has unearthed the émigré-specific way of narrating the Revolution; yet no clear definition has yet been established. This thesis defines what the émigré novel is based on the dichotomy for novelists of having experienced the exile first-hand or not.

The memoirs and novels of three émigré noblewomen, Madame de Boigne, de Souza and de Duras, who all spent a decade in London during the 1790s, are scrutinized for this purpose. Three angles of research frame this comparative analysis: the search for the genre of the émigré novel, or how several genres intertwine in this 'sub-genre'; trauma of the emigration as the core characteristic of the novels; and gender questions, or how the émigrée is using her stay in Britain as inspiration to convey more genuine relationships for post-revolutionary French society. This thesis goes against the idea that to interpret a novel based on the life of the author is reductive: instead it rediscovers the creative potential of the autobiographical which the émigrées chose to inject in their fiction works. Likewise, it establishes that the trauma of the Revolution and exile is visible in the selected émigré novels in the way it is camouflaged, enhanced and fictionalised, which constitutes their originality and distinguishes them from non-authentic émigré fictions. Finally this thesis considers the gender modernisation asked for in the plots, based on the fact that the selected novelists had enjoyed more freedom of action, uprooted from French social etiquette and within British society.





*Adèle d'Osmond, comtesse de Boigne*, print based on Jean Baptiste Isabey's portrait, 1820,  
<http://www.gogmsite.net/>



*Claire de Duras*, Anonymous,  
<http://www.maison-de-chateaubriand.fr>



*Adélaïde de Souza*, Anonymous, <http://www.charles-de-flahaut.fr/Souza.htm>

All images accessed December 2015

## INTRODUCTION

*Le changement de littérature dont le XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle se vante lui est arrivé de l'émigration et de l'exil.<sup>1</sup>*

François-René de Chateaubriand did not forget the huge bearing the emigration had for him and his compatriots, and most importantly he acknowledged its crucial contribution to literary trends emerging in the nineteenth century. This thesis will demonstrate that the emigration was indeed a vector for innovation for nineteenth-century literature through the scrutiny of three female émigré novels and memoirs written between 1793 and the 1830s. The under-explored works of Adèle de Souza, Claire de Duras and Adèle de Boigne more or less explicitly retrace their stay in London during the revolutionary decade. In order to rehabilitate this ephemeral literary vein, dwarfed by the sentimental trend and the later Romantic and realist movements, literary, historical, psychological and sociological angles will be utilised. This thesis will challenge the prevailing assumption that these émigrées' literary endeavours were mediocre and conservative; demonstrating instead that having emigrated to Britain was a key factor for their originality and modernity. Indeed, even to this day, apart from Chateaubriand and his *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, few émigré writers have attracted substantial scholarly interest and been assessed as

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<sup>1</sup>François-René de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, (Paris, 2015), Partie II, Livre I, XI, Génie du Christianisme ; suite ó Défauts de l'ouvrage, p. 571.

valuable contributors to the dynamic literary and socio-political changes in nineteenth-century France. Looking at the neglected novels of Souza, Duras and Boigne offers a valuable and alternative point of view on a period of history that is both rich in events and over-scrutinised. This thesis will focus solely on émigrées' works because their status as exiles and women has made them even more marginalised by historians and literary critics. This research project does not try to rehabilitate the female émigré novels in terms of literary merit, trying to find alternatives to Madame de Staël's genius. Rather, it aims to show that they participated in the literary shifts of the early nineteenth century, primarily because their innovative prose reflected the traumatic experience of the exile in London.

The émigré memoirs and novels will not be considered in isolation: parallels with contemporary writers, émigrés and non-émigrés, male and female, will be made when useful. It is also the first time that those texts are being scrutinized together, thus this strategy will help to coin a more precise definition of the 'émigré novel' as literary moment hugely inspired by historical events. The comparative approach will also allow us to detect, within this literary vein, similar strategies of coping with the displacement of the exile and the adaptation to foreign and new modes of gender behaviour after the revolutionary upheaval. By productively combining history and literature, this thesis hopes to bring new insights to the complex Anglo-French exchanges at the transition between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It will insist on the importance of the trauma of the emigration as an impulse for the literary creation. The female émigré novel, we will argue, is the place where multiple elements cross over: cultural representations revitalised by the exile abroad, the inheritance/innovation from the sentimental novel; the assertion/legitimacy of female authorship based on 'having lived the worst'. This introduction will first re-situate the

émigré individual in his historical and literary context, before justifying the pertinence of singling out the émigré novel genre.

## **I. The émigré and history**

### **Historical context**

The period in which our three émigré authors wrote their memoirs and novels is full of contradictions, and its complexity has attracted extensive scholarly interest. It starts with the French Revolution in 1789 and lasts until Louis-Philippe's final attempt at adapting Monarchy to a revolutionised France in 1848. The coming to an end of the Ancien Régime with the Revolution enshrined deeper evolutions at social, political, cultural and economic levels. In this respect, nineteenth-century France was seeking stability more than anything, and any changes accelerated by the short lived Republic were amended or ignored. Restoration France was a patchy assemblage of revolutionary principles such as equality and the enlargement of the governing elite combined with nostalgia for the great achievements of Bonaparte. It was dubbed the 'Petite France' to reflect the Bourbons' lack of vision and timorous politics. The successive governments had in common their attempt at moving forward/ending the French Revolution.<sup>2</sup> Contemporaries commented on the continued divisions at many levels following the revolutionary turmoil: 'pourquoi n'a-t-on pas mis plus de suite à fondre ensemble ces deux Frances qui s'étaient formées pendant nos troubles civils?' asks the duchesse de Maillé.<sup>3</sup> It is in this context that the destiny of French émigrés and their literary production ought to be seen. Their writings came at a time when

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<sup>2</sup>Vincent Adoumié, *De la Monarchie à la République, 1815-1879*, (Paris, 2004), p. 6; 14.

<sup>3</sup>Blanche-Joséphine, duchesse de Maillé, *Souvenirs des deux Restaurations*, (Paris, 1984), p. 68.

many, on an individual and societal scale, still struggled to put the Revolution and its turmoil behind them.

### **The émigré, definition and historiography**

First mentioned in revolutionary speeches from 1791, the term 'émigré' was created officially by a 1793 law, and eventually entered the dictionary of the Académie in 1798.<sup>4</sup> The ferocious debates at the Assembly from 1791 attached fear to the term. The émigré became a scapegoat for all rebels, anti-revolutionaries, foreigners and plotters. Successive laws made them criminals, susceptible to the death penalty if they left but also if they returned.<sup>5</sup> At the time when the word was fashioned, it meant more than being physically outside the French frontiers: in revolutionary rhetoric the émigré increasingly became associated with the counter-revolutionary movement. With the radicalisation of the Revolution divergent political groups, marginal communities, or foreigners, were scapegoats, dubbed enemies of the state, or plotters to be eliminated, and the émigré took centre stage in this ideology. Anyone suspected of planning to leave or having left France could be at best banned from French soil and barred from their citizenship, at worst guillotined.

It is too simplistic to enclose all émigrés under one term and expect them all to be politically active counter-revolutionary aristocrats. This view was constructed by political parties trying to assert their project for the new born Republic. And yet this view is the one relayed by the very dated and biased historiography on French émigrés, which also suffered from the 'view from above' predominant in history for so long. The traditional studies on emigration by French historians have the

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<sup>4</sup>Stéphanie Genand, *Romans de l'émigration (1797-1803)*, (Paris, 2008), p.15.

<sup>5</sup>By November 1791, the émigrés who left France had to return or were susceptible to be condemned to death. The loi des Suspects 17th September 1793 made émigrés enemies of the state, just like refractory priests. If caught trying to leave the frontiers or returning they risked the death penalty.

advantage of being rich in anecdotes but, when they are not rehabilitating royalist ideology in protest against the Republic, they often succumb to creating romantic stereotypes of émigrés instead. Forneron's work is representative of this tendency.<sup>6</sup> The historians of the Third Republic did not produce an accurate account of the émigrés because their focus was on reinterpreting the workings of democracy to fit their vision of their contemporary regime.<sup>7</sup> Daudet focused entirely on the politics of emigration from the point of view of the exiled princes, even though he attempted to remain objective and exhaustive in his reconstitution of the counter-revolution.<sup>8</sup> By the early twentieth century the tone was still very literary even though there was some broader analysis of the interaction between émigrés and local communities and the process of adaptation.<sup>9</sup> Yet, when it came to the émigrées, the stereotypes and misogynist overtone continued to dominate.

Emigré women were depicted as if they were heroines of novels, within a narrative that relied on the sensational rather than on historical facts. Joseph Turquan tended to generalise that they were cut from la même étoffe et sur le même patron and overly insisted on their incurable frivolité.<sup>10</sup> Those colourful representations persisted, as Jules Bertaut in *Les Belles Emigrées* forty years later still wrote that it was women who pushed men to emigrate because they are plus portées à écouter leurs passions que la raison and ce sont des résistantes dans l'âme, entêtées [i] comme, seule, une femme peut l'être..<sup>11</sup> Amongst the émigré community he singled out female members and blamed them for frivolity. By the second half of the

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<sup>6</sup>Henri Forneron, *Histoire générale des émigrés pendant la Révolution française*, 3 vols, (Paris, 1884).

<sup>7</sup>Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 10 vols, (Paris, 1839); Jules Michelet, *Histoire de France*, 5 vols, (Paris, 1833-1841), Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 12 vols, (Paris, 1857-1870).

<sup>8</sup>Ernest Daudet, *Histoire de l'émigration pendant la Révolution française*, (Paris, 1886).

<sup>9</sup>Pierre Argenvilliers focused on individual actions amongst exiled clergy to overcome national and religious animosities and build up solidarity community in Britain. Pierre Argenvillier, 'Les émigrés français en Angleterre' in *La nouvelle revue*, no. 34, (Paris, 1905), pp. 3626.

<sup>10</sup>Joseph Turquan, *Les femmes de l'émigration*, 2 tomes, (Paris, 1911.), t.1, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup>Jules Bertaut, *Les Belles Émigrées*, (Paris, 1953), p. 9.

twentieth century, scholars had dropped gender stigmatisation and political agendas, but studies on the émigrés were still very general, and none was thematic: for instance Jean Marie Vidalenc did not focus in particular on the French émigrés in London but offered a wide overview of the multiple situations of emigration.<sup>12</sup> Accounts such as these maintained the tendency towards an anecdotal and gossip-based narrative.

Fernand Baldensperger's 1924 study on the ideology of the emigration is still highly relevant today.<sup>13</sup> When at the beginning of the twentieth century histories were focusing on the events and the people, Baldensperger wanted to provide a history of ideas and feelings. He warned he was not going to tie his arguments to locality or period and that he would only look at the intellectual elite. For him, the emigration community should not be seen in the light of its failure to re-establish the Ancien Régime but for itself, as a group possessing its own original set of ideas and views on society, which was eminently modern.<sup>14</sup> In the 1990s and 2000s, the historiography on the emigration ideology was finally reassessed and rid of prejudices with scholars insisting on the heterogeneity of the émigré ideology. Jean Claude Martin has warned against a history that would convey an illusion of ideological unity where there were in fact several groups of individuals.<sup>15</sup> Michel Biard and Pascal Dupuy corroborate this idea: counter-revolution is a polysemous word, it is anachronistic to think of Edmund Burke as unifying a theory of the

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<sup>12</sup>Jean Marie Vidalenc, *Les Émigrés Français 1789-1825*, (Caen, 1963). Ghislain de Diesbach, *Histoire de l'émigration*, (Paris, 1975) constitutes a good overview of the journey of the émigrés in Europe, even though for the émigrés in Britain there is not much more than a list of anecdotes.

<sup>13</sup>Fernand Baldensperger, *Le Mouvement des idées dans l'émigration française (1789-1815)*, 2 tomes, *Les expériences du présent; Prophètes du passé, Théories de l'avenir*, (Paris, 1924).

<sup>14</sup>Baldensperger, *Le Mouvement des idées*, p. xv; 127. By modern we want to insist on the huge gap between previous historiography and Baldensperger's more nuanced and contrasted approach.

<sup>15</sup>Jean Claude Martin, *Contre Révolution, Révolution et Nation*, (Paris, 1998). Several movements developed, amongst which Joseph de Maistre took the central stage. Joseph Marie, comte de Maistre, *Considération sur la France*, (Londres, 1797).

counter-revolution. They remind us that this ideology's roots started before 1789, in the reaction against Enlightenment.<sup>16</sup>

However the emigration is a much more complex phenomenon than just a movement of ideas. For the socio-economical approach to the emigration, Donald Greer's breakthrough regional study was the first to challenge the 'black and white' vision on emigration as a conservative aristocrat exile.<sup>17</sup> He brought to the fore the role of economic and social but also geographical factors, on top of the government's repressive laws. He cast light onto errors in the estimation of the number of émigrés, usually based on the official émigré list: instead he argued for fewer émigrés than previously thought, around 129,099 émigrés in total, so 0.5 % of the French population. His research revealed that fewer nobles emigrated than previously thought: only 17% of émigrés were nobles, compared to 51% from the Third Estate and 25% from the clergy.<sup>18</sup> He also brought to the fore an ignored phenomenon, the voluntary emigration driven by economic motives.<sup>19</sup>

### **The émigré at the core of Anglo-French cultural exchanges**

When it came to emigrating, émigrés had several options: countries close by, such as Italy, Switzerland, Belgium or Germany were actively sought, but Britain stood out as the country of choice. The destiny of French émigrés who took refuge in London in the 1790s was also framed by the fluctuating nature of the exchanges between the French and the British in the long eighteenth century. The expression

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<sup>16</sup>Michel Biard, Pascal Dupuy, (eds), *La Révolution française, dynamiques et ruptures*, (Paris, 2004), p. 219.

<sup>17</sup>Donald Greer, *The Incidence of the Emigration*, (Gloucester, 1966).

<sup>18</sup>Greer, *The Incidence of the Emigration*, p. 20; 63. The remaining 7% accounts for the unlisted émigrés Greer could not place in any social category.

<sup>19</sup>Greer's findings have been corrected since by Kirsty Carpenter. She claimed that he exaggerated the number of Third Estate émigrés in his study; she argued for a bigger proportion of aristocrats. Kirsty Carpenter and Philip Mansel, *The French émigrés in Europe and the struggle against revolution, 1789-1814*, (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 44-5.



'love-hate' is often used to convey the paradoxical and changing nature of this relationship paced by frequent wars. As the eternal rival, Britain also offered a vantage point from which to find support and observe the Revolution safely. It was close yet separated by the Channel, and the French elite could become reacquainted with friends or family there. Indeed the mutual admiration for the countries' respective cultures meant that many ties existed between the elites on both sides of the Channel before the emigration. Josephine Grieder retraced the evolution of 'Anglomania' in France from cultural admiration to the politicisation of British representations at the eve of the Revolution.<sup>20</sup> This cultural familiarity particularly amongst the elite, although determined by stereotypical representations and political agenda, meant that French émigrés were potentially not entirely lost when arriving on the British shores. Understanding the nature of those cultural relationships is crucial to the study of the émigré novels selected for this thesis.

For the troubled period from the French Revolution and the declaration of war in 1793 until Napoleon's imperial expansion and defeat in 1815, scholars have used the term 'war of prints' to highlight the ferocious fight between opponent ideologies and national identities.<sup>21</sup> Numerous studies of the impact of the French Revolution on British politics have stressed that despite an initial outburst of enthusiasm in July 1789, acknowledging that France had finally caught up with the perfect constitutional system, popular animosity against anything French was widespread. The simplistic view that partisans of reformist ideas were mostly amongst the mob has been challenged recently. Likewise the flexibility and vigour of

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<sup>20</sup>Josephine Grieder, *Anglomania in France 1740-1789: Fact, Fiction and Political Discourse*, (Geneva, 1985).

<sup>21</sup>See for instance on anti-French prints: Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner*, (Cambridge, 1986). On the politics of émigrés in London and their newspapers see Simon Burrows, *French Exile Journalism and European politics, 1792-1814*, (Royal Historical Society, Boydell Press, 2000). On British conservatives see Emma Vincent MacLeod, 'La question du citoyen actif: les conservateurs britanniques face à la Révolution française' in *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, n° 342, (Octobre-Décembre 2005), <http://ahrf.revues.org/1908>, [accessed January 2011].

conservative ideology, competing with radical societies for concepts such as patriotism and 'Britishness' has been underlined. The dynamism of the popular King and Church movements of the 1790s proves that anti-Revolutionary ideas were widely spread in more modest social groups.<sup>22</sup> The conservative propaganda encouraged by Pitt's government made the most of this and re-employed inherited animosities against the French: Michael Duffy's study on prints demonstrates the mobilisation of despotism to attack the revolutionary government, and systematic recourse to a comparative portrayal of the free-born John Bull versus the skinny and cannibal sans-culotte.<sup>23</sup> It is not surprising then that the mass arrival of French émigrés and their settlement in London put to the test those pre-existing and aggravated cultural antagonisms.<sup>24</sup> However it was not all political animosity. Simon Burrows has argued that London was the centre of the European émigré press with no less than 13 newspapers produced by or for the London émigré community.<sup>25</sup> It soon became the émigré press centre from which to diffuse their very French views on the progress of the Revolution. Not many studies seem to delve, however, into the way the British people and customs were seen by French exiles, and what emotional significance was attached post-emigration to Britishness. This thesis will partially

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<sup>22</sup>Alan Booth, 'Popular Loyalism and public violence in the North-West of England, 1790-1800', *Social History*, 8 (1983); Jennifer Mori, 'Languages of loyalism: patriotism, nationhood and the state in the 1790s', *English Historical Review*, 118 (2003); Mark Philp, 'Vulgar conservatism, 1792-3', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995).

<sup>23</sup>On inherited love-hate relationship between France and England see Jean Guiffan, *Histoire de L'anglophobie en France, de Jeanne d'Arc à la vache folle*, (Rennes, 2004); Grieder, *Anglomania in France*; Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner*. See also prints by James Gillray, *French Liberty versus British slavery* (8145, 21 Dec 1792); and *Petit souper, à la Parisienne; -or- a family of sans-culotts refreshing, after the fatigues of the day*, hand-coloured etching, 1792, British Museum.

<sup>24</sup>Dickinson spoke of a 'war of opinion' to describe the last decade of the eighteenth century, which is useful to capture the atmosphere felt on arrival in Britain by French émigrés. H. T. Dickinson, (ed.) *Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815*, (London 1989). About the gallophobia in the context of revolutionary and Napoleon wars see: Stella M. Ní Ghallcháir Cottrell, 'The Devil on Two Sticks: franco-phobia in 1803', in Raphael Samuel (ed), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, History and Politics*, vol. 1, (London, 1991), pp. 259-74; and also Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830*, (London, 1987), who showed well the extent to the English gallophobia even if he did not really make the most of the abundant sources on this from the 1790s.

<sup>25</sup>Simon Burrows counts 13 newspapers between October 1792 and November 1814, in Burrows, *French Exile Journalism*, p.9.

illustrate the representational meaning given to the British and British customs in the émigré prose fiction and hope to bridge this gap.

It is in her *Refugees of the French Revolution* that Carpenter really provided the first multi-layered analysis of French émigrés in London and their settlement.<sup>26</sup> Her task was to assess the degree of welcome the French exiles received in Britain. Carpenter's contribution was to show the limits of these prejudices against the French by emphasizing that the welcome received by the émigrés in London was mostly at the initiative of high society. The émigrés could be seen by the British conservatives in a contradictory way: as libertines and frivolous aristocrats, held responsible by their excesses for the fall of the monarchy; but also as dangerous republicans, sometimes as spies, even though they were banned from French citizenship by the revolutionary government.<sup>27</sup> Carpenter argued that the extent to which the London elite welcomed and organised relief for the émigrés challenged traditional stereotypes, as strong as religious antagonisms, and that the generosity could be explained by the duty felt in supporting people sharing the same positions on the Revolution.<sup>28</sup> For the less fortunate French refugees, who had to work for the first time, the resourcefulness shown brought redemption from the excesses of the Ancien Régime.<sup>29</sup> This argument is a useful starting point to our investigation of the cultural representation of the English in the female émigré novels selected: it helps to

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<sup>26</sup>Kirsty Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution; Émigrés in London, 1789-1802*, (Basingstoke, 1999).

<sup>27</sup>Talleyrand was banned from England in January 1793 after the Alien Act was passed, because of his past role in the revolutionary government and his liaison with Madame de Staël and the constitutionalist branch of the émigrés living at Juniper Hall.

<sup>28</sup>Carpenter, *Refugees*, p. xv.

<sup>29</sup>As to the numbers of émigrés in Britain, Gamblin stands for 25 000 to 40 000, in Claude Gamblin *L'immigration française en Grande Bretagne 1789-1815*, (Paris, 2000). Out of about 150 000 French émigrés, 25 000 immigrated to London, according to Rosena Davidson, in 'Friend or Foe? French émigrés discover Britain' in Kathleen Hardesty Doig, Dorothy Medlin, *British-French exchanges in the Eighteenth century*, (Cambridge, 2007), pp 131-49.

differentiate between inherited and often strictly culturally fantasized Anglomania and a genuine praise for British behaviours and customs due to the exile experience.

### **How émigrées became writers**

This thesis posits that the Revolution and emigration encouraged and inspired the selected three French noblewomen to take up writing, and that in doing so they shifted away from the sentimental vogue. The genesis of their writing activity ought to be examined. Research on the condition of publishing at the eve of the nineteenth century shows that women novelists could publish their work more easily than before. Despite the decrease of patronage, there were still powerful social and cultural networks available for support, such as the Bluestocking circle in England. The spread of the subscription method meant that financial security was assured if the book sold well. The recourse to a publisher also suppressed the pressure of a difficult patron.<sup>30</sup> It is highly probable that the book market and publishing conditions abroad gave to the noblewomen exiles an incentive to become writers.<sup>31</sup> This is confirmed by the émigré press which made the most of the capital's competitive print market and alimented the French exiles' debates.<sup>32</sup> During the Empire and Restoration there was a backlash on the liberty of the press, however the breakthrough of the Revolution had left its traces. Finch believed that there were some improvements for elite women despite new restrictions.<sup>33</sup> Women writers still hesitated to publish under their names, and often stuck with the epistolary novel or

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<sup>30</sup>Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth century*, (London, 1992), pp.105-110.

<sup>31</sup>George Sand, real name Amandine Dupin, was one of them for the later part of the nineteenth century. Finch argued that women still published under fake names well into the nineteenth century, in Alison Finch, *Women's Writing in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Cambridge, 2000), p. 23. The selected émigrées had many examples of successful women novelists in London: Fanny Burney married an émigré and befriended Souza.

<sup>32</sup>Again Burrows explores this in *French exile journalism*.

<sup>33</sup>Finch, *Women's writing*, p. 10-11.

educational manuals.<sup>34</sup> The fear of writing about oneself still prevailed amongst French authors and memoirists, which explains the late or posthumous publications of our corpus. This delay in writing about memories of the exile should not discourage us to call them 'émigré texts', as we will now show with an attempt at defining what makes an 'émigré novel'.

## II- Theoretical background

To speak of the émigré novel poses problems because the generalisation about émigré conservative ideology and the marginality of its authors has condemned it to be seen as an ephemeral, dated and sterile literary vein.<sup>35</sup> We have just shown how restrictive it is to categorise all émigrés as ultra-royalist backward-looking aristocrats. Likewise any analysis of their literary production should avoid clichés. This thesis will try to replace the émigré novel meaningfully within the sentimental vogue of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

### The émigré novel, a sub-genre?

The émigré novel, in emulating the sentimental trend, fell victim with it to accusations of being outdated. As such it was perceived as the last survivor of the Ancien Régime culture in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is difficult precisely to define and localise the sentimental vogue's characteristics and development in Western Europe. To understand what a sentimental novel is, it is

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<sup>34</sup>Sophie de Renneville, *Galerie des jeunes vierges, ou Modèle des vertus qui assurent le bonheur des femmes*, (Paris, 1824) 3<sup>rd</sup> edition; Claire Elisabeth Jeanne Gravier de Vergennes, comtesse de Rémusat, *Essai sur l'éducation des femmes*, (Paris, 1824); Stéphanie-Félicité, comtesse de Genlis, *Manuel de la jeune femme, guide complet de la maîtresse de maison*, (Paris, 1829).

<sup>35</sup>Henri Peyre, *Qu'est ce que le Romantisme?*, (Paris, 1971), p. 64-5.

useful to go back to 'the rise of the novel'. Following the reappraisal of Ian Watt's pioneering work on the English novel, it has been recognised that novels are not entirely an eighteenth-century creation. National studies have been replaced by a pan-European perspective and the insistence on the heterogeneity of the genre in its shape and across time.<sup>36</sup> Georges May referred to the situation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as 'le dilemme du roman', where no literary canon existed for the novel. It broke the traditional rules of verisimilitude, unity of scene, time and action, employed in classicism and was accused of exciting the imagination, leading to immoral behaviour.<sup>37</sup> Novelists tried to justify their work by claiming its antique origin, the epic poem, or its power to make readers more moral by example. Thus the novel built itself against the traditional idea of literature while trying to integrate its restricted sphere, which put it in an unstable situation. May's idea was that the sentimental novel thrived from this pejorative criticism by linking sensibility to morality. The mid-eighteenth century saw the highpoint of the novel of sensibility. The sheer success of *Pamela* by Richardson, translated into French in 1742, attests of the immense popularity of the genre in Europe.<sup>38</sup> Sensibility's origins stemmed from Anglo-Saxon sensualism and the emphasis on experience over the rational. The word 'sensible' was first mentioned in Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in 1690 and was associated to sense perception as the means through which knowledge was gathered. Sensibility became a 'quasi-philosophy' increasingly associated with 'Britishness' and a new model of moral character, preferring

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<sup>36</sup>Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel, Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*, (University of California Press, 1957). The nuance to Watt's theory were voiced by Michael McKeon, in *The origins of the English novel 1600-1740* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), and Spender Dale, *Mothers of the Novel* (London, 1986), p. 6, cited in Cheryl Turner, *Living by the pen: women writers in the eighteenth century*, (Routledge, 1992), p. 1; 3.

<sup>37</sup>May, Georges, *Le dilemme du roman au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle : étude sur les rapports du roman et de la critique* (Yale University Press, 1963).

<sup>38</sup>Samuel Richardson, *Pamela ou la vertu récompensée*, (Paris, 1742).

personal worth over a prestigious rank.<sup>39</sup> It therefore infiltrated many domains of society because it made a link between the physical and the moral.<sup>40</sup> The novel of sensibility displayed a specific language placing authenticity and the genuine as guarantees of virtue. In France, Rousseau created a new type of man for readers to emulate: *l'homme sensible* is a man who is in tune with his natural self, away from the vice of civilisation. The genre of the novel of sensibility should not be seen as a fixed one. It underwent some evolutions along the way as *sensibilité* became associated more and more with morals. The moral tale evolved from showing how to be virtuous through sensible protagonists, to the emphasis on violent passions and tragic outcomes. This brought the reader to model his-her behaviour through compassion and pity for fictional but plausible fates. However adopting more extraordinary plots to meet its moralistic objective undermined the credibility of the novel.<sup>41</sup> Alain Montandon has described this evolution as going from the quantitative, i.e. repetitive plots found in the picaresque novel, to the qualitative and deep psychological analysis of the protagonist.<sup>42</sup> The émigré novel can be situated at the crossroads between the sensible novel, the epistolary novel, with hints of the Gothic and the historical novel.<sup>43</sup> However, my contention is that because of its historical contingency, the émigré novel had to find an alternative to the novel's

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<sup>39</sup>This is evident in Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* (Paris, 1807), where her hero Lord Nelvil was British and sensible, whilst his French counterpart, the count d'Erfeuil, was vain and frivolous.

<sup>40</sup>Sciences, political thought, and also medicine of the time were interested in studying the effects of sensorial stimuli on the nervous system, Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and pathology: sensibility in the literature and medicine of eighteenth century France*, (Baltimore, 1998), p.154-5; 187.

<sup>41</sup>Katherine Astbury, 'Passion, *sensibilité* and Baculard d'Arnaud's *Epreuves du sentiment*', SVEC 2001:12 (2001), pp. 423-428, p. 426. She shows how Baculard d'Arnaud operates a shift in his moral tales, painting extreme passions and less realistic plots to fit the demand for sensible fictions: 'the plot devices have become much more extreme and there is an increased sense of melancholy'.

<sup>42</sup>Alain Montandon, *Le Roman au XVIIIème siècle en Europe*, (Paris, 1999), p. 518.

<sup>43</sup>*L'Émigré* written by Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan in 1797 is an epistolary novel. See also, Isabelle de Charrière, *Lettres trouvées dans des portefeuilles d'émigrés*, (Paris, 1993); Genlis, *Les Petits Emigrés, ou correspondance de quelques enfans; ouvrage fait pour servir à l'éducation de la jeunesse*, 2 tomes, (Paris, 1798), Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed May 2015]

dilemma of morality versus the imaginary: it did so thanks to the description of less noble emotions arising, justified by the overbearing reality of the exile. Although framed and inspired by the sentimental trend, it therefore represented its last moments. It put more emphasis on the trauma of the historical event of emigration and on the particular hardship for women and by extension those in a position of disadvantage in general.

The first to engage consistently with the concept of the émigré novel as a genre were Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie and Catriona Seth, who in 2007 published the proceedings of a conference on European émigré novels. Their studies drew common traits and singularities of the genre whilst replacing it within the wider literary context.<sup>44</sup> They defined the genre by a unique combination of inherited novelistic matrix, the sentimental novel, with the identity and historical uprooting felt by writers.<sup>45</sup> The rehabilitation recognised the genre's dynamism, which was provoked by the novelists' desire to rewrite history after the rupture of the Revolution, thereby enlarging the novelistic spectrum.<sup>46</sup> The Revolution contributed to modifying the status of the novel, and the émigré novel participated in this shift. The deconstruction of all certainties of the Enlightenment and Old Régime France meant that suddenly the novel became a means of conveying truth. Whilst philosophical, political, and social standards were shaken up, the novel survived the revolutionary *tabula rasa*.<sup>47</sup> The *Destins Romanesques* scholars even went as far as to inscribe the émigré novel within the development of the Romantic Movement,

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<sup>44</sup>Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie, Catriona Seth, (eds), *Destins romanesques de l'émigration*, (Paris, 2007).

<sup>45</sup>Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie, Catriona Seth, 'Introduction', in Jaquier, *Destins romanesques*, pp. 9-26, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup>Laurence Vanoflen, 'Sortir du monde ancien: Isabelle de Charrière et les vertus de l'émigration' in Ibid, pp. 129-142, p. 136. By this we mean that novels are no longer within the verisimilitude ethic, and embrace more or less explicitly their relationship with historical facts.

<sup>47</sup>Anne Brousteau, 'L'esthétique littéraire à l'épreuve de la Révolution: L'émigré de Sénac de Meilhan', in Ibid, pp. 204-212, p. 207.



seeing in the character of the émigré an early romantic wanderer and a stranger to his own epoch.<sup>48</sup> Katherine Astbury has added another dimension to the discussion on the sub-genre of the émigré novel by insisting on its pan-European characteristics.<sup>49</sup> She confirmed the aesthetic changes observed by the *Destins romanesques* scholars: nowhere else was the tension between realism and implausibility more evident than in the émigré novel. She attested of a move from the Enlightenment type of sentimental heroine towards the male émigré wanderer. She also added that it was necessary to make a distinction between émigré and non-émigré writers, the latter being far less politically invested than the former. In an attempt to provide a definition, one could say that the émigré novel has to be written by an émigré and/or relate the emigration, but the two criteria are not mutually exclusive.<sup>50</sup>

This thesis will show that the real experience of emigration makes the émigré novel more poignant in its expression of various themes attached to the idea of displacement, nostalgia, melancholia and sentimental love. This is not due to the quantity and authenticity of the factual details provided. The press and the explosion of émigré memoirs contributed to making the émigré destiny well-known to French people, making it a relatively easy topic to write about even for non-émigré authors. Instead, this thesis will insist on the fact that it is *not* in the documentary value of those novels that one ought to find merit or the key to defining this unknown literary vein. This was explored by Melissa Wittmeier, who also picked up on the centrality

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<sup>48</sup>, 'Introduction', p. 15.

<sup>49</sup>Astbury 'The transnational dimension of the émigré novel during the French Revolution' in *Gestes admirables, ou la culture visuelle de l'imprimé*, a special issue of *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 23.4 (2011), pp. 801-32. She mentions also Malcolm Cook's take on the genre, speaking of an 'idyllic world in a real framework' Malcolm Cook, *Politics in the Fiction of the Revolution 1789-1794*, SVEC 201, (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1982), p.290.

<sup>50</sup>Having emigrated is not a requirement for an émigré novel: Isabelle de Charrière, *Lettres trouvées; Trois femmes*, (Lausanne, 1996), in Bibliothèque Numérique Romande, [http://www.ebooks-bnr.com/ebooks/pdf4/charriere\\_trois\\_femmes.pdf](http://www.ebooks-bnr.com/ebooks/pdf4/charriere_trois_femmes.pdf) [accessed July 2015]; August La Fontaine, *Claire du Plessis et Clairant, ou Histoire de deux amants émigrés*, 2 vols, translated by Charles Frédéric Cramer, (Paris, 1796); Joseph Fiévée, *La dot de Suzette, ou histoire de madame de Senneterre, racontée par elle-même*, (Paris, 1797), both on Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed June 2015].

of the blurring of the line between reality and fiction in this sub-genre. Her approach helps to better grasp the disparity of themes and scope in émigré and non-émigré writers, and at the same time she links this with the role played by personal experience in fiction.<sup>51</sup> She demonstrates that works about émigrés simultaneously intellectualise and romanticise the exile experience, whereas works written by émigrés sanction and lament it without attempting to rationalise it. Her case study demonstrates that works by émigrés are much more powerful in their exposition of the exile experienced by the characters and much more critical in their assessment of the new patrie.<sup>52</sup>

Within the restricted field of study dedicated to the émigré novel, Stéphanie Genand's work stands out because it takes a firm step towards a full rehabilitation and conceptualisation of the émigré novel within its literary and ideological background. At the antipode of traditional thought, she declares: 'La révolution ne tue pas le roman elle l'inspire'. The émigré novel possessed enough literary dynamism to challenge existing canons. She focuses less on singling out the émigré novel than on examining the conditions of its interaction with the existing frameworks of the sentimental genre, participating in the renewal of the novel in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century. She claims that novels written by émigrés are not only innovative but also provide the key to the new sensibility.<sup>53</sup> In the émigré figure she sees a way for authors to bridge the gap between literature and history, and also the ideal metaphorical symbol of a lost era.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Melissa Wittmeier, 'The Eighteenth-Century Emigrant, Crossing Literary Borders', in *L'Erudit franco-espagnol*, Vol. 2, 2012, pp. 93-106, p. 96.

<sup>52</sup>Wittmeier, 'The Eighteenth-Century Emigrant', p. 93; 98-9. Works by émigré writers also try to appeal to the reader and establish an emotional connection more than works by non-émigré authors.

<sup>53</sup>Stéphanie Genand, *Romans de l'émigration (1797-1803)*, (Paris, 2008), p. 11; 21-4.

<sup>54</sup>Genand, *Romans de l'émigration*, p. 12. She speaks of a shift in the aesthetics of the novel with the émigré novel. According to her the émigré novel operated a reversal of history versus fiction because of the Revolution.

My thesis will systematise the split between émigré and non-émigré novel writers as described by Wittmeier and Genand, with the added ingredient of gender. The emotional and the poignant, the *rawø* but also the re-working and fictionalisation of extraordinary memories of exile, be it explicitly or implicitly, will be systematically analysed. To qualify as an *émigré novelø* the details of the emigration are not a pre-requisite. In the majority of our selected texts, the emigration is not narrated at all, instead we find archetypal Ancien Régime settings. For example, to exclude Madame de Souza's émigré novel *Adèle de Sénange* (1794) under the pretext that it does not refer to the exile directly would be hugely reductive. This rule applies to even the later works of our corpus not produced in the heat of the emigration years, because the thematic of uprooting and displacement is recurrent and productively intertwined with more traditional sentimental topoi. This thesis will thus endeavour to specify what makes the émigré novel by real émigrées more poignant, in their more or less explicit depiction of exile conditions, than novels about the emigration written by non-émigrés.

In a further attempt to characterize the émigré novel as a sub-genre of the sentimental novel, a comparison with other literary genres is needed. The hybridism of the émigré novel, at the intersection of memoirs and autobiography, is profoundly innovative. The memoirs of the nineteenth century are the object of more studies than the émigré novel and should therefore be mobilised. The difficulty of defining memoirs as a genre and their *polygraphiqueø* aspect, as shown by Henri Rossi, mirrors that of the émigré novel.<sup>55</sup> Memoir-writing boomed during the period between the *two revolutionsø i.e.* 1789-1848. This indicates that it was a reaction to brutal socio-political changes in an attempt to save the remnants of a golden age,

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<sup>55</sup>Henri Rossi, *Mémoires aristocratiques féminins (1789-1848)*, (Paris, 1998), p.10.

something evident in the émigré novels as well. The relationship between memoirs/history and the émigré novel/history is then crucial and should underpin any studies of that period. Zanone insisted on the instability and struggle to combine the individual's story and overarching history in nineteenth-century memoirs. The memoirs thus borrowed from autobiography and sentimental or picaresque novels as the only models available to narrate the self.<sup>56</sup> With the end of the Ancien Régime, memoirs were less concerned about relating war exploits and diplomacy, moving towards more intimate accounts, which inevitably brought them closer to autobiography.<sup>57</sup> Memoirs declined in the second half of the century because of the *aporie intellectuelle* they carried: rejected by history, themselves rejecting the novel and a too autobiographical approach, they could not build their own version of the truth.<sup>58</sup> The émigré novel ought to be seen in parallel with the rise and fall of those 1789-1848 memoirs. This will underline the tight relationship between having lived extraordinary events and recording them in writing. It will be demonstrated that the émigré novel borrows heavily from the memoirs of the exile, which proves its preoccupation with making a testimony, remembering in order to move forward.

Autobiography as a genre poses many problems of definition. Many scholars have tried to delineate its contours, often stating that it is a genre that simultaneously is not one, since it has no fixed categories. We can define it by what it is not, *i.e.* an autobiography is not a biography: the author needs to be alive and writing about himself. Philippe Lejeune defines autobiography by the *pact* made between author and reader, maybe giving too much importance to the reader's desire to unravel the

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<sup>56</sup>Damien Zanone, *Ecrire son temps, les Mémoires en France de 1814 à 1848*, (Lyon, 2006), p. 275-86; 299.

<sup>57</sup>Zanone, *Ecrire son temps*, p. 109-118. He argued it is useful to bear in mind the authorial intention of memoirists: their refusal to write an autobiography is enlightening as it reveals their distaste for the notion of individual and the redefinition of public and private spheres happening towards the end of the eighteenth century. This refusal is political as it manifests a desire to hold on to aristocratic privileges.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid*, p. 291.

identity between author and subject. What is of interest for us, though, is the tight relationship between autobiography and fiction which generates paradoxical phrases such as: 'not all fiction is autobiographical' but 'all autobiography is fiction'. Lejeune stated that 'there is no difference between an autobiography and an autobiographical novel', reinforcing the tight link between reminiscing memories and fiction writing.<sup>59</sup> This implies that the literary means perverts the course of recording the history of the self: as soon as there is assembling of words on paper there is creation, and thus fiction. Elaborating on the tension between fiction and autobiography, scholars have coined the term 'autofiction' or even 'roman personnel'. Véronique Dufief Sanchez has highlighted the extent of the confusion between the 'roman personnel, autofiction, roman d'analyse ou psychologique, autobiographie fictive'.<sup>60</sup> Whilst she recognised the pertinence of 'autofiction' in assuming the intertwining of fiction and the self, she preferred to use the 'roman personnel'. She advances that as a sub-genre of autobiography, the 'roman personnel' affords a higher role to fiction than autobiography does.<sup>61</sup> Chapter one will thus search for a satisfying solution to the question of how to conceptualise the interlocking of fiction and emigration memories in the émigré novels, but making sure the autobiographical is stressed as original amongst the literary landscape of the 1800s-1820s.

The risks associated with exploring women's works from the angle of their life will also be tackled. We have mentioned women's reluctance to speak of themselves, which survived well into the nineteenth century. Brigitte Louichon reminded us that most female novels of the period avoided the 'je', and, when using first-person narration, tended to place a male hero as narrator to embody their own

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<sup>59</sup>Philippe Lejeune, see for instance 'Le Pacte Autobiographique' *Poétique*, (Paris, 1973), p. 147.

<sup>60</sup>Véronique Dufief Sanchez, *Philosophie du roman personnel, de Chateaubriand à Fromentin (1802-1863)*, (Droz, 2010), p. 12; 16.

<sup>61</sup>Dufief Sanchez, *Philosophie du roman personnel*, p. 37; 52. She called the autofiction a 'monstre théorique'.

voice.<sup>62</sup> Women's incursion into the autobiographical novel is marginal according to Kathleen Hart: 'The liberation of women's autobiographical writings would require new myths of origins that challenged patriarchal fictions'.<sup>63</sup> It also has attracted less interest than male autobiographic works: Donna C. Stanton stated that autobiography became positive uniquely for men writers because women were thought only to record but not transcend their self. She linked this to the biased male-only perspective on autobiography since Lejeune's 'pact' theory.<sup>64</sup> Not only are the tools missing to explore women's autobiographical works, but these are bound to attract criticism, because of years of misogynistic interpretations of texts in the light of the author's emotional and psychological life.<sup>65</sup> Christine Klein-Lataud has reminded us that we ought to depart from the thought 'that women are incapable of creating ex nihilo' and get rid of the strong belief that autobiography dictates women's inspiration.<sup>66</sup> The risks of giving too much room to the biographical is to dwarf the female writers' merit by stating that they put themselves into fiction first. However the autobiographical should not be considered as a criterion for mediocrity in female texts. On the other hand, and worse still, trying too hard to ignore life accounts in fiction leads to a superficial and biased approach. If this precaution was necessary in order to react against the misogynist critics of the past, it is no longer needed now. The comparison between the plots and the real experiences of the authors is not to say that female authors were overwhelmed by their past and had to write about it.

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<sup>62</sup> She stated that female novelists preferred using 'des modèles romanesques polyphoniques' where the 'je' is masculine, in Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales, (1789-1825)*, (Paris, 2009), p. 126.

<sup>63</sup> She mentioned Madame Roland's *Personal Memoirs* as a rare example of autobiography for 1793. Kathleen Hart, *Revolution and Women's Autobiography in Nineteenth Century France*, (New York, 2004), p. 28-9; 31.

<sup>64</sup> Donna C. Stanton, *The Female Autograph*, (Chicago 1984), p. 4; 11.

<sup>65</sup> Madame Riccoboni's novels have been interpreted in this light, wrongly according to Cook. She was said to have had an affair with the comte de Maillebois, which may have inspired many of her fictions as a vengeance from deception. Elizabeth Heckenberg Cook, 'Going public: Letter and Contact in Fanni Butler in *Eighteenth Century studies*, 24.1 (Fall 1990), pp. 21-45, p. 27.

<sup>66</sup> Christine Klein-Lataud, 'Ere nouvelle, nouvelle pandore ?', in Chantal Bertrand Jennings, *Masculin/Féminin, Le XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle à l'épreuve du genre*, (Toronto, 1999) pp. 199-213, p. 213.

Instead it provides a platform to investigate the way biographical material is productively re-worked into fiction. Rightly so, Dufief-Sanchez reminded us that it is important to depart from the belief that women novelists projected themselves in their heroines, but this time for a different reason: it is also possible they projected themselves into non-female heroes.<sup>67</sup> The autobiographical elements will thus not be seen as reductive but as constitutive and productive parts of the female émigré novel because they participate in the identity-building and the search for meaning of their author.<sup>68</sup> Paul Ricoeur explained that in fictions about the self, instead of seeking to uncover the reality, we must instead 'juger la fiction en fonction de sa participation au processus cognitif'.<sup>69</sup> Chapter one will posit that it is legitimate to search for this reconstruction of the self in fiction, and is what makes the female émigré novel unique, in its free interlocking of imagination and memories.

## Trauma

There still are doubts about how much our three noblewomen writers used writing as a form of solace, and whether this process can effectively be retrieved. Not all émigrés experienced the same degree of distress in London; some lost all they had, their relatives to the guillotine, their possessions to the State, and experienced cold and starvation. Madame de Gontaut was brutally imprisoned in Calais in 1796-7 on her way to strike her relatives from the émigrés' list: 'Qu'allais-je devenir ? [1 ]

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<sup>67</sup>Dufief Sanchez, *Philosophie du roman personnel*, p. 33. She takes the example of one of our selected émigré novelists, Claire de Duras, who used the 'je' for a black heroine in *Ourika* and for a roturier hero in *Edouard*. See also Margaret Waller, *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel*, (New Brunswick, 1993).

<sup>68</sup>Dufief Sanchez explained that we should not look for information about the author's life in an autobiography but embrace the fact that there is always an element of creation allowing the author to experiment with characters and situations which never existed or took place. This enables the author to foresee his past-future whilst experimenting freely, in *Ibid*, p. 40.

<sup>69</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit, 1. L'intrigue et le récit historique*, (Paris, 1984), p. 12.

accablée [í ] harassée de fatigue'.<sup>70</sup> The confusing legislation threatening French émigrés if they were to return to France, and the extreme difficulty of communication between the refugees in London and their friends and relatives left behind, enhanced the feeling of anxiety felt. Meanwhile any trip home was potentially life-threatening. It is impossible to fully reconstitute how these French exiles felt at the height of the atrocities. The level of comfort and relations enjoyed in the British capital could however help to make the stay more bearable.<sup>71</sup>

Furthermore, how do we, as contemporary readers, conciliate our pre-conception of trauma with accounts written some 200 years ago, when trauma as a concept did not exist? The last 20 years have seen an attempt to use trauma as an analytical tool while acknowledging its political and ethical bearings.<sup>72</sup> Trauma comes from the Greek, meaning 'wound' and it is the psychological wound that has attracted the most scholars' attention in various disciplines, such as medicine, but also philosophy and the beginnings of psychiatry, from the nineteenth century. The 'canonical writings' of Susannah Felman, Cathy Caruth and Dori Laub have been reassessed and contested, notably in the way they advanced the idea that to listen to, observe and read a traumatised experience is to understand it.<sup>73</sup> Their approach implies speaking of a 'second-hand' trauma: it would mean that the reader can make the trauma his own and appropriate it. It is admitted that traumatic memory is

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<sup>70</sup>Marie Joséphine Louise, duchesse de Gontaut, *Mémoires de la duchesse de Gontaut*, (Paris, 1909), p.46-7; 54-55. Others were even less fortunate: Amélie de Biron was guillotined in 1794 after returning to try to save family possessions; this shocked the émigré community in London.

<sup>71</sup>Madame de Ménéville and her children found a simple but pleasant lodging with her uncle, a well-off magistrate in London. Her uncle had a small house ready on their arrival, 'un salon propre et bien meublé' which seems a 'palais' in comparison to the squalid places they had to stay at during their journey to the capital. Ménéville writes that she felt 'un sentiment de reconnaissance profonde' to her uncle but also the English, having found herself in such a comfortable and safe position, in Madame de Ménéville, *Souvenirs d'émigration 1791-1797*, (Paris 1934), p. 159-160.

<sup>72</sup>Martin Modlinger and Philipp Sonntag, (eds), *Other People's Pain: Narratives of Trauma and the Question of Ethics, Cultural, History and Literary Imagination*, vol. 18, (Bern, 2011).

<sup>73</sup>Modlinger, *Other people's pain*, p. 1-2. Susana Radstone criticises also the lack of attention given to the victims' identification with the aggressor, 'Trauma Studies: Context, Politics, Ethics' in *Ibid*, pp. 63-91, p. 74.



unstable and it is the meaning unconsciously conferred afterwards that may render a particular memory traumatic.<sup>74</sup> This was backed up by clinical research: after the same traumatic event, some individuals needed help, others did not.<sup>75</sup> There are different ways to deal with trauma because of the variety of traumatic experiences, of individuals, of societies and of political-ethical needs. This makes it doubly difficult to pretend to understand others' trauma, a fortiori mediated through a nineteenth-century text. Scholars have also enriched the debate about trauma by questioning the motives behind viewers, listeners and readers: they are determined by a social, political, historical position and could lead to voyeurism or excessive victimhood.<sup>76</sup> Can any trauma be recovered by us from a nineteenth-century émigré novel or has it been too fictionalised?<sup>77</sup> Roger Luckhurst has spoken of the paradigm of trauma to insist on its fleeting nature.<sup>78</sup> If trauma cannot be voiced, narrated, or represented in art he admitted nonetheless that 'an aesthetic of unspeakability or unrepresentability would fail to register how cultural forms have actually responded to our torturous times'<sup>79</sup> This reinforces the pertinence of our investigation of trauma in émigré texts: to recover 'raw' trauma is chimerical, at the same time this is not what we can or should be interested in recovering. 'Recovering' which implies restitution of what

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<sup>74</sup> So the event is not in itself 'toxic' to the mind, only what the mind later does to it. Jean Laplanche, Jean Baptiste Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, (Paris, 1967), p. 467-8, cited in Radstone, 'Trauma Studies' p.76.

<sup>75</sup> When using psychoanalysis in literature studies it can be useful to focus on the activities of condensation, displacement and symbolization in the prose, and consider the author as engaged in a process of meaning-making even more or less consciously. This could lead to the discovery of 'hidden, unconscious processes of desire or fear- meaning-making' in Radstone, 'Trauma Studies' p. 77.

<sup>76</sup> Anne Whitehead 'Geoffrey Hartman and the Ethic of Place: Landscape, Memory, Trauma' *European Journal of English Studies* 7/3, (2003), pp. 275-92, p. 276; Ulrich Baer, 'To Give Memory a Place: Holocaust Photography and the Landscape Tradition' *Representations* 69 (2000), pp. 38-62, p. 43, cited in Modlinger *Other people's pain*, p.3; 84.

<sup>77</sup> 'trauma studies (if it) might be understood to be practising a kind of tertiary witnessing, setting itself the task of bearing witness to culture's extensions of witnessing through media including the visual arts, literature and film' in Radstone, 'Trauma Studies' p.64.

<sup>78</sup> Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, (London, 2008), p. 80.

<sup>79</sup> Luckhurst, 'Beyond Trauma: Torturous times' *European Journal of English Studies*, 14 /1 (2010), pp. 11-21, p. 15.

previously was, in the same quality, should be swapped for 'discovering', which leaves room for creative writing in transforming incomplete trauma memories. Bessel van der Kolk has argued, talking of traumatic memory, that "once people start [ ] to make meaning of them, they are transcribed into ordinary memories"<sup>80</sup> Still, memories are intrinsically subjective, stored as ideas and images, thus never reachable from the outside observer first-hand. Voicing them implies a degree of fictionalisation. It has been demonstrated that the brain uses the same area for both memories and imagination: the workings of memory and fiction-writing are tied together.<sup>81</sup> When one is narrating memories, stylistic effects are employed as in literature to embellish but also to adapt the past to what is meaningful in the present. George Didi-Huberman formulated that memory "décante le passé de son exactitude"<sup>82</sup> Just like we need to embrace the part of literary creation in memory, we ought to recognise the part of personal memories in literature for the reason that the two processes are entangled in the search for a coherent individual identity. Traumatic memories may not be reachable first-hand, but their embellishment is intrinsically present in literature, which justifies our focus on the émigré novel.<sup>83</sup>

In addition, the narration of memories tends to question the future, wanting to "transmuer le passé en virtualité d'avenir"<sup>84</sup> In making this communication possible between past and future, the writer is also pivotal in connecting personal to collective

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<sup>80</sup> "all narratives that weave sensory imprints onto socially communicable stories are subject to condensation, embellishment, and contamination" Bessel A van der Kolk, "Trauma and Memory" in Bessel A van der Kolk (ed), *Traumatic Stress*, (London, 1996), pp. 279-302, p. 296.

<sup>81</sup> Laurence Dahan-Gaida, (ed), *Dynamiques de la Mémoire, Arts, Savoirs, Histoire*, (Besançon, 2010), p.10-11.

<sup>82</sup> George Didi-Huberman, *Devant le temps*, (Paris, 2000), p.37 cited in Dahan, *Dynamiques de la Mémoire*, p.16.

<sup>83</sup> Some scholars have insisted on the fact that literature is the best place to look for trauma: "it is in the work of literature, rather than exclusively in the insights of psychiatry or medical practice, that this relationship of subjective experience and historical narrative is played out and exposed most acutely" David Miller, "Editor's Introduction" p.ix. See also Hubert Zapf, "Trauma, Narrative and Ethics in recent American Fiction" both in Modlinger, *Other people's pain*, pp.145-167.

<sup>84</sup> Dahan, *Dynamiques de la Mémoire*, p. 15.

memory.<sup>85</sup> Memory does not evolve in a hermetic realm. In *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* Maurice Halbwachs made evident the relationships between individual memory-reconstruction and the social world it is destined for.<sup>86</sup> Paul Ricoeur, went beyond the consideration of personal and collective as rival entities. When speaking of ‘abuses of memory’ in the case of blocked, forced and manipulated memories, he underlined the importance of thinking in terms of the end product of transforming memories, *i.e.* why individual and/or collective memories are recorded and re-worked. Indeed we observe that memory is a flexible concept that touches upon many aspects of our modern society, from relations of power, to the construction of identity, in addition to hegemony and marginality. In the twentieth century, the catastrophe of the two World Wars prompted scholars to investigate the workings of ‘memory culture’ ‘Memory culture’ refers to the contents and forms of representation of memory, be it through institutions, objects, rituals, places, and its social function.<sup>87</sup> This type of memory is different from the informal and immediate memory experienced by individuals. Halbwachs saw in collective memory a way to construct the identity of the individual.<sup>88</sup> Jan Assmann saw two types of cultural memory in society, one functional, to create national identity and political legitimization; and one for storage only, collecting the useless memory to be re-employed into the functional memory if needed.<sup>89</sup> These approaches cast light onto the socio-political pressures applied to the émigré memories, and the purpose behind

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<sup>85</sup>Fertile memory seeks to make a link between past and future, whilst sterile memory is stuck in the limbos of times remote. Tzvetan Todorov, *Les Abus de mémoire*, (Paris, 1995), p. 30-1, cited in Ibid, p. 21.

<sup>86</sup>‘il n’y a pas alors de souvenirs qui puisse être dit purement intérieur, c’est-à-dire qui ne puisse se conserver purement dans la mémoire individuelle.’ Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, (Paris, 1925), p.371.

<sup>87</sup>For an in-depth analysis of the role of places of memory see Pierre Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols, (Paris, 1984-93).

<sup>88</sup>Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, (Paris, 1925).

<sup>89</sup>Jan Assmann, ‘Collective Memory and Cultural Identity’ *New German Critique*, vol 65/1995, pp. 125-33, cited in Sylvia Paletschek, Sylvia Schraut, (eds), *The Gender of Memory, Cultures of Remembrance in Nineteenth and Twentieth- Century Europe*, (New York, 2008), p. 9.

recording them onto paper. We will underline in this respect how similar the émigré novels selected are in the way they treat shared traumatic memories of exile.

## Gender

The female-only focus reflects a desire to dig into lesser known or too readily discarded texts of the early nineteenth century, at the margins of the Romantic Movement and the majoritively male 'great' writers such as Chateaubriand, Balzac or Stendhal. Alison Finch, whilst careful to avoid femino-centrism in her study, claimed that the specificity of female writings 'operates [í ] on a more complex level' because of the double exploitation of women by upper class men, since they are higher in status and of a 'higher gender'<sup>90</sup> To this we will add the marginal status of being an émigrée. There are few studies dedicated solely to the female émigré novels as such, although scholars mention some émigré novels within their review of feminine writing in the revolutionary era. Brigitte Louichon brought to the fore the singularity of the 'romancières sentimentales' of the first decades of the nineteenth century, which resonates greatly with the characteristics of the émigré novel: 'l'utilisation d'un modèle produit par l'Ancien Régime en un temps nouveau confère à leurs écrits une couleur idéelle ou nostalgique, une impression de décalage par rapport à la réalité'<sup>91</sup> Feminine émigré fiction has its role to play within this evolution of the sentimental novel. Itsvan Cseppento in his comparative study 'Les romans d'émigration au féminin' finds more compassion and incitation to reflection and reconciliation in female émigré texts than in their male counter-parts.<sup>92</sup> Despite the differences in treatment of the emigration, there is a certain unity in style and

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<sup>90</sup> Finch, *Women's Writing*, p. 59.

<sup>91</sup> Louichon, *Romancières Sentimentales*, p. 292.

<sup>92</sup> Itsvan Cseppento, 'Les romans d'émigration', in Jaquier et al., *Destins romanesques*, pp. 270-286 p. 273; 277.

themes conveyed by émigrées, diametrically opposed to the male insistence on military and political action. It is crucial to underline that this research project proposes a definition of the émigré novel exclusively from the analysis of a corpus composed of women authors who had lived the exile. An exhaustive comparison of female and male émigré novels is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the use of male counterparts will enable us to explore the women's originality or their place within the émigré community. This will complete our attempt at defining the nature of the émigré novel by women, in providing an in-depth analysis of the female émigré voice and its interactions with competing voices in society, and the literary canon.

The concept of *gender* emerged as a way to tackle the very unbalanced representations of the sexes so far throughout history. Men and women in nineteenth-century France were defined by a palimpsest of representations, secular and religious, built over time and rooted in western Christian culture. Women belonged to the matter and the animal realm, while men, endowed with rationality, were the masters of nature. Women were thus said to be both malleable and passive as matter, and possess animalistic impulses, mainly sexual. Keeping women in passive roles became a social and moral necessity. The valorisation of innocence for girls was connected to the acquisition of knowledge, and the practice of sexuality.<sup>93</sup> According to Susan Mendus *et al.*: 'That duality, that equation of sexual experience and of knowledge, through which the full subject-hood of the adult might be attained, is one which pervades nineteenth-century discourses of gender'<sup>94</sup> How is gender applicable and relevant to our study? Gender as an analytical tool in the humanities has allowed scholars to depart from a biological demarcation of the sexes towards a socially

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<sup>93</sup>Interestingly, the etymology of *innocence* in Latin *non nocere* means not to do harm, in Susan Mendus, Jane Rendall, (eds), *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth century*, (London, 1989), p.7.

<sup>94</sup>Mendus, *Sexuality and Subordination*, p. 9.

created distinction. Joan W. Scott in the 1980s led the way to this new understanding by insisting on the construction and malleability of gender which is also part of the very operation of power.<sup>95</sup> Her method was to move away from the search for an authentic and repressed female discourse to emphasize a global perspective, based on the observation of the relations between men and women and the construction of their respective identities.<sup>96</sup> Studying women in history had to avoid the search for an *a priori* identity, waiting to be deciphered. Scott's view is not without its issues though: the 'all cultural' obliterates for example the feminine physical body; similarly studying gender as a relationship between men and women assumes too readily the binary opposition of the two in all things and ignores overlaps.<sup>97</sup> Judith Butler, in her revisiting of Scott's essay, added the notion of performative gender.<sup>98</sup> She meant that gender is something we do rather than something we are, like a performance on stage. It is never pre-existing, neither true nor false, it is a fiction created to regulate society, and notably to consolidate the female subject. Butler stressed too that any studies ought to intertwine gender with other factors, such as race, class or politics, since gender as a category never works alone.<sup>99</sup> The need to avoid making gender a super concept was stressed by Jacqueline Labbe. She warned against the excesses of gender studies on women's literature because, although it claimed to look at the interaction between sexes, it still separated women and men writers, and gender took

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<sup>95</sup>Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category for Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No 5 (Dec 1986), pp. 1053-75., <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1864376>, [accessed October 2013], and Judith Butler, *The Question of Gender; Joan Scott's Critical feminism*, (Indiana, 2011), p. 3-4.

<sup>96</sup>Dorothy Kelly, *Fictional Genders: Role and Representation in Nineteenth-century French narrative*, (Lincoln, 1987), p. 21.

<sup>97</sup>Hélène Cixous pointed early on to the risks of always thinking in terms of positive-negative, male-female. She was criticised for seeing women as biologically determined though. Hélène Cixous, trans. by Keith and Paula Cohen, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', *Signs*, Vol. 1, No 4 (Summer 1976), pp. 875-893.

<sup>98</sup>Judith Butler, *Gender Troubles: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York, 1990), p. 97.

<sup>99</sup>Butler, *The Question of Gender*, p. 4-5.

precedence over other categories such as class, genre, and style.<sup>100</sup> This thesis's structure reflects the preoccupation with not over-emphasizing a repressed female voice within an oppressive patriarchal society, just like it gives equal weight to other factors like the literary context and the implication of traumatic memory on fiction writing.

The message voiced by our three writers in the first half of the century was conditioned by gender representations and prescriptions applied to literature. Literary critics and male writers paradoxically praised and blamed women's writing and reading.<sup>101</sup> The prescriptions of the female sex, prudence, morality and chastity, had to be respected: women should exist for their family and their natural work was to give birth and rear children on top of domestic duties. This explains the declaration of modesty found in prefaces of female novels - and our corpus is no exception: it worked as a shield protecting them from blame. Furthermore, Kathleen Hart explained that as minors, nineteenth-century women did not own themselves and thus not only writing, but writing about oneself was frowned upon.<sup>102</sup> Paradoxically, the natural limitations of women were recognized advantages in writing: their natural eloquence in feelings, the subtlety of their prose, and their knowledge about love. Although the novel granted women writers a space for expression and popular audience, it also enclosed them within the expectation of masculine morals and aesthetic rules in their society. Hesse spoke also of a tension post-Revolution

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<sup>100</sup>Jacqueline Labbe, *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, poetry and the culture of gender*, (Manchester, 2003), p. 7. Gender is not the sole category and element of analysis in my thesis but it is intertwined with other research tools, in a bid to build a better picture of what the female émigré novel was and to what purpose. This reflects the multifaceted character of being an émigré writer: being a noblewoman, having lived abroad and suffered in exile, having returned to a changed society, and having more or less embraced the status of novelist.

<sup>101</sup>Rousseau did much to exclude women from literary creation, paradoxically through the main heroine in *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, (Paris, 1761), in Hart, *Revolution and Women's Autobiography*, p. 21.

<sup>102</sup>The liberation of women's autobiographical writings would require new myths of origins that challenged patriarchal fictions in Ibid, p. 31.

between a public figure acquired through writing and a private self which was strictly regimented: 'The consciousness of this duality, [í ] meant that they would have to shape a distinctive path into the modern world, and that sometimes tortuous path indelibly marked their creative lives with signs of that difference'.<sup>103</sup> This thesis will combine the female author's dual status with the status of the émigré, in order to further stress the originality of the female émigré prose.

Debates about the level of freedom enjoyed by French noblewomen pre- and post- Revolution encourage us to be prudent when speaking of freer/stricter gender rules for our three novelists from 1789 to the 1830s and the radical character of their demands. As Waltraud Maierhoffer and Suzanne Desan have demonstrated, the debates are too often based upon the assumption that there were two distinct spheres, public and private, the latter being the realm of the woman.<sup>104</sup> Still, the growth of the middle class went hand-in-hand with clearer definitions of male and female behaviour and identities as showed by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall.<sup>105</sup> It meant that policing sexuality was no longer the sole monopoly of Church and law, but also operated through individually embedded gender boundaries. Thus instead of the strict categories 'public' and 'private' we should speak of 'fluidity and flexibility' in gender relations and the role of self imposed boundaries for this transition period.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment. How French Women Became Modern*, (Oxford, 2001), p. 77.

<sup>104</sup>Waltraud Maierhoffer, *Women against Napoleon, Historical and Fictional responses to his Rise and legacy*, (Chicago, 2007), p. 15-6. In her rethinking of the link between republicanism, empire and gender restrictions, Suzanne Desan stresses this crucial point: it is misleading to see women of the nineteenth century in terms of exclusion/inclusion and public/private only, in Suzanne Desan, *The Family Trial in Revolutionary France*, (London, 2004), p. 312.

<sup>105</sup>Leonore Davidoff, Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*, (London, 1987), cited in Mendus, *Sexuality and Subordination*, p. 3-4.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid, p. 24. Amanda Vickery argued that the division women at home; men at politics in its general stance always existed in history. Talking of 'separate spheres' cannot be used as a meaningful category because, loosely speaking, they always have existed. Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), pp. 383-414, p. 413. Robert B. Shoemaker advanced too that the unique



So were the women émigré better off before the Revolution? Until recently, the received view projected a salonnière who, after she had secured regular guests amongst the elite, including key ministerial men and artists, was able to actively make or break political and literary careers, just like she initiated fashion and people's reputations. This view was championed by scholars such as Margaret H. Darrow who affirmed that men 'were often in the same relationship to power as women'.<sup>107</sup> Wolfgang too insists on the fact that intellectual noblewomen were better off during the Ancien Régime than after, in a bid to rehabilitate the literary dynamism of the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>108</sup> Jolanta T. Pekacz de-constructed this view and showed that the salonnières were not challengers of gender norms but emulated in fact the status quo of monarchic France.<sup>109</sup> She insisted that the salons were safe places where women could lead discussions without violating the 'bienséance' of their sex.<sup>110</sup> Pekacz added that 'by being made so important for sustaining honnêteté, women became advocates of their own limited role in society rather than their advancement'.<sup>111</sup> This view has the advantage of breaking the stereotype of the powerful salonnière, and makes room for self-imposed gender etiquette. We argue that the same nuance characterizes the nature and intensity of our three émigrées' gender demands: they were moderate in their tone even if some of their desires for the couple and family relations were eminently modern.

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combination of factors such as the Revolution's trauma, industrialization, the emergence of a middle class reinforced the separation of spheres but did not create autonomous and distinct spheres, Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London, 1998), p. 318.

<sup>107</sup>Margaret H. Darrow, 'French noblewomen and the New Domesticity, 1750-1850', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 5, N° 1, (Spring, 1979), pp. 41-65, p. 48. French salonnières who famously enjoyed a literary and political role in the eighteenth century are for example Madame du Deffand, Madame de Tencin, Françoise de Graffigny and of course Germaine de Staël. Dena Goodman famously started a heated debate when she placed the salonnières as serious participants to the Republic of Letters, their salon being a refuge from the patriarchal and absolutism and educational hub for women. Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: a Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, (New York, 1994), p. 83.

<sup>108</sup>Wolfgang, *Gender and voice in the French Novel, 1730-1782*, (Ashgate, 2004), pp. 187-190.

<sup>109</sup>Jolanta T. Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition in Pre-Revolutionary France*, (New-York, 1999), p. 4; 12.

<sup>110</sup>Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition*, p.28.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid, p. 205-206.

The re-working of Habermas' spheres and the insistence on the possibility of self-embedded gender boundaries is linked to ground-breaking work in female writing and female voices of the long eighteenth century. The refusal to immure women authors in a separate sphere has been primordial for Chantal Bertrand Jennings and other scholars.<sup>112</sup> In terms of earlier writers, Aurora Wolfgang asked how specific literary and stylistic conventions of 'women writing' were articulated [í ] and how different men and women writers exploited these varying conventions to their own ends.<sup>113</sup> This thesis will embrace this notion of self-embedded gender restriction but also the conscious effort of women émigré writers to subvert the literary canon to meet their objective.<sup>114</sup> Thinking in terms of 'émigré female voice' conveys the idea of an individual exile voice in a quest for identity, but also figures the wider structure of society morals and literary conventions from which such voice emerges and diverts. Even though scholars cannot agree on when to date women's 'literary awakening' and modernity, Hesse has shown how literary activity is interlocked with women's awareness of their identity: 'Women's relationships to literacy, publishing, and authorship are crucial to their becoming modern selves'.<sup>115</sup> She explained that 'it was in the realm of literature alone that women were able to command cultural authority and to carve out a space for their public self-

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<sup>112</sup>Bertrand-Jennings, *Un Autre Mal du Siècle, Le Romantisme des romancières*, (Toulouse, 2005), p. 17-21. See also the introductions of Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales*; Turner, *Living by the pen*.

<sup>113</sup>Aurora Wolfgang claimed for instance that the spontaneity and authenticity of an epistolary novel was superficial in order to mimic the said natural and informal feminine voices, in Wolfgang, *Gender and Voice*, p. 137.

<sup>114</sup>Louichon and Bertrand Jennings have examined the women writers' incursions out of the gender boundaries and into new themes of the nineteenth century, in Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales*, p. 290-1; Bertrand Jennings, *Masculin/Féminin*, p. 3; and *Un Autre Mal du Siècle*, p. 19.

<sup>115</sup>Hesse places women's literary awakening from the revolution onwards because 'women would have to find their way into literate culture or see their cultural and political power eclipsed', in Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment*, p.30; 37; 40. See also Robert Darnton, 'Two Paths through the Social History of Ideas', in Hayden T. Mason (ed), *The Darnton Debate: Books and Revolution in the eighteenth century*, (Oxford, 1998), pp. 251-294, p. 274. For Wolfgang, women's influence starts from the mid seventeenth century, and is attested by contemporaries commenting on their production, in Wolfgang, *Gender and voice*, p.7-9. 'The spread of literacy in the late eighteenth century was thus crucial in bringing the cultural ideal of the modern self into being', in Hesse *The Other Enlightenment*, p. xii.

constitution'.<sup>116</sup> Hesse's idea is interesting for our research because it emphasizes the acquisition of a female and authorial identity for a period, 1800-1820s, which has generally been discarded unlike the well-known earlier Enlightenment and the later Romantic Movement. There is something in the condition of the woman and the émigrée which helped to assert the self as author and also encouraged a move away from the familiarity of the trend for sensibility.<sup>117</sup> Margaret Cohen situated in 1830-1850 the moment when 'realism takes shape in a struggle to displace the sentimental novel'; before the triumph of the realist aesthetics meant that there were fewer women novelists.<sup>118</sup> Thus, although the realists 'aggressively denigrated the form' of the sentimental novel by women, they appropriated some of its characteristics.<sup>119</sup> As a consequence the sentimental novel before 1830 should not be seen as hierarchically inferior to the realist novel. It was valid enough to inspire the later nineteenth-century literary trends. Can the émigré novel be the missing link between sentimental and realist novels? For Mona Ozouf, the novel of the beginning of the nineteenth century was helping to forgive and forget the upheaval of the Revolution. Literature kept its aristocratic essence alive well into the nineteenth century, but also recorded changes in conditions.<sup>120</sup> It becomes more evident that the fictionalisation process of the emigration operated by our women exiles had a role to play in the assertion of a

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid, p. 60; 155. The revolution established 'the legal conception of the author as an individual creator of ideas and of written texts as form of property' in July 1793, meaning that the author is free, owns his creation, and can make profit from it. However women, unless celibate or widowed, would seek their husband's approval before publishing, p. 57; 61.

<sup>117</sup>Anne Vila suggests that the sensibility canon was re-interpreted by the Romantics in their quest for new morality, Vila, *Enlightenment and pathology*, p. 295.

<sup>118</sup>Margaret Cohen, 'Women and fiction in the nineteenth century', in Timothy Urwin, (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the French novel from 1800 to the present*, pp. 54-72, p. 55.

<sup>119</sup>Cohen, 'Women and fiction', p. 60. Alison Finch also added that our idea of a 'modern' novel was conveyed by the later nineteenth century production and the 'great' realist masters such as Hugo or Stendhal. The heavy descriptions, the new focus on lowly protagonists and political agenda became the aesthetic norm. Alison Finch, 'Reality and its representation in the nineteenth century novel', in Urwin, *The Cambridge Companion*, pp. 36-53, p. 38-9.

<sup>120</sup>Mona Ozouf, *Les aveux du roman, Le dix-neuvième siècle entre Ancien Régime et Révolution*, (Paris, 2001), p. 10-13.

firmer 'female émigré voice', in the tone of the gender demands and in the evolution away from the sentimental trend. This is what this thesis will aim to uncover.

### III. Presentation of the authors, corpus and chapters

The three émigré noblewomen who are the focus of this study all spent about a decade in London in the 1790s, and took up writing either during or after their emigration. Madame de Boigne, born Adèle d'Osmond in Versailles on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1781, belonged to the group of Restoration writers who rarely attract scholarly interest. Her parents were the marquis d'Osmond and Eléonore Dillon, who was close to Madame Adélaïde, Louis XVI's sister. They emigrated to England first in 1789, returned to France in 1790, went to Italy with the King's sisters in 1791, to finally spend most of their exile in London from 1794. The d'Osmond's familial connections in England meant that they did not suffer too much from privations: they were welcomed on arrival by Mrs Fitzherbert, the cousin of Boigne's mother, and later lived with the chevalier Legard in Yorkshire. In London the d'Osmonds frequented high society, notably Lord Exeter, William Windham, Lady Harington and Lady Ester Stanhope.<sup>121</sup> Adèle married the wealthy but non-aristocratic général de Boigne in June 1798 in London to prevent her family from starving. The marriage was not a happy one and she recounts the domestic violence she experienced in her correspondence: «je me suis approchée de la porte que l'on m'a fermée au nez en me donnant deux coups de poing, un à l'épaule et l'autre à la figure» after which she

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<sup>121</sup>Mrs Fitzherbert welcomed the d'Osmond in Brighton, she was at the time the mistress of the Prince of Wales. Lady Stanhope was Pitt's niece. In Eléonore-Adèle d'Osmond, comtesse de Boigne, *Récit d'une tante, Mémoires de la comtesse de Boigne, née d'Osmond*. 5 tomes. Tome 1. *Versailles. L'émigration. L'Empire. la Restauration de 1814*. (Paris, 1921-1923), t.1, p. 80; 154, Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed December 2015].

apparently told her violent husband: *mon père Monsieur que vous n'allez pas recommencer à me battre*.<sup>122</sup> Upon her return to France in 1804, she belonged to the moderate royalist circles until the July Monarchy when she acceded to a more political role, being close to the king's wife Marie-Amélie, whom she previously met during her short exile in Italy. She claimed to have started her memoirs, called *Récits d'une tante*, in 1837, starting from the last volume during the Orléans government and making her way to the early years and her emigration. They were published posthumously in 1921-3, just like her two novels *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* and *Une Passion dans le grand monde*, respectively in 1866 and 1867.<sup>123</sup> The combined study of her memoirs and her fictional works, which are set in a static Ancien Régime for *La Maréchale* and during the Empire and Restoration for *Une Passion*, brings us to speak of émigré literature. This is because of the interplay between the genre of the memoirs and the sentimental novel, and the fictitious exiles Boigne's heroines go through. Very few studies on Boigne's life and works are available. Françoise Wagener wrote her biography, where she passionately painted the picture of a more human and enlightened Boigne, away from the conveyed republican image of a refractory old woman with literary pretensions, and defended her talent as an historian and moralist.<sup>124</sup> Henri Rossi made her *Récits* the central point from which to assess the evolution of French memoirs between 1789 and 1848. His conclusions

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<sup>122</sup>Letter dated January 1800, in Françoise Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne: 1781-1866*, (Paris, 1997, p. 100-102.

<sup>123</sup>Françoise Wagener establishes a chronology of Boigne's life, dating the moment she actually started writing in April 1835, after her protégé Micheline Lange died accidentally at 14 years old. In Archives privées d'Audiffret-Pasquier, château de Sassy, textes autographes de Madame de Boigne sur la mort de Micheline (avril 1835). Wagener raised the question of the delineation between mere witness and writer, which we will pursue in this study, in Françoise Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, p. 435; 440. Boigne's two novels, *La maréchale d'Aubemer*, (Paris, 1890), archives.org, <http://archive.org/details/lamarchaledaub00boig>, [accessed December 2015]; *Une Passion dans le grand monde*, 2 tomes (Paris, 1867), Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed December 2015].

<sup>124</sup>Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, p.8; 13.

that female memoirs like Boigne's were *des tentatives désespérées pour survivre* will guide our reflections, even though he did not consider her fictional works.<sup>125</sup>

Adèle de Souza or originally Adélaïde Filleul, was born in 1761 and came from modest Normandy aristocracy on her mother's side, whilst her father was a merchant. Rumours had it that Adèle's mother was one of the mistresses hand-picked by Madame de Pompadour to entertain Louis XV.<sup>126</sup> What is certain is that the family, also composed of Adélaïde's elder sister, came to Paris where the mother frequented the court. Madame Filleul died in 1767, followed immediately by her husband who took his own life after bankruptcy. Adélaïde entered a convent in Paris until she was 15 years old, when she was introduced to 'le monde' by her newly rich and married sister, Madame de Marigny.<sup>127</sup> She made her court entrance when in 1779 she married the comte de Flahaut, brother of the influential 'Directeur des bâtiments du roi', Monsieur d'Angivillier. He was 53, she was 18, and she appeared to have suffered from this sterile union. In her Louvre salon Adèle de Flahaut entertained the conservative aristocracy but also some more liberal 'hommes de lettres' and scientists.<sup>128</sup> Her child was rumoured to be the fruit of her affair with the 'froid, moqueur et sceptique' Talleyrand, a regular at her salon.<sup>129</sup> She fled France with her son in September 1792 and struggled to make ends meet in London until she

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<sup>125</sup>Rossi, *Mémoires aristocratiques*, p.495-6. More recently, Claudine Giachetti dedicated a study to several French memoirists, amongst whom figures Boigne. She coined the notion of a *poétique des lieux* to describe the investment of the imaginary into geographic places, showing how the *lieux* was a pertinent tool to explore memoirs. This concept is useful for the study of Boigne's texts, especially if associated with the depiction of emigration, linking space with felt experience. Her most pertinent conclusion is on the ageing of the female body and how writing was the way to both resist time and acknowledge its fatal course for all memoirists. This aspect is widely found in Boigne's two novels. Claudine Giachetti, *Poétique des lieux, Enquête sur les mémoires féminins de l'aristocratie française, (1789-1848)*, (Paris, 2009).

<sup>126</sup>André de Maricourt, *Madame de Souza et sa famille, les Marigny, les Flahaut, Auguste de Morny*, (Paris, 1907), p. 5-6.

<sup>127</sup>The rumours about Adèle's mother having a liaison with Louis XV seemed to fit with the fact that Madame de Pompadour gave her brother, the newly rich and noble M. de Marigny to Julie Filleul, Adèle's sister.

<sup>128</sup>As for the non-noble members of her salon, Maricourt mentioned the Lavoisiers, and the poet Alfieri, in Maricourt, *Madame de Souza*, p. 74-5.

<sup>129</sup>Charles was born on 21st August 1785, in Ibid, p. 61-2.

went to Switzerland in the summer of 1794, then finally to Holland. Her husband stayed behind and was guillotined in 1794. Her first novel, *Adèle de Sénange* was published in London in 1793 and brought her financial and literary success.<sup>130</sup> Then followed numerous novels, all published after her return to France in 1797: *Emilie et Alphonse*, (1799) ; *Charles et Marie*, (1802); *Eugène de Rothelin*, (1810); *Eugénie et Mathilde, ou Mémoires de la famille du comte de Revel*, (1811); *Mademoiselle de Tournon*, (1820); *La comtesse de Fargy*, (1823) and *Eugénie de Revel* (1853).<sup>131</sup> She married the Portuguese ambassador José Maria de Sousa, whom she met in Holland, on 17<sup>th</sup> October 1802, and took the name of Madame de Souza.

On Madame de Souza's life we are mostly indebted to the Baron de Maricourt for his one-sided painting of her as a charitable soul, but also a self-indulgent 'coquette'.<sup>132</sup> The diary of Morris, Souza's American friend from the years preceding her exile, depicted her as belonging to the 'philosophical cast', being very politically aware and interacting in public affairs; she reportedly said to him: 'Enfin, mon ami,

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<sup>130</sup> Adèle de Sénange was reedited in 1796, 98, 1805, 1808, and 1827. Maricourt collected Casimir Bonjour's expression 'toute l'aristocratie du royaume [í ] souscrivit' and '40 000 francs' of subscription, in the *Journal des Débats*, 19 Avril 1836. This resulted in a more comfortable life for our new novelist, in *Ibid*, p. 175-6.

<sup>131</sup> The novels of Madame de Souza we selected for this thesis can be found online Adélaïde Filleul, comtesse de Flahaut, then Madame de Souza, *Adèle de Sénange, ou lettres de Lord Sydenham*, 2 vols, (Londres, 1794); *Emilie et Alphonse*, 3 tomes (Paris, 1799), both on Google books, <https://books.google.co.uk>, [accessed December 2015]; *Charles et Marie*, (Paris, 1802), *Eugénie et Mathilde, ou Mémoires de la famille du comte de Revel*, 3 vols (Londres, 1811), both on Archives.org, <https://archive.org>, [accessed December 2015].

<sup>132</sup> Maricourt did not provide sources for his assumptions on Souza's personality. Other accounts are limited, and briefly mentioned Madame de Flahaut in passing. Esmein used Maricourt's biography in his analysis of *Eugénie et Mathilde*, (Paris, 1811), in A. Esmein, 'Un roman de l'émigration: Mme de Flahaut peinte par Mme de Souza' in *Revue politique et parlementaire*, n°164, Tome LV, (1908), consulted on <http://www.charles-de-flahaut.fr/index.html>, [accessed May 2011]. Linda Kelly mentioned Madame de Flahaut in her account of the émigrés in Juniper Hall as she received the help of Talleyrand and Madame de Staël to correct the draft of *Adèle de Sénange* in her 'miserable lodging'. Linda Kelly, *Juniper Hall*, (London, 1989), p. 55. M.-J. Fassiotto concentrated on the private-public aspect of Madame de Flahaut's salon preceding her emigration: he underlined her influence and vision in politics transmitted via Talleyrand and her american friend Morris, in M.-J. Fassiotto, 'La comtesse de Flahaut et son cercle. Un exemple de salon politique sous la Révolution' in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, (303, 1992), pp.344-348.

vous et moi nous gouvernerons la France'.<sup>133</sup> His diary also reveals aspects of her life that strikingly resemble her first novel *Adèle de Sénange*: her attachment to the convent she spent years in as a young woman, leading to her visits to her 'religieuse'; and her infatuation with a young lord.<sup>134</sup> The primary sources we used are a few letters between Madame de Flahaut, Windham and Morris kept in the British Library and the National Archives in Paris; they provide a glimpse of her personality and connections during the Revolution and her emigration.<sup>135</sup> *Adèle de Sénange* was acclaimed by fellow female novelist Isabelle de Charrière amongst others.<sup>136</sup> Sainte-Beuve's introduction to the 1840s edition of her works was far too tied up with the thought that the recording of personal life led to second-class literature whereas the absence of autobiographical elements meant talent. Hence his recognition of her masterpiece in the less autobiographical *Eugène de Rothelin* as opposed to *Adèle de Sénange*: 'l'auteur n'en est plus à cette donnée à demi-personnelle et la plus voisine de son cœur'.<sup>137</sup> Souza's work has been analysed in detail by French émigré specialist Carpenter; Stewart and Louichon dedicate chapters to her most famous novels.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Indeed Mme de Flahaut helped Morris elaborate his political strategy, using her influence on her lover Talleyrand. *The diary and letters of Governor Morris*, ed. by Anne Cary Morris, 2 vols, (London 1888), vol.1, p.166.

<sup>134</sup> *The diary*, vol. 1 p. 161. See also: 'she had a design upon him [í ] to marry him and he thinks she did much mischief to effectuate it', vol. 2 p. 295. Maricourt also mentions Madame de Flahaut's new confidant, in the person of 23 years old Lord Wycombe, son of count Wycombe and marquess of Lansdowne, an important political man. He frequented her salon in the summer of 1790 during his 'Tour'. In Maricourt, *Madame de Souza*, p.139-141.

<sup>135</sup> London, The British Library, The Windham papers, add. 37914 f. 193; 37915 f. 210; 220; 222; 223. Paris, Archives Nationales, Flahaut papers, 565 AP, AP 5-7.

<sup>136</sup> Isabelle de Charrière, *Trois femmes*, cited in Louichon, *Lire Adèle de Sénange de Souza: point de vue masculin, point de vue féminin* (Suzan van Dijk et Madeleine van Strien-Chardonneau (eds), *Féminités et masculinités dans le texte narratif avant 1800 : la question du "gender"*, XIVe Colloque of the SATOR, Amsterdam/Leyde, 2000, (Peeters, 2002), pp. 403-415, p. 403.

<sup>137</sup> Charles Augustin de Sainte-Beuve, *Notice to Oeuvres de Madame de Souza, Adèle de Sénange, Charles et Marie, Eugène de Rothelin*, (Paris, 1840), in *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Maxime Leroy, (Paris 1951), p. viii. He adds also this determinist remark on *Eugénie et Mathilde* and the attention to maternal love: 'C'est le cri du cœur de bien des mères sous l'Empire, que madame de Souza [í ] n'a pu s'empêcher d'exhaler', (italics our own), p. xvi.

<sup>138</sup> We are indebted to Carpenter for the only general analysis of Souza's works, however in her latest publication she refused to call *Eugénie et Mathilde* as émigré novel on the grounds of its late publication (1811). *Eugénie et Mathilde, ou Mémoires de la famille du comte de Revel*, by Madame de Souza, MHRA Critical Texts, Vol. 26, (London, 2014), p. 3. Louichon, *Lire Adèle de Sénange*, pp.



The first four novels of Souza will be considered: *Adèle de Sénange* (1793); *Emilie et Alphonse*, (1799); *Charles et Marie*, (1802); *Eugénie et Mathilde, ou Mémoires de la famille du comte de Revel*, (1811).<sup>139</sup> Chronologically, they are the closest to her emigration, and either evoke the emigration explicitly or refer to it implicitly in a recurrent manner. *Adèle de Sénange* and *Eugénie et Mathilde* are émigré novels *par excellence* because the first was written during the emigration as a way to cope with a traumatising time, the second narrates the exile of a noble family to Belgium and Holland. As for *Emilie et Alphonse*, although there is not any implicit mention of the emigration, the notion of uprooting and displacement is distilled subtly in the plot, notably in the forced exile the heroine has to comply with. In *Charles et Marie* the action is set in England, which means we can see the emigration as underlying inspirational force.

Claire de Kersaint, later known as Madame de Duras, was born in 1777; her father was a successful naval officer from Brittany, her mother the daughter of a family based in the French colony of La Martinique. Claire followed the traditional education for noble girls staying in a convent where she met her long-term friend and fellow émigrée the future Madame de la Tour du Pin. The Revolution dissolved the family ties: Claire's parents divorced in 1792, her father became active as a constitutionalist, and was guillotined with other Girondins in December 1793, as Claire and her mother fled to America. Her mother is said to have been mentally weakened from those traumatic experiences but Claire showed maturity very early on in recovering the family fortune invested abroad. In 1794-5, after a brief stay in Switzerland, they travelled to London, where she married the duc de Duras in 1797,

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403-415; Joan Hinde Stewart, "Gilded cages" Adèle de Souza in *Gynographs: French novels by women of the late eighteenth century*, (University of Nebraska Press, 1993), pp. 152-170.

<sup>139</sup> *Eugène de Rothelin* was published in 1810. *Eugénie et Mathilde*, published a year later, is more pertinent to our research as it is a traditional émigré novel.

who, according to observers 'ne dédaignait pas les 25 000 francs de rente de cette jeune personne'.<sup>140</sup> After the birth of her two daughters she travelled back and forth between London and Paris to claim her father's possessions and obtain the radiation of her husband from the émigrés list.<sup>141</sup> She was back in France permanently in 1808, date of her first encounter with Chateaubriand, and the start of their ambiguous friendship, until her death in 1828. Madame de Duras was one of the most famous salonnières of the second Restoration and a supporter of liberal monarchy. She obtained through her relations many important posts for Chateaubriand.<sup>142</sup> She published her first novel, *Ourika*, in 1824, followed by *Edouard* in 1825, both were successful.<sup>143</sup> Two other works, *Olivier ou le secret*, and *Le Moine* were read to an intimate circle only and the first published posthumously. *Les Mémoires de Sophie* and *Amélie et Pauline* are unfinished but have recently been published under the direction of Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm.<sup>144</sup> The 'inédit' texts will be analysed alongside the more famous *Ourika*, *Edouard* and *Olivier ou le secret*. Duras inserted both subtle and obvious references to the exile, driving us to speak of émigré novels in her case too.

What we know of Claire de Duras is through her correspondence and the memoirs of her friends, notably Madame de La Tour du Pin who highlighted her

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<sup>140</sup>Henriette Lucy Dillon, marquise de La Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme de 50 ans, 1778-1815*, (Paris, 1913), 2ème partie, p. 163. In Duras belonged to the most fortunate part of the French emigration thanks to her mother's fortune she had recovered in Martinique, in Boigne, *Récits*, p. 136.

<sup>141</sup>She also stayed in Lausanne in 1805, which has a great influence on some of her émigré novels where she depicts a Swiss city.

<sup>142</sup>Notably in the Académie Française, as an ambassador of Sweden; and after 1815 when he became a ministre de l'Intérieur and then accessed the Chambre des pairs. Agénor Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, (Paris, 1898), p. 102-10; 170; 180.

<sup>143</sup>*Ourika* was a huge success, and was re-edited three times between 1824 and 1826. Plays adapted the story, the salon of 1826 had painting called *Ourika raconte son histoire et ses malheurs* by Gérard and Louis XVIII ordered a vase representing the famous black heroine. For this thesis we have used various editions online and in print. For *Ourika* we used *Ourika*, ed. by Christiane Chaulet Achour, (Paris, 2006); for *Olivier* we used *Madame de Duras, Ourika, Edouard, Olivier ou le secret*, Marc Fumaroli and Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm, (eds), (Paris, 2007). *Edouard* was consulted online *Edouard* (1861), Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed December 2015].

<sup>144</sup>Claire de Duras, *Mémoires de Sophie, suivi de Amélie et Pauline*, ed. by Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm, (Paris 2011).

unhappy marriage 'M. de Duras avait une attitude de plus en plus mauvaise à l'égard de sa femme'; 'la pauvre Claire ne pensait qu'à faire du roman avec un mari qui était le moins romantique de tous les hommes'.<sup>145</sup> Her literary talent was recognised by her contemporaries, and Stendhal is said to have based the character of Octave in *Armance* (1827) on Claire de Duras. The duchesse de Maillé wrote that out of all the women who took up writing, Duras was the one that did so with the most talent and success.<sup>146</sup> Biographers Agenor Bardoux and Gabriel Pailhès, both considered her to be a minor figure but acclaimed her literary talent because it was virile.<sup>147</sup> Before them, Sainte-Beuve had criticised Madame de Duras' family for having kept her other works hidden for too long, resulting in missing the appropriate time for their publication: he stated that the duchesse was stuck in the Restoration spirit, not a writer for the *roi-citoyen* era of the 1830s.<sup>148</sup> Pailhès, despite his desire to contradict Sainte-Beuve's judgement and curb the excessive misogynist criticism, advanced that she did not share the *mal du siècle* of the male Romantics; her melancholia being totally and evidently sourced from her life and emotions: 'Les œuvres de femmes sont-elles souvent autre chose que des réminiscences et des souvenirs ?'<sup>149</sup> Bertrand-Jennings and Finch have equipped us with solid studies on Duras' works, highlighting how modern she was in her painting of the outcast heroes and dysfunctional society.

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<sup>145</sup> Her correspondence is reproduced in Abbé Gabriel Pailhès, *La Duchesse de Duras et Chateaubriand d'après des documents inédits*, (Paris, 1910). La Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme de 50 ans*, p. 190-1. see also Maillé, *Souvenirs des deux Restaurations*, p. 233.

<sup>146</sup> Stendhal, *Armance*, (Paris, 1827), Maillé *Souvenirs*, p. 230-1.

<sup>147</sup> 'malgré une santé brisée par les émotions et par une sensibilité aigue, exerça, grâce à la virilité impétueuse de son esprit, une action considérable dans le parti royaliste'. 'Cette page virile' Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 5; 59. Despite the sheer success of her novels in the 1820s, Madame de Duras was reduced to her status of *confidante* of Chateaubriand and attached pejoratively to the obsolete regime of the Bourbons. Pailhès' aim was to decipher the genius in Chateaubriand through the study of his correspondence with Duras and the feelings he inspired to her. Pailhès, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 2.

<sup>148</sup> Sainte-Beuve, 'Madame de Duras' in *Portraits de Femmes* (Paris, 1886), pp. 62-80, Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed January 2014]

<sup>149</sup> Pailhès, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p.29.

The time frame within which these three émigré writers wrote and published is meaningful in itself. Genand has looked at a selection of émigré novels from a restricted time frame, 1797-1803, where the immediacy of the distress felt from the Revolution upheaval is palpable. Carpenter restrictively called 'émigré novels' the production between 1792 and 1800, which excluded Souza's 1811's story of a family emigrating.<sup>150</sup> Having a strict time limit is very misleading. Genand acknowledged a shift from 1800 onward, with émigrés presented as metaphors of a regretted, exorcised past rather than heroes as such.<sup>151</sup> This is due to the authorisation of return to France on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1802, which changed the way the émigré character was represented.<sup>152</sup> Her approach has the advantage of recognising the literary merit of a later testimony of emigration, which is the case for most novels of the corpus under consideration here. The urgency of the situation had faded, the émigré novelist tried hard to make a meaningful link between past and present, and to anticipate the future. Boigne and Duras wrote their memoirs and novels between 1820 and the 1860s; whilst Souza, although she started in the midst of her emigration in London in 1793, published her most characteristic émigré novel in 1811.

Four chapters will work towards establishing the importance of defining the émigré novel in relation to the historical context, *i.e.* the French Revolution, Restoration and Empire but also London in the 1790s. In fact, these events shape the literary genre in many ways: the trauma of having witnessed violence, destruction

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<sup>150</sup>Carpenter, *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p.3.

<sup>151</sup>They are used as anti-heroes: the count d'Erfeuil in *Corinne* is frivolous and pretentious, contrasts with Oswald who is modest but brave. Stéphanie Genand, 'Le rôle stratégique de l'épistolaire dans la représentation de l'émigration. L'exemple du *Retour d'un émigré, ou Mémoires de M. d'Olban*, 1803' in Jaquier et al., *Destins romanesques*, pp. 215-229, p.218.

<sup>152</sup>Csepento, 'Les romans d'émigration au féminin' in *Ibid*, pp. 270-286, p. 277.

and death and the struggles linked to emigration abroad encouraged noblewomen to record what they had witnessed and make it literature. A typical case of this assertion of authorship made easier by the experience of the emigration is Souza's first novel. It also meant that the emphasis shifted away from traditional sentimental themes, and into themes which held meaning to the émigrées, sometimes with a social perspective.<sup>153</sup> Consequently, the émigré novel, because of its troubled historical roots, encloses specific elements such as the interplay between fiction and memories, the use of writing as coping with trauma and, in our female-only corpus, the insistence on an alternative to rigid gender conventions post-revolution.

The first chapter will scrutinize the form of the émigré texts of our corpus, making sense of the interaction between memoirs and novel, autobiography and fictionalisation. By looking at the genesis of the émigré novel and places where it innovates or subverts the literary canons it developed within, it will be possible to argue for its dynamism at a historical and literary level and to define it more precisely. This chapter will thus pursue the effort of definition of the émigré novel as genre started by Wittmeier, Genand and the scholars of *Destins romanesques de l'émigration*; however no other study has systematically combined a literary and historical approach on exclusively female émigré novels. The interlocking of the individual experience of the emigration with the fictionalisation process will be examined to find out whether the greater emphasis on talking about oneself, via intertwining memoirs and fiction, is what makes the émigré novel original and innovative. The émigré novel is the best example to apply Michel Delon and Alain Malandain's idea of the «échanges permanents entre fiction, autobiographie, pseudo-

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<sup>153</sup>It has to be noted that the motive for writing had changed after the Revolution and emigration: keeping memories alive was primordial in order to make the present and/or future more bearable. It counteracted what the Revolution had vowed to do, the *tabula rasa* of French history, culture and religion.

mémoires, mémoires réels in the French novel.<sup>154</sup> The chosen corpus reflects this hybridity: the memoirs tend to romanticise anecdotes, the novels evoke personal emigration memories. Can it be said in this respect that the émigré novel is fictive memoirs or fictive autobiography? The relationship between the imaginary and memories will be systematically explored to find out why and how our émigrées felt compelled to 'romanticise' their lives in such an innovative way. The émigré novel's intersection with the autobiographical will bring us to seek a middle ground between misleading biographical approaches and the emigration as driving force in the émigré novels.

Chapters two and three will illustrate the idea that the émigré novel consistently dealt with the trauma of the Revolution, the emigration and the re-adaptation to a changed France at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The latest developments in trauma studies will frame our reflection on the émigré novel's working through a decade of painful exile in London. The major difficulty is not to fall into misinterpretations in identifying references to the trauma of the emigration through fictionalisation. From this, it is necessary to split the research into two domains, reflecting the contrasting and varied individual ways in which our novelists dealt with the trauma of their emigration in writing and the many filters at stake. Chapter two will elucidate the hidden, camouflaged, embellished, transposed traumatic memories through stylistic figures such as continued metaphor, stereotypical heroines and the painting of an inward exile to withdraw from the aggression of society. This will allow us to understand how our authors came to terms with their traumatic past, the impact of time elapsing between the events and their reminiscing in fiction, and whether those strategies can be said to renew the

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<sup>154</sup> Michel Delon, Pierre Malandain, *Littérature française du XVIIIème siècle*, (Paris, 1996), p.366.

sentimental tropes. This approach is inspired by Astbury's study on Chateaubriand's *Les Natchez*, which affirmed that projecting the traumatic past onto fictional situations and characters enabled the émigrés to put it behind them and find relief. She based her conclusions on Felman's re-enactment theory, directly applying clinical stages of recovery from trauma to literature.<sup>155</sup> In chapter three, the more explicit references to a painful exile will be analysed. This will lead us to show that original narrative strategies, such as the emergence of a specific melancholia linked to a forced exile in the heroines, made personal memories worthy of literature. Secondly, it will be argued that the explicit treatment of the emigration also betrays an attempt at collectively mourning this traumatising event, at a time when many survivors of the Revolution competed or united in their shared memories. In light of the developments in memory studies, chapter three will thus engage with the idea that the émigré author did also narrate the emigration to get a sense of belonging to a mourning community of ex-exiles.

Chapter four will ask whether the female émigré novel was a vector to propose more modern gender relationships. Whilst the concept of gender is useful to our research it will not be used as a super concept, but form part of the conceptual theories we test out on the émigré novel, alongside with the question of the genre and trauma, for the purpose of defining this sub-genre. Chapter four will render an analysis of what links the demands for equal loving relationships with the experience of the exile in London. Did the hybrid genre of the émigré novel represent, ephemerally, a platform from which to safely voice women's frustration, without infringing strict gender rules in society and in literature? Is there in the female émigré novel a hidden desire to link the fatal destiny of the uprooted émigrée,

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<sup>155</sup> Astbury, *Narrative Responses to the trauma of the French Revolution*, (Oxford, 2012), p. 168. She investigates how Chateaubriand dealt with the trauma of emigration in *Les Natchez*, and especially in the second part of the novel, which is un-revised and dates from his exile in London, p. 174; 192.

deprived of any future, with that of the lonely and disillusioned nineteenth-century noblewoman? Or is it solely that émigré authors voiced their rude awakening from believing that love could be revolutionised, centring their demands on emotional equality rather than a political and social one? Two approaches will be intertwined to provide a fuller picture of the originality of the demands of our émigré writers. Firstly, how the traditional themes of heartbreak, and sensible heroes/heroines are transformed because of the experience of the emigration in London. Secondly, how much reform was desired by our three novelists in their society, and how much this was due to the observation of foreign gender norms in Britain. Chapter four will thus bridge the gap in investigating why the selected émigrées felt England was a fit vehicle to denounce the unsatisfying gender relationships in French post-revolutionary society. The literary innovation and social demands in gender relationships are to be studied together to bring to the fore the modernity of the émigrées texts.

Alain Corbin in his preface to Judith Lyon-Caen, *La Lecture et la vie, les usages du roman au temps de Balzac* associated the need for clarity and order with the rise of the realist novel: 'l'histoire récente a convaincu les contemporains de la fragilité des régimes, du raccourcissement des durées, de l'instabilité des convictions', which meant that the novelist's task was to make sense of this perceived chaos.<sup>156</sup> The female émigré novel too had tried to decrypt a new reality before this, and it is what this thesis will aim to demonstrate. In exploring systematically the form and content of the female émigré novels, within their precise historical context, it will be possible to conceptualise the émigré literary vein or moment. Far from

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<sup>156</sup>Judith Lyon-Caen, *La lecture et la vie, les usages du roman au temps de Balzac*, (Paris, 2006), p. 10-11.



being isolated, this particular genre and moment in literary history teach us more about the post-revolutionary evolution, on social, cultural and political levels, and help to make the junction between the dying sentimental vogue, Romanticism and the realist novel. Will be avoided, on the one hand, the assumption that since the three selected novelists possess similarities in the way they write about -and around- the emigration, that all émigré texts must be constructed on the same model; and on the other hand, that because they depart slightly from the expected sentimental form they must therefore already be pre-romantic. This rehabilitation of forgotten women émigré novels does not aim to emulate a linear literary history, but it hopes to complete our understanding of the interaction between the Revolution, individual trajectories and their recording in prose fiction.

## CHAPTER 1

### The genre of the female émigré novel

*‘Tout est vraisemblable et tout est romanesque dans la révolution de la France’<sup>1</sup>*

In the preface to his novel *L’émigré*, the émigré novelist Sénac de Meilhan pointed out the confusion between reality and fiction felt by many of his compatriots. He was writing at a time when the functions of the novel and novelists were being redrawn: all of a sudden the literary criteria of verisimilitude became irrelevant. How could a novel pretend to be plausible when such bizarre and barbaric events were happening in the streets of Paris for everyone to witness? Wittmeier, in her study on the specificity of émigré writers as opposed to non-émigré writers, underlined that ‘the line between the scripted and the authentic undeniably shifted during this period’ and that ‘the event is Romanesque and the Romanesque is the event’<sup>2</sup> As the previously prevailing ruling concept of plausibility became blurry, novelists had

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<sup>1</sup>Sénac de Meilhan, *L’émigré*, (Paris, 1797), p. viii. Madame de Genlis too writes in her émigré novel that one of her characters has a life which is ‘extraordinaire’, Félicité de Genlis, *Les Petits Emigrés, ou correspondance de quelques enfans ; ouvrage fait pour servir à l’éducation de la jeunesse*, 2 tomes, (Paris, 1798), p.112.

<sup>2</sup>Wittmeier, ‘The Eighteenth-Century Emigrant’, p. 94. Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, *Idée sur les romans*, (Paris, 1878), p. 33, <https://archive.org/details/idesurlesromans00sadegoog>, [consulted November 2015]. Sade develops the same idea that the novels become somewhat boring and run out of steam in comparison to the intensity and extraordinary character of the revolutionary events. This shakes the concept of plausibility previous critics had praised.

greater opportunities to engage with literary creation and their individual take on the quick pace of events following 1789. This took place in a climate of destruction of cultural, spiritual and social reference points with the attacks on the Church, the monarchy and aristocratic privileges that accompanied the Revolution. The novelist, witness of those changes, often victim and refugee abroad, had thus a new found legitimacy and potentially new views on the mission of literature. Apart from the *Destins romanesques* scholars who systematised this idea to a few novels, the fact that the émigré novel could be the key to understanding this shift has been overlooked by literary scholars focusing primarily on production from the second half of the century, and the rise of Romanticism and the realist novel. Kathleen Hart states that the writing of later female novelists such as George Sand combined the feature of spiritual autobiography and historical memoir<sup>3</sup> It would be both useful and pertinent to attempt to bridge the gap between the pre-revolutionary literature and the later production, thanks to the innovative turn taken by the émigré novel. Alison Finch proposed to see the realist novel as a modern conception of history: in Balzac, because of lost opportunities after Napoleon's dismissal, protagonists have no other outlets than plots or amorous affairs.<sup>4</sup> Could this influence of history on the characters' psychology already be present in the émigré novel in their bitter representation of exile and post-revolutionary years?

This first chapter will explore the ambiguous and confusing, yet meaningful intertwining of real memories of emigration with the model of sentimental fiction at work, in a bid to provide a definition for the short lived émigré novel of the early nineteenth century. The émigré texts selected in our corpus will be actively compared

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<sup>3</sup> Hart, *Revolution and Women's Autobiography*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Alison Finch also relates this interest for history in the novels to the interest for childhood, decisive in building the adult's character, from Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Emile ou De l'éducation*, (Paris, 1762). Finch, 'Reality and its representation' p. 41; 43.

in order to find out how the Revolution and exile shifted ideas about what is a novel and how much personal and general histories it can narrate. This will add to the ongoing groundbreaking, and yet still too scarce, studies on the émigré novel, and a fortiori on the female émigré novel. By putting to the fore the interaction of life memories and fiction, we will ask whether we can speak of a genre or sub-genre within the sentimental vein, a vein both emulated and rejected. To help with coining the émigré novel definition, the literary landscape of the period will be mobilised, notably the memorial frenzy of the first half of the nineteenth century, favoured by many émigré noblewomen, and other novelistic trends and themes, such as the Gothic novel and the romantic tendency to systematically paint a *mal être* in protagonists. This chapter demonstrates that there is a link between emigration and renewal in the literary form and tropes of the novel; it also proposes some characteristics to define the émigré novel more concisely.

The approach will be threefold and comparative: examining the form, content and the 'mise en abyme' at work in the selected corpus. Due to the pressures put on women in society and in literature, the upheaval of the Revolution and the porosity of the available genres, such an approach is pertinent if we are to pay specific attention to the authorial project, conception and reception of the female émigré novel. First, a scrutiny of the pre-texts will show the difficult assertion of authorship for the French noblewoman refugee in London. The enunciation choices made will reveal the tension between requirements for novel and memoir writing. Secondly, the themes present in the corpus will be compared in order to test out the originality of the émigré novel within the wider sentimental trend, and whether it can be said that personal memories of the emigration are a dominant feature. Finally, the hybrid nature of the female émigré novel truly comes to light in the 'mise en abyme' of

memory recording found across the corpus. This indicates that the specificity of the émigré prose lies in its engaging with personal life memories and how they are dealt with in fiction.

## **I. The émigré novel, memoirs or tale of the emigration?**

### **1. The assertion of authorship in the pre-text reveals a hesitation between the memoirs and the novel**

The forewords and prefaces, or ‘pre-texts’, are often paradoxical and reveal hesitations about the status of the female novelist who often preferred to be seen as a mere painter of life, like a memoirist. To pretend to be an author in the 1800s was still to sell oneself in the public sphere, the figure of the noble femme d’esprit was associated with immoral behaviours and the Ancien Régime salonnière. Claire Cottin, acclaimed novelist, still anticipates criticism in the preface of *Claire d’Albe* because of ‘son âge et [í ] son sexe’<sup>5</sup> At the same time though, the ‘typically feminine’ prose was praised because it was believed to best encapsulate the nuances of emotions. Women novel readers fell under the same scrutiny: after Rousseau, and the increasing popularity of the novel of sensibility, the thought that fiction could push people to be immoral in real life was commonplace.<sup>6</sup> These attacks on the sentimental novel and its female authors and readers underlined the sexual licence

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<sup>5</sup>Sophie Cottin, *Claire d’Albe*, (Paris, 1805), p. vii, Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed April 2015].

<sup>6</sup>Jean Jacques Rousseau championed this belief, but was far from being isolated. His position was paradoxical because he categorically stated women shouldn’t read but at the same time valorised sensible qualities for both sexes. In 1790s in Britain, sensibility was associated to irrational and the French Revolution by prints. Sensibility meant effeminate men, preferring weeping passively over taking action. In Janet Todd, *Sensibility, an Introduction*, (London, 1986), p. 133-4; 137; 141.

and risk of unruly behaviour in the family realm.<sup>7</sup> Women from this corpus, with the exception of Souza, who published her first novel in 1793, were active in literature in the first half of the nineteenth century, a time when the sentimental novel came increasingly under attack not only for being subversive but also dated and spreading ridiculous mannerisms in social behaviour.<sup>8</sup> So what strategies did these noblewomen writers adopt? And in what way did being an émigré shape their justification of authorship?

Memoirs, as a genre available for the émigré noblewomen, offered a double justification of authorship making it a 'safe' activity to undertake: first as an aristocratic genre *par excellence* and thus naturally fitted to the leisured noblewoman and secondly, because the political turmoil experienced justified and legitimised the attempt at writing accounts of one's experience of it. Until the Revolution, autobiographies were also rare and exclusively written by men, with the notable exception of Manon Roland in 1793.<sup>9</sup> The explosion of émigré memoirs up until the 1850s, and the sizeable proportion of female ones attest to this.<sup>10</sup> The prefaces emphasised above all modesty and sincerity, and, despite the strong attraction of stories of the old court etiquette and the emigration, female memoirists were

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<sup>7</sup>Todd, *Sensibility, an Introduction*, p. 136. Michel Foucault explained this aversion for novels as 'instrument of perversion par excellence' in *Madness and Civilization*, (London 1977), p. 219.

<sup>8</sup> According to Todd, the most sustained attacks came with Jane Austen. Austen operated a systematic reversal of the sentimental themes: mothers are not dutiful, families are dysfunctional, and daughters do not marry against their fathers' will but comply with a reasonable man. She suggests *Sense and Sensibility* in instances mocks the plot of Richardson's *Clarissa*. This remark about the reversal of the sentimental themes is interesting for this analysis of the originality of the émigré novel. In Todd, *Sensibility, an Introduction*, p. 144.

<sup>9</sup>Jeanne-Marie Roland de La Platière, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, ed. by Claude Perroud, (Paris, 1905). Noticeably Roland's autobiography is called 'mémoires'. Hart, *Revolution and Women's Autobiography*, p. 28. Hart adds that by the early nineteenth century, the 'I' was still strictly masculine: 'The liberation of women's autobiographical writings would require new myths of origins that challenged patriarchal fictions'. Ibid, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup>For a review of the memoirs of the Empire and Restoration period see Jean Tulard, *Bibliographie critique des mémoires sous le Consulat et l'Empire*, (Paris, 1973). The duchesse de Gontaut, Madame de La Tour du Pin and the duchesse de Maillé in their various political opinions offer a good representation of what a female memoir is in the nineteenth century: Marie Joséphine Louise, duchesse de Gontaut, *Mémoires de Madame la duchesse de Gontaut*, (Paris, 1909); La Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme de cinquante ans*; Maillé, *Souvenir des deux Restaurations*, (Paris, 1984).

préoccupées d'accéder à une authenticité de l'être plutôt qu'à une illusoire vérité historique.<sup>11</sup> In that respect, Henri Rossi stressed that the self became the main point of focus in female memoirs rather than great events or political actors. The aristocratic attitude, or refusal to speak about the self, disappeared to the profit of a more nuanced approach introducing the self with the purpose of adding credibility.<sup>12</sup> This tendency to be more personal was not always nuanced, the vicomte Walsh proudly affirmed: 'parler des siens n'est point de l'égoïsme: aussi je ne m'excuse pas, je m'explique'.<sup>13</sup>

In the aftermath of the Revolution, the sentimental novel was still popular, yet more and more seen as dated; in parallel, the emergence of more personal memoirs was a reaction to the revolutionary upheaval. In this context, what we have called the pre-texts of the chosen corpus are a useful tool for deciphering the intentions of these women exiles turned authors and to illustrate how the lived emigration forms a constitutive part of the émigré literary project. The foreword to Adèle de Boigne's memoirs of the Revolution and emigration *Récits d'une tante* paved the way for her assertion of authorship in her subsequent novels. Indeed she did not show as much self-confidence as Walsh in justifying her personal take on the emigration experience; instead she apologised for putting herself in her memoirs. This can seem paradoxical to us, however it fits within the conceptions of the time about the genre: 'j'ai parlé de moi, trop peut-être, certainement plus que je n'aurais voulu, mais il a fallu que ma vie servît de fil à mes discours et montrât comment j'ai pu savoir ce que je raconte'.<sup>14</sup> Giachetti noted that in the memoirs the absence of sub-titles for each

<sup>11</sup> Giachetti, *Poétique des lieux*, p. 46-7; Rossi, *Mémoires aristocratiques*, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Rousseau's *Confessions* is seen as helping the shift towards more inwardness in the memoirs according to Rossi. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions*, (Paris, 1782-1789). In Rossi, *Mémoires aristocratiques*, pp. 29-36.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Alexis, vicomte de Walsh, *Souvenirs de cinquante ans*, (Paris, 1845), p. 398.

<sup>14</sup> Boigne, *Récits*, p. 6.

chapter indicated they were more personal; whereas when they were present, they recalled the lineage with the aristocratic genre and its impersonality.<sup>15</sup> Boigne did divide her five volumes into chapters, each with a detailed list of sub-titles. The title in itself reminds the reader of her being female within a familial realm. To ensure she was not seen as a real author, she even devalued her writings as a typically ‘feminine’ salon occupation: she termed it ‘une causerie de vieille, un ravaudage de salon’ with ‘pas plus d’importance qu’un ouvrage de tapisserie’<sup>16</sup> She defused criticism about the veracity of the facts by refusing to be writing ‘un livre’ and instead offering her humble yet first-hand testimony. However, her definition of truth is curious: ‘on est vrai quand on dit ce qu’on croit’ making evident she avoided being seen as a historian too. Because Boigne also wrote novels, she ventured out from the safety of memoir writing. While there is no foreword in *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* -even though her narrator voice is affirmed many times within the plot- in *Une Passion dans le grand monde* we find a declaration where, much like in the *Récits*, she pretends to paint her society as it is, almost in a documentary way, and refuses to embrace the process of fiction-writing altogether. It seems that, for Boigne, writing a novel was the same as writing memoirs, or at least she wished it to be so: her foreword talks of a ‘histoire de salon’ when her memoirs mentioned a ‘causerie de vieille’. Her stated objective for *Une Passion* was merely to paint the social group that she frequented, the ‘royalist aristocracy’ based only on her recollections.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the analysis provided by Amélie Le Normant in the preface to the 1867 edition of Boigne’s *Une Passion* stressed how much of her own life was invested in the novel: ‘La plupart des scènes de ses romans ne sont que des réminiscences, elle

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<sup>15</sup> Giachetti, *Poétique des lieux*, p. 36-7.

<sup>16</sup> *Récits*, p.6-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Récits*, p. ii.



en convient ; elle s'oy est peinte elle-même<sup>18</sup> Her novels are said to be mere *réminiscences* and her memoirs an incomplete recording of what she witnessed during the revolutionary decade: as a result, the essence of each genre is emptied and replaced by Boigne's own conception of female writing. We have reasons to think Boigne started her memoirs before her novels: both were published posthumously, but we do know that her memoirs were written as a reaction to a tragic loss in 1835.<sup>19</sup> It is logical that she started with the less threatening activity first, and then transposed a secure and familiar mode of authorship to her novel, which reinforces the idea of the porosity of genre definitions. Her legitimacy as a writer was coming from her status of noblewoman, and émigré witness and as such, she pretended to be doing no different in her novels than merely arranging her past onto paper.

When not writing their memoirs, which were a secure platform from which to claim modesty, how did the other female émigrées assert their authorship? Souza expresses in her preface to her first novel in 1793 the same desire to protect herself by the 'real' account of life. She stated that her aim was 'montrer, dans la vie, ce qu'on n'y regarde pas, et décrire ces mouvements ordinaires du cœur'.<sup>20</sup> It primarily viewed the novel as a detailed documentary of human emotions. At a later point, the novelist even makes a curious comparison with history: 'il y a des ouvrages de l'antiquité dont la vraisemblance scrupuleuse fait douter encore s'il faut les considérer ou comme l'histoire ou comme fiction morale'.<sup>21</sup> For Boigne, writing history was not modest enough; for Souza, the stamp of history brought respectability and a hint of

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<sup>18</sup>Boigne, *Une Passion*, p. iii. Amélie Le Normant was Madame Récamier's niece, and Boigne and Récamier were close friends. Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>*Récits* p. 5

<sup>20</sup>Souza, *Adèle de Sénange*, p. i.

<sup>21</sup>*Adèle de Sénange*, p. vii.

truthfulness to her fiction.<sup>22</sup> It also fits with her literary project of recording the trivial and fleeting: «J'aime à croire que l'on pourrait se rapprocher davantage de la nature, et que l'on ne manquerait pas à l'utilité, peut-être même à l'intérêt, en cherchant à tracer ces détails fugitifs qui occupent l'espace entre les événements de la vie»<sup>23</sup> From there comes morality she affirms, even though we suspect a different and more personal purpose in her writing. Indeed, when reading *Adèle de Sénange* one cannot but observe that this banality she probed is that of a timeless Ancien Régime society, as she liked to recall it in the midst of her London exile. Because of the context she wrote it in, these little things of life are anything but banal and instantly take a higher almost cathartic meaning. As a consequence, the foreword's modesty takes on a slightly different meaning if compared to the main text. The dialogue between the two helps us understand how she built her novel, with reference to the vogue for moral sentimental plots, and her more personal intentions as a female émigré writer.<sup>24</sup> For Souza, the emigration experience served as justification and motivation for becoming an author. The tension between the wish to testify of a golden age overcomes the fear of becoming a female author. The preface to *Adèle de Sénange* is a way of rooting the texts into a tradition of modest female writing, but it is intrinsically contradictory and fails to match the main text which follows.<sup>25</sup> Noticeably, these pre-texts tend to disappear once the writer has affirmed her

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<sup>22</sup>The type of antique history she describes as source for the novel is a 'romancised' history, written in a literary style, with a political and moral agenda, hence the assimilation with the novel. The Greek and Romans historians prided themselves in conveying powerful historical moments via their poetic writing style, see for instance the Greeks Herodotus, in his *Historia* 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, Thucydides, in his *War of the Peloponnesian*, 4-5<sup>th</sup> century BC; or the Roman Tacitus in his *Historiae*, or even *Ab excessu diui Augusti*, 2<sup>nd</sup> century. By referring to the great historians of the past Souza imbues her novel with morality, whilst still asserting her pretension to narrate the emotional journey of her protagonists.

<sup>23</sup>*Adèle de Sénange*, p. xx.

<sup>24</sup>Once this was established, she didn't feel the need to reiterate her declaration of intention in the successive novels, hence the absence of prefaces.

<sup>25</sup>The paradoxical prefaces can also be because the genres available, the memoirs and the sentimental novel, were not fitted to what the émigré writer wanted to voice.

narrative voice. The line between memoirs and novels is definitely not solidly drawn for émigré noblewomen taking up writing. In both Boigne and Souza's cases, despite their different experiences of exile, contemporary events and memories are triggers and main material leading them to put pen to paper.

Duras did not provide apologetic prefaces to her novels *Ourika* and *Edouard*, published in the years 1824-5.<sup>26</sup> She did not publish memoirs of her emigration like Boigne, nor did she start her writing activity during or shortly after her exile like Souza. Her fictional works received a warm welcome by the public and her literary merit was recognised by contemporaries.<sup>27</sup> The duchesse de Maillé praised her unique talent: «Dans ce temps où presque toutes les femmes ont écrit, Madame de Duras a montré une grande supériorité»<sup>28</sup> *Ourika* is, unlike Duras's other published novel, *Edouard*, set during the Revolution even if historical events are relegated to the background. At first sight, her approach to authorship seems much more confident and less based on her emigration experience than Boigne and Souza. Nonetheless, the recent publication of her unfinished novels strengthens her émigré colour, whilst it informs us a little bit more about her authorial intentions, and the way she juggled between memories and fiction writing. Indeed, Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm treats *Les Mémoires* and *Amélie et Pauline* as «romans d'émigration» and enriches the text with abundant notes on the revolutionary events and details on the real persons mentioned in the plot.<sup>29</sup> As we will subsequently see, Duras also

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<sup>26</sup>*Olivier ou le secret*, written in 1821-2 wasn't published during Duras' life because the rumours surrounding the scandalous theme of the novel -said to be about impotence- discouraged her to present it to the public.

<sup>27</sup>For a chronology of the publication and re-editions, adaptation to the theatre, by-products inspired notably by the character of *Ourika*, see the Folio Classique edition of *Ourika*, *Edouard*, *Olivier ou le secret*, ed. Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm, 'Les Oeuvres de Madame de Duras en leur temps. Chronologie d'un phénomène', pp. 212-222.

<sup>28</sup>Maillé, *Souvenirs*, p. 230-1.

<sup>29</sup>Duras, *Mémoires de Sophie, suivi de Amélie et Pauline*. ed. by Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm. Diethelm's pertinent notes after each novel inform us of the errors in the chronology, make parallels

hesitated between the memoirs and the novel and this is evident in her inédit works. One cannot but notice how identical the plots are in both texts, even though the titles indicate a clearer categorisation of the genres. Both treat the same material, freely inspired by Duras' own experience of emigration: the heroine undergoes a similar exile in Switzerland and England and heartbreak after being abandoned by her émigré companion. Thus the genre becomes almost an artificial appellation: *Les Mémoires de Sophie* are and are not memoirs, *Amélie et Pauline* is and is not a novel. According to Diethelm it is highly likely that both texts were written simultaneously, but after Duras' other novels, in the late 1820s, which corroborates the idea of a contamination between the genres. It works as if, with the same raw material, Duras attempted two narrative approaches, one memoir, one novel. This recalls Boigne's approach to memoirs and novel writing displayed in her prefaces. Are Duras' texts two fictional autobiographies or are they memoirs hidden behind a novelistic approach? Genre as defining literary category becomes artificial here, failing to define Duras' work. This is why those texts are émigré novels: their element of unity lies in the underlying reference to the Revolution and emigration.

We have made evident here various strategies for framing the authorial project, indicating the porosity and malleability of the novel and memoir genres. These strategies protect the female author and fit with her desire to record an eventful and often traumatic past. The sheer brutality of the events witnessed and the desire to record them drives our noblewomen to take up writing, with their own take on how much reserve, and how much private and historical content is acceptable. The affirmation of authorship for our three female émigré writers stems from the immediate and reflected experience of emigration. Duras' case, shows also that the

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with real life characters in Duras' life and above all refer to the author's personal correspondence which bears resemblance with the both texts.

blurring of the line between memoirs and fiction could be intentional or at the very least inevitable in an attempt to record and fictionalise a challenging moment in her exile life. Therefore, the tension between memories and fiction is one key element of the émigré novel, defining its genesis and its content.

## **2. The affirmation of authorship is facilitated by the emigration in London**

The pre-texts are a useful way of glimpsing the émigré novelist's project but they cannot explain alone what motivated a French female refugee to become an author. To do so it is necessary to consider the cultural, social and political context of 1790s England. Out of our three émigré noblewomen, Adélaïde de Flahaut is the only one to assert her novelist persona at the height of her distressful exile in London in 1793-4. Carpenter's groundbreaking contribution to the historiography of the emigration helps us understand better the genesis of *Adèle de Sénange*. It is possible that the harsh conditions of emigration and the attitude of Londoners towards French refugees she describes made it easier for Souza to assert her authorship even though she found herself as a destitute single mother in London.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Carpenter's *Refugees* demonstrated that the London elite was ready to support the French refugees on the grounds of a shared cultural background, the same hatred for the

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<sup>30</sup>Hilary Marland and Catherine Cox, in their collection of essays on migrants and the health service from the mid-twentieth century onwards in the Anglophone world, offer a more systematic approach to the relationship between welcoming country and exiles. Often the common idea is that 'immigrants are always at health disadvantage and psychological dislocation [ ] often isolated and subject to language difficulties' probing authorities to treat them differently. They insist on the importance of exploring all factors when investigating the settling of migrants, such as race, social class, gender and age. The welcoming of French exiles in 1790s London similarly has to be apprehended in relation to those criteria. In Catherine Cox, Hilary Marland, (eds), *Migration, Health, Ethnicity in the Modern World*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 4.

Revolution, and an enhanced sense of tolerance towards fellow Christians.<sup>31</sup> Several elements have to be added to this. First, it appears that Souza was relatively isolated in London: it must have been a shock to find herself with few resources and very little support, in contrast to her animated salon in Paris. Her connections were dissolved by the emigration: her lover Talleyrand had left her and frequented the Juniper circle with Madame de Staël.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, examples of successful British women writers were present around her, such as Charlotte Smith or Frances Burney. The conditions for publication in 1790s London were easier for women, even though one should not exaggerate the degree of independence they enjoyed. In Britain, the coffee shop culture secluded women in the domestic realm, and the prospect of having commercial success was a daunting one for most. Meanwhile, the feminine quality of writing, greater sensibility and a talent to depict the emotions well, was paradoxically praised. Consequently, writing was a way for women of accessing public acclaim but it also enclosed them into a hegemonic male set of expectations.<sup>33</sup> French perceptions of British women are often stereotypical and invariably used to castigate home customs: Staël spoke through her heroine Corinne to comment on the limitations to the level of freedom enjoyed by the British woman. Her view is however biased as she herself was marginalised by the British elite

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<sup>31</sup> Frances Burney's campaign crystallised this original attitude from the British elite: she published a text calling the British to help the French émigrés on the ground of Christian charity, see Maria Jernic's analysis in 'Challenging Englishness, Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*' in Adrian Cracium, Kari Lokke (eds), *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, (New York Press, 2001), p.65. Her novel *The Wanderer, or Female Difficulties* (1814) criticized the hegemony of patriarchal rule in her society. This enables us to associate contestation of limited field of action for women with the support for the French émigrés: those fights were interconnected for British intellectual women.

<sup>32</sup> Letters between Souza and Windham exist. Souza asked Windham for a passport in an undated letter. There is also the evidence that Windham was with her in Paris before ('you left me coldly'), in Windham papers, 37915 f. 222. In ff. 223: Souza wrote: 'I'll live only to love you'. She certainly had a great affection for Windham before she moved to London. Morris said she tried to marry the young Lord Wycombe without success, in *The diary and letters of*, vol. 1, p. 355; vol.2, p. 295.

<sup>33</sup> Wolfgang affirms that novels idealized the informal and natural feminine voices, in *Gender and voice*.

during her exile in Surrey.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, this unique state of things probably changed the way Souza saw herself, not solely as a French noblewoman, but as an émigrée in London, justified in selling her literary talents to make ends meet. On top of the old cultural connections between British and French elite, the general fascination and curiosity for stories of the émigrés made it easier for a new writer to become visible. Newspapers were saturated with émigrés' advertisements offering their services, from teaching to dancing and fencing. The solid network of émigré press, for instance Jean Marie Peltier's newspaper *L'Ambigu*, offered a starting point for publicity and publishing opportunities for a willing author.<sup>35</sup> For example, in his *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, Chateaubriand recalled being helped by Peltier.<sup>36</sup> Finally, it is evident that the traumatic nature of Souza's exile, with the decapitation of her husband and the pressing need for cash formed a conjunction of psychological and materialistic motives pushing her to write. Emigrating made Souza a novelist.

### **3. The shift in the enunciation reveals a firmer assertion of authorship, away from the epistolary novel and the memoirs-writing style**

The analysis of the enunciation across the selected corpus shows a progression from the memoir-style writing and traditional epistolary novel towards the more confident third person narrator. The following section will demonstrate that

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<sup>34</sup> Germaine de Staël, describes the monotonous life in English elite circles where women never express themselves and are used to 'dès l'enfance [à] tout supporter'. *Corinne*, (Paris, 1985), cited in Marguerite de Coïasnon, *Ecrire de soi, Mme de Genlis et Isabelle de Charrière, l'autorité féminine en fictions (1793-1804)*, (Paris, 2013), p. 368; 370; p. 230. Madame de Staël was not well seen in London: she had left her newborn baby to join her lover in Juniper Hall and live in concubinage with him. Her fierce independence and influence on ideas at a time England was at constant war with France also breached the accepted behaviour for women and made matters worse.

<sup>35</sup> Newspapers such as the *Courier de l'Europe* (1776-1791) are seen by Burrows as an agent of cultural transfer in Ann Thompson, Simon Burrows, (eds), *Cultural transfers: France and Britain in the long eighteenth century*, SVEC: 2010, 04, pp. 189-201.

<sup>36</sup> Peltier found a flat for Chateaubriand and promised to help him publish his *Essai sur la Révolution*. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, Livres I à XII, (Paris, 1989), Livre 9, Chap. 5, p. 638-9.

experimenting with contrasted enunciations and the departure from the epistolary structure serves the narration of the private through the strengthening of the authorial voice. *La Maréchale*, the shorter of Boigne's two novels, illustrates the oscillation between safe versus assertive modes of narration in one text. *La Maréchale* does not have a preliminary modest foreword and isn't an epistolary novel like *Une Passion*. Instead, it adopts the third person enunciation and its omniscient point of view. The narrator's power is limitless since it selects, slows down or speeds up the action at will. Through this more hands-on type of enunciation, Boigne pushes further the narrator-reader relationship. The general and vague *«nous»* used in order to get rid of her responsibility as author, creates a certain familiarity between her and the reader: *«Il nous faut encore un peu abuser de la patience du lecteur»*<sup>37</sup> This direct speech form allows the narration to pause and open up a digression to add more insight into the plot or characters: in chapter 2, the heroine's family history is introduced this way. Full of precautions, *«au risque de faire rejeter ces feuilles avec dédain»* those incursions resemble the declaration of modesty usually placed in the preface.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, these insertions often take the form of oral conversation, as if Boigne was informally telling a story to a small audience: *«Tranchons le mot, elle était laide»* *«Gudule, puisque aussi bien vaut lui donner ce nom qu'elle acceptait»* and *«Cet Henri d'Estouville que nous avons vu préparer»*<sup>39</sup> This informality and direct contact between author and reader recalls the informality with which Boigne called her *«histoire de salon»* in *Une Passion* and *«causerie de vieille»* in her memoirs. It seems that without the distance provided by the epistolary form, like in *Une Passion*, Boigne's voice as narrator identified with that of the memoirs or even informal salon conversations. Nonetheless, Boigne asserts her authorship in places when she

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<sup>37</sup>Boigne, *La Maréchale*, p.48.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, p.34.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, p. 160; 176; 244.



qualifies herself as an *écrivain* taking charge of enlightening the reader about the story of la maréchale in chapter 2, in order to *comprendre le passé, déjà un peu long pour une héroïne de roman*<sup>40</sup> Her presence as narrator is no longer a literary convention, she brings it to the fore, acknowledging she is writing a *roman* and not a collage of her past memories as she pretended in her other novel's foreword. At the same time, she justifies her digressions by the need to understand the past, an aim shared with the memoirs, and which echoes the genealogical first chapter of her *Récits*. Boigne as narrator has also the last word at the end of the story: *Arrêtons-nous là*<sup>41</sup> She experimented with contradictory types of authorship in her novel and it is at the intersection of memoirs and fiction narration that the female émigré voice is born, progressively escaping from the epistolary form to embrace more willingly an assumed authorial persona.

Just as memoir-writing was seen as an acceptable activity for noblewomen, so was letter-writing.<sup>42</sup> Letter writing transferred its respected aura onto the epistolary novel and offered a way to camouflage the authorial influence and guarantee plausibility. Many epistolary novels started with a justification of the authenticity of the letters, having been found or transcribed by the editor.<sup>43</sup> For instance, Souza insisted on the authenticity of the letters in her brief foreword to *Emilie et Alphonse* and again, at the end of the novel, she informed the reader of what happened to the

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid, p. 33-4

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.133

<sup>42</sup>Elizabeth Goldsmith showed how for Madame de Sévigné letter-writing became a vital need, leading her to even write letters in advance, which resembles the writing of a journal, or an epistolary novel. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, *Giving Weight to Words: Mme de Sévigné's letters to her daughter* in Donna C. Stanton, *The Female Autograph*, pp. 96-103, p. 99. Rossi has argued that epistolary novels with a single voice were very close to memoirs. Rossi, *Mémoires aristocratiques*, p.112.

<sup>43</sup>Such a declaration of authenticity is found also in Benjamin de Constant novel *Adolphe*, (Londres, 1816): *anecdote trouvée dans les papiers d'un inconnu et publiée par M. Benjamin de Constant* See also: Astolphe de Custine, *Aloys ou le religieux du Mont Saint Bernard*, (Paris, 1829). Both on Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed June 2015]. Custine writes under the heading *avant-propos de l'éditeur* that *cette histoire est vraie* and is published because the hero of the story died.

characters after the letters stopped.<sup>44</sup> Todd explained that in the 1800s the epistolary form, denying authorial judgement, gave way to the omniscient narrative voice that hindered self-indulgence and un-mediated displays of sensibility and allowed a multiplicity of responses.<sup>45</sup> Todd thus associated the decline of the sentimental vogue with the affirmation of third-person narration and realism. This sense of progression is best seen in Souza's following novels: from *Adèle de Sénange* in 1793 to *Eugénie et Mathilde* in 1811, she had time to refine her literary style, from the epistolary novel, to the diary and to a third-person narrator novel.<sup>46</sup> In *Adèle de Sénange*, Lord Sydenham speaks in the first person in the letters he writes to Henry, but we never read his friend's replies: as such, the novel is more a long monologue than a dialogue; only interrupted by Eugénie's letter. The epistolary genre seems to be a convenient way of getting closer to the hero's inner feelings and reflections, and to paint Adèle only via his anxious gaze.<sup>47</sup> In *Emilie et Alphonse* (1799), another epistolary novel, the letters 'published' are in majority from Emilie's mother to her elder daughter and from Emilie to her niece, but we don't get the daughter or niece's replies. As the story progresses, the action centres on Emilie's letters to her niece only, becoming a monologue much like Lord Sydenham's in *Adèle de Sénange*. There is thus an obvious will to tighten the enunciation, moving away from the epistolary novel. *Charles et Marie* (1802) is not an epistolary novel but a diary, written day after day using 'je', and addressed to an unknown friend: 'Je pensai que vous liriez ce journal'<sup>48</sup> Here, Souza had freed herself from the epistolary novel

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<sup>44</sup>Whilst this is typical of epistolary novels, there is something quite artificial and conventional about it, because it comes after *Adèle de Sénange*, where no such declaration of letter authenticity was displayed.

<sup>45</sup>Todd, *Sensibility*, p. 148.

<sup>46</sup>Those are dates of publication, provided she wrote her novels and published them shortly after.

<sup>47</sup>The implications of the male point of view on the way gender relationships are pictured will be explored in our fourth chapter.

<sup>48</sup>'Mon ami sera pour moi une seconde conscience; je m'adresserai à lui, ou me parlerai à moi-même avec une égale sincérité' in Souza, *Charles et Marie*, p. 199.

requirements but utilised the diary as a frame to justify and introduce the story of the private. Its effects are similar to the monologue letters of Lord Sydenham or Emilie at the end of *Emilie et Alphonse*: it distanced the author from the responsibility of the characters' actions, describing the actions and characters through the biased gaze of a subjective outlook. The hero takes full responsibility for the narrative task, eclipsing the author Souza: this is visible in the first lines of *Charles et Marie*, where Charles explains the genesis and objective of his writing activity: 'j'ai suivi votre conseil: chaque jour je me suis rendu compte des différents sentiments que j'ai éprouvé'. He adds that he edited the final version to remove meaningless memories: 'ces heures que rien n'a remplies'.<sup>49</sup> Therefore it is a 'journal', but one that has been revised and modified according to its audience. In this case, the narrator-hero almost merges into the novelist as their task is similar: both have to construct a story with an audience in mind. It echoes Souza's foreword to *Adèle de Sénange* where she suggested she wrote to provide for her son and find solace in her emigration.<sup>50</sup> Only *Eugénie et Mathilde* (1811) isn't an epistolary novel, and the enunciation is in the third person.<sup>51</sup> The chronological evolution of Souza's experimentation with authorship and narrative voice reinforces the idea that existing literary genres are irrelevant for defining the female émigré novel. The reassuring but weakened frame of the epistolary novel or memoirs is thus no longer central, and Boigne and Souza concoct their own version of the sentimental novel: this is when speaking of the 'émigré novel' is pertinent.

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid, p.199.

<sup>50</sup>The start of Charles' story in the next page corroborates this claim: 'j'étais à Oxford; je venais d'avoir vingt ans', in Ibid, p. 200.

<sup>51</sup>The only female speaking with 'je' does so through letters; whilst male heroes speak with first person through epistolary, diary-style but also non-epistolary, for instance *Eugène de Rothelin* (1810), which has a first person narrator. The 'cover' of the epistolary novel allowed Souza to experiment more freely with the female first person narration.

In Duras's *inédit* works, the move towards the affirmation of the authorial voice is less linear than in Souza's successive novels, and is related to her efforts in confusing the reader as to what is the reality of her exile experience and what is fiction. At first sight, the *Mémoires de Sophie* are very much written in the memoir-writing tradition: the story of the private is told with the *je* which is abundantly combined with verbs of remembering, knowing and reflecting: *je ne sais plus à quelle occasion* *je me souviens*, *J'ai réfléchi depuis que*<sup>52</sup> However, the genre is made explicit within the text and not in a preface, unlike contemporary memoirs; the heroine-narrator affirms her intentions in telling us about her life and their risks: *J'ai peur des souvenirs que je vais retracer*'.<sup>53</sup> Although Duras dissects the psychological state of Sophie during her exile in detail, which prompts us to suspect the insertion of personal memories, the heroine is very much a fictitious émigrée. The study of the enunciation reveals that the trinity author-narrator-character, found in autobiographies, is permanently questionable. Sophie's own emigration journey diverges in many points from Duras's one: she does not flee to America before going to London, and does not get to marry a French émigré. Furthermore, it can be sensed that the fiction is given primacy over the biographical, which is relegated to being the source of inspiration and main structure of the plot. This can be affirmed by comparing the plot with Duras's life and the chronology of the 1790s. It appears this émigrée writer used her exile memories loosely, at times to enhance the pathos, at times to provide a framework to the twists and turns. The Revolution memories are subordinated to the novelistic demands and literary effects. This process is best shown by the centrality of the Swiss emigration in the *Mémoires*, something Duras's biographers haven't written on hugely, and yet seems to have had a great importance

<sup>52</sup>Duras, *Mémoires*, p. 40; 45; 93. And *Cette triste réflexion n'appartient pas à l'époque dont je parle, je la fis plus tard* p. 102.

<sup>53</sup>*Non je ne veux pas retracer ces tableaux* in *Ibid*, p. 129; 130.

for Duras.<sup>54</sup> She seems to concentrate on some episodes from her past and explore the novelistic potential within them. The historical facts are likewise reduced by their novelistic status, as elements of perturbation for the protagonist, accelerating or slowing down the plot. The main steps of the Revolution are detailed but without giving the year in most cases.<sup>55</sup> Diethelm even notes some mistakes in the chronology revealing that Duras wrote without verifying her memories.<sup>56</sup> The focus of the text is consequently shifted to the dissection of feelings between Sophie and M. de Grancey. Historical exactitude does not matter even in a text that claims to be memoirs. However, it can similarly be argued that not all memoirists had the habit of checking their sources: Madame de Boigne stated in her *Récits d'une tante* that she did not research archives to back up her memories of her exile, but jotted on paper what she recalled with its unavoidable missing parts.<sup>57</sup>

In an attempt to show the subtlety of Duras's play between the personal and fictive and to determine whether she developed a firmer idea of authorship like Boigne and Souza through narrating the emigration, the falsely generalising ought to be put under scrutiny. It is also commonplace to insert generalisations using in memoirs to pass one's own opinion as truth or to attempt at moralising the reader: the fact that it also occurs in the *Mémoires* and in the novel *Amélie and Pauline* corroborates the idea of a contamination from the memoirs-style

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<sup>54</sup>Bardoux said that Claire de Kersaint and her mother stayed briefly in Switzerland after their emigration to America and before leaving for London in April 1793, but without mentioning his sources, in Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p.51. Pailhès stated that Duras and her daughters stayed in Lausanne in a house called 'Petit-Bien' belonging to her friend Rosalie de Constant in 1805. He also publishes the correspondence between her and Rosalie. Pailhès, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 65-6.

<sup>55</sup>'14 juillet' refers to the Bastille fall in 1789; '5 octobre' to the insurrection of the women that same year. '20 juin' takes place in 1792, for the anniversary of the 'Serment du Jeu de Paume' when Louis XVI had to drink 'à la santé' of the Nation. See also the '10 août' which is in 1792 and marks the end of the monarchy and the royal family moved to the Temple, in *Mémoires*, p. 50.

<sup>56</sup>M. M. d. P. is for Mallet du Pan (and his newspaper in London *Le Mercure*) which appears in a scene that takes place about 1795-6: this is impossible as Mallet du Pan published his newspaper only from 1798. For Diethelm it is about Duras's memories in London in the years 1796-1800, in *Ibid*, note 46 p. 122.

<sup>57</sup>'N'ayant consulté aucun document, il y a probablement beaucoup d'erreurs de dates, de lieux, peut-être de faits' 'on est vrai quand on dit ce qu'on croit' in *Récits*, p.7.

enunciation. Both texts ought to be read together as they are two variations on the same mode. The duality of narrators, between the *je* (Sophie-Duras) and the *on* expressing the author's anxieties contributes to the confusion the reader feels as to who speaks and who lived the events. When Sophie discovers love, Duras writes: *Quand on commence à aimer, rien n'est indifférent ; les plus petites circonstances paraissent d'un intérêt extrême, tout se grossit*<sup>58</sup> It seems the author takes precedence as a more experienced speaker, giving context to the heroine's feelings. This is more flagrant when it touches upon the ageing process, showing Duras's personal insights more than general truth. The premonitory voice of the narrator is scattered throughout both texts: *dans la jeunesse les sentiments se nourrissent de douleur, plus tard on la craint, on sent qu'on n'a plus la force de la supporter*<sup>59</sup> Maxims such as these reveal the *je* of the émigrée behind the *on*. The acme comes when the parallel between fiction and real life does not leave room for any doubt. In London Sophie is told by a fellow émigrée character: *Quand on n'a jamais été jolie, ni heureuse, on n'a jamais été jeune*. This recalls what Duras said to the duchesse de Maillé, recorded in her memoirs: *On n'a jamais été jeune quand l'on a jamais été jolie*<sup>60</sup> Using the impersonal *on* when evoking the ageing process and the regrets it encompasses demonstrates how nagging the idea of old age and lost opportunities was for the émigré woman at the time of writing. Consequently, the impersonal pronoun is expressing the very personal, despite seemingly avoiding telling the story of the private. This layering of different types of enunciation frames the voicing of personal insights into the struggles Duras experienced in exile and in love. The utilisation of 'on' for moments of uprooting is also found in Souza's émigré novel

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<sup>58</sup> *Mémoires*, p. 38.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41, which echoes: *quand on a perdu les illusions de votre âge, mon enfant, l'indulgence vient* in *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 159.

<sup>60</sup> *Mémoires*, p. 133. Maillé, *Souvenirs*, p. 231, mentioned by Diethelm, in *Mémoires*, note 17 p. 139.

*Eugénie et Mathilde*: «Quel que soit le pays où l'on arrive [í ] la première personne qui vient vous prévenir [í ] vous devient chère, cet étonnement mêlé de tristesse, qu'on éprouve toujours en arrivant dans un lieu inconnu, and the impersonal phrasing: «premier salaire d'un travail, que vous êtes pesant à recevoir!»<sup>61</sup> The general 'on', coupled with words such as 'toujours' or 'quel que soit' aimed to convey a sense of permanent truth or popular wisdom. However it was misplaced here as it referred to Souza's own experience of exile and her acquired wisdom from it. As a consequence, those remarks lose the generality emanating from the 'on' and in fact translate the desire to voice personal insights.

It is not only the «on» which disguises more personal insights, in rare occurrences, the very intimate 'je' even slips into the enunciation apparatus. It is curious to find one occurrence of the first person in a third person novel such as Duras's *Amélie et Pauline*: «je ne sais s'il faut envier leur sort» talking about the ageing process and the bitterness felt.<sup>62</sup> It is interesting to ask who speaks under this sudden «je». Is it the author, Madame de Duras; or the omniscient narrator, a conventional entity; or it is possible that given the fact that the novel is more a draft than a finished work, Duras forgot to correct this mistake?<sup>63</sup> In Souza's émigré novel, the voice of the female émigrée author can be heard at times behind the third person enunciation, nonetheless Souza also used 'je' once, as if it was a slip of the tongue: «Je passe sous silence les regrets [í ], les souffrances [í ] pendant cette route fatigante»<sup>64</sup> It is when evoking the hardship of the stay abroad that Souza inserted

<sup>61</sup>Souza, *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.3, p. 48; 51; 59.

<sup>62</sup>Duras compares childhood years where «la vie est toute en dehors» there is «jouissance» and it is possible to «oublier de penser» with adult life where one is interiorising too much: «revenir sur ses propres chimères» in Duras, *Amélie et Pauline*, p.154.

<sup>63</sup>The fact that the texts are incomplete proves an advantage rather than an inconvenience, helping us to catch sight of the drafting process.

<sup>64</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 231.

those personal insights, as if her own memories infiltrated the plot at this point.<sup>65</sup> And in Boigne, a similar 'mistake' can be found: the narrator in *La Maréchale* surprisingly uses the first person: 'je le dis à regret'.<sup>66</sup> It seems that in their progressive assertion of authorship, and experimentation with the narrative voice, these émigré female writers were attracted to the subjectivity and depth provided by an enunciation in the first person. Does this attest of the preponderance of personal memories and reflections over the demands of fiction writing in the female émigré novel? Somehow the enunciation system did not match the émigré novelist's desire to testify from the psychological damages of the exile they lived and witnessed. The émigré's experimentation with a more authoritative and subjective narrative voice and their venturing outside the safe epistolary form proves that they sought to innovate. This leads us to ask whether the émigré novel is always a novel of the self.

## **II. The émigré novel, always novel of the self? The ~~sentimentalisation~~ of the emigration**

### **1. Sentimental memoirs, autobiographical novels**

Boigne is the only author in the selected corpus to have experimented with both memoirs and novels, making it easy to compare her stories, fictive and real. In her memoirs, there are what look like fictional short stories; whilst *Une Passion* possesses some elements which would fit in a typical émigré memoirs. Despite her

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<sup>65</sup>Carpenter picked up on the progression of Souza towards a third person novel with *Eugénie et Mathilde*, from the model of the journal; letters, in Carpenter, *The Novels of Madame de Souza in Social and Political Perspective*, (Peter Lang, 2007), p.119.

<sup>66</sup>*La Maréchale*, p. 149.



refusal to engage in literary creation, stated in the pre-text of both works, she nonetheless engaged with the fictionalisation process, and what is striking is that she did it in the middle of her *Récits*. Giachetti showed that short stories integrated in memoirs had many similarities with novels. She argued that short texts interrupting the linearity of the recollection of the past had the function of arousing the interest of the reader and guaranteeing authenticity.<sup>67</sup> What was Boigne's purpose in blurring the lines of the two genres?

The memoirs' short stories are centred on impossible love. If read on their own, they do not strike one as being anecdotes from someone's life. The tragic story of Lady Kingston is a perfect example of where reality is presented in a novelistic way. Mary Kingston, daughter of lord Kingston fell in love with Colonel Fitz-Gerald who was already married. During a trip to Ireland they succumbèrent tous deux à la passion and were pursued by the Kingston clan.<sup>68</sup> Their romanticised escape by boat, with Mary dressed as a man, was stopped and she immediately faced social scorn: «elle a failli, la morale veut qu'elle en porte la peine» Boigne distanced herself from these prejudices in addressing Mary directly in the text: «la sévérité, la cruauté des autres, tout conspirait à ta perte !»<sup>69</sup> This recalls her novel *Une Passion* where we find both the condemnation of improper feminine behaviour and its contestation.<sup>70</sup> Fitz-Gerald was then duped by a letter and assassinated. The story ends after Mary was given her bloodied portrait found on her lover's body, which caused her

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<sup>67</sup> *Une Passion*, p.145.

<sup>68</sup> *Récits*, p.149.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, p.150.

<sup>70</sup> Euphémie and Romuald's love was virtuous but necessarily condemned by society: «raison au point de vue des convenances sociales; «la vertu n'exigeait pas un si cruel sacrifice» in *Une Passion*, t.2, p.254. Saint Lambert, *Les Saisons, Poème*, (Amsterdam, 1769), see *Sarah Th...*, pp. 205-244. The story of Sarah resembles that of Mary Kingston : Sara was rich fell in love with a Scottish peasant serving her father. Sara insists on natural laws as more important than social laws, she pretends to be dead to marry him and live with him on a farm in Scotland. The narrator stays at the farm and hears the story. He knew her from before. pp. 221-241.

miscarriage and insanity: «imbécillité apathique»<sup>71</sup> This short but poignant episode is full of characters fit for a sentimental novel: «Quand on aura compulsé tous les portraits de héros de roman pour en extraire l'idéal de la perfection, on sera encore au-dessous de ce qu'il y aurait à dire du colonel Fitz-Gerald.»<sup>72</sup> The extremely tragic outcome belonged to the novel genre too: «on a inventé bien des romans moins tragiques que cette triste scène de la vie réelle»<sup>73</sup> Boigne acknowledged the novelistic qualities of this story, and yet she insisted on it being the truth. She frequented Mary herself and was very fond of her, and even saw the correspondence of Fitz-Gerald.<sup>74</sup> The reader is pushed to ask whether this was the truth or if Boigne romanticized some gossip she heard in a salon. The same interlocking of truth and fiction is also obvious with the story of Lord Cecil: «Sa vie avait été un singulier roman»<sup>75</sup> It shows how strong the temptation of writing a novel was for Boigne, and represented for her a safe way of exercising her novelistic prose within a conventional frame, which brought more value to the piece. There is in Boigne's memoirs this strong tendency to be more than a mere witness as Wagener, her biographer, suggested. Rossi argued that Boigne was manifesting here her frustration with her own failed marriage by inserting the story of ideal love stories.<sup>76</sup> However, passionate love failed in these stories and one cannot be sure Boigne would have given up a loveless yet secure marital life for a passionate yet socially scorned one. Moreover, when she started writing her memoirs in 1835, the struggles of married life were less vivid. Boigne did insert semi-fictional stories -in the sense of plausible- in her memoirs, mimicking the novelistic genre, in order to show how close reality

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<sup>71</sup>*Récits*, p. 152.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid*, p.148.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid*, p.153.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid*, respectively p. 148 and «(elle) m'a montré cette correspondance» p. 151.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid*, p.156.

<sup>76</sup>Rossi, *Mémoires Aristocratiques*, p.148-9.

got to fiction, and hence giving weight to her testimony. This echoes what Sénac de Meilhan famously notes in *L'Emigré* about the 'romanesque' and reality being indissociable.<sup>77</sup> If we compare the fictional digressions of the memoirs with the tendency to document the Revolution in the émigré novel, it appears that the first provided an escape from reality, whilst the latter based its legitimacy and dramatic intensity on a personal rendition of the exile upheavals, therefore reversing the reader's expectations. It is in this sense that Boigne's memoirs have their pertinence amongst this corpus of émigré novels: they draw attention to the mechanism of fictionalisation in isolation. The fictionalisation of memoirs starts to reveal the specificity of authentic émigré prose. The exceptional character of exile shook traditional genre boundaries, encouraging Boigne to write creatively. The emigration experience went beyond the mere recording of facts but implied personal and social changes unheard of, which the 'romanesque' could better transcribe.

The rest of the chosen émigré novels depict details of the 1790-1800s like the memoirs. The fact that 1789 and its aftermath is mentioned does not make the corpus original compared to other works by non-émigré authors. The originality comes first from the nature of the references, which is very much first-hand and raw in these novels, resembling the memoir-style of writing. In *Une Passion* the depiction of characters of the Revolution, like that of the comtesse de Kérinthie, formerly engaged in the Vendée war, strongly echoes Boigne's memoirs.<sup>78</sup> The reconstitution of salon arguments between this comtesse and Mme de Saint Eloi about the causes of the Revolution and whose fault it was, reminds us of the émigrés' community in London as described by Boigne in her memoirs. Furthermore, the objective of such details is not to add twists and turns to the plot but to educate, and, as in the memoirs,

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<sup>77</sup> 'Tout est vraisemblable et tout est romanesque dans la révolution de la France', Sénac de Meilhan, *L'Emigré*, p. viii.

<sup>78</sup> *Une Passion*, t.2, p.100-101.

to show jusqu'à quel point les émigrés [í ] étaient encore absurdes dans leurs idées sur la France<sup>79</sup> In *Ourika*, references to the Revolution are not central to the plot, except the heroine's disillusion about gaining equality and be able to marry the son of her adopted family, but Duras inserts a vivid rendition of the radicalisation of revolutionary ideas, from a belle théorie to the intérêts intimes de chacun and des prétentions, des affectations ou des peurs<sup>80</sup> Like Boigne, she casts light on one particularly ridiculous character: the old abbé, who used to se moquer de la religion, et qui à présent s'irritait qu'on eût vendu les biens du clergé<sup>81</sup> His beliefs were un enchaînement si complet d'idées fausses [í ] qu'il était source inépuisable d'amusement<sup>81</sup> The authentic émigrées novels are recognisable not by their historical accuracy but by their genuine rendition of the mindset of the time. In 'non-émigré émigré novels' references are brought in more artificially and have a dramatic function, as a way to structure the plot: August La Fontaine's *Claire du Plessis* (1796) frankly uses the revolutionary progression and European wars to pace the love story; in Charrière's *Lettres trouvées dans des portefeuilles d'émigrés* (1793) the emigration and the Vendée wars serve as a backdrop to initiate long political debates.<sup>82</sup>

Secondly, the references to the emigration are often very personal in the émigré novels of this corpus. Melissa Wittmeier has commented on the interconnection between novels and autobiographic works for émigré authors saying it was stronger in the latter because the subject of the emigrant was both lived and

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<sup>79</sup> *Récits*, p.190.

<sup>80</sup> *Ourika*, p. 45.

<sup>81</sup> Les absurdités du pauvre abbé in *Ibid*, p. 49; 52. Boigne herself reports many surreal discussions: quant aux opinions politiques c'était partout le comble de la déraison, les plus absurdes aveuglement du parti in *Récits*, p. 127. Boigne describes the extreme conservatism of some members of the high clergy, refusing to join Napoleon's concordat, in *Ibid*, p.171.

<sup>82</sup> La Fontaine, *Claire du Plessis et Clairant*. Isabelle de Charrière, *Lettres trouvées*.

living.<sup>83</sup> In Souza's *Eugénie et Mathilde* the details about the Revolution and the emigration are conditioned by personal experience, even if they are fictionalised. Souza emphasises key moments of the emigration experience from a very emotional point of view, rather than framing the plot with dates and political evolutions. The emigration dilemma, i.e. whether or not to flee, is the first intense argument between the newly married Mathilde and Edmond.<sup>84</sup> The argument Edmond uses in vain to convince Mathilde is that the emigration is *une course de plaisir et de curiosité*, which is invalidated automatically by the narration centring on her heartfelt and more reasonable argumentation. This indicates Souza's first-hand experience of this dilemma, as provided by her biographer Maricourt, and her looking back on the émigré illusions more than a decade later.<sup>85</sup> When in Brussels amongst the rich émigré community, Souza describes the well-known frivolous behaviour of the French exiles. However, she focuses more on one individual, M. de Trèmes, who is a caricature of everything that was wrong with the Ancien Régime's way of thinking: its unapologetic disdain of virtue is inserted to shock the reader.<sup>86</sup> Trèmes recalls the seducer Talleyrand, former lover of the author, who abandoned her when she left Paris for London. This is also the case in Duras' recently published émigré novels, which bring us to scrutinise more closely the relationship between fiction and autobiography. It seems that what makes the authentic émigré novels unique is the emphasis on felt experiences, which often appear as memoir-style anecdotes interrupting the imaginary plots. In the selected corpus the Revolution is not a tool to enhance the dramatic effect, unlike what non-émigré writers tended to do. The

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<sup>83</sup> Wittmeier, 'The Eighteenth-Century Emigrant', pp. 93-106, p.96.

<sup>84</sup> 'Est-il donc bien sûr (...) qu'ils aient eu raison de partir? le roi est encore ici', in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 92; 112.

<sup>85</sup> Maricourt narrates how Adèle and her husband Flahaut debated in 1791 whether or not to leave, and where to seek refuge, in Maricourt, *Madame de Souza*, p. 141-2.

<sup>86</sup> Souza makes him say shocking principles, such as 'il suffit d'offenser l'orgueil, pour attirer l'attention d'une femme vaine', in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p. 14-16.

émigré female writers stood at a vantage point where they could entangle their imagination with their extraordinary experience of the revolutionary storm. This leads us to argue for the specificity of the émigré prose, directly linked to the brutality of social and political changes, which encouraged writers to transgress the classical novel conventions on plausibility and genre categories. What is left to determine is how much personal life our female novelists inserted in their prose and how much they departed from the sentimental vogue.

## **2. The émigré novel, an auto-fiction?**

Alison Finch stated that the nineteenth-century female memoirists display a subtle understanding of the intertwining of the personal and historical destinies<sup>87</sup> and this was because the recent turbulence of their own lives had precipitated them into a different perception of autobiography<sup>87</sup>. We have shown the blurring of the line between memoirs and the émigré novels of the corpus: we will now examine how texts written by émigrés are preoccupied with narrating the self. Can it be said that the émigré novel is a sort of autobiographical novel? Or at least, can the term autobiographical be used to define some of its characteristics? The view that female émigré novels were heavily inspired by personal memories is voluntarily contradicting feminist scholars, who tried to move away from the idea that women put themselves into their fictions.<sup>88</sup> They argued that associating women's literary inspiration with their private life was another way of undermining their merit. This view is dated and it emerged as a reaction to the misogynous literary criticism, conveyed until the twentieth century, stating that women are less talented because

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<sup>87</sup> Finch, *Women's Writing*, p. 34.

<sup>88</sup> See especially Wolfgang, *The Female Voice*.

they are driven by emotions, unlike male authors.<sup>89</sup> One of Duras' biographers declared: 'Les œuvres de femmes sont-elles souvent autre chose que des réminiscences et des souvenirs ?'<sup>90</sup> Sainte Beuve argued that Souza's masterpiece was her less autobiographical *Eugène de Rothelin*: 'l'auteur n'en est plus à cette donnée à demi-personnelle et la plus voisine de son cœur'.<sup>91</sup> Female emotions as opposed to male reason are deeply rooted ones in Western civilisation. The fact that personal memories have been seen as less worthy of literary merit for centuries should not lead us to discard them. The value and literary potential of personal stories is obvious in novels by both men and women, if not for its historical value, then definitely for the way it interacts with and enriches the fiction.

Is the émigré novel a form of autobiography? Since *Les Confessions*, the autobiography was defined as a story of the self using 'je', where the author promised the reader to tell the truth about his past.<sup>92</sup> As such, it remains vague despite Philippe Lejeune's attempt at defining it by 'le pacte autobiographique'.<sup>93</sup> Defining autobiography by what it is not can help to delineate its contours: it is not a biography as the trinity author-narrator-character needs to be present. It is not memoirs: even if both are stories of the self, the memoirs, originally at least, wished to give the author a take on major events in order to remember them. The autobiography does not have to make a parallel between individual and wider scale history. Those characteristics are not exclusive though, since from the nineteenth-

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<sup>89</sup>The tendency to ignore women's autobiographies was detrimental as it spread the idea that only men's autobiographies were valuable. Stanton explained that somehow autobiography became positive for male writers but not for female ones: women were only able to record but not to transcend their self. Stanton, *The Female Autograph*, p.4.

<sup>90</sup>Pailhès, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p.29.

<sup>91</sup>Sainte-Beuve, *Oeuvres de Madame de Souza*, p. viii. He adds also that the attention to maternal love in *Eugénie et Mathilde*: 'C'est le cri du cœur de bien des mères sous l'Empire, que madame de Souza [...] n'a pu s'empêcher d'exhaler', (italics our own), p. xvi.

<sup>92</sup>Rousseau granted men with an autonomous self, but not women which had an impact on female autobiographies, according to Hart, *Revolution and Women's Autobiography*, p. 21

<sup>93</sup>Philippe Lejeune, 'Le Pacte Autobiographique', *Poétique*, (Paris, 1973), p. 147.

century when memoirs flourished, they tended to neglect history's greater picture to concentrate on the intimacy of family life, making the labelling an even harder task.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps this difficulty in defining what an autobiography is emerges from the widespread reluctance, amongst the writing community, to talk about the self since it was seen as despicable and vain well into the period scrutinized; despite the development of a sense of individualism and a taste for intimacy from the mid-eighteenth century, as identified by historians.<sup>95</sup> In addition, it is important to keep in mind that the *ŉlŉ* we read in autobiographies today must be historicised, because it did not pre-exist in people's thought independently from the course of time, waiting to be activated in writing. For Felicity Nussbaum, the development of autobiography is linked to ideological constructs, and specifically the formation of a gendered bourgeois subjectivity.<sup>96</sup> The reluctance to write about the self is connected to the conception of the self and its transformation accompanied but survived the fast-paced Revolution. These remarks help us to grasp our *émigré* writers' intentions better when putting pen to paper, and prevent us from making anachronistic conclusions. Thus we have a situation where memoirists and novelists flirted with autobiography, but avoided embracing it. Does the concept of autofiction, coined in the 1970s, retroactively define the *émigré* novel? It may be a way to conceptualise, or at least to start characterising the hybrid nature of the *émigré* novel. The neologism

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<sup>94</sup>Zanone advanced the idea that the memoir writers were tempted to write autobiographies, however at the same time their distaste for the notion of the individual prevented the memoirist from really engaging with autobiographic modes of narration. Their refusal was political according to Zanone as it manifested a desire to hold on to the aristocratic privilege of the memoirist. In Zanone, *Ecrire son temps*, p. 109-118; 275-86; 299.

<sup>95</sup>Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus situate the emergence of the 'modern family' in the eighteenth century, with the development of individuality, and privacy. Hannah Barker, Elaine Chalus, (eds), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, (London, 1997), pp. 17-18. This was operated by, amongst other factors, the Enlightenment's ideas, the development of a consumer's society and the change in economic structures, notably the disaggregating of corporations. The Revolution accelerated the shift in people's conception of themselves: identity shifted from outwards to inwards. Scholars working on this shift are for example Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-century England*, (New Haven, 2004).

<sup>96</sup>Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-century England*, (London, 1989), p. xiii.



autofiction was first coined by Serge Doubrovsky in the 1970s, and has generated many debates amongst scholars since.<sup>97</sup> The author is also the narrator and the main character: for instance in Duras' *Les Mémoires de Sophie*, the *je* stands not only for the heroine-narrator but also for Claire de Duras since parts of the emigration journey are autobiographical. The facts are real but the narrative techniques belong to a fiction, giving greater importance to the emotional story than historical events.<sup>98</sup> It does not belong to autobiography because there is not a pact with the reader guaranteeing authenticity in a foreword or at the start of the text like in *Les Confessions*. Autofiction as a genre gave rise to a thorny debate: noticeably on the absence of a pact delineating the contours of what is truthful and sincere. Without a preliminary agreement everything can be fiction or everything can be biographical.<sup>99</sup> The degree of involvement of fiction and where and how it replaces reality is also questionable. Is fiction left to the narrative techniques only or can it contaminate the plot and the events, placing the author-narrator-character in imaginary settings?<sup>100</sup> In this specific case, two aspects of autofiction are important. The first aspect is that it allows us to escape from the traditional definition of autobiography which has been used as a pejorative criticism for female texts and neglected altogether as a minor genre for our period. The second aspect is that it emphasises the complexity of the *moi* of the author-narrator-character, and its re-construction in writing. Roland Barthes stated that: *«Celui qui dit " je " dans le livre est le je de l'écriture. C'est*

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<sup>97</sup> Serge Doubrovsky, *Fils*, (Paris, 1977).

<sup>98</sup> We will show later that both texts have a multitude of references to revolutionary dates and real characters, and follow the story of Duras in emigration. All those historical and personal facts are reproduced with more or less exactitude, the focus being on the emotions lived by the heroes rather than the facts.

<sup>99</sup> Mounir Laouyen, *«L'autofiction : une réception problématique»*  
<http://www.fabula.org/forum/colloque99/208.php>, (12/08/2013).

<sup>100</sup> Jacques Lecarme, *«L'autofiction : un mauvais genre ?»* in *Autofictions & Cie. Colloque de Nanterre*, 1992, dir. by Serge Doubrovsky, Jacques Lecarme, Philippe Lejeune, RITM, n°6. Gérard Genette called autofiction an *«autobiographie honteuse»* refusing to acknowledge its status as a genre, in *Fiction et diction*, (Paris, 1991), p. 87.

vraiment tout ce qu'on peut en dire. Naturellement, sur ce point-là, on peut m'entraîner à dire qu'il s'agit de moi. Je fais alors une réponse de Normand : c'est moi et ce n'est pas moi.<sup>101</sup> However it is not the role of this thesis here to take part in the debate concerning autobiographical versus non-autobiographical in literary criticism. Instead we will retain that in the case of the émigré novel it is crucial to embrace the blurring of the genres and to acknowledge the part of creation in narrating the self. Psychoanalysis has helped cast light onto the falsification of the self, a self said to be incapable of avoiding lies when writing. Thus the notion of autofiction appears to be a pertinent way to tackle the fraud of the autobiography and its pact of authenticity, by embracing the fictive element. The trinity of the self is a useful tool enabling authors to overcome interiorised censorship, and the cover of the novel helps this camouflage too. Fiction nurtures the exploration of the self and can show in a more authentic way what lies beneath the surface, the unconscious, the forgotten, and the shameful. Indeed many autofictions are published after the death of one or several relatives.<sup>102</sup> The term fits the hybrid nature of the émigré novel and its interlocking of personal memories and fiction. This part examines the relationship between life experience and fictional themes of the sentimental novel in the selected émigré texts. This will reveal that the heterogeneity observed in the form of the émigré novels is structurally linked to the exile experience and as such is not dated but quite innovative in its departure from sentimental tropes.

### *Variations on the arranged marriage*

The authors in the corpus were all writing about matrimony and its impact on the psychology and life of the protagonists. What changes though, and was not

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<sup>101</sup> Roland Barthes, *Le Grain de la voix*, (Paris, 1981), p. 267. Philippe Lejeune speaks of an "anti-pacte par excellence" in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* ", in *Moi aussi*, (Paris, 1984), p. 30.

<sup>102</sup> *Fils* was published only after the death of Doubrovsky's mother.

picked up by contemporary critics, too readily stamping those works 'old-fashioned', is that each author adapted the sentimental theme freely and subtly inserted personal experiences of marriage during the revolutionary era, hence emptying the sentimental mould of its substance. *La Maréchale* d'Aubemer and *Une Passion dans le Grand Monde*, written by a mature Boigne in the 1830s, are as much about an old matriarch keen to perpetuate the traditions of her noble family in a changing society, as they are about a love story. There are striking resemblances between Boigne and her heroines' marital destiny: the maréchale was married to the bourgeois M. Dermonville, his qualities being his fortune and his 'heureux caractère'<sup>103</sup> Madame de Romignière also married an older non-noble but very rich businessman. The age gap between this fictional couple and the Boigne couple is almost the same, about 15-25 years difference.<sup>104</sup> The wedding is, of course, arranged: 'je ne sais quelles conventions se firent entre eux' which echoes very strongly the author's negotiations to settle her own marriage deal.<sup>105</sup> For the maréchale, the deal is organised by the swindler Duparc.<sup>106</sup> Both cases highlight the commercial aspect of matrimony, where women are exchanged between families for money. We know the drop in status was difficult to accept for Boigne, she expressed it in both novels. The feeling of frustration was rendered particularly well in *Une Passion*: 'il aurait été par trop dur de s'appeler Romignière pendant 40 ans pour ne rien laisser à la maison de Bauréal'<sup>107</sup> On top of

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<sup>103</sup> *La Maréchale*, p. 35.

<sup>104</sup> Mademoiselle de Bauréal was 35 years old, M. Romignière, 60; Mademoiselle Emilie was 19 years old, M. Dermonville, 45; Adèle d'Osmond was 17 years old and M. de Boigne, 49.

<sup>105</sup> *Récits*, p.138-40.

<sup>106</sup> In the novel, the gossip about the maréchale's marriage was that Duparc exchanged her for 'beaux deniers comptants' in *La Maréchale*, p.35.

<sup>107</sup> *Une Passion*, p.17. The similarities go further: the physical portraits of the maréchale and Mme de Romignière seem to emulate Boigne's younger appearance, as presented in her memoirs: 'taille charmante, mince et flexible comme dans sa jeunesse' 'cheveux argentés soigneusement arrangés' 'malgré son âge avancé' 'imposante' 'élégante' 'visage pâle' in *Ibid*, p.32. In *La Maréchale*, the physical description of the younger Emilie d'Elancourt, before her marriage to the maréchal d'Aubemer, recalls Boigne too: 'la belle Emilie' in *La Maréchale*, p.72; 86. We know that Boigne had blond hair which she kept in a good state until an advanced age: 'une quantité énorme de cheveux d'un blond cendré' in *Récits*, p.102-3. Madame de Romignière is 82 years old when she dies in the

age gap and drop in status, marriage is systematically unhappy, or even traumatic in Boigne's novels. Does it relate more to the sentimental vogue or her own memories? In her memoirs, Boigne only touches upon her unhappiness as a result of her marriage: «les mauvaises façons [í ] me firent souffrir» but we know from her correspondence that her husband beat her at times.<sup>108</sup> The epistolary form adopted in her novel *Une Passion* allowed her on the contrary to overcome her 'pudeur' and analyse feelings in much more depth, especially via a dialogue between Euphémie and Odille. *Une Passion* is more relevant in this matter than *La Maréchale*, where the brevity of the text does not allow as much in depth analysis of marriage and female feelings.<sup>109</sup> In her memoirs, Boigne offered a critical yet humane portrayal of her husband: «Monsieur de Boigne n'était ni si mauvais ni si bon que ses actions, prises séparément, devaient le faire juger.»<sup>110</sup> Conversely, the comte d'Amézaga in her novel is a caricature of the authoritarian husband. Boigne accentuated the lexical field of coldness: «le plus glacial», «dédain», «accompagné d'irritation», «style froid et laconique». Brutality, very timidly evoked in the memoirs, is much more present too in the comte's character: «violence», «un maître froid et absolu» who is also accused of being jealous.<sup>111</sup> In her memoirs, Boigne blamed her husband's stay in India to explain his «jalousies orientales». The objectification of the wife, reduced to her appearance or typically feminine performance is something present in the memoirs and in the novel: both husbands are «buying» their wives' obedience with gifts; both

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novel, however she has not lost the qualities of her rank or intellectual youth, which could well be how Boigne saw herself, given the fact she was literarily active until her death, at 85 years old, in *Une Passion*, p.164.

<sup>108</sup> «en me donnant deux coups de poing, un à l'épaule l'autre à la figure» in Wagener, *La Comtesse de Boigne*, p.100-3; *Récits*, p.146.

<sup>109</sup> Evidently, Gudule resembles Boigne when she mentions her precipitation to marry Lionel because of her strong desire to stay close to her family and her ignorance about love. Gudule wanted to marry not out of love but because: «je voulais rester (í ) auprès de mon grand père et ne jamais quitter maman» in *La Maréchale*, p.232.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p.141-2. See Rossi on M. de Boigne's portrayal, *Mémoires aristocratiques*, p.98.

<sup>111</sup> *Une Passion*, p. 62; 82; 192-5.

Adèle de Boigne and the comtesse d'Amézaga are expected to impress guests with their singing skills, which is the only aspect appeasing their conflictual relationships.<sup>112</sup> In *La Maréchale* too, Gudule is used as a foil by her husband to impress the audience: «faites-lui chanter de l'italien»<sup>113</sup> Souza's bestseller offers striking examples of pre-revolutionary memories of marriage reworked to fit sentimental themes. Her husband M. de Flahaut, aged 53, who suffered from gout, and seems to have been fairly accommodating for his young bride, resembling M. de Sénange in this.<sup>114</sup> Arguably though, the representation of an old husband-father, guardian of the Ancien Régime conservative values, and protector to the innocent heroine is a popular sentimental theme, found also in *Claire d'Albe* and *Valérie*.<sup>115</sup> In both novels, the female heroines seem to have embraced marriage willingly and at least before the discovery of love, appear content in their marital life. But unlike Souza, it is the irruption of love in *Claire d'Albe*, in the person of an adopted son or protégé, which triggers love and heartbreak, not the sudden death of the husband, as in the case of M. de Sénange. M. de Flahaut was decapitated in 1794 because he was wrongly suspected of producing faux assignats. His brutal death probably triggered mixed feelings for our émigrée: guilt, regret, but also excitement at the idea of being then able to contract a union based on love.<sup>116</sup> The comparison between lived and fictive marriages underlines that the cover of the sentimental novel, traditionally treating themes of arranged marriages and heartbreak, offered a better way of expressing frustration creatively than the memoirs. Paradoxically, its traditional

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid, p.63; *Récits*, p. 142.

<sup>113</sup>*La Maréchale*, p.176.

<sup>114</sup>He turned a blind eye on his wife's affair and son with Talleyrand, in Maricourt, *Madame de Souza*, p. 61-2

<sup>115</sup>Cottin, *Claire d'Albe*, p. 5; Barbara Juliane de Vietinghoff, baronne de Krüdener, *Valérie ou lettres de Gustave de Linar à Ernest de G...*, 2 tomes, (Paris, 1804) p. 6.

<sup>116</sup>It is thought that Souza pursued an English Lord, Lord Wycombe, she had met before leaving Paris. It is impossible not to draw a parallel between a widowed Adèle in London and widowed Adèle in Neuilly. Maricourt, p. 139-140.

themes are used as a reassuring frame but they are simultaneously overcome by the abundance of reworked memories. The female émigré novel operates a sentimentalisation of personal memories taking place before or during exile. This is where it is pertinent to speak of autofiction to characterize the female émigré novel.

The parallel between Duras' personal experience of marriage and love and her novels not only fits the autofiction definition but is enhanced by references to it in other writers' memoirs and novels in post-revolutionary France.<sup>117</sup> The duc de Duras is said to have never reciprocated his wife's feelings and even repeatedly cheated on her: her biographer published letters from Duras to her husband full of passionate words, 'mon Amédée, je courrai dans vos bras ; mais loin de vous, je suis si seule !'<sup>118</sup> In a play between contemporary memoirs and novels, we get a grasp of the coldness of the Duras ménage. Astolphe de Custine in his preface to *Aloys* thanks 'l'auteur d'*Ourika*' for making the publication of the 'true story' possible. He later writes about the heroine's husband: 'M. de M\*\* n'avait vu que de l'importunité dans un amour si romanesque, et qu'il avait répondu aux rêveries de sa femme par une froideur malheureusement trop réelle'. We know Claire de Duras frequented Custine before he broke his promise to marry her daughter. Thus it is highly likely that the male novelist inspired his novel from observing the Duras couple.<sup>119</sup> Madame de La Tour du Pin commented on the inequality of feelings in the Duras ménage, insisting on Claire's unrealistic expectations: 'M. de Duras avait une attitude de plus en plus mauvaise à l'égard de sa femme. Elle en pleurait jour et nuit et adoptait malheureusement des airs déplorables qui ennuyaient son mari à périr.' She adds: 'je tâchais de lui inspirer un peu d'indépendance, de la convaincre que sa

<sup>117</sup>Duras' friend La Tour du Pin is very prolific on the Duras ménage, *Journal*, 2nd part, pp. 163; 190-196; 235; 303; 336; so is the duchesse de Maillé, *Souvenirs*, p. 19; 102; 230-1; 232-3.

<sup>118</sup>'Vous manquerais-je quelquefois ?' 'Je désire tant vous embrasser !' 'Je me sens découragée, loin de vous' in Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 74-5.

<sup>119</sup>*Aloys*, p.vi.

jalousie et ses reproches [í ] éloignaient son mariø Her efforts are in vain: «la pauvre Claire ne pensait qu'à faire du roman avec un mari qui était le moins romantique de tous les hommes»<sup>120</sup> In his correspondence, Chateaubriand also pulled back from the demands of Duras in terms of affection: «Ne suffit-il pas, après tout, que je vous aime autant que je puis aimer ? Je crois que c'est beaucoup.»<sup>121</sup> This choice of words echoes the sort of limited love Grancey has for Sophie.<sup>121</sup> The picturing of the lack of love, in face of absolute devotion from the heroine, which is recurrent in all of Duras' novels, will be explored further in chapter four. Biography, contemporary memoirs and novels form a palimpsest of elements to compare with Duras' émigré prose. The biographical flavour of her works forms the base of her reflection on marriage and love at the time she was living, meaning it is an autofiction because it reassembles re-interpreted episodes of her life as émigrée and unhappy wife in post-revolutionary society.

The female émigré novelists made the sentimental theme of unhappy, loveless and arranged marriages more personal experiences to them. The sentimental tone fades as each author emphasises one key aspect that mattered to her in her own experience of marriage, before, during and after the Revolution. Thus it is in the consistently repeated themes slightly deviating from the general sentimental trend that one can find the originality of these émigré writers and how much their traumatic experience of loss and exile had a role to play.

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<sup>120</sup>La Tour du Pin, *Journal*, 2<sup>ème</sup> partie, p. 190.

<sup>121</sup>Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 174; Sophie finds herself «privée des deux affections qui avaient rempli ma vie» her lover ungratefully leaving her and her brother neglecting her because of his frivolity, in *Mémoires*, p. 135. One of Duras' «vrai scène de mélodrame» about Chateaubriand is reported by La Tour du Pin, in *Journal*, p. 304.

*The fantasy of fraternal love in Duras.*

The element of unity and originality in Duras' novels is the painting of an ambiguous relationship between lovers, pretending to be brother and sister when they actually desire to be married. She asks whether it is possible to hide love under innocent fraternal feelings. Nowhere else in this corpus is such a systematic painting of fraternal love displayed. The only other occurrence is in *Adèle de Sénange*: Lord Sydenham is adopted by M. de Sénange, and since the latter is almost a father to his young wife Adèle, the lovers are potentially brother and sister. However, this is left to the reader to work out, and they don't call each other 'frère' and 'sœur'. The model of brotherhood to disguise a growing passion that cannot be materialised is also a common theme in sentimental novels.<sup>122</sup> Often used as a fall-back option between two lovers who cannot be together because one is married, the intimate friendship preserves honour but is never a satisfying solution. Although one must note that it is more often a friendship than a true brotherhood. Lovers call each other brother and sister because it is the only model available of unquestionable and chaste male-female intimacy. In *Claire d'Albe*, once his feelings are voiced, Frédéric wishes to remain by Claire's side as a friend and a son, since her husband adopted him. The narrator in *Aloys* denies his burning passion for the mother of his bride: he is thus her future son-in-law. The idea of intimate friendship is a way to see and be with the loved one without infringing the forbidden. However, in Duras' novels this theme is overbearing, which one can argue has more to do with Duras' personal experiencing of it than a sentimental trope. Duras had a long term friendship with Chateaubriand, in their letters they called each other 'frère' and 'sœur'.<sup>123</sup> Duras' good friend,

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<sup>122</sup> Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales*, p. 140-2.

<sup>123</sup> Bardoux even note that Chateaubriand signed in English at times 'your brother' and addressed Duras by 'my good sister'. Both had lived in London and the use of the English could have been a way of reactivating those common memories. In *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 101-2.



Madame de La Tour du Pin, offers an external point of view to understand this ambiguous relationship. She tried repeatedly to spare Madame de Duras from disillusion: 'L'amitié ne ressemble pas du tout à ce que vous ressentez ! Fuyez à Ussé'<sup>124</sup> She describes how the apparent literary admiration for Chateaubriand is in fact a deification: 'Mme de Bérenger, Mme de Levis et Mme de Duras étaient les trois prêtresses du temple où l'on déifiât M. de Chateaubriand'.<sup>125</sup> Duras seemed to have suffered from being just Chateaubriand's 'sister' she showed pathological jealousy for his mistresses. Despite him trying to appease her anxieties: 'mais ma soeur n'a-t-elle pas une place tout à part, où elle règne sans trouble et sans rivale ?' it seems this primacy wasn't enough for Duras.<sup>126</sup> Bardoux publishes a letter where Claire explains the nature of her feelings: 'Une amitié comme la mienne n'admet pas de partage. Elle a les inconvénients de l'amour.' 'Savoir que vous dites à d'autres tout ce que vous me dites [í ] m'est insupportable'<sup>127</sup> In the 1820s, Chateaubriand is an ambassador in London and starts an affair with a rival, Madame Récamier. On top of the distance separating him and Duras, his letters are colder and less frequent, which affects the noblewoman. It is no surprise that she starts to write at this challenging time.<sup>128</sup> This can partly explain her obsession in her novels with the

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid, p. 93-4. Ussé was the castle bought by the Duras once back in France. The duchesse de Maillé also commented on Duras' excessive character in her memoirs: 'elle est (í ) très fidèle en amitié, mais emportée et exigeante. Elle n'a jamais recueilli le tribut d'affection auquel elle aurait eu droit si, aux qualités brillantes de son âme, elle avait joint plus de liant dans le caractère' ; she adds that Duras 'se vexe si ne reçoit pas l'affection qu'elle a investi', in Maillé, *Souvenirs*, p. 102.

<sup>125</sup>Mme de Duras made a scene; 'vraie scène de mélodrame'; to possess the inédit book of Chateaubriand that Madame de La Tour du Pin managed to get: she 'se jeta sur moi comme une lionne' and 'se mit alors à genou et me conjura de lui donner le volume', in La Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme de 50 ans*, p. 303-4.

<sup>126</sup>Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 175.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid, p. 290-1.

<sup>128</sup>From April 1822, Chateaubriand is ambassador in London and writes less and less to Duras. In his letters to his lover Madame Récamier he complains about the permanent reproaches made by 'his sister' 'Madame de Duras est à moitié folle' Duras attempted to win Chateaubriand's pity: 'je suis malade, tant j'étais affligée de votre départ !'; but also highlighted his ingratitude, since she helped him to obtain this charge thanks to her relations : 'Voilà pourquoi nous nous donnons tant de peine depuis huit ans ! Vous me direz si cela vous fait grand plaisir qu'on vous appelle Votre Excellence'

conciliation of an innocent love -almost childlike- between brother and sister, with a more passionate and exclusive love. Eventually her female protagonists are disappointed by their -brothersø who abandon them. Louise and Olivier are similar, with the difference that the inconsistency of love comes from a -secretø half justifying the withdrawing of the -brotherø<sup>129</sup> For Ourika too, her brother is a source of dissatisfaction when he slowly abandons her in order to embrace his new family life. But for the young black heroine, the failure of fraternal love has its reason within her own social and racial condition, as in the case of Edouard and Natalie de Nevers, a couple with the potential to transform the fraternal love into real love, if social distinctions were not so entrenched in their world.

The mirroring effect between Duras and Chateaubriand and the protagonist goes even further in *Amélie et Pauline*. Henry de Melcy has many of the known talents and flaws of Chateaubriand. He comes from Brittany, from a -vieux château de ses pèresø which resonates with Combours, the austere castle where Chateaubriand was raised, and owes to his education his -droiture d'âme et d'intentions peu communesø<sup>130</sup> He shares the same distaste for social scheming as Chateaubriand: -il avait le tort d'exprimer avec énergie son dédain pour la bassesse et son mépris pour l'intrigueøand has a -caractère cassant et difficileø -il n'aimait point la courø<sup>131</sup> We know that Durasøfirst invitation was declined by Chateaubriand with the pretext that her salon was too frequented.<sup>132</sup> Just like the famous writer, whose sister Lucile died in 1804, Henry is distraught from the loss of his sister Cécile. Furthermore, Chateaubriandø sister is said to have inspired the character of another

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Later she confesses that the novels she is writing -lui font du maløbecause they resuscitated some of her emotional pain, in Ibid, p. 278; 281-3; 285.

<sup>129</sup>Madame de Duras was inspired for Olivier by Astolphe de Custine a suitor for Clara, her younger daughter who suddenly pulled out of the marriage agreement for no reasons.

<sup>130</sup>*Amélie et Pauline*, p. 155.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid, p. 152.

<sup>132</sup>Bardoux cites a letter from Chateaubriand to Duras refusing an invitation because he fears the -mondeø *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 98.

Amélie, in *René*.<sup>133</sup> Henry substitutes Cécile for Amélie in Duras's novel, and the couple takes refuge in a fraternal love. For some time, Henry was misled by the striking physical resemblance between Cécile and Amélie: «l'illusion était complète»<sup>134</sup> Could it be that Duras wanted to be Chateaubriand's new sister? This duo of look-alikes can be read as a trio, since Cécile becomes Amélie, and is Claire de Duras. For the protagonist Henry, memory was challenged by reality, in finding physical and moral resemblances between the defunct and alive woman. For Duras too, memories are challenged, but this time by the act of communicating them through fiction. Moreover, Duras was combining her friend's past with her own. The successive layers of biography, Chateaubriand-Henry>Lucile-Cécile>Duras-Amélie are transposing reality into fiction but also subdue this reality to one version and one experience of it: Duras's own. Amélie is told the tragic destiny of Cécile by Henry and we suppose that Chateaubriand did exactly this to his confidante Claire de Duras. Amélie immediately desires to replace this lost sister in Henry's heart, just like Duras. This innocent fraternal love, summed up in Henry's mouth, is in fact a protean love: «j'ai perdu ma seule, ma véritable amie, ma sœur, ma Cécile»<sup>135</sup> The act of fictionalising the autobiographical material becomes almost conventional here, only camouflaged by invented names, as one can easily read between the lines. The artificial hiding of the personal is in fact what recalls autofiction, as a step away from the strictly autobiographical but without totally fictionalising key intimate events. Of course in the female émigrée novels this effort to avoid the overly personal was linked to the literary traditions and self-embedded restraints of women novelists. Nonetheless, there is a strong volition to make some of this personal baggage

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<sup>133</sup>L. Legras, «Lucile de Chateaubriand et les Mémoires d'outre-tombe», *Annales de Bretagne*, 1932, vol. 40, pp 98-112.

<sup>134</sup>*Amélie et Pauline*, p. 157.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid*, p. 152; 167.

intelligible to the informed reader. The concept of autofiction is relevant when looking at the representation of fraternal love in this sense. It puts forward the authorial project behind the émigré novel, which was essentially to mobilise selected personal memories in a sentimental manner. It is because the will of talking about oneself in any way possible is privileged over the sentimental tropes that we can speak of autofiction for Duras' works and the corpus.

*The image of the convent in Souza's novels, a twist on the sentimental trope?*

Sainte Beuve affirmed that Souza's main source of inspiration was her convent years: 'chacun de ces écrits en retrace les vives images', neglecting simultaneously the impact that the Revolution and the emigration had.<sup>136</sup> On the contrary, it can be said that the two experiences are intimately linked in Souza's novels, and the predominance of the convent motif does not eclipse the exile. It is in exile that our émigré writer led her first reflection on her convent years, and later on, the motif appears in her other novels, especially in her émigré novel par excellence, *Eugénie et Mathilde*. Thus, convent and emigration are tightly linked in Souza's prose, leading us to depart from the traditional sentimental theme and argue for her original take on it. How did the convent years appear to Souza as she set about writing in her miserable London lodging? And further still, how did the convent years appear when she was comfortably settled back in France? In this section, the ambivalent nature of the convent will be analysed, revealing her views on her past where moments of happiness cohabited with intense distress. This will support the

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<sup>136</sup>Il y a en effet dans la vie et dans la pensée de Madame de Souza quelque chose de plus important que d'avoir lu Jean-Jacques [i.e. Rousseau] que d'avoir émigré et souffert [i.e. en exil], c'est d'avoir été élevée au couvent.'; he called it: 'la plus grande affaire de sa vie', in Sainte-Beuve, *Oeuvres de Madame de Souza*, p. iv.

argument that the female émigré novelists exploit the sentimental tropes to communicate more poignantly on matters close to their hearts.

It is important to remember that Souza was not creating in an artistic vacuum, but within the sentimental trend of the time, and her painting of the convent could have been inspired by novels where death or entering a convent are the only options available for the heroine. In the corpus and in contemporary female novels the convent is often kept as last resort, as an alternative to suicide. It is more a self-inflicted punishment as a way of purifying the sin of having loved outside marriage. It is rarely given a role of its own in the plot, but stands at the antipode of love, a medicine for heartbreak.<sup>137</sup> Sainte Beuve said of the convent in Souza's novel that it was not an 'expiation contrite', but 'quelque chose de gai'; 'une volière de colombes amies'; 'les babils d'une volage innocence'.<sup>138</sup> It is true that the convent has an old-fashioned charm and the power to preserve innocence. Adèle is taken out of it, however her time there is evoked nostalgically many times: the games played, the friendships and the charity are praised by all.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, even though in *Eugénie et Mathilde* Eugénie lives her convent years in the first part of the novel, it is on her death bed, in the last pages, that she recalls with emotion her childhood quiet bliss: 'toutes les années que j'ai passées dans le cloître, ont été douces et heureuses'.<sup>140</sup> Time magnifies the heroines' fond memories of the convent, and perhaps also the author's. There is something significant about the fact that Souza's most 'émigré' novels, *Adèle de Sénange* and *Eugénie et Mathilde*, apply the same lexical field and

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<sup>137</sup>Euphémie dies in a convent from heartbreak. Her cousin laments at her decision to go there as she is only 23 years old. Her decision appears somewhat extreme and out of character. In *Une Passion*, p. 297. Duras opens *Ourika* with the description of a damaged convent by the revolution: a place of peace and rest for the ravaged heart of the heroine, in *Ourika*, p. 25-7.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid*, p. xii.

<sup>139</sup>Adèle played 'le Colin-maillard' with her friends. Eugénie mentions the 'jeux de la classe' and her stay is made more enjoyable by the fact that the 'abbesse' is her aunt, respectively in *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 148; *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p.5; 18.

<sup>140</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.3, p.274.

nostalgic outlook to the convent years. In *Adèle de Sénange*, it becomes a utopian microcosm, cut off from the outside world and the passing of time.<sup>141</sup> In *Eugénie et Mathilde*, it also resists the pressures of the world and history: the Revolution may have abrogated the religious institution and annulled the vows, but Eugénie renews hers and honours them until she dies. The convent assures that tradition lives on despite the dramatic social changes endured by the characters; just like it provides reassurance and a sense of identity for the young heroines. Since the emigration and the convent years appear to be strongly tied together in Souza's writings and to take central stage as fundamental element in the building of the woman's persona, it proves that she was twisting the sentimental trope to meet her own personal and novelistic needs.

However, Souza did not solely display a nostalgic and idyllic image of the convent. Through her description of the dichotomy between the education provided to the nuns and the dangers of the outside world, she seems to point at the inadequacy of this religious institution for women. The sentimental trope of the convent is used in a more militant way here. The details of the young pupils' daily occupations are provided with care: 'la musique, le dessin, divers instruments: leur taille, leur figure, leur maintien, sont soignés sans recherche'.<sup>142</sup> Those skills are mainly preparing them to evolve in 'le monde' and develop a conventional feminine behaviour in society. Eugénie learns music, singing, and dancing in her convent, something susceptible to inspire 'le désir de plaire': 'Les habitudes d'Eugénie étoient toutes pour le cloître; ses occupations toutes pour le monde'.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, we discover a convent that is far from austere: it is an educational system forming young

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<sup>141</sup> Adèle explains 'un pan de mur de leur jardin était tombé', which means: 'il est permis aux hommes d'entrer dans l'intérieur des couvens', in *Adèle de Sénange*, p.178.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, t.2, p.10.

<sup>143</sup> *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 21-2.

women to behave according to precise gender conventions in social and familial spheres. Its lessons are contradictory and incomplete, encouraging asceticism but also teaching girls to be a 'œtiquette'. In addition to this, love is out of the equation in the convent's educational program: 'pour que non seulement les romans y soient défendus, mais que même les chansons où le mot d'amour est prononcé, en soient bannis', this being to preserve the teenager's purity of heart.<sup>144</sup> More than simply denouncing a dysfunctional institution, Souza underlined the impact the convent had on a woman's life, in light of her own experience. Having lost both her parents at a young age, we know our author cherished the years she spent in the convent and visited 'sa religieuse', probably a replacement maternal figure. However, when taken out of the convent, she was thrown into 'le monde' and married shortly after.<sup>145</sup> She then must have reflected on how well the convent had prepared her for those life challenges. The way Adèle is torn away from it in the opening pages of *Adèle de Sénange* speaks for itself: it symbolises the end of childhood and the brutal start of marital and social life.<sup>146</sup> As a figure of maternal protection and childhood naïve bliss, the convent had a powerful evocative power under Souza's émigré pen: it was both the key to her lost innocence and to the lost Ancien Régime. Although a rampart against change, the convent was also a run-down institution incapable of embracing change and inadequately equipping young women for couple and family life. The powerful images and functions attached to the convent attest of the malleability of the sentimental trope, twisted and personalised at will.

There are more explicitly negative sides to the convent: it is not a maternal and protective realm, and it embodies the failure of the family to provide and care for

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<sup>144</sup> 'son esprit est-il simple et pur comme son cœ ur', in *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 185.

<sup>145</sup> Maricourt, *Madame de Souza*, p. 25.

<sup>146</sup> *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 6-7.

the child. It becomes a sacrifice forced upon the heroine for the good of the clan.<sup>147</sup> Both Eugénies are thrown in the convent because of financial matters.<sup>148</sup> Whilst *Adèle de Sénange*'s Eugénie is straight away miserable as a nun, *Eugénie et Mathilde*'s Eugénie seems content until she slowly discovers the charms of life outside.<sup>149</sup> *Eugénie et Mathilde* is as much the story of Eugénie's many struggles to adapt to normal life, as it is an émigré novel. Her bitterness and powerlessness is clearly rendered: one day as Mathilde visits her she laments on her state using a comparison between a tree and a flower: 'Comme ces arbres je n'aurai pas de belles saisons; mais l'hiver ne s'apercevra pas'.<sup>150</sup> From a sacrifice imposed by the family, the convent becomes a personal burden one cannot get rid of: this aspect is expressed very acutely in *Adèle de Sénange* through the letter sister Eugénie writes to Lord Sydenham, begging him to take her out of the convent.<sup>151</sup> In his review, Sainte-Beuve altogether omitted to speak of this anecdote of the sister Eugénie.<sup>152</sup> Eugénie lost her mother at eight years old and suffers from being the only orphan in the convent: 'Il me semblait qu'elle m'était enlevée une seconde fois'.<sup>153</sup> With the death of her father following that of her mother, the fiction is becoming closer to our novelist's difficult childhood: indeed Adèle lost her mother at a young age and

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<sup>147</sup>In *Charles et Marie* there is no mention of the convent however: does this mean that in an English context Souza did not feel it judicious to integrate what was for her a very personal French upbringing?

<sup>148</sup>'en mettant Eugénie au couvent [...] elle aurait des goûts simples, et [...] prendrait sans répugnance l'état où le mari qu'il voudrait lui donner', in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 5; and *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 88-9.

<sup>149</sup>Hiding the pleasures of life from Eugénie becomes a family obsession, even the genuine Mathilde partakes in this task in her compassionate devotion to her sister: 'il serait cruel de lui donner des regrets'. Inescapably, the truth is progressively unveiled to the nun, first during her vows ceremony, then by seeing Mathilde's marital bliss, and finally by her return to her family's house. The pain slowly damages the heroine, but is rarely voiced: '*sacrifiée ! Reprit douloureusement Eugénie*'. In *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 18; 50.

<sup>150</sup>*Ibid*, p. 87.

<sup>151</sup>The metaphorical image of convent could also signify the immaterial burden of Souza's memories.

<sup>152</sup>The consequences of Eugénie's letter are that Lord Sydenham has to leave Neuilly for a short period of time, making Adèle jealous, until he explains his good action, *Adèle de Sénange*, t.2, p. 135.

<sup>153</sup>'mon père mourut de chagrin à la suite d'une banqueroute', in *Ibid*, t. 2, p. 88-9. This is close to what happened to the Filleul couple, Souza's parents.



shortly after her father took his life, bankrupt and depressed.<sup>154</sup> Eugénie's experience of the convent is far from Adèle's 'babils d'une volage innocence': she is constantly depressed and close to madness: 'des sanglots prêts à m'étouffer'; 'un stupide abbattement'.<sup>155</sup> Her survival depends on her capacity to escape this claustrophobic place: 'ce mur, qui s'avancait pour enfermer mon tombeau.'; 'Arrachez-moi d'ici, Milord, arrachez-moi d'ici'.<sup>156</sup> The tragic episode of Eugénie in *Adèle de Sénange* and the insistence on the psychological impact of internment is extensively developed in *Eugénie et Mathilde* too, where Eugénie ends up wishing to 'descendre vivante dans ce tombeau où elle n'existeroit plus que pour sa passion et ses devoirs'.<sup>157</sup> On top of being debilitating, the convent physically and metaphorically resembles the penitential world and Souza plays heavily on its symbolic attributes: the lock, the wall and the metal fence. The wall of the convent is broken in *Adèle de Sénange*, and in *Eugénie et Mathilde* the gates are opened briefly during the vows ceremony, to be finally destroyed by the Revolutionary laws.<sup>158</sup> M. de Sénange narrates with emotion his encounter with Adèle. He recalls his shock at the imposing door: 'on la referma sur elle, avec un si grand bruit de barres de fer et de verroux, que mon cœur se serra'; 'ce même bruit de verroux, de triple serrure, qui en ressemblait que trop à une prison'.<sup>159</sup> As a physical prison, the convent never really ceases to be present. Adèle has to go back to her convent at the end of the novel when she mourns her late husband. Eléonore is joined by Emilie and Alphonse's

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<sup>154</sup> Maricourt, *Madame de Souza*, p. 20.

<sup>155</sup> *Adèle de Sénange*, t.2, p. 94.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, t.2, p. 103-4.

<sup>157</sup> *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.3, p.275. The sacrificed woman is also the one who interiorizes the sacrifice, and is ready to reiterate it if needed. Eléonore in *Emilie et Alphonse* does just this: she becomes a nun because she wants Alphonse to be happy with Camille. Letter from Eleonore: 'des voiles, des grilles nous séparerons pour TOUJOURS', in *Emilie et Alphonse*, t.3, p.72.

<sup>158</sup> 'Le rideau de la grille ouvert', in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 34-5.

<sup>159</sup> 'ce bruit lui renouvelait(sic) le sentiment et le regret de son esclavage', in *Adèle de Sénange*, t.2, p. 4-5; p. 21-22. Other occurrences include: 'à travers les barreaux'; 'à travers la grille', in *Ibid*, t.2 p.186; 197. See also the same mention in Souza's other novel: 'à la grille' in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 88.

child in her convent at the end of *Emilie et Alphonse*. However, the convent's walls and bars are also carried within Souza's heroines, as if they carried their own prison within themselves. The Eugénies in *Eugénie et Mathilde* and in *Adèle de Sénange* cannot adopt a normal life and slowly die.<sup>160</sup> The way we are shown the infrastructure of the convent and the nuns' daily routine in all its saintly candour is immediately defused by the visitors' and family's perceptions of the place: M. de Sénange rescuing Adèle from a life of sorrows; Lord Sydenham emulating him by his clandestine rescue mission for Eugénie; Alphonse looking for Eléonore for four months in order to remove her from her convent; Mathilde, without her father's agreement, bringing Eugénie back to her family.<sup>161</sup> Souza wished to display the convent as it was, for her and for her society. The play between the physical picture of the convent and its psychological damages echoes Souza's re-investment of personal memories, at times painful, at times happy, of her childhood years, and her emigration. It fits the genre of the autofiction, stepping away from the materiality of memories, in their details, and moving towards a fantasized past. Souza's work on the diverse negative impacts of the convent on the heroine's well-being is representative of this fictionalisation process where childhood and emigration memories become parallel themes.

This thematic investigation of the subversion of the sentimental tropes by the selected émigré authors demonstrates that they chose to voice matters close to their own experience. It is this emphasis on the historical and personal, which was chosen to conceptualise the émigré prose with the help of autofiction, that should not to be ignored as it participates quietly in the renewal of nineteenth-century literature.

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<sup>160</sup>Sydenham sent Eugénie to his properties in England, but she falls into a worrying melancholia. Nothing is said after this, in *Adèle de Sénange*, t.2, p. 110-182.

<sup>161</sup>Mathilde worries about the coup d'autorité qu'elle se permettoit in bringing Eugénie home without her father's approval, in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 165.

Louichon spoke of different levels of 'mémoires' in the sentimental novel: 'le récit sentimental, qui prend souvent la forme d'un roman-mémoires, est aussi le lieu où s'articulent mémoire du personnage, mémoire de l'auteur, mémoire des textes et mémoire de la littérature'<sup>162</sup> The female émigré novel engages with those successive layers of memories, and just like Louichon affirmed, they are much more than love stories. This remark introduces the next section, which focuses on the successive layers of memories that, it is argued, are a dominant feature of the émigré novel. Not only the personal and historical memories are revalorised but within the plot itself a reflection is led on how to best keep memories alive.

### III. 'Mise en abyme' of the process of memory recollection in the émigré novel

In his survey of the manifestations in literature of the experience of loss around 1800, Paul Knee argues that since Chateaubriand was incapable of sticking to political, moral and historical writing in his *Essai sur les Révolutions* and operated many digressions on his own experience, it is in personal memory that 'se métamorphosent les conflits historiques'.<sup>163</sup> The temporal displacement caused by the Revolution, in its attempt at erasing time past, has consequences on writing, something that is also present in the émigré prose of the corpus. Knee identifies a specific way of dealing with the past and the present in memory writing around the 'moment 1800', a moment of tremendous socio-political changes, of subversion of all authorities and especially of Christianity.<sup>164</sup> He highlights the new link established between loss and literary talent. Experiencing loss guarantees merit, so the victims of

<sup>162</sup> Louichon, *Romancières Sentimentales*, p. 298.

<sup>163</sup> Paul Knee, *L'Expérience de la Perte autour du moment 1800*, (SVEC 2014: 8), p. 208.

<sup>164</sup> Knee, *L'Expérience de la Perte*, p. 97.

the Revolution, writing in the nineteenth century are keen to use loss in a meaningful way and manipulate it to give it meaning. We have touched upon this aspect already showing that the experience of the emigration facilitated the affirmation of authorship for the three noblewomen in question. Knee does not say that the self is preponderant in works by émigrés: Chateaubriand, just like Montaigne, is aware of the failure and drawbacks of memory and refuses to use it to record exactly his *moi* in a *Confessions*-style.<sup>165</sup> The particularity of Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, and its conception of the self, is discontinuity and the absence of a linearity of time. He operates a back and forth movement between the time of writing and his past to show that memory is not fixed, but oscillates between different platforms of time. He thus acknowledges the limits of memory recording whilst writing about his memories. This awareness of the limits of memory for recording and safeguarding, together with the back and forth movement between past and present in order to make sense of the future, is something that can also be detected in the fictional works of the corpus. The mise en abyme of memory recording happens at two levels, first when the protagonists of the émigré novel associate lost past with lost love, and secondly when they are desperately trying to safeguard an idealised past at times of fast social changes.

### **1. The émigré novel take on the sentimental notion of *la vie intense***

Michel Delon explained that *la vie intense* was a dominant notion of the sentimental novel, placing short but passionate life above a long and uneventful one.

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<sup>165</sup>Ibid, p. 226; 231.

Love, and its loss, took central stage in this vision of time.<sup>166</sup> Our female émigré novelists described and reflected on the importance of memory and the passing of time in relation to love, just like other non-émigrés authors of the time. However, whilst contemporary sentimental novels systematically linked the distortion of time with love and its loss, the novels of the selected corpus add another dimension which has to do with their first-hand experience of the exile.<sup>167</sup> At first sight, the émigré author does conceptualize the recording and safeguarding of memories and their impact on the mind, within the typical themes of passionate love and heartbreak. Thus, the measurement of time is often tied up with being in love or having lost love: Edouard forgets time when happy with his beloved whilst in exile in the countryside: 'on ne demande rien ni au passé ni à l'avenir and 'on voudrait faire durer le temps'<sup>168</sup> Louise and Olivier strengthened their love because they have 'parlé longtemps de nous, de notre enfance, de nos souvenirs'<sup>169</sup> In *Emilie et Alphonse*, within the context of dissatisfied love, Souza makes links between inert objects and places and memory systematic. Noticeably, Emilie is saddened by her mother's death and brutal introduction to marital life and Parisian society: her intense throe is first translated by absence of memory: 'je prévois des jours si longs, et toutes les années vides pour le souvenir'.<sup>170</sup> By ceasing to be fulfilled in her everyday life, Emilie stops recording memories and placing hopes in the future, as if time was at a standstill. The only satisfactory moments are when she can be transported back to her happy past

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<sup>166</sup> Michel Delon, 'Celui qui a vécu le plus l'idéal de la vie intense dans le récit romanesque de L'émigré (1797) à Jean Sgobar (1818)', *Romantisme*, vol. 16, (1986), pp. 73-84 [http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/roman\\_0048-8593\\_1986\\_num\\_16\\_51\\_4809](http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/roman_0048-8593_1986_num_16_51_4809), [consulted January 2015].

<sup>167</sup> Claire in Cottin's eponymous novel laments: 'je suis accablée de l'éternité de la vie', in Cottin, *Claire d'Albe*, p. 188-9. The young hero in love in Krüdener's novel declares: 'je meurs jeune, et j'ai beaucoup vécu'; 'dans cet espace de vingt-deux années, j'ai eu des jours, des heures qui valoient une longue existence', in Krüdener, *Valérie*, t.2, p. 146.

<sup>168</sup> Duras, *Edouard*, t.2, p. 19.

<sup>169</sup> Olivier, p. 244.

<sup>170</sup> *Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2, p. 8.

when she met Alphonse. In her husband's house, she spots the portrayal of a Spanish man resembling Alphonse: «Cet Espagnol avait ranimé en moi tant de souvenirs!...»<sup>171</sup> Later on, Emilie experiences another of those 'flashbacks': «Alphonse, que je croyais avoir oublié, se présenta à mon esprit, comme si je le voyais encore: et, avec lui, je retrouvai le souvenir de tous les sentimens [sic] qui m'ont agitée depuis»<sup>172</sup> This flow of positive emotions is triggered by the simple sight of an inert object, a fan. In seeing this fan, Emilie thinks back to the happiness she felt being around Alphonse, but also ineluctably to her unsatisfied present, lamenting at her mother's decision: «comment avez-vous pu me donner à un homme qu'il m'était impossible d'aimer?»<sup>173</sup> Later in the novel, when Emilie and Alphonse are reunited in the Pyrénées, she is emotionally attached to the natural landscape welcoming their daily meetings: 'cette première caverne', 'son arbre favori', 'je les fixais pour y trouver ou y attacher des souvenirs'.<sup>174</sup> After Alphonse's death, Emilie cherishes his memory and raises his child with love. In the convent, she meets with Alphonse's promised wife, Eléonore, who 'consent à peine à parler d'Alphonse; elle cherche à l'oublier! Et moi, s'il fallait perdre son souvenir, je ne voudrais pas de la vie!'.<sup>175</sup> Not only did this émigré writer cast light onto the deconstructed way in which one remembers, helped by objects, paintings, places of memory recording, but she also touched upon the vital need to do so. It is in the way it is systematised in the prose that it bursts out of the more mainstream mould where an object belonging or having belonged to the lover enhances the passion. The émigré novelist takes the reflection on time passing and lost love further than her contemporaries because it

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<sup>171</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 10-12.

<sup>172</sup>This occurs as Mme de Villars has a fan made of the same wood as Alphonse's cane, t.2, p. 69. Similarly in *Amélie et Pauline*, when Henry hears Amélie singing it immediately triggers memories of his defunct sister Cécile, *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 156.

<sup>173</sup>*Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2, p. 69.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid, t.3 p. 171-3.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid, t.3 p. 202.

systematises the reminiscence as a life-saving activity, revealing subtly the exiles' fear of forgetting and being forgotten for having lived in the Ancien Régime.

Finally, this brings us to see more behind the representation of memory recording in the plots of the corpus. The following phrasing in *Olivier*, «ma vie est dans le passé, 'je ne veux plus d'avenir» summarises the tension between an emotional attachment to the past, as provider of identity; the mourning of a forever lost mythological age combined with the reluctance to move forward, and thus forget.<sup>176</sup> The predominance and originality of the memorial themes in the female émigré novels selected makes evident their degree of literary innovation, even if enshrined within the sentimental vogue. There is more than the representation of time that would be stretched by passionate love only. Sentimental love is dwarfed by the overbearing power of reminiscence, and by the strong will to tell of the dissatisfaction with the present and the absence of future. This is the plight of the émigré, as identified by Knee for instance. As a consequence it singles out the émigré novel as the one engaging more profoundly with the struggles of memory, beyond the sentimental notion of «vie intense» and its centring on heartbreak. The émigré novel is paced by this «mise en abyme» of primary memory recording.

## 2. Safeguarding the past

The most visible manifestation of the desperation in safeguarding the past, hence operating a «mise en abyme» of the idea of memory recollection, is visible in the desperate need to transmit one's noble heritage to the new generation painted in *Une Passion*. If we compare Boigne's works, it is clear that it is truly in this novel

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<sup>176</sup>*Olivier*, p. 217; 229.

that her attachment to the past is translated the most vividly, rather than in the memoirs, again revealing the novel as the best place to voice the émigrée's perception of time. Madame Romignière is not only similar to Boigne in her young age at marriage; she also strikes a resemblance in the way her mission is to restore her family's former lustre: «relever la maison de nos pères avait été la passion à laquelle [í ] j'avais consacré ma vie»<sup>177</sup> Before her death, she is careful to preserve letters she wrote for her family to keep.<sup>178</sup> This is also apparent at the start of the novel, in the maréchale's intrigues in order to marry her niece to a higher rank of nobility, and later when she makes arrangements for her patrimony.<sup>179</sup> However, Madame Romignière dies without having time to act in favour of her descendant's future: Romuald dies in what looks like a suspicious accident, and Euphémie becomes a nun. The traditional sentimental themes of suicide and convent take on another significance here, as the failure of the perpetuation of a noble lineage.<sup>180</sup> Boigne admits that realising that her personal experience of pre-Revolutionary society was becoming more and more unique led to write her *Récits*.<sup>181</sup> Similarly, her 'mésalliance' to the roturier Boigne, due to the financial struggles of her family in exile is something she never truly made peace with: her biographer indicates that she tried, in vain, to have her nephew rehabilitate the d'Osmond prestige and lineage.<sup>182</sup> Boigne also develops her anxiety about the past and present with the metaphor of the changing furniture: Romuald's new wife Emilie moves in Romignière's castle and

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<sup>177</sup> *Une Passion*, p.183.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, p.171.

<sup>179</sup> *La Maréchale*, p.52-3; 318-26.

<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, Romuald's selfless suicide is almost a caricature, and especially so because he is at times ridiculed for his excessive «romanesque». Similarly, Euphémie's decision to end her days in a convent is presented as excessive, in *Une Passion*, t.2, p. 299. This suggests that, although Boigne did not wish to set herself free from the sentimental frame of writing, she nonetheless slightly twisted the meaning of the traditional ending of suicide/convent, in order to emphasise the urge to guarantee the permanence of noble ethic when status was disappearing.

<sup>181</sup> «les traditions se perdent» in *Récits*, p.5.

<sup>182</sup> Wager, *Madame de Boigne*, p.10.



proceeds to redecorate it. Her re-organising and changing of the furniture shows disrespect for the past: «modernisé dans une complète discordance avec la proportion des pièces et l'épaisseur des murailles»<sup>183</sup> The fact that Romuald is passive and unable to prevent this sacrilege is meaningful, hinting at Boigne's despair to preserve a golden age.

Boigne was not the only one to worry about the future of her lineage and more generally the survival of an old set of ethics. We find a similar emphasis on the effect of time on aristocratic houses and furnishings in the rest of the corpus. In Duras' *Mémoires*, Sophie compares French castles: «chez nous la négligence accélère l'usure du temps» as opposed to English interiors where «tout est vieux et où rien n'est usé»<sup>184</sup> It is evident that the metaphor of the castle's furniture hints at the anxiety for too much negligence in France for ancestral traditions. As such, the novel overcomes its traditional 'anglomania' style, something often found throughout the eighteenth-century novel as a way of criticising by contrast institutions and culture at home. Duras voiced it too in *Edouard*: the roturier hero is in awe at the maréchal d'Olonne's dedication to celebrate his noble roots. On the walls of his house were «tableaux de famille», «noms historiques» inspiring the hero with «respect»<sup>185</sup> Noticeably, his only daughter Natalie is a widow with no children, and eventually dies of «langueur» when her love Edouard leaves for America to his death. Natalie's father desire to maintain the d'Olonne heritage fails. The sentimental frame with its tragic suicides and heartbreaks, helps the depiction of the lack of connection between a dying generation, guardian of the Ancien Régime values, and a doomed generation, incapable of fulfilling its mission of carrying the heritage into the future. This is often combined with a more explicit reference to the Revolution and exile, as causes

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<sup>183</sup> *Une Passion*, t.2 p.175-6.

<sup>184</sup> *Mémoires*, p.115.

<sup>185</sup> *Edouard*, t.2, p. 73.

of this loss of aristocratic memories. In *Amélie et Pauline*, Amélie's grand-mother talks about pre-revolutionary society to Henry: «Les noms qu'elle prononçait, les souvenirs qu'elle retraçait, lui rappelaient son pays, sa famille et ses manières auxquelles il était accoutumé»<sup>186</sup> This reminiscence takes place in exile and thus the distance separating the characters from their past is surprisingly short. It indicates that the émigré writer was propelled prematurely into a forced reflection on the passing of time and the recording of customs and a life-style forever gone. It also points to a much later reflection made by Duras, twenty years after the emigration at the time of writing her émigré novel, nostalgically looking back to what she saw as a golden age. Consequently, the matrimonial intrigues of a dying old noblewoman, the evocation of ancestors on the walls or by oral reminiscence, and the material changes in everyday life are ways in which émigré prose searches for a bridge between the pre- and post-revolutionary periods, irrevocably getting further from each other. It echoes the back and forth movement between the time of writing and the time of the emigration, underlined by Knee in *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*.

Souza consistently deals with the desire and yet incapacity to revive the past completely. The first scene of *Adèle de Sénange* immerses us into the Ancien Régime's atmosphere with the description of an old-fashioned but elegant carriage passing by, mirroring the description of furniture in Boigne: despite 'l'extrême antiquité de sa forme' Lord Sydenham judges that 'tout était antique, rien n'était vieux'.<sup>187</sup> Calling an object an antique, or referring to Antiquity immediately confers value to the said object, unlike the adjective 'vieux'. The carriage falls on its side and the hero rescues Adèle. This dramatic event sets the tone for the rest of the novel: we are entering a world where the old is respected and admired, yet vulnerable. This

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<sup>186</sup> *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 162.

<sup>187</sup> *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 3.

takes on all its meaning when considering Souza wrote the novel in exile, witnessing the destruction of the Ancien Régime she had known. We find a similar opening scene in *Ourika*: a dilapidated convent, last remnant of the Ancien Régime, bears witness to the sheer ruthlessness of the partisans of the revolutionary *tabula rasa*. Duras uses the same adjective as Souza: «l'antique église» hence elevating it to the rank of myth.<sup>188</sup> The narrator is an outsider, just like the English lord, who stands against monastic orders and yet admires the majesty of their ruined buildings. This translates the desire to rehabilitate and protect what is left of a lost age, just like one preserves an antique in one's house. As such, this reminder of the past displays how unsatisfying the present still is, and how much it lacks a sense of identity and historical roots.

Souza's desire to fix and embellish elements from her past transpires the most in the character of M. de Sénange. His old age and wisdom places him as a father figure for both Adèle and the Lord. He even actively asks the English Lord to be his adopted son.<sup>189</sup> Sénange's past in England holds an important place in the novel: on crossing the channel, he meets Lord Sydenham's grandfather and falls in love with his wife Lady B. The tranquil narration of these emotional memories for a man at the end of his life is repeatedly interrupted by the childish Adèle.<sup>190</sup> The fact that this story is constantly reported and delayed excites the reader's curiosity and accentuates the fragility of memories. Sénange's last words on his death bed are: «Lady B...» showing his attachment to his past and his desperation to transmit those memories to his descendants.<sup>191</sup> The disturbing role of the impatient Adèle is underlined throughout the novel. By her eagerness to move forward, she threatens the

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<sup>188</sup> *Ourika*, p. 25.

<sup>189</sup> Sydenham calls him «ce digne homme» «il m'a reçu comme un fils» in *Adèle de Sénange*, p.120, t.2, p. 143.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63; 85-91; 98-119.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid*, t.2 p. 167.

preservation of memories. This is obvious when the couple discuss the turning of their Parisian garden into an English garden. M. de Sénange will not authorise this change because of his attachment to his trees, which have seen him grow old.<sup>192</sup> As a replacement, he promises her she can make all the changes she wishes to his property of Neuilly, where he gives her an island on the river. Her excitement, 'elle y fut toujours sautant, courant, car sa jeunesse et sa joie ne lui permettaient pas de marcher' not only contrasts vividly with M. de Sénange's slow pace and reserve, but also potentially hurts his sensibilities, 'Cette impatience me déplut'.<sup>193</sup> Can it be said then, that since M. de Sénange slows down Adèle's plans, she embodies the new generation of the post-Revolution thirsty for modernity and eager to move forward, at the expense of the dying generation? This would be a too schematic an assumption, for Souza held liberal views and was not part of the conservative branch of the émigrés in London. Her reflection on time passing and the recording of valuable memories is metaphorical here and translates something beyond the fear of change. The respected M. de Sénange dies but designates Lord Sydenham as his heir and desires him to marry his widow, guaranteeing the continuity of his own memories. The novelist seems to be signifying that the Ancien Régime traditions can be productively combined with a thirst for change. In parallel, she seems to express the importance of transmitting traditions to the new generation. And yet, the ending is far from being optimistic: memories are in danger of being forgotten because the union of Adèle and her lord, wanted by the dying Sénange, is not narrated by Souza but left to the reader's imagination. The novel ends abruptly on the young lord emphasising that his future is bleak: 'Ah ! Je ne serai jamais heureux, ni avec elle, ni

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<sup>192</sup>Ibid, p.69; 70.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid, p. 74-5; 83.

sans elle !...'.<sup>194</sup> The uncertainty of the future is interlocked with the ephemeral nature of love, as seen previously; here, the high expectations of the male hero often clash with the heroine's misleading innocence. It seems the anxiety about the loss of memories is concomitant with antagonistic conceptions of love between individual and society, between old and young, between men and women, which chapter four will explore in more detail. The *mise en abyme* of memory and its safeguarding arises from Souza's prose in this tension between ephemeral optimism and the absence of future. She paints the uncertainty of her times and the incapacity for an ex-exile woman to reconcile past and future because of the instability of human relationships and an unattainable happiness through socially accepted routes. In this respect the reflection on memory safeguarding is central to the émigré text.

The case of *Charles et Marie* is symbolic of the way in which émigré writers entangle the process of memory recording as experienced by those who survived the revolutionary turmoil, with key themes of the sentimental novel such as death and love. The narrator Charles claims to do exactly the opposite of *Adèle de Sénange*. Instead of recording the little things in life which go unnoticed, the first pages state clearly that the memories worth recording for him are on the contrary meaningful events. The novel is about *se rappeler* whilst also being selective, and it opens with a citation by Young: *'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours: Their answers form what men experience call'*<sup>195</sup> Charles admits *'la plus grande partie de mes jours a été vide d'intérêt'* and deplores the emptiness of his life so far: *'ces heures que rien n'a remplies, ces jours commencés et finis sans laisser un souvenir'*<sup>196</sup> His diary will

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<sup>194</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 218. This echoes a sentence pronounced by Charles in Souza's other novel about his disturbed passion for the timid Marie: 'avec vous, le moment qui s'écoule est tout pour moi ; il n'y a ni passé, ni avenir : loin de vous le présent n'est rien ; je n'existe que par mon souvenir', in *Charles et Marie*, p. 281.

<sup>195</sup>*Charles et Marie*, p. 199.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid, p. 199.

only narrate the important events of his life, starting with the loss of his mother. There is no middle way between total absence of memories and overbearing memories, and dramatic events like death invite the protagonist to begin his awareness of time.<sup>197</sup> This turmoil brings Charles to reflect on the workings of his memory: every object in his childhood house reminds him of his late mother, and the shock of her death provokes an association of memories in his mind, a reinterpretation of his past: «Les soins de ma mère se mêlent tellement avec le commencement de ma vie»<sup>198</sup> Her dwindling presence in the house makes him become aware of his own past, but instead of moving forward, he is seized with melancholia and cannot remove his gaze from fading memories. It is significant that the novel starts with such a powerful evocation of memories. Souza engages with a deep reflection on the process of memory searching and mourning. Elsewhere in the selected corpus, the difficulty of reminiscing is evoked. Duras explicitly develops it in the *Mémoires* as shown, but also in *Edouard*, «On croit ses souvenirs ineffaçables, ajouta-t-il ; et cependant quand on va les chercher au fond de son âme, on y réveille mille nouvelles douleurs.»<sup>199</sup> As for *Ourika*, it is clear from the onset that what the doctor is really there to cure is the past and not an illness: «c'est le passé qu'il faut guérir»<sup>200</sup> The portrayal of young heroes already aged by their painful past is central to the émigré novel.<sup>201</sup> Unnaturally it is Charles' father who takes him out of his morose nostalgia: he invites him not to «parler de ces jours heureux qui sont à jamais passés» and «ne jetons pas de regards en arrière...»<sup>202</sup> The reversal of the roles, the

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<sup>197</sup>This is evident also with Edouard who despairs after the death of his father: «il me semble que je n'ai plus de souvenir» in *Edouard*, t.2, p. 72.

<sup>198</sup>*Charles et Marie*, p. 201-2.

<sup>199</sup>*Edouard*, p. 60.

<sup>200</sup>*Ourika*, p. 27-8. Edouard also expresses no difference: «On est vieux, dit-il, quand on n'a plus d'espérance» *Edouard*, p. 55

<sup>201</sup>Henry deploras his adult life where as a direct consequence of the emigration «ne voyait devant lui qu'un long avenir sans intérêts et sans bonheur» in *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 154-5.

<sup>202</sup>*Charles et Marie*, p. 199-200.

older man pushing the younger one to move on with his life is surprising. It is at the opposite of what we observed in *Adèle de Sénange* with M. de Sénange and Adèle. It may attest of the shock of a whole post-Revolution generation, struggling to let go of the past.<sup>203</sup> Louise in Duras's *Olivier* feels old because her past took over her present and her identity: «je vis comme les vieillards dans le passé, avec mes regrets»<sup>204</sup> It is in this respect that the evocation of lost memories, uprooting and nostalgia for a golden era is far more potent in our authors' prose than in other non-émigré novels. This desire to display first and foremost the damaging effects of nostalgia and the search for memories, troubling and interrupting the present, resembles what Klee observed in Chateaubriand's literary memoirs. It shows that the émigré novel did engage not only productively but creatively with the reflection of the impact of the Revolution on society and individual.

## Conclusion

This chapter started to define what the female émigré novel is by examining the structure of the works of three noblewomen turned authors as a consequence of or following the emigration. The conditions of writing and literary projects have been looked at closely: the prefaces and forewords and the narrator-author affirmation of authority oscillates between modesty and confidence in being the pertinent recorder of a French society that is no longer. The confusion between the genres available to the women writers is either unconscious or assumed. What is certain is that the three novelists used the gaps between the memoirs and the novel productively, in order to

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<sup>203</sup>The trauma dimension at work in the émigré novels will be studied in our second and third chapters.

<sup>204</sup>*Olivier*, p. 236.

create a more satisfying hybrid genre.<sup>205</sup> From here comes the importance of the autobiographical approach, or rather of applying the concept of autofiction to the émigré fiction work. The female émigré novel is original in the way it freely interlocks personal memories and sentimental fiction. This strategy not only casts light onto the women exiles' creative voices but also shows that the emigration as tragic personal experience has its role to play in the research into their literary projects. The particular attention to lost and surviving memories of an idealised past found in the corpus were touched upon: the following two chapters will show that the painful and traumatic memories of exile penetrate on several levels into the content of the émigré plot.

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<sup>205</sup>The post-modern and post-colonial use of the concept of hybridity in literature is different. Here the concept of the 'hybrid novel' is understood without any political or ethical baggage, but simply as a pertinent way to express the interlocking of genres in the émigré novel. See for instance Vanessa Guignery, Catherine Pisso-Miquel, François Specq, (eds), *Hybridity, Forms and Figures in Literature and the Visual Arts*, (Cambridge, 2011), <http://www.cambridgescholars.com/download/sample/59101>, [consulted November 2015].



## CHAPTER 2

### The manifestation of trauma in the émigré novel:

#### The 'exile within'

*«Celui qui n'a pas souffert, que sait-il ?»<sup>1</sup>*

The ability to suffer as a consequence of one's hypersensitive character is a dominant feature of the sentimental novel and the texts of the selected corpus alike. The quotation is taken from Claire de Duras' novel *Ourika*, where the black heroine dies of sorrow after realising that both the Revolution and men fail to give her the opportunity to be loved like a white woman. On top of her skin colour, it is her hyper sensibility which elevates but alienates her from others. There is no happy ending for Duras' sensible women thirsty for love. The tragic arises from the heroine's innate condition, something one can argue is less a result of sentimental trends than the uprooting experience of exile. The first chapter underlined that the experience of the emigration in fact encouraged women to put pen to paper, and they did so with originality, blurring the line between memoirs, novel and autobiography.

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<sup>1</sup>*Ourika*, p. 41. Louise expresses the same feeling: «n'est ce pas pour souffrir que je suis née ?» in *Olivier*, p. 223.

The next two chapters will proceed to study the explicit or implicit references to the emigration, focusing on the way it provides the plot with a tragic note and above all, how it can be seen as a way to come to terms with a painful past. In the attempt of defining the émigré genre, the importance of the intertwining of the fictional with the autobiographical content has been established; this chapter will continue the task of definition and recognition of the originality of the émigré novel thanks to a more systematic study of the relation between trauma, melancholia and literary innovation, with a consideration of gender singularities.

Before establishing what is meant here by the trauma of the emigration in itself, it is necessary to establish why trauma is a pertinent angle of approach to apply to the émigré novel. Firstly, the novels of the emigration published from the outbreak of the Revolution until the mid-nineteenth century have not been seen as distinct from the sentimental genre or original in any way up till now. The traces of coping with the emigration have been totally ignored; worse still, critics contemporary to the female émigré authors preferred to comment on the subtleness of their feminine prose and underline the sentimental character rather than pointing out their rendering of memories of exile. There is a double prejudice at work: the émigré as individual in history, as shown in our general introduction, and the woman writer in nineteenth-century France, portrayed in a biased way. Despite their first-hand witnessing of the collapse of the Ancien Régime, the French émigrés have rarely been seen as talented or valuable writers. Henri Peyre in his study of Romanticism discarded the émigré writers, denying they had any talent or that they contributed to the Romantic Movement in France in any way: «Leur imagination aurait dû être mise en branle. Les vieux oripeaux du classicisme désuet [í ] auraient pu être balayés» All they got

credit for was to have productively used the «possibilités dramatiques» offered by the Revolution in the novel.<sup>2</sup> Peyre compared the literature of the Revolution with that of the two World Wars: «c'est non pas ceux qui vivent les événements qui écrivent avec plus de force ou qui les sentent le plus puissamment» consequently dismissing the aptitude for émigrés to be able both to testify and be actors of literary renewal.<sup>3</sup> Peyre was still caught in the stereotyped version of the emigration and his belief that direct witnesses of a traumatic event cannot produce good literature ought to be contested.<sup>4</sup>

Sainte-Beuve's critique of Madame de Souza's novels ignored the signs of her emigration: «Il y a en effet dans la vie et dans la pensée de Madame de Souza quelque chose de plus important [à savoir] que d'avoir émigré [à savoir], c'est d'avoir été élevée au couvent»<sup>5</sup> However, it can be argued that her novels were as much about her exile abroad as they were about her pre-revolutionary past. Sainte-Beuve's interpretation of Souza's works is very heavily tied to his century's fascination for anything Ancien Régime-related: as a survivor of the Revolution, the ex-émigrée's view on the convent's education had an old-fashioned charm which drew immediate interest.<sup>6</sup> What he failed to spot though was the emotional journey Souza displayed in her plots, admittedly a journey often starting in the convent, but above all a journey of

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<sup>2</sup>Peyre, *Qu'est ce que le Romantisme ?*, p.65.

<sup>3</sup>And yet Chateaubriand, himself an émigré and a Romantic, situated the renewal of literature in the emigration: «Le changement de littérature dont le XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle se vante lui est arrivé de l'émigration et de l'exil. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, (2015), p. 571.

<sup>4</sup>One needs only to look at the novels about the Second World War and the concentration camps. Primo Levi and Didier Daeninckx's testimonies of the Second World War and its aftermath are perfect cases where literary creation and the voicing of trauma have been explored in conjunction meaningfully. Primo Levi, *Si c'est un homme*, (Paris, 1988), Angelo Rinaldi emphasises on the back cover Levi's ability to analyse the complexity of the feeling of distress and adds: «si la littérature n'est pas écrite pour rappeler les morts aux vivants, elle n'est que futilité» Didier Daeninckx, *La Mort n'oublie personne*, (Paris, 2003).

<sup>5</sup>Chapter one showed the limits of Sainte-Beuve's interpretation. See his foreword, in *Oeuvres de Madame de Souza*, p.vi; xii.

<sup>6</sup>Sainte-Beuve wished his contemporaries would emulate the pre-revolutionary literary style more: 'La société moderne lorsqu'elle sera un peu mieux assise [à savoir] devra aussi avoir son calme, ses coins de fraîcheur et de mystère', in *Ibid*, p. ii.

recovery from the traumatic emigration to London. It is paradoxical that Sainte-Beuve sought to read émigré production with avidity, drawn by a curiosity to recover the turmoil of the Revolution in between the lines and the nostalgia of pre-revolutionary style, and yet did not acknowledge the crucial impact the exile had on the narration.

So far, some engagement with the idea of trauma and émigré works is visible in Katherine Astbury's study of Chateaubriand's novel where she applies clinical stages of recovery to the ex-exiled prose; and Stéphanie Genand's work, where she claims that the novels written *by* émigrés are more innovative than novels written *about* émigrés, arguing that something within the exile experience provides the key to the new sensibility.<sup>7</sup> Melissa Wittmeier states that works by émigrés are "much more powerful in their exposition of the exile experienced by the characters and much more critical in their assessment of the new patrie"<sup>8</sup> Philip Knee dedicated a volume to the reactions to the "moment 1800", a unique moment when a "nouvelle appréhension de l'historicité émerge"<sup>9</sup> Who better than the émigré to voice the difficulty of going through and digesting this "moment"? This chapter insists on the pertinence of the female émigré author in the first half of the nineteenth-century literature because of its constant reworking of loss and pain, transforming the raw emigration material via fiction.<sup>10</sup> The next two chapters will thus carry on the rehabilitation of the émigré novel and cast light on its originality, based on its much more individual treatment of trauma memories than previously thought.

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<sup>7</sup> Astbury, *Narrative*; Genand, *Romans de l'émigration*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Wittmeier, "The Eighteenth-Century Emigrant", pp. 93-106. See also Jacquier, (eds), *Destins romanesques de l'émigration*; Marie France Silver, "Le Roman féminin des années révolutionnaires" in *Women, the Novel, and the Revolutionary Moment*, issue 4, vol. 6, (7/1/1994).

<sup>9</sup> Borrowed citation from Marcel Gauchet, in Knee, *L'Expérience de la perte*, p. v.

<sup>10</sup> According to Knee, the victims of the Revolution became pertinent speakers of their physical, emotional and psychological throes, in *Ibid*, p. 97.

Sainte-Beuve's approach is easily justified due to the fact that the emigration experience is not systematically narrated explicitly in novels by émigrés.<sup>11</sup> What can justify looking at novels from the corpus if the exile is not immediately described? We are faced with two issues: why most of our émigré noblewomen hid and/or softened the mentions of their emigration in fiction; and how do we, as readers, recover the details of their difficult exile abroad? In his study on memory and its social framing, Maurice Halbwachs stressed the fact that *le regret du passé repose [é] sur une illusion, qui est l'oeuvre de la mémoire, ou plus exactement de l'imagination*.<sup>12</sup> The imagination cannot be removed from the process of memory recording and a fortiori from immortalising it on paper. The hypothesis in this chapter is that the recourse to indirect ways of narrating the painful past in the case of the émigré novel hints at a coping strategy, made possible by the very characteristics of fiction-writing, such as displacement, alterations, embellishment and camouflage. Halbwachs also insisted on the fact that memories were brought back through and for the social context of the present, denying the individual the power to reconstitute alone his past. He thought that the recovery-transformation of memories was necessary for the continuity of sociability, since it provided an impression of coherence and unity.<sup>13</sup> In addition to this, one should not consider memories of the exile as traumatic in themselves. For Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, it is the meaning conferred afterwards unconsciously that may render a particular memory traumatic. So the event is not in itself *toxic* to the mind, only what the mind later does to the memory is.<sup>14</sup> This was backed up by clinical research: after the same traumatic event, some individuals

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<sup>11</sup>This is also explained by the fact that non-émigré writers published fictive accounts of the emigration. Isabelle de Charrière did not emigrate but inspired her works from it: *L'émigré, comédie*, (Neuchâtel, 1793); *Lettres trouvées* and *Trois femmes*. Another example is Fiévée, *La dot de Suzette*.

<sup>12</sup> Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, p. 146.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p. 153-4.

<sup>14</sup>Jean Laplanche, Jean Baptiste Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 467-8, cited in Radstone, *Trauma Studies* in Modlinger (eds), *Other People's Pain*, pp. 63-91, p.76.

needed help, others did not. This encourages us to embrace the complex reconstruction of past memories, memories which are 'made' traumatic for Souza more than Duras or Boigne for instance; memories appointed for the purpose of fiction-writing, and to fit within a specific social context. What our selected authors chose to voice, when they explicitly did, was not solely for appeasing their wounded émigré mind, but also betrayed their desire to belong to a larger suffering community, mourning together the Ancien Régime's loss. The way personal and collective memories interact is a thorny question chapter three will tackle. It will indicate how writing provided solace for the three émigré novelists through the use of themes that the community of victims of the Revolution could understand.

After having posited that memories are by definition reconstructed, how do we then claim to search and reach traumatic memories of exile? The concept of trauma as psychological wound was popularised by railway accidents at the end of the nineteenth century and during the First World War with the shell shock syndrome.<sup>15</sup> Not only did trauma not exist as we understand it today when our novelists put pen to paper, but the very idea of recovering the trauma of the emigration through sentimental novels seems flawed. All is not lost as trauma scholars have recently stressed: 'The focus on the relationship of literature with testimony and memory is a modern and contemporary development, but literature has always been concerned with dealing with traumatic episodes in history.'<sup>16</sup> Trauma studies applied to literature help to theorise how the female émigré novel dealt with the emigration trauma.<sup>17</sup> Concerns about the intelligibility of trauma in literature

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<sup>15</sup>Ronen Steinberg, 'Trauma before trauma: imagining the effects of the Terror in post-Revolutionary France', in David Andress, *Experiencing the French Revolution*, SVEC 2013:05, p. 180.

<sup>16</sup>David Miller, 'Editor's Introduction', *Journal of Literature and Trauma Studies*, Vol 1, n°1, Spring 2012, pp. vii-x.

<sup>17</sup>For a revisiting of the canonical writings see Modlinger, *Other People's Pain*. Colin Davies notes that we often are self-indulgent and want to be seen as victims of the trauma we are in contact with,

preceding the emergence of the concept did not deter Ronen Steinberg to speak of the trauma of the Terror.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the angle of trauma fits the émigré novel particularly well: the aim not being to recover what these three French exiles went through but to highlight how trauma is dealt within their novels, how traumatic memories of exile become transcended. Trauma and memory theories prompt us to never assume there were pre-existing traumatic memories in these particular noblewomen's mind, waiting to be pasted into the plot. For convenience, the terms 'the trauma of the emigration' and 'traumatic memories' will be used. However, this always implies that those are *reconstructed* recollections of the London exile, for multiple purposes, personal, social, political, and of course, for the needs of literature.

Finally, literature offers a valuable means of exploring the trauma felt by individuals, albeit in a less assertive way than historical analysis of non-fictional material, but certainly in a more intimate way. The French Revolution has always fascinated contemporaries and scholars, and this research project fits well within the tendency to adopt less obvious angles of research to challenge traditional beliefs, or to apply new concepts, to the revolutionary era.<sup>19</sup> Just like it has to be admitted that communicating trauma is difficult and traumatic memories are malleable, the way literature transforms trauma ought to be embraced. The immediacy of language is lost in writing and there is often a greater distance between the traumatic event and

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instead we ought to create a 'respectful distance' when commenting. 'Trauma and Ethics: Telling the Other's Story', in Modlinger, *Other people's pain*, pp. 19-42, p. 39-40. Radstone criticises also the lack of attention given to the victim's identification with the aggressor, in 'Trauma Studies' in *Ibid*, pp. 63-91, p. 74.

<sup>18</sup>Steinberg asks whether we can use retroactively the concept of trauma in an eighteenth-century context. Steinberg, 'Trauma before trauma' pp. 177-199.

<sup>19</sup>For example, see the work of Dominique Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses*, (Paris, 2004) which takes a very different approach to Albert Soboul, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 2 tomes, (Paris, 1962) or François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, (Paris, 1978). See also Andress, *Experiencing the French Revolution*, pp. 177-199.

its recording onto paper. Does this make it harder to decode trauma in literature?<sup>20</sup>

Bessel Van del Kolk doubted altogether that trauma could be reached through literature: she stated that the act of writing the past normalised traumatic memories, through the process of meaning-making and embellishment. This means that as soon as traumatic memories are out on paper, they lose their traumatic characteristics.<sup>21</sup>

This approach is flawed unless it states what is universally 'normal', i.e. non-traumatic. In the life of an eighteenth-century born woman, this is something extremely tenuous to grasp and necessarily differs from our own relative understanding of 'normality'. The gravity of the traumatic memory translated in our corpus is not something we are able, nor wish to discuss: nonetheless they are reminiscences of a very challenging time in the life of the authors, in comparison to pre or post-revolutionary life. Despite speaking of the 'paradigm of trauma', reinforcing the forever escaping nature of trauma through forms of limited literary or artistic language, Roger Luckhurst did recognise that art can re-appropriate trauma positively at times.<sup>22</sup> The following paragraphs will show that in the case of the female émigré novel, writing did provide a real outlet to the painful memories of exile. Jeanne Goldin, on Madame de Genlis' prolific works, wrote: 'Uniquement livrée à ses travaux littéraires, elle trouva dans l'étude et dans les beaux-arts une

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<sup>20</sup>Radstone asks whether the codes used to stock trauma memories in the brain can be decrypted: 'can that "encoding" become the foundation for a general theory of representation?' in Radstone, 'Trauma Studies', p. 70.

<sup>21</sup>Traumatic memories are believed to be cut off from consciousness, and impossible to verbalise according to Aleida Assmann, 'Texts, Traces, Trash: The Changing Media of Cultural Memory', in *Representations*, No 56, Special Issue: The New Erudition, (Autumn, 1996), pp. 123-134; Van der Kolk, (ed), 'Trauma and Memory' in *Traumatic Stress*, p. 163 and pp. 279-302, p. 296.

<sup>22</sup>Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 80; 16. The potential of literature to collect and communicate past events is highlighted by several scholars: Suzette A. Henke, who coined the term 'scriptotherapy' especially in the case of autobiography. It is called a talking cure by Geoffrey Hartman. Suzette A. Henke, *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing*, (London, 1998), pp. xii-xiii. Geoffrey Hartman, 'Trauma within the Limits of Literature', *European Journal of English Studies*, 7(3) 2003, p. 257-74, p.259.



source inépuisable de consolations<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, David Miller reaffirmed that 'it is in the work of literature, rather than exclusively in the insights of psychiatry or medical practice, that this relationship of subjective experience and historical narrative is played out and exposed most acutely.'<sup>24</sup> The nature of literature in its subjective 'digesting' of past events fits the nature of trauma and crystallises its manifestations.<sup>25</sup>

Before exploring the way trauma memories are conveyed in the corpus, a short introduction to the documented emigration of our three noblewomen is needed. Our novelists' experiences were potentially psychologically unsettling, although, with the exception of Souza, they did belong to the modest to wealthy part of the émigré community in London. Boigne and Duras did not have a hugely traumatic emigration from a material point of view: the first admitted in her memoirs to have witnessed rather than lived the emigration.<sup>26</sup> Mademoiselle de Kersaint had preserved her wealth when she arrived in London, something which attracted penniless French noblemen such as the duc de Duras. We know she lodged in the most exclusive part of the emigration settlement in Richmond.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, the emigration often coincided with the passage into adulthood and the sometimes abrupt discovery of married life. Boigne's exile was a time of construction of her female

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<sup>23</sup>Genlis, *Femme auteur*, in *Contes drôlatiques. ű uvres ébauchées* (Paris, 1965), t. XI, p. 130-1, cited in Jeanne Goldin, 'Femme-auteur et réflexivité, Madame de Genlis', in Chantal Bertrand Jennings, *Masculin/Féminin*, pp. 41-71, p. 54.

<sup>24</sup>Miller, 'Editor's Introduction', pp. vii-x.

<sup>25</sup>Hubert Zapf insists on the importance of fictive trauma in contemporary American novels. He shows that, although fictionalised, these trauma narratives are relevant ethically to the reader contributing 'towards a collectively experienced historical reality' in Hubert Zapf, 'Trauma, Narrative and Ethics in recent American Fiction', in Modlinger, *Other people's pain*, pp.145-167.

<sup>26</sup>'je n'ai jamais mené la vie de l'émigration, mais je l'ai vue d'assez près pour en conserver des souvenirs' in *Récits*, p.126.

<sup>27</sup>La Tour du Pin, *Journal d'une femme*, 2ème partie, p. 162; 186 Carpenter's *Refugees* provides an in-depth description of the three areas of settlement for the French refugees in London, according to wealth; St Pancras and Somerstown for the poorest, Richmond and Marylebone for the richest, and Soho as the émigré hub, or first point of contact.

identity. Having left France at just 8 years old, she arranged her wedding to the wealthy M. de Boigne herself to provide financial relief to her parents. She also experienced the harshness of the émigré society in London and the threats that came with taking charge of her own destiny. This period would influence the rest of her life because it inscribed in her a set of values and ideals in relation to what the family had lost and their close circle of English friends. For Claire de Kersaint too, the emigration and its aftermath coincided with life challenges. Her parents got divorced, and her father, a Girondin, was executed before Claire and her mother fled France. Her position as daughter of a guillotined liberal was a difficult one to uphold amongst the conservative émigrés gathered in London, very quick to reject their compatriots according to their degree of attachment to the King. After her wedding, Claire suffered from her husband's infidelity and the alienation of her daughter by a rival ultra-royalist salonnière. The pain of being rejected is related in her letters and was also aggravated by her friend Chateaubriand's neglect. The delay between the exile and its evocation in fiction proves there was a therapeutic process at work. The recourse to writing was truly a way of resuscitating old traumatic memories once back in France: «ces romans m'ont fait du mal, ils ont été remuer au fond de mon âme un vieux reste de vie qui ne servira qu'à souffrir»<sup>28</sup> The case of Souza is different from Duras and Boigne because she published her novel during her exile. Likewise, her experience of emigration is at the same time more miserable and less documented. She didn't leave memoirs nor did she talk much about her stay in London in her later correspondence according to Maricourt's biography.<sup>29</sup> Her emigration was far from comfortable, despite finding many of her old acquaintances.

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<sup>28</sup> Bertrand Jennings, *Un autre mal du siècle*, p. 70; Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, letter to Chateaubriand, dated 5 April 1822, p. 283. See also the introduction by Diethelm in her edited version of *Mémoires de Sophie, suivi de Amélie et Pauline*, p. 9-26.

<sup>29</sup> Maricourt, *Madame de Souza*, p. 155. Maricourt did not publish his sources, which we suppose are letters. His account is both invaluable and to take with caution.

In 1794, she probably learned about the execution of her husband in the newspapers, a traumatic experience in itself. The publication of *Adèle de Sénange* bettered her living conditions; however, it seems it was not enough as she travelled to Switzerland and Holland where living costs were much cheaper.<sup>30</sup> Her impressions on her emigration, the details of the journey through Holland, the struggle to work for a living, the uprooting felt at contemplating foreign landscapes, are related solely in *Eugénie et Mathilde* from 1811, through the story of the exile of the Revel family. It is the only way we get a sense of what Souza probably experienced concretely. This chapter and chapter three will show how exactly writing a novel could, in Duras's words, "remuer" and eventually soothe old traumatic memories of emigration for the three writers.

This chapter will unearth the hidden stigmas of trauma in Boigne, Duras and Souza's novels; whilst chapter three will tackle the more obvious references. This chapter is not a re-constitution of the past experience via the analysis of the prose; rather the metaphors, imagery, references and thematic choices will be scrutinized with the aim of finding systematic strategies of processing trauma. The majority of the plots analysed avoid the story of the emigration, preferring to allude to it through stylistic figures and recurrent motifs: this translates the strong volition from the émigré author to fictionalise painful past events thus getting closure. First, the concept of 'safe re-enactment', *i.e.* the action of distancing yet re-appropriating difficult memories, will be applied more consistently to the émigré novel: this will lead us to consider various strategies at work, depending notably on the degree of immediacy of the traumatic experience when putting pen to paper. Likewise, the urge

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid, p. 163-4; 176. He advances the idea that the widowed Adèle tried to marry a young and rich lord, which will show quite a capacity to move forward, p. 166.

to re-build oneself through stereotypical sentimental heroines, in order to get a sense of wholeness and recover a shaken identity, will be analysed. The notion of 'exile within' will help to grasp better the impact of a traumatic event on the lives of these female writers: through the painting of heroines seeking refuge within themselves, we catch a glimpse of the memories of a traumatic exile experience.

## **I. Distance versus immediacy of the emigration: different re-enactments of the emigration in fiction**

Astbury applies the theory developed by Sander Gilman of safe re-enactment to her study of *Les Natchez*, noting that Chateaubriand dealt with his own trauma from his emigration in London by investing in it his characters in the remote setting of America.<sup>31</sup> The hero René is scarred by his past, struggles to lead a normal life and is a stranger to the world. The Natchez's tribe chief Chactas asks him at the start of the novel: «Es-tu certain de ne jamais nourrir dans ton c  ur les regrets de la patrie ? tout se r  duit souvent, pour le voyageur,      changer dans la terre   trang  re des illusions contre des souvenirs», which echoes the fate of the French   migr  s.<sup>32</sup> His struggle to fit in with the tribe and incapacity to love C  luta makes him an outcast.<sup>33</sup> Astbury explains that the hero's numbness has to do with the author's emigration by fruitfully applying to her analysis Gilman's clinical stages of recovery from trauma:

we project this fear onto the world in order to localize it, and indeed, to domesticate it. For once we locate it, the fear of our own dissolution is removed. Then it is not we who totter on the brink of collapse, but rather the

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<sup>31</sup> Astbury *Narrative Responses*, p. 166.

<sup>32</sup> Chateaubriand, *Les Natchez*, (Paris, 1872), p. 10-11, Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed May 2015].

<sup>33</sup> René writes to C  luta that she should run away from him before he contaminates her with the 'ab  me' he has in himself, in *Les Natchez*, p. 149-151.

Otherí How we see the diseased, the mad, the polluting is a reflex of our own sense of control and the limits inherent in that sense of control.<sup>34</sup>

This way of viewing literature as a tool to rephrase a traumatic experience through fictionalisation matters hugely for this chapter's argument. This is not to say that the novels of the corpus are original solely for the reason that they fictionalise the traumatic experience of their exile. It is in the interplay between established sentimental themes and painful memories for the purpose of coping with trauma that they stand out. This manifests itself through two processes. First, just as was demonstrated in the preceding chapter with the autobiographical, the traumatic memories of the emigration burst out of the sentimental mould. In some instances, the parallel between the plots and the emigration memories is too obvious to be ignored, leading us to think the author wished to source her inspiration elsewhere than in the sentimental tales she was familiar with. This is a movement of distanciation. Second, it can be observed that the usual love stories are narrated using a lexical field which would be appropriate for the narration of a traumatic exile. Metaphorical representations of exile and implicit references to it, such as for instance British culture, remote places and feeling of uprooting, are valid and constitutive parts of coming to terms with the real trauma of the emigration. This is a re-working from within the sentimental genre, twisting the available vocabulary. The notion of safe re-enactment, a process of self-healing through fiction writing, is pertinent to look at in this first part because it conveys the idea of distance yet re-appropriation happening within the prose, in the choice of vocabulary, twists and turns, metaphors, and protagonists, with the aim of safely re-living a traumatic emigration.

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<sup>34</sup>Sander Gilman, *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS* (New York, 1988), cited in Astbury, *Narrative Responses*, p.166; 168.

## **1. The Channel takes on a metaphysical meaning under the pen of the ageing émigré writer**

The majority of texts from the corpus was written and/or published a considerable amount of time after the experience of the emigration. Madame de Boigne returned to France in 1805 and started to write from 1837 onwards, but her memoirs and novels were only published posthumously. Madame de Duras returned in 1808, and wrote all her novels during a writing spree between 1821 and 1824. Souza is the exception as she published in 1793. Thus on average, about twenty years or more passed before our female émigrées put pen to paper. Even though the lapse of time implies a blurry recollection, the old memories are seen with the benefit of hindsight. As pointed out, the recollection of past memories is a re-construction which involves alterations. At an individual level, memory recollection is never without an agenda. When safely re-enacting trauma in the novel, not only is the past transformed by the former émigrée, but it is re-played in a way that pleases her. To reconstitute exhaustively these three émigré writers' past is an overly ambitious task. The aim here is rather to underline some recurrent imageries of indirect, implicit and hidden exile; to draw attention to the distancing/re-appropriation at work.

The implicit and indirect references to their exile in the novels of Boigne and Duras have in common the figure of the sea and the ocean. The crossing of the Channel is the first step towards the status of émigré and is a rite of passage found in most memoirs of London refugees. Madame de Ménéville too recalled the sea sickness and fear for her children when a violent storm rocked their frail vessel: 'J'étais si accablée de ma souffrance et de celle de mes enfants que je n'écoutais

rien'.<sup>35</sup> Both the difficult crossing and the realisation of being on the other side of the immensity of the sea are themes found in this corpus of émigré novels, even though most are not set during the Revolution. As insurmountable frontier but also gateway between England and France, the sea offered many narrative possibilities. In some texts, the Atlantic Ocean is charged with the same metaphors as the Channel, transposing the contingent, lived emigration in London, onto incriminatory shores. These organic metaphors build on the specific fate of the émigré, crossing the Channel to go to Britain, and convey emotions that anyone could identify with. As such they are a prime example of the mechanism of coping with trauma through re-enactment.

The comparison between Boigne's memoirs and *Une Passion* is fruitful, this time to show the manipulation of sentimental themes to reconstitute a traumatic crossing of the Channel, and its extension, the ocean in the plot. The crossing of the Channel is the first crucial step towards being an émigré for Boigne and an exiled wife for Odille in the novel. The Channel has a shifting status, being a beautiful element of nature and an active element of the exile: «avec quel serrement de c  ur je contemple cet oc  an qui va me s  parer de tout ce que je ch  ris !»<sup>36</sup> It is wider than a frontier, dangerous and cuts any link people may have with their home and family. The communication between France and Britain was slowed down throughout the revolutionary decade and the Empire: from the year 1793, the two countries were almost permanently at war and Napoleon's blockade in 1806 did not improve matters. Boigne was affected directly by this during her emigration and her travels in Europe with her family. This anxiety of receiving news from loved ones is palpable in her prose. The distance between Odille and her home becomes «centupl  e par la

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<sup>35</sup> M  nerville, *Souvenirs d  Emigration*, p. 155.

<sup>36</sup> *Une Passion*, p.49.

difficulté des communications and increases more and more: first, she crosses the Channel to marry in England, and then she has to cross the Atlantic to live in Brazil with her new husband. The image of the sea-ocean is not one-sided as it carries the hopes and resuscitates memories of life at home, being the only way back to the *‘patrie’*<sup>37</sup> Renaud Morieux has pointed out the ambivalence of the conception of the Channel as a frontier, showing that its meaning shifted depending on its users.<sup>38</sup> The perception of the Channel for Boigne is similarly altered. The following quotation from the memoirs stresses the emotional impact the crossing of 'l'Océan', meaning here the Channel, had on a young Boigne:

Je me rappelle seulement l'impression que me causa l'aspect de l'Océan. Tout enfant que j'étais, je lui vouais dès lors un culte qui ne s'est pas démenti. Ses teintes grises et vertes ont toujours un charme pour moi, auquel les belles eaux bleues de la Méditerranée ne m'ont pas rendue infidèle.<sup>39</sup>

This passage demonstrates that, on the one hand, her childhood first impressions of the exile had an impact on her later life; and on the other hand, that it was utilised in her novel to express Odille's ambivalent emotions in exile, fearing and admiring the sea element. The use of the word *‘culte’* reinforces the spiritual link between ocean and emigration for Boigne. By emigrating very young, powerful images were sealed in Boigne's mind and this was creatively re-worked later on. The purpose behind this posterior re-enacting of a key moment in the journey of the émigré, the crossing of the Channel is to dismantle the element of anxiety and fear attached to it, and instead to adorn it with pleasant and identity-building elements. Furthermore, the association of the crossing with Odille's admirable character was a way of giving prominence to the exile experience. The memory is transformed into a metaphor and re-appropriated

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid, p.87. René, the hero exiled in America also makes the link between Ocean and *‘patrie’* *‘sans patrie, entre deux parties, à cette âme isolée, immense, orageuse, il ne restait d'abri que l'Océan’* in Chateaubriand's *Les Natchez*, p. 117.

<sup>38</sup>Renaud Morieux, *Une mer pour deux royaumes. La Manche, une frontière franco-anglaise (XVIIe ó XVIIIe siècle)*, (Rennes, 2008).

<sup>39</sup>*Récits*, p.79-80.



thanks to fiction writing which attenuates the raw character of the trauma narrative, hence providing solace for this émigré author.

Duras offers a much more developed metaphor of the Channel, to the point where it bears complementary and conflicting meanings, and has a central role within the love story. The importance and richness of the image of the Channel in her works shows that we are dealing with personal traumatic memories and not sentimental tropes. By dissecting the stages of this metaphor present throughout *Olivier ou le secret* and her *Mémoires de Sophie*, we can begin to understand the mechanism of re-enactment at work. The complexity of the meaning-making behind any reminiscence of the past has been analysed by specialists in gerontology. For instance, Webster identified 77 reminiscence factors, amongst which the following are pertinent to the émigré novel: boredom reduction, death preparation, identity/problem solving, bitterness revival, and to teach/inform.<sup>40</sup> S. B. Merriam presented four components that made up the structure of simple reminiscence: selection, immersion, withdrawal, and closure.<sup>41</sup> Whilst one must be careful not to confound mere life-reviewing of non-traumatic events with coming to terms with an extraordinary episode such as forced ostracism, these detailed lists provide useful guidance for reflecting on why Duras develops conflicting ideas about the Channel in her works. Unlike Boigne, her re-working of the image of the sea element is charged with ambivalent, paradoxical and complex meaning, influencing the characters and plots dramatically. Webster and Merriam's lists help us to become aware of the risks for the novelist in engaging in this painful revival: it does not necessarily bring solace or satisfying answers to the émigrée. Furthermore, the reasons behind re-enactment

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<sup>40</sup>R.P., Webster, 'Construction and validation of the Reminiscence Function Scale', *Journal of Gerontology*, 48, 1993, pp. 256-262.

<sup>41</sup>S. B. Merriam, 'The structure of simple reminiscence', *The Gerontologist*, 29, (1989), pp. 761-7.

have something to do with individual needs of identity solving and the desire to remind and teach the reader how crucial the sea crossing-contemplation was to her. Finally, the purpose of withdrawal and closure is an important element to take into consideration when looking at the way Duras paints the Channel in her novel.

In *Olivier ou le secret* the image of the Channel is ambivalent, incarnating in turns fear and hope and is linked to the idyllic parenthesis on the Isle of Wight. The first characteristic of the Channel in the novel is that it soothes and bridges the gap between the two lovers. Louise wants to *aller sur le bord de mer, me rapprocher de l'Angleterre* where *je serai plus près d'Olivier, je verrai la mer qu'il a traversée, les vents m'apporteront quelque chose de lui* and *cette mer que je vais traverser baigne aussi les rivages que tu habites !*<sup>42</sup> This investment in inert objects and natural elements to compensate for the absence of the loved one is common in sentimental novels. Traditionally, a portrait was the object used to compensate for frustrated love, but places can be also invested with meaning. However, in Duras's novels the reflection on the ocean and its effects on the characters is pushed further, betraying the crucial role it played as constitutive element of the exile to England. One passage of the novel indicates more conclusively the link between the émigrée's past and the fiction: Louise goes to Dieppe to take baths on the advice of her doctor, just like Duras did.<sup>43</sup> It actualises the sentimental trope, making it accessible to the reader who would have heard of the new trend of sea baths. Louise writes after her bath: *cette mer immense ne m'a point frappée*, almost challenging the infinite in the name of love.<sup>44</sup> Here, in a bid to make peace, Duras challenges the danger represented by the sea and steps away from its threatening aspect. The sea also soothes open wounds of the mind and fits the ups and downs of love: *La mer a cet*

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<sup>42</sup> *Olivier*, p.266; 280.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p. 267 and note 1, p. 389.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 267.

avantage qu'on peut penser à la fois à elle et à autre chose<sup>45</sup> The characters come to identify their feelings with the Channel: 'cette vaste mer, orageuse comme nous' at times feeling agitated, as if by 'une tempête', at times feeling light, in synchronisation with the forecast.<sup>46</sup> After his return to France, Olivier expresses the impossibility of materialising his love for Louise: 'nous ne sommes pas encore au port'<sup>47</sup> This French expression becomes charged with the relived anxiety of the émigrée and lover, never losing sight of the promised shores. The extended metaphor of the sea becomes associated with Duras's vision of passionate love, as celestial element, sharply contrasting with the terrestrial rules and obstacles to it. Absolute love is infinite just like the Channel and is unattainable for finite individuals. By investing meaning into the Channel, Duras could transport her own memories of the crossing onto fantasised settings of passionate love and seaside walks. This is where the re-enactment process is most poignant in its reshaping of the sentimental themes of love with memories of a traumatic crossing of the Channel, making the reminiscence both literary pleasant and less harmful to Duras. Whether it is an 'émigré-trauma' twist on the sentimental trope or a 'sentimentalising' of the Channel setting, what remains is the powerful merging of a very personal upheaval with literary images, bringing 'normality' to an initially traumatic episode.

There is also in Duras's novels a way to enjoy passionate love which systematically happens by the sea. In the *Mémoires*, Sophie has brief moments of happiness by the sea when she walks with Grancey: 'passant le bras sous le sien', 'pour un moment du moins j'étais heureuse'<sup>48</sup> The Isle of Wight, where

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<sup>45</sup> 'il se était promené au bord de la mer une partie de la nuit', in Ibid, p. 280. The correlation lost soul- immensity of the ocean is found also in Chateaubriand, applied to René: 'à cette âme isolée, immense, orageuse, il ne restait d'abri que l'Océan' in *Les Natchez*, p. 117.

<sup>46</sup> *Olivier*, p. 276.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 286.

<sup>48</sup> *Mémoires*, p.131.

Louise and Oliver stay briefly, is not only surrounded by the sea, but also a place caught in between two antagonistic worlds, between infinite love and its physical obstacles, be it society, impotence or melancholia. Staying on the Isle of Wight is also an ideal realm between England and France, emigration and the return to society, enabling fantasies to happen freely: «là je serai plus près de vous»<sup>49</sup> The island is the compromise between two feared situations: being separated from each other and being together but scorned by society. This corresponds to Duras's paradoxical treatment of the emigration as traumatic but also as a first experience of pure happiness. No matter how explicit the references to the exile are in her plots, she inserts an episode of respite and greater intimacy thanks to the seclusion of the space the protagonists are in, be it the little cottage of Sophie and Grancey and Amélie and Henry in Switzerland, or the countryside castle where Edouard and Natalie take refuge.<sup>50</sup> In *Edouard*, the insularity is again put forward, through the fantasy of the paradisiacal island, where love is enjoyed freely, which corroborates the idea that Duras shifted the representations of exile to show us a glimpse of the possibilities offered by intimacy in a remote foreign space.<sup>51</sup> The fantasised image of the Channel which, by its isolating characteristics, provides the ideal conditions for love equips Duras with a remedy to the trauma she went through by pasting a more pleasant interpretation on top of it. The re-enactment operates through distancing via fictionalisation and fantasizing, and re-appropriation, domesticating something that seems out-of-control and time, such as the crossing of the Channel as an émigré.

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<sup>49</sup> *Olivier*, p.271.

<sup>50</sup> *Mémoires*, p. 54-55; *Olivier*, p. 279; *Edouard*, t. 2, p. 18-41. The exile also corresponds to a period of happiness in *Ourika*, p. 50.

<sup>51</sup> In Duras's life emigration corresponded to the discovery and realisation of forbidden love, it is probable that she reproduced in fiction her emotional experience of the exile. Indeed, Madame de Duras was in love with her husband and gave birth to her daughters in London, which seems to have made her happy according to her letters, Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p.79-82. During the Cent Jours, she sought refuge in Ghent with her mother and Chateaubriand, in Bardoux, *La Duchesse de Duras*, p. 181. This episode is also transmitted in the *Mémoires*, p. 130.

However, the Channel also takes on a more dramatic meaning: it reflects the dangers of love and its fatality. The concrete damages implied by crossing the Channel are vividly pictured in the *Mémoires*. Sophie is tormented by the thought of her lover *‘faisant naufrage’*<sup>52</sup> The sea possesses the power of creating and taking lives; it is connected to a sense of mortality and eternity. There is an attempt at erasing these potential dangers, as if refusing to see the finite status of human life. Louise expresses it: *‘vous êtes sur un autre rivage, un abîme immense est entre nous, mais il ne nous sépare pas’*<sup>53</sup> The contrast between the words *‘abîme immense’* and *‘ne nous sépare pas’* stresses how hard Louise wants to ignore the fatal ending awaiting them. Above all, working on the image of the Channel allows Duras to reflect on the status of life and to add perspective to the sentimental theme. The sea *‘donne de la grandeur au paysage’*, *‘elle place à côté de la paix des champs l’image des dangers et de la mort’*<sup>54</sup> More than the opportunity to multiply narrative possibilities, the sea element also brings a metaphysical reflection on the universe, life and death, for the protagonists sense their mortality by contemplating it: *‘la mer sans borne [í ] qui laisse la pensée indéterminée’*, *‘rien de fixe’*, *‘une sensation de vague, d’infini’*<sup>55</sup> In *Edouard*, the hero summarises this thought: *‘Quel fidèle emblème de la vie ! ainsi nous creusons notre sillon dans cet océan de misère qui se referme après nous’*<sup>56</sup> This could have been the thought of any of the émigrés crossing the Channel in the 1790s. Therefore, the extended metaphor of the sea in Duras’s novels displays multiple elements of meaning, incarnating successively or simultaneously hope and despair, but it also reveals metaphysical reflections, which

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<sup>52</sup> *‘Je voyais le vaisseau de M. de Grancey entr’ouvert et brisé sur les écueils’* in *Mémoires*, p.102; 116.

<sup>53</sup> *Olivier*, p. 272.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 277.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 278; 280.

<sup>56</sup> *Edouard*, p. 55.

are personal to the émigré author and her take on her exile. The re-enactment process highlighted here is not built on the same unchanging model of transposing the 'émigré' Channel onto more exotic settings.<sup>57</sup> Whatever the message attached to the evocation of the Channel, it goes beyond the mere representational level and seeks to distance yet also re-appropriate a challenging episode of the exile. Eventually, by examining the metaphysical reflections that the observation of the sea and the ocean triggers for the characters, we catch a glimpse of the effect of time on the traumatic memories of exile.

## 2. The émigré novel or the fantasy of marrying a lord

Souza tells a love story through the letters of an elegant English lord to a young French noblewoman in a fantasized pre-revolutionary setting: as such, it differs from Boigne and Duras' novels which insert the Channel and its crossing or contemplation as leitmotiv. This proves that the re-enactment of trauma in fiction takes on different shapes and forms, since it is dependent on personal experience and its re-construction in writing. Souza is particularly explicit as to the soothing effect writing had during her emigration in *Adèle de Sénange*'s foreword: 'Seule, dans une terre étrangère [í ] dans un temps qui semblait imposer [í ] le besoin de s'éloigner de tout ce qui était réel' she felt the need 'de ne guère réfléchir, et même d'écarter la prévoyance' in writing.<sup>58</sup> The recently widowed and exiled Adèle de Flahaut wrote

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<sup>57</sup>There are other cases of repetition of the same stylistic figure elsewhere in Duras. The metaphor of lightning to symbolise fast and deep pain is found in *Ourika* and in the *Mémoires* respectively: 'l'éclair n'est pas plus prompt : je vis tout à plus rapide que l'éclair, plus douloureuse que le poignard' in *Ourika*, p. 35-7; *Mémoires*, p. 95. The recourse to the 'éclaircissement' stresses the challenges of voicing trauma and how well suited are fictions to materialise it into words.

<sup>58</sup>*Adèle de Sénange*, p. xxi, xxii. Souza wrote in a letter to her friend Madame d'Albany: 'je me suis mise à faire un roman, cela m'amuse et me distrait', in Saint René Taillandier, *Lettres inédites de J. C. I. de Sismondi, de M. de Bonstetten, de Mme de Stael et de Mme de Souza à Mme la comtesse d'Albany*, (Paris, 1863), p. 363.

about the dying Ancien Régime she was born in, not the emigration she was living. Her novel, she adds, was 'achevé dans les intervalles d'un dépérissement lent et douloureux'.<sup>59</sup> This attests of the traumatic character of her emigration in London, and her need to numb the pain by writing about a completely different topic, one she felt familiar with. The urgency of the situation she found herself in contrasts sharply with her effort at muting real facts about her emigration. According to Steinberg one of the coping mechanisms of victims of the Terror was to restrict emotional reactions, in order to counter-act the excesses witnessed.<sup>60</sup> This fits in with the concept of safe re-enactment in fiction: we do not find weeping complaints about the destitution and loneliness of the émigré in the corpus but a systematic contouring of the obvious, the writer preferring to transpose emotions of the emigration onto fantasised settings. Hence the importance of examining *Adèle de Sénange* because it is the only novel from the corpus composed in the heat of the emigration, and yet probably the one obliterating it the most.

*Adèle de Sénange* is set in a largely idealised Ancien Régime. The absence of an exact date corroborates this: the first letter is dated: 17.. There is no mention of political troubles or even a description of the atmosphere in the streets of Paris which could give away the period the plot is set in. Still, Souza gives some clues about the social climate in France in the episode of the encounter with the flower girl's family. Living in squalid conditions, the father nonetheless claims to be content: 'Vous autres grands, on voit bien que vous connaissez pas les gens de travail'; 'la moitié du monde ne sait pas comme l'autre vit'.<sup>61</sup> This episode delivers a social message to the

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<sup>59</sup>*Adèle de Sénange*, p. xxii. She led the same reflection in 1825 about the soothing effect of writing in a letter to Madame d'Albany: 'après toutes les tracasseries et persécutions que j'ai éprouvées, me trouver ce repos, c'est bien la preuve que la solitude et le travail sont les vrais biens de la vie' in Taillandier, *Lettres inédites*, p. 398.

<sup>60</sup>Steinberg, 'Trauma before trauma' p. 194.

<sup>61</sup>*Adèle de Sénange*, t.2 p. 127.

aristocracy, which could fit the 1780s and 1790s debates about the viability of the three order society and the abuses made by the financiers of the monarchy. By providing the opportunity to be charitable, this episode contributes to Sydenham's bettering of his own self-esteem and by analogy, the redemption of the French nobles in exile. Another clue which indicates the story may well happen during the years preceding the Revolution is the dress Adèle wears when Lord Sydenham visits her for the first time: 'une robe de linon plus blanche que la neige, un grand chapeau de paille'.<sup>62</sup> This simple dress was fashionable before the Revolution and had been imported from England, in the frenzy for everything British. In London, French female émigrés earned a living by making straw hats, avidly sought after by the British women.<sup>63</sup> Despite the lack of dates and references to the upheaval of the Revolution, it is impossible not to sense that the author gave *Adèle de Sénange* a pre-revolutionary setting and that her narrative choices were directly influenced by the events she had just witnessed.<sup>64</sup> Might it betray the émigré author's wish to escape the gritty reality of her emigration to London? The detailed painting of pre-revolutionary France together with the social concerns she voices provided solace: it made possible the reconciliation of the irreconcilable, of nobility and the Third Estate, of traditions and much needed tolerance. The re-enactment operates first through this invisible and maybe unconscious link between an idealised past and a voluntarily ignored present. Marie France Silver claims that the success of *Adèle de Sénange* partly

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>63</sup>Anglomania was rife in France and did not receive unanimous acclaim, Fougeret de Monbron, *Préservatif contre l'anglomanie*, (Minorque, 1747). On the history of Anglomania see Grieder, *Anglomania in France*. For the émigrés selling straw hats in London, see Diesbach, *Histoire de l'émigration*; Carpenter *Refugees*.

<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the fact that the wall of Adèle's convent collapsed echoes the Revolution and its anti-religion laws, shutting down and requisitioning convents, as depicted in *Eugénie et Mathilde*.



depended upon the evocative power of pre-Revolution era: certainly it was a soothing activity for the distressed émigrée alone in London.<sup>65</sup>

The multiple references to England, its customs and the English people attest to the very historically entrenched character of *Adèle de Sénange*. The phenomenon of Anglomania in France, spreading from the mid-eighteenth century, saw the elite avidly seek British novels, clothes or even horses, when they were not praising the constitutional monarchy. Criticising the French people or political system by juxtaposing them with foreign virtues, as initiated in *Les Lettres persanes*, became popular.<sup>66</sup> The author was also familiar with Anglo-Saxon culture from her acquaintances in her pre-revolutionary salon: Lord Windham, Lord Wycombe and her American friend Governor Morris.<sup>67</sup> It can be argued, however, that Souza's *Adèle de Sénange* already possesses an émigré tint because it nuances the evocation of Anglomania, bringing a more pragmatic outlook on it. Britishness is depicted as positive and a tool to criticise dated French traditions, but at the same time it is when combining the best of both customs that life and relationships are satisfying. At first sight, there are multiple positive and stereotypical references to the British, allowing the author to blame the artificiality of the French by contrast.<sup>68</sup> During a dinner in Neuilly, Adèle and Lord Sydenham meet a man who describes the English character each time with a trio of adjectives: 'peut-être ils plaisent davantage par leur ingénuité,

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<sup>65</sup> Silver, *Le Roman féminin* p. 319.

<sup>66</sup> Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, (Cologne, 1721). The debate about whether the British are more virtuous and have a better political system was a traditional one by the time Souza wrote her novel. It became reactivated during the Revolution and the emigration in Britain, where the émigrés could truly observe British people and customs.

<sup>67</sup> Morris said Madame de Souza tried to marry the young Lord Wycombe without success, in *The diary and letters*, vol. 1, p. 355; vol.2, p. 295. It is known that a tender friendship existed between Souza and Windham through their letters kept in the archives, London, The British Library, The Windham papers, add. 37914 f. 193; 37915 f. 210; 220; 222; 223.

<sup>68</sup> The hero-narrator conveniently reports how he is seen by the French aristocracy. During a gathering in Madame de Verneuil's salon, he writes that he is spoken of as 'cet Anglais si sévère' and associated with dominant stereotypes, 'comme les Anglais sont tristes', in *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 22-57. After Sénange's death, Adèle reproaches Lord Sydenham's excessive seriousness: 'votre visage était si sévère!', Ibid, t.2, p. 212. The Lord's grandfather is also described by Sénange as being 'toujours froid, toujours raisonnable', Ibid, p. 99.

leur sincérité, leur rudesse'; and by 'rudesse' he explains: 'leur vérité, leur franchise, leur loyauté'.<sup>69</sup> By placing clichéd British characteristics into this ridicule protagonist, Souza's moves beyond the first-level Anglomania, no longer interested solely in emphasising the defects of French elite society. Furthermore, the way the lord reports how he is seen by peripheral characters puts the reader on his side: it creates a familiarity with the British character and customs, whilst French customs are not totally rejected. M. de Sénange's garden is 'affreux: c'est l'ancien genre Français', with its 'buis', sand alleys and birds in cages.<sup>70</sup> Lord Sydenham's park in Wales is 'sauvage' and his birds are 'en liberté'. M. de Sénange resists Adèle's desire to have 'le jardin anglais' but promises her she can have free reign over the island in the Neuilly property.<sup>71</sup> Britishness is thus threatening Frenchness, but Souza did not overly insist on this, since she gave M. de Sénange, the safeguard of the French gardens, qualities making him likeable. Therefore, the take on Anglomania is much more realistic and nuanced, which has to do with being an émigrée in London in 1793.

The stereotypical opposition between British authenticity and French frivolity is not only presented as out-dated, but deeper reflections on the emotional effect of being in contact with a foreign culture can also be found, which immediately alludes to the exile. These cannot entirely be justified by remnants of Anglomania or even a strategic move to please the British readership: it has to do with a coping mechanism in times of upheaval. Souza gives Britishness the power to uplift and 'save' characters in the plot. Being British or having been to England is a key element, forging not only the identity of the hero but also of M. de Sénange, and it seduces Adèle too. Indeed, M. de Sénange's past adventure in England is far from stereotypical and

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 32.

<sup>70</sup>*Adèle de Sénange*, p. 64-66.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, p. 69-70.

recalls the emigration, whilst being a founding experience forging the old man's personality. When Sénange was 20, to escape an authoritarian father, he embarked on a boat to cross the Channel where he met Lord Sydenham's grandparents. Many themes in the story of his trip recall Souza's emigration: he endured a difficult crossing of the Channel, 'le vent devint si fort [í ] nous fumes en danger'; describing how Lady B. feared for her children's life: 'j'étais si occupé de la frayeur dont cette femme était saisie; elle regardait ses enfants avec tant d'amour!'.<sup>72</sup> Once in England, Lady B. looks after the young and troubled Sénange because she fears he will succumb to his sorrows 'dans une terre étrangère'. She orchestrates his reconciliation with his father, 'promettez-moi de le rendre heureux, de vous y dévouer tout entier!'.<sup>73</sup> Thus, this British escapade proves both traumatic and beneficial for Sénange, making him into the wise and loving man he is later in the plot. It is possible that Souza projected her own traumatic arrival in England onto this episode, and by tinting it with hope and positive consequences, anticipated her own future. England appears again briefly in the plot when Sydenham sends the distraught nun Eugénie to his property there. It truly becomes a safe haven, potentially rescuing a lost soul and nurturing it back to health. This way of associating a stay in England with the improved compassion and well-being of the individual could be the way Souza chose to see her traumatic experience in London, in her search for relief, driven by the desire to survive rather than to dwell on the pain.<sup>74</sup>

The way the émigré writer made Britishness and Frenchness complementary and guarantors of virtue attests of her attempt at finding a way out of her sordid situation, projecting her own fate onto a fantasised scenario. This manifests itself

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid, p. 94; 98.

<sup>73</sup>This phrasing 'dans une terre étrangère' matches Souza's foreword, which strengthens the argument that she projected her traumatic emigration into various fictive exiles, in Ibid, p. 112; 115.

<sup>74</sup>Even though eventually Eugénie fails to find happiness in England, and slowly perishes, the overbearing image for England is that of a safe haven, in Ibid, t.2, p. 109.

when Adèle is widowed and discovers love with Lord Sydenham. Having returned to the convent, she learns English, saying words aloud to improve her pronunciation, 'jusqu'à ce que je l'aie dit précisément comme vous'. She is less and less the naïve child running around and giggling, she is in love and has become more committed to the lord. In this sense, her apprenticeship of English is constructing her identity. She adds:

-l'Anglais a pour moi, un charme d'imitation et de souvenir que le Français ne saurait avoir ; je ne l'ai jamais entendu parler qu'à vous, et quand je le prononce, il me semble vous entendre encore ; chaque mot me rappelle votre voix, vos manières ; c'est une Source de plaisir inépuisable ! si jamais vous me menez en Angleterre, je serai bien fâchée d'y trouver que tout le monde parle comme vous !<sup>75</sup>

For Adèle, speaking English possesses memorial attributes, taking her back to her days spent with the lord, and it feeds her feelings for him. At the same time, the young heroine personalises and monopolises the foreign language, *i.e.* she wants to speak her lover's English only and would be saddened to hear others speak it. It is hard here not to see Souza speaking through Adèle's mouth, especially when she associates speaking English with 'un charme d'imitation et de souvenir'... How could this be since she wrote the novel in the heat of her emigration in London? Souza evokes here a way of learning English charged with emotions, something taking her back to her Anglo-Saxon friends in the Louvre for instance, a time where insouciance surrounded everything British. This brings us to argue that the charm and virtuous qualities Souza attributed to anything British, from the personality, the gardens, to the very words, have to do with the desire to skip her traumatised experience of the emigration, and instead evoke the happier days in the Louvre where she was familiar with Anglomania. This is how one can detect a re-working of memories and the sign of the émigré literary project, which burst out of the sentimental frame and the plain

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 188-9.

Anglomania references. Unlike the metaphor of the Channel which suggested a complex re-thinking of the traumatic crossing and forced exile, the British references in Souza's émigré novel are willingly intertwined with more superficial and mainstream cultural features and happy pre-revolutionary memories. This sort of re-enactment is much more raw and immediate, utilising what the noblewoman had available around her and from her experience as salonnière. Thus, what Sainte-Beuve noted as the charming atmosphere should not lead to obliterate the stigmas of a distressed stay in London. On the contrary, this greater effort to paint pleasant images attached to Britishness only reveals the desperate need to escape the harsh contingency of the emigration.

### **3. The re-enactment through projection onto the Other, the displaced heroine in *Une Passion* and *La Maréchale***

When looking at Boigne's novels, it is important to note that the specific uprooting experience of the emigration is systematically projected onto the sentimental heroine, who at first sight does not resemble the émigré persona at all. The centrality of the image of the exile, always affecting the female protagonists, infuses the typically sentimental plot with an émigré plight and betrays the process of re-enactment. The insistence on the psychological struggles of the female characters placed in a situation of being exiled has a huge narrative potential, because it plays with an already very rich 'sentimental vocabulary' of weeping, compassion and passionate gestures. How do we distinguish the sentimental themes from the attempt to depict the trauma caused by exile in the heroines? Let us examine the points of junction between the sentimental throes as seen in the sentimental genre and the

trauma of the emigration remembered by the novelist. First, in Boigne's case, heartbreak and the isolation of exile are fundamentally linked. The intertwining of her difficult adjustment to marriage and her exile in London has already been highlighted. This doubly traumatic experience is re-worked through the sentimental tropes easily but with an accentuation on the uprooting felt by the recently married woman. Indeed, the type of challenges the author elected to place at the origin of her heroines' misery were not heartbreak but successive exiles, triggering the same feelings of displacement and uprooting as the Revolution and emigration. Therefore, the sentimental genre with its frustrated brides provides a convenient frame from which to project one's distress. However, Boigne switches the origin of the distress or gives it a more émigré colour in its manifestation. This corroborates the previously mentioned view that the process of coping with trauma is dependent upon the authors' personal experience of emigration, even though it makes use of the literary frames available, and thus runs the risk of being underestimated as another overly sentimental tale of a survivor of the Revolution.

The close relationship between the pain of being in exile and the pain generated from love is something that can only be reached through the novel and is absent from Boigne's memoirs. This further proves the therapeutic function of fiction writing and the pertinence of looking at less explicit émigré accounts. It also suggests that trauma can be productively invested in literature to create more poignant plots. We have seen how Odille's marriage to the violent Amézaga in *Une Passion* echoes Boigne's own, partially recalled in her memoirs. This indicates that the novelist's emigration experience and her stay in England in the novel are tied up with the suffering of women, real and fictive, in marriage. Odille suffers first from homesickness and not being close to her dear Euphémie: amongst the crowd in

London she feels intrinsically different.<sup>76</sup> She is literally torn away from England by her husband to live in Brazil, where the communications with France are even more fragile: she then fears she will be forgotten and all her dreams of happiness will vanish.<sup>77</sup> Little by little her life becomes insignificant.<sup>78</sup> Euphémie has to go into exile for political reasons: she undergoes the same suffering which she expresses in her letters to Odille. The two heroines are then said to be 'des exilées' despite the different reasons for their emigration.<sup>79</sup> Boigne wants to depict the sheer trauma of being torn away from one's home, be it for marriage or for political reasons; she attempts to universalise a challenge she herself experienced. Diluting personal traumatic memories into a more common woman's difficulties could help make them less acute.

Another point of junction between sentimental tropes and émigré trauma is in *La Maréchale*, where homesickness is doubled with conjugal frustration. When Gudule realises her husband is having an affair in Paris, she is heartbroken and immediately expresses her desire to return to her beloved Limousin: 'je me languis à revoir nos rustiques sentiers'<sup>80</sup> The conjunction of the two sufferings is obvious. However, it is said that she pretends to be homesick solely to hide her intense sorrow about her husband's affair, since when he accepts to return home she is 'étonnée de ne point ressentir une joie plus sensible'<sup>81</sup> Heartbreak is opposed to homesickness, both potentially damaging to the heroine's well-being. It shows how closely related the upheavals of emigration and marriage are for the female author. Returning to the safe 'Limousin' is only seen as a back-up option and Gudule eventually chooses to

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<sup>76</sup>*Une Passion*, p. 65.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid*, p. 64.

<sup>78</sup>'insignifiante vie', in *Ibid*, t.3, p. 190.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid*, p. 49; 69.

<sup>80</sup>*La Maréchale*, p.197.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid*, p.198.

stay longer in Paris. The play on spaces is interesting here too, as the family home is safer but does not provide love; whereas Paris is deceptive, filled by ill-intentioned people, but nevertheless brings new beginnings and new love, in the person of the courtesan Henri.<sup>82</sup> This is flagrant too in all of Duras' novels, where emigration or reclusion in the countryside allows for more intimate relationships between the lovers.

The intertwining of uprooting and love, and the greater emphasis on the psychological effects of being torn from home, within or outside France, across the Channel or on the other side of the Atlantic, suggests that the émigré text is unique in the way it projects the intimate feelings of the exiled onto stereotypical sentimental characters. This particularity is not conveyed this powerfully in contemporary novels by non-émigré authors. Travelling is frequent of course, traditionally between the Paris home and the countryside castle, notably in *Claire d'Albe*; or abroad in *Valérie*, sometimes with a clear political agenda, like in *Aloys*.<sup>83</sup> However, nowhere else is the psychological intensity of feeling alone in a foreign society, having been forced into matrimony for survival, expressed this poignantly. Boigne 're-presents' in fiction the instability and challenges of the emigration, in doing so she creates a model of the uprooted woman, struggling to adapt to unfamiliar settings, simultaneously camouflaging the personal dimension and yet sourcing her inspiration from it. The re-enactment through this almost stereotyped distraught heroine attenuates the contingency of her traumatic experience: it immediately becomes, through writing, a-personal, a-historical and universal.

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<sup>82</sup>Boigne oscillated between several spaces while in emigration, her parents' and her husband's houses, noticeably. In her letters, she cherishes her parents' house, a place where she escapes from a jealous husband and the intrigues of French émigrés envious of her situation, in *Récits*, p.144.

<sup>83</sup>Cottin, *Claire d'Albe*, Krüdener, *Valérie*, Custine, *Aloys*.



On top of switching the origin of women's suffering from solely heartbreak to uprooting, isolation, and exile, Boigne also tends to universalise the distress of the woman émigré by avoiding direct references and sticking to strictly a-political plots. The places of exile are stretched to the New World and Portugal, but also within France itself, simultaneously restricting and diluting the emigration theme further. This process of generalisation of a very personal but also recognisable trauma by contemporaries, transforms the fate of the émigré woman into a more universal type of suffering. In *Une Passion*, many details of the exile do not refer to Boigne's own experience, and yet the reflection on the psychological impact of the exile haunts the whole plot. We have seen how Odille is forced to travel to England, then to Brazil, followed by Portugal and finally to return to France, a journey not typical of a French refugee of the Revolution. Furthermore, Odille resents the language barrier and she insists on «la douceur infinie de causer avec confiance dans langue familière quand on est réduite à n'entendre que des sons étrangers, sur une terre étrangère, parmi des étrangers !»<sup>84</sup> It does not strike as coming from Boigne's own experience as she learned English very fast, spoke it fluently and made many friends in England.<sup>85</sup> However, she witnessed how many French compatriots struggled to fit into British society.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the emotional distress is one reconstructed by the émigré outside her own experience, meaning that writing was a way of distancing herself from her own experience and creating a fictive émigré persona. The physical and moral resemblance between Boigne and her older heroines in both novels studied in chapter one indicates her desperation to represent herself in fiction with all the attributes she acquired during her life; but the distancing she operated between her young émigré

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<sup>84</sup>*Une Passion*, p.88.

<sup>85</sup>*Récits*, p. 116.

<sup>86</sup>She mentions the scandalous manners and dress of some French noblewomen, being associated with the behaviour and clothing of prostitutes by British elite society, in *Ibid*, p. 127; 143; 171; 177.

self and the young brides Odille and Gudule reveals a strategy of coping with painful memories of exile. In each novel, the duo young Boigne-older Boigne suggests a contradictory but complementary process of building psychological wholeness and dispersing elements potentially upsetting this unity.<sup>87</sup> The instrumentation of literary codes brings together a -dispersedøself, between youth in exile and maturity in post-revolutionary France. By depicting a polished and eternal version of herself, Boigne is exorcising the pain. Christine Kovach wrote that the process of reconstruction of memories is an attempt at maintaining or attaining a sense of personal existential meaning.<sup>88</sup> As Felman put it, this desire for meaning and psychological wholeness is manifested through pasting one's suffering onto the 'Other'. Consequently, the sentimental heroine, predisposed to suffering, helped to transcend and heal the trauma of the female émigrée.<sup>89</sup> The extent to which Boigne is consciously manipulating literary tropes to gain a sense of psychological wholeness is not what matters here. The debate amongst scholars is not clear-cut about whether the traumatised subject re-enacts consciously or if the unbearable is stored in a separate part of the brain not affecting his free will. Ruth Leys argues for a balanced approach where subjects can at times react to the trauma event unconsciously and also be aloof from trauma experience.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>The duos are Madame de Romignière-Euphémie/Odille; the maréchale d'Aubemer-Gudule de Saveuse.

<sup>88</sup>Halbwachs insists on the role of creative imagination in memory recollection, but his theory did not cater for the individual purpose behind this re-construction. Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, p.146. Christine Kovach, in 'A Qualitative Look at reminiscing: Using the Autobiographical Memory Coding Tool' in Jeffrey D. Webster, *The Art and Science of Reminiscing: Theory, Research, Methods and Applications*, (London, 2013), pp. 103-122, p.105; 121-2.

<sup>89</sup>Soshana Felman, *Writing and Madness: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*, (New York, 1985), p.5.

<sup>90</sup>The risk with thinking that one mimicks a past trauma unconsciously is to diminish considerably individual autonomy. Ruth Leys, *Trauma: a Genealogy*, (Chicago, 2000), p.9. See also Radstone, 'Trauma Studies' pp. 63-91, p. 73.

This chapter has demonstrated that the émigré novel bears traces of the emigration trauma, through subtle metaphorical references and a shift in the versatile sentimental vocabulary. In curbing the sentimental tropes, combining heartbreak with uprooting, these novels are innovative in the way they push the reflection on the destiny of women in post-revolutionary society further. The decades that had elapsed between the emigration and the time of writing meant that safe re-enactment could take place; whilst the feeling of being at odds with the changed France of the 1820-30s pushed the novelists here to create protagonists in their image, not at ease with the present and anxious about the future. The constant use of exile and its psychological effects also re-draws the 'sentimental' melancholia, which deserves more careful scrutiny.

## **II. The exile within**

Another noticeable strategy in which the émigré authors reflect on their experience of emigration is by placing the heroine in a situation where she actively seeks retreat and solitude as a coping mechanism. The 'exile within' means the authors' attempts to transport the psychological turmoil of the émigré into the inner battles of the sensible heroine. The way re-enacting a past trauma for Boigne and Duras implied embellishing, giving meaning to objects or creating a heroine able to carry and transcend the émigré throes has already been explored. This part will now analyse the stigmas of trauma in the depiction of the intrinsic 'mal être' which corresponds to an impulse to withdraw and an immense tiredness with society's obligations and social interactions related to the shock of having emigrated.

Furthermore, the nature of the heroines' inner struggles suggests that this taste for retreat is built through the lense of a disappointed return to a changed elite society. It is the most flagrant in Souza and Boigne's novels written in the midst of their reinsertion into Parisian elite circles. This 'mal être', placed solely in the female heroines, resembles melancholia. This part will therefore demonstrate how the trauma of the emigration inspired the returned émigrées to shift and overlay melancholic behaviours onto female protagonists. It will introduce the notion of a specific émigré melancholia, which will be looked at in the following chapter.

### **1. Souza's 'cercle idéal'**

Silver pertinently notes that there was a double nostalgia at work in Souza's first émigré novel: nostalgia for childhood from Adèle the heroine and nostalgia for the end of an innocent world from Adèle the author. This explains why Souza systematically wrote about her heroines' need to find asylums or refuges, such as the convent or the Pyrénées.<sup>91</sup> Could it be that the fear of reality felt by the émigré writer is transposed in fiction via the representation of the exile within? Souza's heroine Emilie does not leave France but feels like a fragile refugee amongst the crowded Parisian society leading her to withdraw from the outside world. She is hit by a deep melancholia prompting her to escape social interactions and take solace in her own company, something that paradoxically could be dangerous for her reputation. Through this internalisation of the exile, Souza explores the psychological distress of the ostracised woman and possibly makes peace with her own traumatic journey. The first stay in the hotel of Emilie's husband after her marriage is a metaphorical

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<sup>91</sup>Silver, 'Le roman féminin', p. 319.

representation of exile because uprooting, anxiety and deep sadness are central to the narration, even though Emilie lives in Paris, amongst her husband's friends. Souza represented here the emotional states the heroine experiences before and during her uprooting from her home following her wedding: 'Ah! Mon amie, l'éloignement ajoute bien à l'absence!'. This phrasing resembles a line the author wrote to her dear friend Madame d'Albany in 1812: 'dans un moment où tant de dangers, un si grand éloignement, rendent l'absence plus cruelle !'.<sup>92</sup> It makes evident the parallel between absence and geographical distance, something central for Souza in her private life and when writing fiction. She also uses the tragic of the sentimental tone to its maximum effect when she describes the shock of the departure: Emilie literally screams, before crying when she loses sight of her castle in Aumale.<sup>93</sup> It is only once the last signs of a familiar place have vanished that the heroine starts to realise the struggles she will have to face: 'tout s'éloignait, tout disparaissait ; et bientôt je n'ai plus aperçu aucune trace de notre ancienne demeure'. At this precise moment Emilie understands she will be 'seule dans la vie'.<sup>94</sup> The melancholic state pictured in *Emilie et Alphonse* has more to do with uprooting and the difficult adaptation to a new and potentially harmful society than heartbreak. This tragic uprooting of the young female heroine at the time of her marriage is also pictured in *Adèle de Sénange*, when Adèle has to leave her beloved convent; and in Boigne's *Une Passion* when Odille follows her husband to England and Brazil. In contemporary novels the young heroine is often torn from her familial realm to be married to a much older man, but the circumstances and the trauma of this event are not insisted on as much.<sup>95</sup> The

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<sup>92</sup>Taillandier, *Lettres inédites*, p. 379.

<sup>93</sup>The impossibility of M. de Candale also accentuates Emilie's pain: 'ne faisait pas attention à ma peine, il s'occupait d'autre chose' in *Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2, p.2-3.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup>Claire d'Albe does not seem distraught by retreating to the Loire with her older husband, in Cottin, *Claire d'Albe*, p. 9. Krüdener insists on the effect travelling has on emotions for the hero: 'Mon séjour

émigré novelists insist much more on the uprooting dimension and detail the range of emotions felt at this precise moment in the young heroine's life, as if an alternative had been possible. Might it be that the conjectural nature of the exile led these novelists to conceive the tearing of young girls from home as something that could have been avoided, just like the Revolution?

Emilie never manages to feel at home in Paris and adapt to her new environment: 'je me trouve si complètement étrangère !'<sup>96</sup> Her instinctive reaction is to create a 'cercle idéal', a 'barrière', an 'asile' within her huge room, with her harp, a table and flowers where she retreats at will.<sup>97</sup> This is a very specific way of withdrawing within oneself, with the help of furniture as separation and protection from the outside world, and the careful selection of indispensable and cherished objects. It corroborates the previously stated argument that this taste for solitude is inspired by the experience of having emigrated and returned to a changed society, from which all reference points have vanished. From her marriage to M. de Souza in 1802, the former émigrée lived a comfortable and comparatively uneventful life in her Parisian hotel, and she attended few social engagements, taking pleasure in her small garden. The extreme difference between the emigration years and life back in Paris probably prompted the novelist to narrate the difficulty of Emilie to adapt and to conform to what is expected of her. It is obvious that Souza did not simply paste the melancholic emotions she found elsewhere, she truly reflected on the implication of a brutal displacement from one's home, something she lived at her most destitute but also once back in France and feeling at odds with the Imperial circles of

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ici convient à mon funeste état ; ce lieu mélancolique et sauvage est fait pour l'amour malheureux' but does not detail how Valérie feels during her forced travels to follow her ambassador husband, in *Valérie*, t.2, p. 94. Male novelists evoke even less the situation of uprooting from the woman's point of view after the marriage.

<sup>96</sup>*Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid*, t.2, p. 24.

sociability. Indeed, Emilie withdraws from participating actively in elite society entertainments, since she feels intrinsically different, 'je ne suis pas née pour le monde avec lequel je vais vivre'. This attitude is strongly held and leads her to morbid considerations: 'je voudrais quitter le monde et la vie'.<sup>98</sup> We have letters from Souza to Windham during her exile in Holland expressing the desire to retreat to Italy, far from everything.<sup>99</sup> The intensity of the emigration could prompt individuals to desire a quieter life instead, even once they had returned to France. Likewise, the changes in the socio-economic picture of the Imperial and Restoration France led some noble families to be ostracised because they belonged to the wrong 'coterie'. Despite taking place in a pre-revolutionary setting, the plot of *Emilie et Alphonse* carries the signs of the returned émigré, trying to fit in with the Paris of the first decades of the nineteenth century. This strong disgust for the social world and its entertainments is also something noted by Brigitte Louichon in other sentimental novels written by French women in the first half of the nineteenth century. She argues that the conflict between 'parole vraie' and 'parole mondaine' is central to the genre, something that more scholars should look at.<sup>100</sup> However, the émigré novel couples the repulsion for the 'parole mondaine' with the description of the damages of a fictive exile. It is clear that Emilie is not merely the sensible heroine, weeping because of her unhappy marriage, struggling to cope with the scheming and gossiping of the frivolous aristocrats; she is the ostracised woman, uprooted and deeply melancholic. Souza adds to the traditional threats posed by marriage and a

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 14; 34; 106.

<sup>99</sup>In her letter to her friend Windham, Souza, who wanted him to call her 'Adèle', explained how the 'infortune' of the emigration made her crave a simpler life, in retreat, with her good friend by her side. London, The British Library, The Windham papers, add. 37914, ff 223.

<sup>100</sup>Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales*, p.245.

corrupted society the throes of finding oneself alone and powerless.<sup>101</sup> The suffering she paints has more to do with uprooting and the impression that brutal events in life have irremediably torn the individual from her original blissful state.

## 2. Boigne's disgust for the 'monde' in post-revolutionary society

Boigne's heroines suffer at times from a strong disgust from superficial elite social occupations. It resembles melancholia as a result of heartbreak found in previous sentimental novels, but is given an 'ex-émigré flavour'. Traditionally, melancholia from heartbreak has physical manifestations: realising that she will never be with Romuald, Euphémie becomes so ill that her friend worries for her life: «son accablement m'inquiète, même pour sa santé»<sup>102</sup> Likewise, the emphasis on the selfish display of extreme *langueur* is present: «Que m'importe à moi le reste des humains alors qu'il est perdu pour moi ?»<sup>103</sup> However, this melancholia is dwarfed by a stronger emotion, the type of feeling we have called the 'exile within', or desire to withdraw from the distractions of society. Marie-France Silver records a change from the very end of the eighteenth century in women's novels, towards increased disarray in face of the world's mediocrity.<sup>104</sup> It is likely that the trauma of the emigration is reactivated by the struggles to adapt to post-revolutionary society and that this is more poignant in the novels of ex-exiles. Just like Souza, Boigne returned to a totally changed France in 1804 from one that she left more than a decade earlier. In her memoirs, she comments on the gap between her idea of France and what it

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<sup>101</sup>This is also the case in Duras' émigré novels: the return to Paris for Sophie and Amélie corresponds to the end of love and its illusions. In *Ourika*, the Revolution contributes to separate even more the heroine and her beloved Charles, who marries someone else shortly after.

<sup>102</sup>*Une Passion*, t.2, p.62.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid*, t.2, p.73.

<sup>104</sup>Silver, 'Le roman féminin', p.321.



really was, describing this society as *«sauvage»* and her tedious *«noviciat»* into the Restoration circles thanks to the help of her aunt.<sup>105</sup> Boigne's *maréchale* is said to have the *«spleen»* and to be immensely bored of balls and gatherings.<sup>106</sup> Thus, we believe the disgust for the social gatherings and etiquette is actually inspired by this traumatic return to a disappointing France for the exiled noblewoman. Gudule feels like a stranger just like Boigne during her first Restoration ball. The lexical field of embarrassment is developed at length: *«embarrasser», «visages [í ] étrangers», «elle craignait de se tromper», «la troubla», «déconcerter»* creating an atmosphere of oppression.<sup>107</sup> The scene is a painful rite of passage into a society that seems paradoxically more wild than civilised, reaching the acme with the word *«indigène»*<sup>108</sup> Conforming to what society expects, keeping one's rank provokes physical strains and doesn't match the heroine's life expectations: the *maréchale* falls ill at the end of the ball.<sup>109</sup>

Boigne's melancholia is original too in the way it is not merely associated to heartbreak and does not systematically condemn the heroine to the deterioration of her mind and body. In her novels, after the hardships of life, entertainments can still temporarily soothe pain: the death of the *maréchale's* adoptive son gave her a *«chagrin très vif»* and her medicine was to seek the *«petites agitations de la société factice du grand monde»*<sup>110</sup> In *Une Passion*, which is explicitly set during the Empire and Restoration, the heroine Euphémie evokes this feeling of being at odds with the social world: *«je voyais [í ] des amis, je n'aperçois plus que des ennemis»*<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, p.140. See also the *Récits*, p. 193-5.

<sup>106</sup>*La Maréchale*, p.2; 13. When the eponymous heroine is reluctantly organising a ball, she is said to be *«grognon»* bored and tired by it, in *Ibid*, p.11.

<sup>107</sup>*Ibid*, p. 122.

<sup>108</sup>*«on l'examinait, aucun ne s'ouvrait pour l'admettre»* in *Ibid*, p.125.

<sup>109</sup>This is something felt by Boigne herself at her return to France, she mentions it in her *Récits*, p. 195.

<sup>110</sup>*La Maréchale*, p.54.

<sup>111</sup>*Une Passion*, t.2, 105.

Euphémie feels like an outcast in her sociable circle. However, she does not hesitate to use 'le monde' as distraction and is aware of her influence upon it. Society is a double edge sword, which triggers the feeling of emptiness in the former émigrée, but can also be a distraction from chronic sadness. Furthermore, caring for family is valorised as a remedy to melancholia which is original to the émigré prose. The maréchale's friend accuses her of jealousy, revealing what is missing in the heroine's life: «après m'avoir envié mes enfants, vous querellez votre sœur d'aimer les siens !»<sup>112</sup> In *Une Passion*, maternal love acts as compensation for the uprooting of the exile for Odille, something that gives «la force et le courage de tenir»<sup>113</sup> Boigne kept extremely strong relationships with her parents while in London. Wagener provides letters where this tender affection can be witnessed.<sup>114</sup> Scholars have identified the link between the modification of the family unit and the Revolution: emigration, loss and the new ideal of bourgeois family encouraged the nobility to tighten and reinforce maternal and filial love.<sup>115</sup> However, the return to France does not allow this idyll to persist: Boigne's parents died in the 1830s and so did her adoptive daughter.<sup>116</sup> The constant activity of salons and balls of the July Monarchy could have provided a solace for the émigrée mourning the loss of this adoptive child. This explains why she chose to leave room for salvation in her otherwise melancholic description of the social engagements. Boigne seems to say that for her, and probably the émigré caste, there was a «before-during» the emigration, where the nuclear family was tighter and satisfactory, and an «after» where despite having more

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid, p.17.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid, p.331. This is also the case for the exiled Emilie in Souza's novel, «Je compte m'occuper de leur éducation; trop heureuse si je pouvais me créer ici des objets d'attachement!» in *Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2, p. 176.

<sup>114</sup>Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, p.101-3.

<sup>115</sup>This aspect will be further explored in chapter three. Jaquier, Lotterrie and Seth identify a «resserrement de liens» in Jaquier et al., *Destins romanesques*. See also Lynn Hunt, *The family romance of the French Revolution* (University of California, 1992) and Darrow, «French Noblewomen and the New Domesticity» pp. 41-65.

<sup>116</sup>Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, p. 431-7; p.101-2.

comfort, the émigrée lacks the essentials, which are to care for a loved one. The melancholia expressed in the novel is original not because it rewrites the 'mal être' singling the sensible heroine out from the evil 'monde' and its empty distractions, but in the way it realistically evokes the struggle to adapt to post-revolutionary society, a society which failed to quench the émigré's thirst for a revival of the Ancien Régime's fantasized harmony and peaceful existence. What is truly original is how this émigré 'mal être' implies that the years of emigration were paradoxically better because of increased intimacy and a simpler lifestyle. As such, the émigré melancholia is a dead-end state of mind, constantly balancing between the need to build for the future and re-create the fantasized family nest of the emigration upheaval; and the radical refusal to give in to the social demands of the elite Restoration society. The émigré novel did showcase the unique experience of the exile and how it stained the present with traumatic memories of the past. Expressing this tortuous emotion in novels corresponds to a volition to appease those conflicting tendencies, and therefore to cope with the trauma of the emigration.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter established the methodology for looking at trauma in literature. If individual strategies of coming to terms with trauma differ slightly amongst the authors of the corpus, they certainly show a common desire, conscious or not, to leave a trace of their unique exile experience, for this experience had been traumatic. The fictionalisation of trauma memories is done through stages, depending on the nature of the exile, how far ago was this experience, and the literary strategy elected. Whether in miserable lodgings in London or decades after their return to Paris, the

evocation of the emigration by the émigré novelists is silenced and/or metaphorical, framed by the impersonal codes of the sentimental genre. In the non-explicit émigré novels, the trauma of the emigration is seen through the safe re-enactment of its key moments, such as the crossing of the Channel, an emotional attachment for English identity and customs; and through a very 'émigré' feeling of alterity bursting out from the sentimental heroine. A shift in the painting of melancholia was also underlined, where the heroines' attributes of sensibility are combined with the more specific émigré uprooting. The following chapter will dig deeper into what will be called 'traditional' male melancholia and how the female émigré novels from the selected corpus differ slightly from that model, with the purpose of stressing the impact of trauma in making the émigré novel innovative.

## CHAPTER 3

### **The manifestation of trauma in the émigré novel:**

#### **The 'exile without'**

The preceding chapter dealt with the ways in which our émigré writers coped with trauma through fiction writing, intertwining specific emigration references within the sentimental themes and projecting their wounded self into stereotypical suffering models of women. We spoke of the 'exile within' to stress our novelists' tendency to disguise painful memories in fictive ones; this chapter will now explore the more explicit references to the emigration experience, especially in Souza and Duras' works. The idea behind the 'exile without' implies a greater awareness of the evocative power of the emigration, making personal trauma a collective one through the fictionalisation. Indeed, the émigrées in their novels also came to terms with the trauma of the emigration via an appeal to a community of mourning ex-exiles.

We pointed at the 'émigré melancholia' in chapter two; an alternative *mal-être* which diverges from mainstream melancholia and crystallises the émigrées' anxieties in post-revolutionary France. The roots of this émigré melancholia -the exile- mean that its development should be seen as partly autonomous from other melancholic expressions. This chapter will detail the fictionalisation of the emigration experience and how this operates through explicit references and the émigré melancholia. It will be argued that the 'exile without' and émigré melancholia participate in the coming to terms with painful memories for the selected exile

writers. As such, this chapter contributes to rehabilitating the value, both literary and historical, of the female émigré novel, as a text which attempts to interpret and embellish the exile experience in a meaningful way.

To better grasp the originality of our three authors in voicing this slightly different *malaise* it is crucial to first establish what we mean by émigré melancholia as opposed to 'mainstream' melancholia, how it developed and was re-appropriated by the disillusioned generation post-Revolution. What we call the émigré melancholia stemmed from the realisation of the end of an era, together with bitterness about both the errors of Enlightenment ideas and the excesses of the monarchy. Philip Knee explains why the Enlightenment ideas were attacked: 'À travers les Lumières se serait cristallisé un nouveau type d'autorité devenu peu à peu alibi pour le chaos des désirs et pour l'orgueil de la raison individuelle; une autorité qui aurait légitimé l'auto-fondation des sociétés en dehors de l'héritage qui les façonne'.<sup>1</sup> A similar pejorative critique of the ideas which fed the revolutionary storm is placed at the start of the *Mémoires de Sophie*:

'Je naquis à l'époque où la philosophie moderne avait déplacé toutes les idées et changé l'acception de tous les mots; alors on vantait la bienfaisance aux dépens de la charité, alors on plaçait les qualités naturelles au-dessus des vertus. Le devoir avait été proscrit avec la religion et dans le code facile qui les avait remplacés, on recommandait la morale comme moyen de bonheur'.

Likewise, *Adèle de Sénange* and *Ourika* start by describing the fragility of the Ancien Régime's old institutions, the noblesse's old carriages and dilapidated convents. The ex-émigrés found themselves in a difficult position, similar to what Knee characterised as the counter-revolutionary discourse: 'la pensée se dédouble',

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<sup>1</sup>The counter-revolutionary discourses manifested this particular distraught and constant 'porte-à-faux' between the said failure of the Enlightenment and absence of viable solution for the future in their texts. Knee studies the various reactions to the '*moment 1800*', from resistance to mourning, in *L'Expérience de la perte*, p. 75.

they were both critical of a social reality and 'partie prenante de cette réalité'. Our female émigrés authors could fall victim to this, in the way they projected themselves in their novels as critics but also as main protagonists.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the ideological 'cul-de-sac', the social, economic and political atmosphere was challenging to the old noblesse, used to its prerogatives and leisurely life. During the Restoration and the July Monarchy, the wars had ceased but making money had become the new value despised by the increasingly secluded nobility. This disillusioned noble caste seemed incapable of investing its energy into the new society.<sup>3</sup> In Astolphe de Custine's novel *Aloys*, the narrator refuses to make a career in politics because of his hatred of Napoleon. Consequently, his passivity in society, together with his natural penchant for solitude, further singles him out: 'je devins entièrement étranger, non seulement au lieu de ma naissance, mais au genre humain'. The development of this blasé attitude and *malaise* about the new challenges of nineteenth-century society, found in political and literary texts, was concomitant with the melancholia of the ex-émigré. The hero of *Aloys* is himself travelling to Germany, Switzerland and Italy, blurring the line between the character of the outcast, the melancholic and the émigré.<sup>4</sup> Writing about melancholia did not necessarily mean to have emigrated during the Revolution. But being an ex-émigré certainly enhanced the malaise felt and equipped the author with real life situations of uprooting and loneliness. Upon returning to France, the pain was intensified because the nostalgia for the Ancien Régime failed to be matched with the Empire and Restoration societies. It appears the émigré melancholia found in our corpus is the specific expression of a past trauma of emigration, resuscitated through the lens of the post-revolutionary life, and

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 215.

<sup>3</sup>Honoré de Balzac, *La Cousine Bette*, (Paris, 1847): this novel describes acutely the thirst for power and money driving the bourgeoisie in Paris.

<sup>4</sup>Custine, *Aloys*, p. 46; 58-9.

voiced thanks to literary tropes known to the writers such as melancholia and sensibility. This is why we have used the term *émigré melancholia*; to highlight how it is close to, but different from the main strand of melancholia. Whilst we often use the terms *mal être* and *malaise* interchangeably to express this vague feeling of displacement for the *émigré* in society, the *émigré melancholia* is nonetheless precisely set, both historically and ideologically, whilst taking the vital role of helping close old wounds.

What we call the main strand of melancholia is a notion carved over centuries, and which has accumulated several layers of meaning: melancholia was interlocked with death and mourning, but closely related to intense activity of the mind, and deemed to be a characteristic of exceptional men. It was also a medical condition, a criticised attitude of slackness, and a sin for Christians.<sup>5</sup> Melancholia could be defined as the *expression of cultural malaise embodied within a particular individual or system of thought* as Julia Schiesari put it, in addition to being a complex concept built progressively over time.<sup>6</sup> Recently, trauma studies, in their revival of Freudian thought, have underlined the creative power of melancholia.<sup>7</sup> Far from being a static state like Freud advanced, it ought to be linked to literary production. The renewed interest in melancholia has allowed it to be used as a critical tool for the analysis of literature, which will be greatly employed in this study. Anna-Julia Zwierlein demonstrates that female writers in seventeenth-century England appropriated male models of melancholia to express loss but also to fashion

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<sup>5</sup>In Antiquity melancholia was contracted from the loss of a loved one, but was also associated with the prolific writing. In the Middle Ages melancholia was also seen as intense activity of the mind, (*acedia*). Doctors in their theory of the humours linked this condition to the spleen and a secretion of black humour. Christians accused melancholic people of being sinful as they gave into laziness.

<sup>6</sup>Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, (London, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>Martin Middeke, Christina Wald, *The Literature of Melancholia: Early Modern to Postmodern*, (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 5-8.



themselves as creative authors.<sup>8</sup> This is groundbreaking work in the way it integrates women writers into the literary creation and handling of melancholia in fiction. Likewise, this thesis attempts at filling in the gaps of scholarly research on melancholia in the writings of women of the early nineteenth century. The definition and recognition of the originality of the émigré novel beyond its sentimental mould implies a more systematic relation between trauma, melancholia and literary innovation, with a consideration of gender singularities. Schiesari advanced that in fact the 'myths of the 'sensible' male have co-opted or re-appropriated a certain femininity for the benefit of men and to the detriment of women', and that her 'selection of female responses to the masculine myth of melancholic genius also argues for the possibility of an alternative that is symbolic of loss and lack'.<sup>9</sup> Bertrand Jennings similarly made a special case from female novelists expressing melancholia. She opposed the view that the 'mal du siècle' is strictly romantic and male. She coined a parallel version of this malady of the soul for female heroines, where the compassion for the other is stronger than for their male counterparts and there is less 'complaisance dans la souffrance morale'. For instance, she underlined the importance of the poetic of loss in the works of Claire de Duras. Bertrand Jennings' approach, whilst highlighting the specificity of the rendering of female suffering by women novelists, refrained from enclosing them too restrictively in their femininity.<sup>10</sup> This part will be cautious when talking about female melancholia and avoid thinking in terms of a female melancholia, reacting or developing independently from so-called male melancholia. The way female émigré novelists

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<sup>8</sup>She supports her argument with the examples of Margaret Cavendish and Ann Bradstreet. Anna-Julia Zwierlein, 'Male Pregnancies, Virgin Births, Monsters of the Mind: Early Modern Melancholia and (Cross-) Gendered Constructions of Creativity', in Middeke, *The Literature of Melancholia*, pp. 35-49.

<sup>9</sup>Schiesari, *The Gendering*, p. x.

<sup>10</sup>Bertrand Jennings, *Un autre mal du siècle*, p. 9-10; 21.

voiced their traumatic emigration should not entirely be tied to their gender; however the insistence they seem to place on compassion for others and a different sense of otherness, as pointed out by Bertrand Jennings, encourages us to explore further their originality. Rather than thinking in terms of female versus male malaise, we will oppose émigré melancholia, in our uniquely female case, to the main strand melancholia from which it departed. Thinking in terms of originality in the way melancholia is described in the protagonists can help us to categorise more concisely the genre of the émigré novel written by women, the aim of our thesis.

Before progressing, it is useful to ask whether the émigré novels, because of their melancholia, could fit within the Romantic Movement. Knee states that 'dans le moment 1800 le romantisme ne semble définir le héros que par ce qu'il ne peut plus être, et sa fonction est alors remplie par le marginal lui-même'; 'le marginal devient justement celui en lequel la société se reconnaît'.<sup>11</sup> This strong taste for the imperfect hero is also adopted by our émigré novelists: does it make them Romantics? Romanticism has always been closely related to melancholia. The attention to Romanticism today tends to de-construct stereotypes, and acknowledges the different tempos of European Romanticisms. It is important to recall that the Romantics did not recognise such a unified movement themselves. British, French and German Romanticisms had overlapping themes, but the same consciousness of being different from classicism: Germaine de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* in 1813 was at the forefront of this line of thought.<sup>12</sup> What seems to have caused misleading categorisation in the field is the temptation to find a strict definition of a multifaceted and pluri-national

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<sup>11</sup>Knee, *L'Expérience de la perte*, p. 102.

<sup>12</sup>John Isbell argued that 'Romanticism sprang fully formed from Madame de Staël's head' and that she could be a convenient 'mythic parent to link all European Romantic Movements'. This hugely exaggerates the influence of one individual and one book and does not take into account the different paces of Europe Romanticisms, John Claiborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism, Truth and Propaganda in Staël's De l'Allemagne 1810-1813*, (Cambridge, 2006), p. 6; 9.

movement. To challenge Lovejoy's view of void Romanticisms, Ferber suggested that the movement be seen like a family, whose members bear resemblance to one another but not to all, and yet, in a large crowd they would be recognisable as siblings. He felt scholars should refrain from over-emphasizing very narrow, albeit restrictive, traits for Romanticism, and instead establish a list of shared features, with no hierarchy.<sup>13</sup> Ruston and others insisted on examining the idea of the Romantic Movement not as the product of a solitary genius, but -instead seeing it as produced by social, historical and political forces.<sup>14</sup> Tying this literary movement to its socio-politico-economical background allows more room for the so-called mediocre literature of the first two decades of the nineteenth century and a fortiori for the émigré novel. It is undeniable that there is, in the case of the émigré novel, a conjunction of historical circumstances, socio-cultural evolutions and aristocratic ethic which will never again be possible.<sup>15</sup> Also, the idea that characteristics of Romanticism bear 'familial' resemblances makes it easier to incorporate partially the émigré literature. Consequently, it is pertinent to replace the émigré novel historically as part of a 'pre-Romantic Movement': *i.e.* not in the sense that it announced or prepared the following literary movement, but in the way it owed its characteristics directly from first-hand witnessing and experiences of the Revolution and emigration. As such, this genre is time-defined and short-lived, but this doesn't mean that it did not share some themes with the Romantic Movement. Thus the notion of

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<sup>13</sup>Michael Ferber, (ed), *A Companion to European Romanticism*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 5-7.

<sup>14</sup>Sharon Ruston, *Romanticism*, (London, 2007), p. 120. She refutes the idea of Romantics as voluntarily not involved in the socio-political world, citing works which prove otherwise: G Russel and C Tuite, *Romantic sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, (Cambridge, 2000). On Keats and Wordsworth: N. Roe, *Keats and the Culture of Dissent*, (Oxford, 1997); and -Wordsworth -The Haunted Tree- and the Sexual Politics of Landscape- in P. Kitson, (ed), *Placing and Displacing Romanticism*, (Ashgate, 2001) pp. 33-47.

<sup>15</sup>Peter Fritzsche makes evident the link between the French Revolution and an evolution of European consciousness. This was manifested for instance in a greater taste for ruins, in reaction to loss and unsatisfactory present. -The Melancholy of History: The French Revolution and European Historiography- in Middeke, *The Literature of Melancholia*, pp. 116-129.

émigré melancholia is inscribed too in its historical context: while being heir to the sensibility of the eighteenth century, it also communicates the trauma of the exile and the aristocratic caste's nostalgia. Therefore, it is defined by its historical 'moment' and cannot be separated from the factual elements it attempts at digesting and interpreting. After the Revolution, the female émigré writer found herself torn between a painful but cherished past and an unsatisfying but appeased present: it is often when settling back into a changed France that the trauma of the emigration can be voiced most powerfully. By 'émigré melancholia' we therefore mean also a type of back and forth movement triggered from the realisation of socio-political changes by a group sharing a similar experience of the Revolution. Once this group disappeared, so too did the émigré melancholia and the émigré novel from the mid-nineteenth century.

## **I. The 'exile without' and the émigré melancholia**

### **1. The 'exile without'**

Talking of 'exile without' implies looking at ways in which our émigré authors overlaid memories of their own emigration experience onto the sentimental plot. It differs from the 'exile within' which, in chapter two, corresponded to the desire to paint the protagonist's irrepressible need for withdrawal, hence primarily emphasising the inward emigration. So rather than looking at strategies to disguise the emigration, this section will study the more obvious references to the émigrées' upheavals. We argue that the émigrées' novels display a very specific melancholia

because of the shock of having fled their country; though, at the same time, the melancholic literary device allows too for better coping with these traumatic memories. The genesis of this specific exile malaise is thus not easy to identify as it operates a double bind with the historical and personal trauma: it emanates from it, but also simultaneously contributes to soothing its evocation. Looking at the émigré melancholia can help to make the relationship between memories of emigration more precise and their adaptation into fiction for the purpose of coming to terms with trauma.

Souza's *Emilie et Alphonse* is particularly pertinent for this because it combines the 'exile within' studied earlier with the 'exile without', helping to make sense of the psychological features of the heroine, and therefore the strategy in place to come to terms with a difficult past. The fact that Emilie first withdraws into herself, before being ostracised in her husband's castle in the second half of the novel shows a gradation in the treatment of the emigration trauma. The situation for this transposition of the conditions of the emigration onto fictional settings is of course to avoid any mention of the historical context of the 1790s. *Emilie et Alphonse* takes place far before the Revolution and no mention is made of the political or social troubles in France: the first letter is dated 'Compiègne 15 juin 1761'.<sup>16</sup> Still Souza represented the concrete psychological effect of the emigration through the forced exile of Emilie to her husband's dilapidated castle in the Pyrénées: the fictive exile she paints becomes almost a microcosm where she could concentrate on the heroine's suffering. The reason for the exile is explained: it is a punishment for Emilie's supposedly improper behaviour with the Chevalier de Fiesque. Souza, we have shown, chose to escape the immediate contingency of the emigration by writing

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<sup>16</sup>*Emilie et Alphonse*, p.1.

about a golden age Ancien Régime in *Adèle de Sénange*. *Emilie et Alphonse* is her second émigré novel published just five years after, in 1799. In that respect, it could almost be compared to the later fiction works of Boigne and Duras in the 1820s-30s who tend to utilise the memories of exile more openly to deepen their message about the isolated and unloved woman. Even if Souza had not fully recovered her former status in France on the eve of the nineteenth century, more time had passed than with *Adèle de Sénange*, which suggests that it is possible to evoke the emigration more directly. The term 'exile' is even used by Madame d'Artigue, who 'a paru consternée de cet exil, car c'est ainsi qu'elle nomme ce voyage'. Souza manipulates the references to the emigration more readily than she did in *Adèle de Sénange*, which confirms our view that it is indeed a fictive exile or 'exile without', a form of exile which at first sight is not linked to the émigré upheaval, but, just like the 'exile within', betrays the desire to project and transform the author's old throes into fiction. If Emilie was repulsed previously by the vicious and vain 'monde' of Paris, here, her repulsion is now caused by the wild nature and empty castle. The word 'désert' reoccurs, which enhances the remoteness of the place from any form of civilisation, «une terre qu'il n'a jamais habitée, qu'il ne connaît même pas, qu'on dit presque sauvage».<sup>17</sup> This vast but lonely exile contrasts sharply with Emilie's previous experience in Paris where she was repulsed by the «monde» this time she craves company and support.<sup>18</sup> The imagery representing a fictive exile is abundant; however, what is of greater interest for our research is the effects it has on the distraught heroine, something Souza concentrated on in the latter parts of her novel. Emilie's coping mechanisms are affected; she is no longer able to withdraw as she did in Paris and creates a physical barrier between her and the outside world. She

<sup>17</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 138. The word 'désert' comes three times, t.2, p. 220; 133; 144.

<sup>18</sup>«jetée dans un pays où je ne connais personne» in Ibid, t.2, p. 152. Emilie is even more left alone when her servants leave her after having accompanied her to the castle, t.2, p. 163.

faces hurdles when trying to cope with the void of this exile as there is no tangible way to soothe her endless anxiety. This is enhanced by the fact that her ostracism is purgatory after her alleged affair with the chevalier, leading the heroine to be permanently devoured by feelings of despair and guilt. She has to accept her punitive exile while knowing she is innocent: 'Me garderai-je bien de lui donner occasion d'adoucir mon sort, de dire qu'il m'a *pardonnée* lorsque je n'ai point fait de fautes'.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the guilt of having displeased her husband and the frustration of not being able to redeem herself is added to the disarray of her exile.<sup>20</sup> This complicates the mere feeling of uprooting or loneliness: her exile is also repentance, a forced spiritual retreat in the 'désert'. The depicted feelings of guilt and powerlessness allude to the trauma of having left behind loved ones, just like Madame de Flahaut with her husband. Or did it allude to the shared émigrés' guilt at leaving behind their country and their King?<sup>21</sup> Souza seized fully the opportunity offered by fiction-writing to voice her mixed emotions about her own experience of the emigration, and probably that of others too.

The particularity of the exile Souza represented in *Emilie et Alphonse* resides in the constant threat posed on the heroine by the castle and its surroundings. There is no bucolic landscape where Emilie can soothe her wounded soul. On the contrary, the place is almost supernatural and unpredictable, threatening our protagonist with a 'sort inconnu': 'je ne sais ce que la solitude des Pyrénées peut avoir d'effrayant pour moi qui aime la campagne'<sup>22</sup> Souza injected a Gothic aesthetic within her description of the place of exile, with 'des ruines' a 'vieux château' 'tout-à-fait

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 137; 144.

<sup>20</sup>Emilie says: 'ne pouvoir me défendre'; 'me fait jeter des cris de douleur' and speaks of the 'désespoir que j'éprouve'; truly fearing a 'sort inconnu' in Ibid, t.2, p. 144; 150.

<sup>21</sup>Historians of the emigration underlined the pressure to emigrate amongst the French nobles. Similarly, some nobles refused to emigrate and abandon their country. Those debates are acutely portrayed in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 112; 123.

<sup>22</sup>*Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2, p. 150.

abandonnéø ðe grandes fossesø ðes ponts levis que la rouille empêche de fermerø ðes chaînes, des grilles qui ne servent plusø<sup>23</sup> The servants belong to this gloomy place, like the walking dead serving the haunted castle: ðUne vieille concierge, quelques servantes, et dancien domestiques qui, de père en fils, sont restés au service des ancêtres de M. de Candaleø<sup>24</sup> Emilie hears voices one night when singing at the window, and her irrational fears are confirmed by the gouvernante Madame Robert who affirms there are ðrevenantsøand ðsorciersøroaming around the castle. Emilie is paralysed with horror and fear, ðje nøsais me mouvoir; je tremblaisø<sup>25</sup> This supernatural setting emphasizes the solitude and isolation of the heroine, and the narration, by that point composed of Emilie's letters only, concentrates solely on her emotional journey. The starkness of the décor allows Souza to hone in on the heroine's melancholia. During a walk in the mountain she is surprised by a storm and waits under ðune espèce de caverneø The 'spectacle' of nature's power, with trees being uprooted by a strong wind, accentuates her feeling of utter loneliness and mortality: ðje suis seuleøin ðcet éternel silenceø and she feels ðune horreur secrète à me trouver ainsi séparée du reste du mondeø<sup>26</sup> It contrasts sharply with her desire to isolate herself before: here she has no choice and thus suffers from this forced reclusion. She is ðoppressée par la mélancolie, épuisée de fatigueø This melancholia is therefore triggered by her forced exile more than a feeling of inadequacy, as felt in Paris. For instance, it is affected by the natural elements: ðla tristesse de la nature redoublera sa mélancolieø<sup>27</sup> Its symptoms vary and infiltrate the prose several times, alternating between ðun dégoût insurmontableøand in other instances, madness, ðmø

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid, t.2, 157-158; 162.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 159.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 185-9.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 166; 180.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, t.3, p. 126.



fait reconnaître ma folie, dans la solitude on anime tout<sup>28</sup> Steinberg showed that some doctors who specialised in mental health observed cases of insanity directly linked to the shock of the Terror. He showed that this way of linking Terror with monomaniac insanity resembles our conception of trauma.<sup>29</sup> The madness hinted at here by Souza has to do with this reflection on the effects of the revolutionary turmoil on a fragile soul, and as such differs from the 'traditional' melancholia of sentimental novels. This is all the more evident that love is not the cause or the sole reason Emilie suffers. Being with Alphonse does not soothe Emilie's inner 'mal', as she dedicates herself to his well-being, wishing to absorb all of his suffering to relieve him: «à mesure que la mélancolie d'Alphonse diminue, la mienne semble augmenter»<sup>30</sup> The impossibility of loving him freely is secondary to her inner sadness, she is very much entirely focused on the unfortunate hero's 'mal être' which explains her absolute numbness, even when the brutality of a storm threatens her life: 'Tout-à-coup un ouragan affreux se fit entendre'; 'je n'éprouvais aucune émotion'.<sup>31</sup> Part of Emilie's suffering is measured by her ability to care for Alphonse; it is very much a selfless pain contrary to the traditional form of melancholia which is by definition an emphasis on the self in its dysfunctions. Mellor has demonstrated that feminine Romanticism had an ethic of care and favoured compassion rather than ego. She added it was «fluid, absorptive, responsive, with permeable ego boundaries» and wished to be inscribed within family or community.<sup>32</sup> For instance, Mary Wollstonecraft championed this selfless non-male melancholia, one that did not

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 179; 184; 193.

<sup>29</sup>Steinberg, 'Trauma before trauma', p. 192-3.

<sup>30</sup>*Emilie et Alphonse*, t.3, p.121.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, t.3, p.174.

<sup>32</sup>Mellor, *Romanticism*, p. 209.

result in hysteria but enhanced creativity.<sup>33</sup> Souza did not wish to challenge the established etiquette for displaying a 'feminine' style of soul-searching, nonetheless she succeeded in two things: she explored with the fictive exile an alternative way of suffering for the sensible heroine, outside of mere heartbreak; and secondly she proposed a selfless and dignified twist on the traditional egocentric male melancholia. As a consequence, Souza led a reflection on the effects of the shock of a brutal reclusion, away from one's home, which she voiced with the help of the more traditional literary tropes of the sentimental and Gothic novel, nonetheless never jeopardising her own original way of picturing the traumatic experience. The mixed emotions she depicts, where guilt and regret are intertwined, and where melancholia increases due to the challenging conditions of a forced exile, all lead the heroine to wish and fear her death simultaneously: 'vivre et mourir inconnue, oubliée' hint at a more unconventional reflection on the ravages of the Revolution changes on the individual's psychological and physical well-being.<sup>34</sup> We are not in the field of safe re-enactment by metaphor, avoidance and subtle references. Here the emigration memories are overlaid directly onto a fictive version of them: the coming to terms with trauma is indeed less staggered, and more straightforward. On top of the fictive exile making the traumatic memories more manageable, the very specific melancholia felt by Emilie that we have underlined attests of the author's reflection on the psychological scars of the émigré woman. Ultimately both processes, fictive

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<sup>33</sup>Dolan argued that Wolstonecraft in her travel novel *Letters written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796), challenged medical notions of melancholia as essentially male and re-appropriated melancholia for herself. Wolstonecraft described herself as sensible but wanted to avoid been dubbed 'hysterical' so insisted on her 'manly' melancholia, as literary genius, intellectual capacities. Dolan concludes that 'she complicates the gendered distinctions applied to nervous illnesses' in Elizabeth A., Dolan, *Seeing Suffering in Women's Literature of the Romantic era*, (Burlington, 2008), p. 86.

<sup>34</sup>*Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2 p.156. This remark leads us to point at Balzac's *Le Lys dans la Vallée*, (Paris, 1836), story of impossible love between Blanche de Mortsau and the young Félix de Vandenesse. Monsieur de Mortsau was an émigré, and never truly recovered from his traumatic exile abroad: he is depicted as a hypochondriac authoritarian husband, regularly suffering from seizures of madness.

exile and émigré melancholia, help the émigré novelist to provide a type of logic to their traumatic memories by being arranged narratively in a plot. The real experience of exile and its stigmas are productively invested in the novel. This strengthens the idea of exile without; the idea that the emigration inspired literature with its themes and in that respect, looking for trauma is a pertinent task.

## **2. The émigré melancholia.**

This section seeks to demonstrate that the melancholia portrayed in the heroes and heroines of this corpus differs from the melancholia found in non-émigré novels. Melancholia has been designed and understood often as a male malady, the female characters suffering from an excess of sensibility or hysteria. Schesiari proposed to palliate the masculine version of melancholia in literature by re-inscribing «women» losses through another type of representation, embracing their gender specific melancholia.<sup>35</sup> Here our aim is not to think exclusively in terms of female versus male melancholia, but inclusively in terms of an alternative émigré melancholia. The gender of the authors is not a pre-requisite but a constitutive part of this coining of an alternative malady of the soul. This will allow us to demonstrate that this «mal-être» is a hybrid construction of «mainstream» male melancholia together with the reflections of women ex-exiles. By coining the term émigré melancholia we reinforce the idea that having lived the emigration has a huge impact on the female émigré novel: for lack of available vocabulary our novelists adapted the melancholic lexical field they were accustomed to. Therefore the notion of émigré melancholia

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<sup>35</sup>Schesiari, *The Gendering of Melancholia*, p. 77.

highlights the process of coping with trauma and also the originality of the émigré novel from the sentimental vogue.

All our novelists insert some melancholic characters, male and female, in their works. Alphonse's melancholia has been shown previously to influence Emilie in Souza's *Emilie et Alphonse*; likewise, Boigne's hero Romuald is described as numb, «je ne sens plus rien profondément, je n'ai plus ni amour, ni colère, j'aime et je hais bien faiblement». This wave of lingering sorrow reaches even Henri in *La Maréchale*, which is surprising for a courtesan.<sup>36</sup> Female protagonists, as shown in chapter two, are voicing a more inward rejection of the «monde» which indicates the overbearing weight of a traumatic emigration once the ex-exiled noblewomen returned to a changed society. Gudule's spirit for instance «avait perdu toute élasticité» and «la langueur qui l'accablait la suivit à Paris».<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Dolan demonstrated that women writers of the Romantic era insisted more on the seeing of suffering than men, in a bid to assert themselves as «creative subjects within patriarchal culture».<sup>38</sup> She added that there was a correlation between identity and seeing the suffering: «we become ourselves by caring for others».<sup>39</sup> This implies that by painting uprooted heroines, our émigré novelists developed a firmer sense of identity and belonging, and came to terms with their wounded pasts. The shift in the depiction of melancholia in our corpus attests of a will to assert oneself and heal at the same time.

With the case study of Duras' heroes, we will show how the mainstream melancholia is twisted to incorporate the uprooting of the émigré, and simultaneously how the heroes' 'mainstream' melancholia is invalidated by the narration, as not

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<sup>36</sup> *La Maréchale*, p. 316.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201. The language of spleen is present in the maréchale's speech about happiness, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> She linked this emphasis on the materialistic 'seeing' of pain by the influence of the medicine on the eyes and the preoccupation with weaker categories of the population in late eighteenth century, in Dolan, *Seeing suffering*, p. 3; 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> Kaja Silverman, *World Spectators*, (Stanford, 2000), p. 24, cited in Dolan, *Seeing suffering*, p. 14.

satisfying for the heroines. Firstly, through the use of melancholia, Duras merged the psychological descriptions, found in contemporary novels, with the historical and traumatic destiny of the typical French émigré. The expressions of melancholia in nineteenth-century novels are often stereotypical and easily recognisable: Edouard and Olivier in this respect are within the traditional melancholia, being restless and fatally unsatisfied with life.<sup>40</sup> Psychological agitation is translated by incessant pacing and walking. For Edouard it is written that : «je marchais des journées entières, je parcourais les rues comme un insensé»<sup>41</sup> Olivier runs away with a «pâleur mortelle» on his face.<sup>42</sup> The anticipation of a fatal ending is omnipresent through changes in the body and behaviour: «d'affreuses palpitations me faisaient croire que je touchais à la fin de ma vie, ses cheveux en désordre, il avait l'air tout égaré, il me fit peur»<sup>43</sup> Melancholia is both innate and provoked by the living environment: Edouard clearly states that there is «quelque chose d'incomplet dans mon âme»<sup>44</sup> Olivier links his mal être to a childhood illness which changed him forever.<sup>45</sup> As put forward in Romantic Movement discourses, melancholia is synonymous with exceptional beings and despises vulgarity: «souffrir profondément appartient aux âmes distinguées, car les sentiments communs sont toujours superflus»<sup>46</sup> It is not surprising then that it is when confronted by the mediocrity of the social world that this melancholia becomes unbearable. Society in Duras's novels

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<sup>40</sup>This is common place in contemporary novels such as Krüdener, *Valérie*, Etienne de Senancour, *Oberman, lettres publiées par M. Senancourt*, 2 vol., (Paris, 1804); Constant, *Adolphe*; Stendhal, *Armance*, (Paris, 1827); Custine, *Aloys*.

<sup>41</sup>*Edouard*, t.2, p.35; 73.

<sup>42</sup>*Olivier*, p. 257.

<sup>43</sup>*Edouard*, t.2, p. 32-3; *Olivier*, p. 297-8.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid*, p. 60.

<sup>45</sup>Olivier is said to have suffered from an illness as a child which almost killed him and was seen as the cause for his impotence. Duras never reveals his secret but scholars are convinced her novel is about this delicate topic. See the introduction by Marie-Bénédicte Diethelm, in *Ourika*, p.57. Other heroes being melancholic from birth include Octave in *Armance*, and the eponym heroes Aloys and Oberman; Gustave in *Valérie*.

<sup>46</sup>*Edouard*, p. 58.

has noxious characteristics which drag down the heroes and accelerate their descent into despair. Both characters actively seek solitude: Edouard says that *«dès qu'il arrivait un étranger, je m'en allais vivre dans ce monde que je m'étais créé et auquel celui-là ressemblait si peu»*<sup>47</sup> For Olivier too, being in the world accentuates *«ces dégoûts et ces ennuis qui sont les malheurs de ceux qui n'en ont pas d'autres»*<sup>48</sup> This problem unfortunately is never to be resolved: *«je ne sais ce que je veux, la vie [í ] me fatigue [í ] et la mort [í ] me séparerait de toi»*<sup>49</sup> M. Waller argued that male writers had the unconscious desire to appropriate feminine characteristics and be melancholic: this is vivid in the case of Stendhal who is said to have been influenced by Duras's *Olivier* (1821-2) and *Edouard* (1825) for his *Armance* (1827) and *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1830).<sup>50</sup> This puts into perspective the belief that there is a male form of melancholia as opposed to a female one. We cannot say that Duras' novels display a feminine melancholia in reaction to male melancholia, but they rework a given melancholic lexical field to fit the émigré suffering.

If we compare Edouard and Olivier to Henry in *Amélie et Pauline* we find a clear correlation between exile errancy and melancholia. Henry is travelling in Europe *«sans but»* since *«rien ne l'intéressait assez»* The Revolution stripped him of his hopes, and the present is necessarily dissatisfying: *«maintenant tout était détruit; errant sur la terre, exilé de son pays»* *«ne voyait devant lui qu'un long avenir sans intérêts et sans bonheur»*<sup>51</sup> The feeling of numbness and of being an outcast is the same in the émigré Henri and in the non-émigré protagonists Edouard and Olivier,

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid, p. 68.

<sup>48</sup>*Olivier*, p. 210. His *«profond dégoût»* for society is stated from his first letter: *«il faut s'isoler dans le monde puisqu'avec ses affections, on multiplie ses douleurs»* and speaking about the *«maladies de l'âme»* he believes that *«celles qui tuent le plus souvent sont celles qu'on porte avec soi dans le monde»* p. 227; 232-3.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid, p. 288.

<sup>50</sup>M. Waller, *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel*, (Brunswick, 1993), p. 23.

<sup>51</sup>*Amélie et Pauline*, p.156.

thus there is a re-appropriation of the vocabulary of melancholia to fit what the exile went through. The idea of being alienated as a result of a shameful secret, like Olivier, or by social exclusion, like Edouard, resonates strongly with the émigré trauma as reflected on once back in France because it is centred on the incapacity to be in tune with the outside world and the incapacity to move past a debilitating wound. Duras' 'tour de force' in placing impotence at the root of Olivier's melancholia proves that she sought to explore radical and alternative modes of Otherness, in line with the exceptional status of the émigré in post-revolutionary France. The émigré melancholia is therefore characterised by an absurd yet insurmountable disconnection between individuals and their surroundings. Edouard reacts by taking refuge in his own dreams, in the company of chimeras: *je ai dans mon âme un trésor de douleur et de délices que je conserverai jusqu'à la mort, je vivais encore une fois dans un monde créé par moi-même*<sup>52</sup> Could this 'trésor de douleur et de délices' that he is keen on safeguarding, symbolises the particular émigré throe at seeing everything that was reduced to dust? The circumstances of the emigration, and its traumatic impact on the behaviour of individuals, are ideally fitted to the language of melancholia in the fiction. It gave to this malady a substantial historical cause from which to claim its origin. Did Duras transfer the figure of the emigrant into non-émigré protagonists in order to attain the same sense of mal être, or did she utilise the vocabulary of melancholia to characterize her exiled heroes? The case study of Duras' implicit and explicit émigré novels attested to the productive merging of the two psychological and historical conditions. This reveals how innovative the émigré novel was in the way it recuperated and revised the traditional male malady of the post-revolutionary literature.

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<sup>52</sup> *et la forme et la vie étaient données à tous ces vagues fantômes de mon imagination* in *Edouard*, p. 79; 94; 95.

Secondly, the female émigré novels diverge from other novels by non-émigrés in the evocation of melancholia because they invalidate its *raison d'être* from the point of view of the heroine. The enunciation in Duras' novels creates a distance between the male protagonist's melancholia and the heroine and readers. In *Edouard*, we have access to the hero's life story only thanks to the narrator who is reading a written diary, which means that the enunciation switches from *je* narrator to *je* Edouard. Eventually the narrator reacquires his role as he tells the reader how his friend died. Edouard's melancholia is therefore perceived from the outside, through a third person narrator, and from the inside, through the autobiography he provides. In *Olivier* the melancholic male hero is first presented as such by Louise de Nangis, who is his childhood friend and lover. Olivier's letters are scarce and he is often mentioned in the third person: *ses lettres sont toujours d'une mélancolie singulière*<sup>53</sup> As the plot thickens, Louise reports Olivier's speech directly within her letters and so does her cousin the Marquise de C.<sup>54</sup> It is as though Olivier did not have a voice of his own, and the reader discovers his atypical behaviour and secret through the description and analysis provided by the two women. This outside point of view on melancholia enables Duras to highlight the negative effects it has on the heroines: indeed the male malady is a literary device she seems to portray as becoming redundant. This corresponds also to a desire to denounce the archaic and inadequate behaviour of men, which we will explore in detail in our next chapter. Edouard and Olivier's *mal être* becomes in fact the reason why the couples cannot be together, and thus it is no longer an attractive feature. Duras placed a secret at the core of Olivier's spleen: *il y a certainement une cause secrète à la mélancolie*, the Marquise de C. insists: *j'ai cru voir percer une passion violente retenue par cette*

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<sup>53</sup> *Olivier*, p. 199; 201.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 217; 231.



susceptibilité ombrageuse, défaut inné de son caractère -il est sombre et incertain. Just like the protagonist, the reader is left wondering what Olivier's secret could be.<sup>55</sup> Whether or not it is his impotence, our intuition is that this process is but a smoke screen that authorises Duras to emphasise the absurdity of melancholia in the way it affects every aspect of life and escapes common logic. It symbolises the lack of comprehension between the heroine and the male hero, but also between the outcast émigré and the society. Ultimately the reader is left wondering if the marriage with Louise would have happened had Olivier's secret been told. Likewise, Edouard loves a high born widow Natalie, and is adopted by her father after his own father's death. He is very much appreciated by this aristocratic family of choice. However what leads him to leave France and find death in the American war is mere gossip about an embrace he had with his beloved. It is his archaic stubbornness which ultimately condemns their love, not circumstances. This too shows that there is no positive outcome from this state, only despair, madness and death, always at the expense of female protagonists. Bertrand Jennings pointed out that Duras' heroes are and aren't traditional melancholic heroes like male writers painted them: Olivier is incapable of fulfilling his role in society but unlike René, Obermann or others, he knows why. His melancholia has in fact a very concrete physical cause.<sup>56</sup> Alphonse's melancholia in *Emilie et Alphonse* brings him to neglect not one but three women: when he obtains the hand of his beloved Camille, he remains deeply dissatisfied, leading him to betray her by seeing Eléonore. He then runs away and hides in the Pyrénées, where he befriends the married Emilie. His indecision and unproductive regrets lead him to push all three women either to their death or the convent, without the promise of

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid, p. 210; 242.

<sup>56</sup>Bertrand Jennings, *Masculin/féminin*, p. 96.

marriage we usually find in Souza's novels.<sup>57</sup> Worse still, the ending takes to the extreme the absurdity of male melancholia: Alphonse dies from the wounds of his duel with Emilie's husband, and Emilie raises his daughter in a convent.<sup>58</sup> Boigne too ridicules male melancholic expressions but less poignantly than the two others. Duras and Souza demystified male melancholia by cancelling its *raison d'être* through the insistence on the damage done to others, above all women. The demystification of male melancholia hints at a desire for change, provoked by the individual experience of exile of the author. This links with what Sénac de Meilhan wrote about the Revolution becoming more extraordinary than fiction. The melancholia still painted by contemporary writers seemed unauthentic, artificial, and void for women who experienced loss, uprooting and social downgrading. Nonetheless our émigré novelists were not militating for a feminine malaise as such in reaction to the male one found in contemporary novels. The divergence between the two melancholias comes from the émigré flavour the writers of my corpus have adopted. The émigré melancholia differs in the way it evokes deep existential anxieties, such as the incapacity to find happiness in the present when one's past has been traumatic, anxieties which are rooted in the émigré condition. Duras' very 'physical' version of melancholia pertinently translates émigré fears of being perpetually at odds with society because of a visible-invisible stigma from having emigrated. Just like Olivier, the émigrés have almost a physical disability preventing them from engaging with normal social interactions. The important aspect to retain from this is that the trauma of the emigration comes through this curbing of the main melancholia vocabulary, in a bid to regain focus and centre the plot onto things that

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<sup>57</sup>The priest and confidant of Emilie says Alphonse never loved Camille or Eléonore, in *Emilie et Alphonse*, t.3, p. 129. The reader is left wondering if Alphonse even loved Emilie at all.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, p. 31. Emilie also says of him «sa figure me frappe; mais si j'essayais de vous la peindre, sûrement vous accuseriez mon esprit romanesque de l'embellir» p.6.

matter, like a generous heart and genuine love. It is possible that by bursting out of the sentimental mould, the émigré novel announced its death sentence, without realising. Indeed the expression of innate mal être in characters was taken over by the Romantic Movement and the sentimental vogue faded to the profit of the realist novel. The émigré novel made the effort of combining traditional but dying trends with new and original features. Ultimately what Duras utilised in her fiction is a reshaped melancholia which survives the exile and makes its victims almost crave the return of difficult times in order to feel alive: *je suis comme ces génies malfaisants qui n'ont de pouvoir que dans les temps de calamités, et que le bonheur fait fuir*<sup>59</sup>

This case study of the representation of an outward fictive exile and émigré melancholia casts light onto our novelists' strategies and different paces of working through trauma in the relatively rigid frame of the sentimental novel. What is crucial to underline is that, via the painting of fictive exile and émigré melancholia, Souza and Duras were trying to re-appropriate their past to adapt and recover in post-revolutionary society. Hence the use of traditional melancholic tropes from which to mould the more specific émigré malaise: in removing the ideological tone linked to the description of émigré characters, our women writers concentrated on the essence of melancholia, making the émigré trauma a much more standardised condition for them to feel comfortable with, and appealing for the nineteenth-century reader. The transformation of the characteristics of melancholia inscribes the émigré suffering into a wider category of suffering, consequently contributing to elevating the fate of the émigré as martyr and yet survivor of the Ancien Régime's dramatic collapse.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ourika*, p. 68.

## II. The collective mourning of the emigration

So far the novels of our corpus implicitly referred to the emigration. Our novelists chose not to tell the story of their emigration in London in its gritty detail, and instead they evoked it in places where it brought meaning to the plot, and enhanced the psychological turmoil and tragic destinies of their characters. We have shown this strategy made it easier for them to recover from the emigration trauma through the depiction of inward and outward exiles. Imagination and creativity embellished and put at a distance the painful past. However popular this was, it is not the only strategy we detect in our corpus. Indeed three novels treat the emigration explicitly and no longer narrate a fictive exile or use metaphorical images to evoke displacement: Duras's *Mémoires de Sophie* and *Amélie et Pauline*, and Souza's *Eugénie et Mathilde*. By 'exile without' we include the direct narration in a fictional work about the historical emigration. The relative absence of smoke screens between the past memories and the fiction, questions the very aim of this chapter: if the memories of a difficult emigration are told explicitly then, potentially, there are no longer traces of trauma to be found. The abandon of the camouflage strategy could signify the author is finally at ease with her past. Assman believed that in the case of extreme violence, such as the Holocaust, societies make an effort to remember in order not to forget.<sup>60</sup> Thus, paradoxically, the more direct narration of the emigration does not necessarily mean that trauma has been dealt with: in fact it is likely that the process of inscribing one's story of exile -even fictive- within a community of nostalgic souls corresponds to a strategy of making peace with troubled and

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<sup>60</sup> Aleida Assman 'From Collective Violence to a Common Future' in Modlinger, *Other people's pain*, pp. 43-62. The link between memory safeguarding and collective history is pertinently theorised by Nora in *Les lieux de mémoire*.

individual memories. Furthermore, these three explicit émigré novels are never ceasing to entangle the autobiographical with the fictional, creating a new journey of emigration: Sophie and Amélie do not go to the colonies before arriving in London like Duras, the Revels never crossed the Channel like Souza. However much they insert their own recollections into the plots, however explicit the stories of the emigration are, our novelists do not tell their own journey, but that of another family or individual; a story their readers could identify with from having lived similar upheavals, read the newspapers, or overheard accounts from friends. Consequently, to better grasp the way Souza and Duras wrote their more explicit émigré novels, it is important to underline the fact that they were not working in a hermetic space. As members of a community of aristocrats they were brought together, despite political antagonisms, by a shared experience abroad óthey were far from being isolated or unique in communicating part of their experiences. The act of putting pen to paper was a way of acknowledging this shared ordeal, as well as situating oneself within it and coping better with a difficult re-adjustment into the evolving French society. It logically necessitated the establishment of a vocabulary and ideology which would be recognizable by other witnesses and victims.

At this point it is important to get a better grasp of who the French émigrés were, what they believed in and how they positioned themselves once they returned to the Restoration and Empire societies. Firstly, the community of French émigrés was heterogeneous, and not solely composed of noblemen and women fleeing for political reasons. Since Greer's breakthrough research, it has been recognised that the emigration concerned less privileged parts of the French population too, who chose to flee France to find brighter and safer European economic climates.<sup>61</sup> Once abroad,

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<sup>61</sup> Greer, *The Incidence of the Emigration*.

groups of émigrés were formed according to their political colour, wealth and date of arrival: the later you arrived, the more 'radical' you were seen to be. Families who had funds outside of France could enjoy a generous settlement, like Claire de Kersaint and her mother who had recuperated money from their estate in the colonies. European countries, cities and governments were not equal in welcoming those communities, and the degree of welcoming influenced the areas of settlement, just like the local institutions and politics framed the way the émigrés presented themselves and what options they chose for survival. Coblenz was the core of the hardline royalist emigration, having sheltered the émigré army under the command of Condé. Emigration in Switzerland, or Italy, was less military and politically explicit, and depended on previous connections being activated.<sup>62</sup> England has been recognised as the most welcoming, offering financial support and a relatively convenient hub from which to circulate, produce and diffuse French news for the most politically engaged émigrés. The divisions amongst the exiled community were transported back to France and boiled over during the Restoration, at times tearing apart old loyalties.<sup>63</sup> The visibility of freshly arrived émigrés in Paris is, for instance, commented on in the novel and by Duras herself, speaking of 'un air d'émigrés rentrés' in her correspondence.<sup>64</sup> Boigne felt foreign when she attended her first Restoration ball: 'je ne sais pas trop ce que j'étais, anglaise je crois, mais certainement pas française'.<sup>65</sup> Situating oneself within the émigré community and towards the new government was vital upon return. Thus, when using the topic of the

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<sup>62</sup>Boigne and her parents were hosted by the queen of Naples, in *Récits*, p. 104.

<sup>63</sup>Boigne commented on the divisions in the 1800s France between 'les deux sociétés de l'ancien et du nouveau régime', in *Récits*, p. 251. For more on the ideological world of the émigrés see Baldensperger, *Le mouvement des idées*.

<sup>64</sup>Sophie is appalled by the atmosphere of suspicion when she arrives in Paris: 'le titre seul d'émigré devait être un reproche' and comments on the fact that the exile did not stop once back in France: 'l'émigration n'était complète pour un émigré qu'à son retour' in *Mémoires*, p.133; note 18, p. 139.

<sup>65</sup>*Récits*, p. 186. Madame de Gontaut, a fellow French émigré in London, also writes she was seen as a foreigner because of her English dress style at a party during the first Restoration, in Gontaut, *Mémoires*, p. 136.

emigration as main canvas for their plots, our noblewoman writers had to position themselves clearly within the émigré ideology while conveying acceptable values for their rank, and avoiding frontal attack on the regime. Unsurprisingly, this move towards assimilation within the wider emigration community and French society in general was a potentially harmful enterprise for them, and writing about the emigration did not guarantee acceptance amongst the ex-exiled crowd. Duras herself suffered from the alienation of her caste, when Louis XVIII refused to receive her alongside her husband, for she was the daughter of a Girondin. Her daughter, who opted for the most 'pure' royalist circles of her family-in-law, left her later on. In the preface to *Les Petits Emigrés* in 1819, Madame de Genlis, having experienced the emigration in England between Autumn 1791 and 1792, seemed to fear attacks on the grounds of writing a story about the émigrés: 'car ce nom d'émigré a fait penser à quelques émigrés, qu'il ne pouvoit contenir qu'une satire amère et sanglante'.<sup>66</sup> Violent debates about the émigrés and their rehabilitation in the French society were rife up until the vote of the bill of indemnification in 1824.<sup>67</sup> Genlis affirms her aim is to counteract 'la méchanceté d'un très petit nombre d'individus' under the banner 'd'une classe infortunée dont je partage les malheurs'.<sup>68</sup> Carpenter underlines in her introduction to a new edition of *Eugénie et Mathilde* that Souza too was trying to rehabilitate the émigré family against the critics.<sup>69</sup> Clearly writing an émigré novel was still controversial in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, and opened up old wounds and conflicts; however it was also obviously a peacekeeping project, as hinted at by Genlis, by lamenting on the horrible upheavals lived by the émigrés

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<sup>66</sup> Genlis, *Mémoires inédits de Mme la comtesse de Genlis, sur le dix-huitième siècle et la Révolution française*, (Paris, 1825), Tome 4, p. 110

<sup>67</sup> Stendhal mentions the 'loi d'indemnité' the Malivert receive two millions. It makes his hero Armance rich and attractive to suitors, in *Armance*, p. 37.

<sup>68</sup> Genlis, *Mémoires inédits*, p. 138-139.

<sup>69</sup> Carpenter, *Madame de Souza, Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 3.

and creating cohesion.<sup>70</sup> The social visibility of the ex-émigré can also be attested by their presence as novelistic figures throughout most of the nineteenth century, and the highly colourful portraits related by historians.<sup>71</sup> Up until the mid-twentieth century, French historiography saw the perfect embodiment of a frivolous and corrupted society in the émigré who lived above his means, opposed the reform of the institutions and, as a consequence, paid a high price for it. Others, in the wake of the Franco-German conflicts starting in 1870, spread the image of the émigré martyr, and expressed their regret for a fantasised golden age of harmonious relationship between the king and his subjects.<sup>72</sup> This brief overview makes evident the need not to treat our émigré texts in total isolation. They ought to be replaced and understood within their original social, political and ideological context, and as being under the influence, or even pressures, of the émigré community and the rest of society as each group attempted to reinterpret the story of the Revolution and the emigration.

Several questions need to be considered. Is it at all possible to distinguish between individual memories and collective ones? Were the (female) émigré(e)s authors aware of those pressures and, if so, did they willingly include themes that the community would approve of? How did this interaction of the individual and collective impact on the voicing of trauma? Could we speak of collective trauma in this case? Scholars have brought much needed insights into workings of the individual as opposed to collective memory. Halbwachs coined the term of 'cadre de la mémoire' to define the context within which we produce memories; a web of concepts we are familiar with at the time. Later on in life, memories are hard to

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<sup>70</sup> Genlis, *Les petits émigrés*, p. vi-vii.

<sup>71</sup> For instance, the moribond M. le comte de Mortsauf in Balzac, *Le Lys dans la vallée*.

<sup>72</sup> Republican historians conveyed a pejorative image of the émigré, or one that is sentimentalised to show they were cut off from reality: such is Michelet's *Histoire de France*. For a more sympathetic, yet subjective, account see: Forneron, *Histoire générale des émigrés*. A more objective approach is that of Daudet, *Histoire de l'émigration pendant la Révolution française*.



recollect because those frames are missing, they have evolved as we passed into adulthood. For him there are no memories independent from society: memories are like a language, therefore they are embedded within and dependent on the social realm. He advanced that the recollection of individual memory -which he insisted is reconstruction and never recovery of an intact memory- cannot be separated from those *cadres spatiaux et sociaux* of collective memory: *«L'individu évoque ses souvenirs en s'aidant des cadres de la mémoire sociale»*<sup>73</sup> This is because we crave social unity and continuity, against disparate memories of antagonistic groups. Halbwachs also showed that group memories are trying to accord with one another: *«ce que le groupe oppose à son passé, ce n'est pas son présent, c'est le passé [í ] d'autres groupes auxquels il tend à s'identifier»*<sup>74</sup> Consequently, memories are reworked in society in order to be more compatible and homogeneous. Whilst providing a practical frame, helping to distinguish personal and collective memories, in this theory it is not clear exactly who is making the memories more homogeneous, and under which conditions this happens; and above all, whether this is done consciously or not. Nonetheless, it is likely that our émigré writers were not fully aware of the distinction between memories of their own trauma and the trauma of others, taking ideas and images they heard, or read, in ex-émigré circles as their own. Even if providing a frame for thinking about the reminiscence of memories and their social make up, Halbwachs' approach does not help to conceptualise the complex relationship between individual versus collective memories of the emigration. Paul Ricoeur brought the personal and the collective closer by reinterpreting and applying Freud's theory on mourning to collective memories and analysing blocked, forced and manipulated memories. This strategy also made evident the porous nature of

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<sup>73</sup>Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux*, p. 391-2.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid, p. 394.

memories, at both the individual and collective level. However for Ricoeur, seeking to separate and clearly define collective as opposed to personal memories is useless. Instead we should concentrate on identifying who feels the *pathos* for those memories, and who seeks to record them.<sup>75</sup> It gives importance to the strategies for recording and maintaining memories, and the effects of memory onto an audience rather than their origins and whether they are authentic or fictionalised. Perhaps the gender of the author can also bring some answers in grasping the nature of the exchanges between individual and collective traumatic memory. In nineteenth-century Europe hegemonic memory was preoccupied with building national identity and often ignored minorities and women.<sup>76</sup> Paletschek and Schraut deplore that 'female memories can only be inscribed into collective memory when times permit it, namely when they are regarded as politically correct and when they are usable for the construction of national identity'. To this it must be added that women have a tendency of not viewing themselves as actors in history and simultaneously 'rob themselves of [...] being worthy narrators [...] of the past'.<sup>77</sup> We underlined this strategy in chapter one when explaining that to embrace the female sentimental novel frame was to protect oneself from criticism for breaching gender boundaries. This factor has to be taken into consideration, even if gender as a meaningful angle will be examined in our next chapter. The female émigré novel draws power from its attempt to simultaneously identify with a shared memory of the Revolution, and to tell a drastically more intimate experience of it.<sup>78</sup> Those contradictory forces probably

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<sup>75</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, (London, 2006), p. 79-91; 162-5.

<sup>76</sup> Jay Winter, *Remembering War: the Great War between Memory and History in the twentieth century*, (London, 2006), cited in Paletschek, Schraut, (eds), *The Gender of Memory*, p.17.

<sup>77</sup> Sylvia Paletschek, Sylvia Schraut, 'Gender and Memory Culture in Europe- female representations in historical perspective', in Paletschek, *The Gender of Memory*, pp. 7-30, p. 7-8, p. 19-21.

<sup>78</sup> Dolan argued that women made the best out of patriarchal culture by being creative in their own way: 'The women writers [...] deploy body-based ideas about vision and suffering to assert themselves as creative subjects within patriarchal culture. They rely on a physical, embodied mode of seeing in order to represent the marked nature of illness, the therapeutic importance of the viewer'.

explain why the genre was dubbed mediocre, but it also stresses that there is a female take on the emigration and its psychological damages. Thus, this approach further highlights the pertinence of considering the role played by the personal, social and historical contexts on the recording of, and dealing with, the trauma of the Revolutionary decade. It casts light onto the shift in the way French people saw their common past and sought to safeguard and entrench their identity within it.

With this in mind, we will be careful not to pretend to separate the individual from the collective memories of emigration. Instead we will concentrate on the purpose behind this combination: ultimately the objective was for the émigré writers both to re-appropriate an extraordinary event lived by all, and to claim their belonging to a suffering community, hence demanding indulgence and social recognition, a process which would help them come to terms with their own trauma as émigrés. Nora pointed out that the Revolution's turmoil also made people aware and protective of their shared national memory, the 'patrie'<sup>79</sup> He noted that the Revolution encouraged people to see a sovereignty of space, the French territory, the borders of which were jealously defended by an army of citizens organised by the republican State. He added that 'the self-exile of the mainly aristocratic emigration, the physical development of the attachment to a land the Revolution took from them' encouraged the attachment to the 'patrie' like never before. This particular shift encourages us to link trauma with collective memory even further. To study the link between individual and collective memories in our émigré novels, we will talk of a common language of 'emigration trauma'. Indeed there are recurring moments in the émigré texts systematically narrating the stages of emigration with a similar lexical

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location, and the invisibility of particular forms of suffering. In addition, they invent narrative forms designed to make the social causes of suffering culturally visible. in Dolan, *Seeing suffering*, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup>Pierre Nora, *Rethinking France, Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 2, trans. directed by David P. Jordan, (London, 2006), p. ix-x.

field: those are the 'émigré steps' each author engages with in order to merge individual into collective memories and get a sense of closure. Interestingly, for fictive trauma in contemporary American novels, Hubert Zapf has shown that, although fictionalised, these trauma narratives are often ethically relevant to the reader, contributing towards a collectively experienced historical reality.<sup>80</sup> This is useful to consider in our examination of the émigré steps, which are systematically inserted, independently from the very varied experience of the authors. They often start by evoking the incredulity and spreading of panic when it becomes clear a character's life is endangered if he/she stays in Paris and/or France. The point of view in this respect enhances the incredulity and powerlessness in the face of the quick radicalisation of the Revolution: Boigne speaks for instance of an 'esprit de vertige' for the young Adèle in 1789, an effect reproduced in the fictional works.<sup>81</sup> Ourika and Sophie are young women reporting events they fail to fully grasp: what is stressed is the Revolution's apparent mission of 'tout ébranler et tout détruire' which 'excita en moi un de ces mouvements combattus qui furent le tourment d'une époque où il semblait qu'on ne pût éprouver de sentiment simple' and kills off any last illusions: 'L'espoir sitôt détruit que m'avait inspiré la Révolution'.<sup>82</sup> Mathilde and Eugénie in Souza's novel are left out of the heated discussions about the progress of the Revolution, either by choice or circumstance, the first being bed-ridden during her pregnancy, the second having been sheltered in her convent. Their relative ignorance about the events shows a naïve attempt at erasing the immediate threat of the Revolution, Souza insisting on the difficulty for individuals to grasp the sheer gravity of the events. This stage is followed by the forced emigration and the denial of the condition of émigré: M. de Revel is first unaware of his new status; only when

<sup>80</sup> Zapf, 'Trauma, Narrative and Ethics' in Modlinger, *Other people's pain*, pp.145-167.

<sup>81</sup> *Récits*, p.77.

<sup>82</sup> Respectively, *Ourika*, p. 44; *Mémoires de Sophie*, p. 45-6.

he is told by a domestic he realises the danger his family is in, hence reinforcing his attachment to his land: «je suis émigré! et cependant me voilà encore en France, encore dans ma terre» «j'y resteraï»<sup>83</sup> The conversations reproduced in the modest salons of the French refugees abroad accentuate the gap between the reality of the changes at work in France, and the naivety of the nobility about this «course de plaisir» «nous ne doutions pas que nous n'y revinssions nous-mêmes l'hiver suivant»<sup>84</sup> The authors' narrators are trying to display the extent of the émigrés' illusions and apparent naivety in such expressions; as survivors and émigré novelists they did not have the benefit of hindsight. After this phase, starts one of anxiety and restlessness at receiving news from loved ones, whilst living conditions worsen. The slow circulation of news and their lack of veracity during the emigration is a topos of the émigré novel: «mille récits contradictoires remplissaient les gazettes» and «aucun renseignement direct ne nous parvenait»<sup>85</sup> The sheer ignorance doubled with anxiety is insisted on at regular intervals, slowing the pace in between rapid moments of the plot: «Cette France [í ] était devenue un gouffre dont l'imagination n'osait approcher les rapports vagues»<sup>86</sup> This step is often well exploited by the author, strengthening the pathos of the emigration and the empire of the imagination on the already frail mind of the heroine. Sophie is obsessed with getting news and becomes close to an old soldier, she calls «mon oracle» because he can provide plausible theories about the progress of the émigré army.<sup>87</sup> Mathilde's life depends on the news she avidly seeks 'en tremblant': «à un seul nom sembloit attaché son dernier soupir»<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 241. In the *Mémoires de Sophie*, the word 'émigré' appears only p. 47, well after the family has emigrated.

<sup>84</sup> «on refusait la lumière qui eût fait apparaître ce qu'on craignait d'entrevoir.» «tout le monde était plus ou moins sous l'empire de l'illusion» in *Mémoires*, p. 46; 48; 50.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>87</sup> «les craintes sont sans bornes et le repos nulle part» in *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>88</sup> The Revels move house «dans une ville neutre» in order to access information more easily, in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.3, p. 43; 73.

The reproduction of these 'émigré' novel steps provides a tense and cadenced plot ideally suited to dissecting the very emotions of the protagonists.

However, our aim is not to comment on the dramatic effects that the reconstruction of historical events has in the fiction, but to demonstrate how these acknowledgeable steps enabled the 'émigré' woman to claim her share of the emigration trauma, as if to say: 'I was there too'. Here Halbwachs' idea of the reconstitution of personal memory with the aim of fitting the collective social memory, and Ricoeur's crucial remark on the need to look for who felt the pathos expressed rather than the distinction between the individual and the collective in memory recollection can be applied. This project thus makes the junction between the social aim of memory recollection in novels, its therapeutic properties at individual and collective level and adds that the 'émigré' novel is the appropriate place to witness this. In this respect, we have selected two 'émigré' steps' characteristic of this 'émigré' language' which, by aligning personal and collective recollections, confer a sense of closure to the writer. The realisation by the 'émigré' of his/her love for the 'patrie' painted by Duras, and Souza's use of the weather metaphor to figure the abstraction and yet unstoppable progress of the Revolution, are two emotional stages which highlight the interconnection of personal and collective trauma, productively exploited in fiction writing.

### **1. The 'patrie' seen by the 'émigré'**

The modern notion of 'patrie' is one that did not germinate in people's minds until the Revolution and even then, the aristocratic caste felt they belonged first to

the European aristocracy rather than to a country.<sup>89</sup> However we argue that the emigration is a pivotal moment for the development of an attachment to the patrie which the émigré novel crystallises in its own way. This part will show that the female émigré novel evokes the lost patrie with a specific vocabulary of uprooting and loss which, in appealing to collectively shared memories of a traumatic exile, allows the authors to get a sense of closure. In the novels, the upheavals of the solitary protagonist become assimilated to the loss of one's homeland, helping to relate individual and collective memories of emigration. This prompted the aristocrats to see further than their own individual throes, further than the network of their caste and associate the exile experience to the discovery of patriotic feeling. 'l'esprit de famille c'est le patriotisme en petit', declared the vicomte Walsh in his memoirs, attesting to the diffusion of the 'patrie' discourse in émigré texts, but also to the malleability of the term, conveniently combined with family pride or social status.<sup>90</sup> Indeed the patrie is not clearly defined in the aristocratic émigrés' written accounts published in the first half of the nineteenth century: it often paradoxically combines disgust for the atrocities committed by the French Republic and the state it represents, and a sense of lack, a longing for the return to a place affectionately called home. Madame de Ménéville wrote in her memoirs that in 1789 'je n'avais d'autre désir que de fuir cette odieuse patrie qui me semblait livrée aux assassins';

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<sup>89</sup> The idea of patrie was associated to the Monarchy up until 1789, see for instance this treatise: M. Rossel, *Histoire du patriotisme françois ou Nouvelle histoire de France, dans laquelle on s'est principalement attaché à décrire les traits de patriotisme qui ont illustré nos rois, la noblesse et le peuple françois, depuis l'origine de la monarchie jusqu'à nos jours*, (Paris, 1770), Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>, [accessed June 2014]. The idea of patrie was used avidly by the revolutionaries' propaganda, to unify the French against the European monarchies. The nineteenth century was a period of definition and consolidation of the French nation, coming to an acme in the war against Prussia in 1870. Maurice Agulhon, Philippe Oulmont (eds), 'Nation, patrie, patriotisme', in *La Documentation photographique*, N° spécial, (juin 1993). For Britain, the idea that patriotism was forged in relation to the other, the other village, the other region, the other people is argued by Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, (London, 1996). See also Jennifer Mori, 'Languages of Loyalism: Patriotism, Nationhood and the State in the 1790s', in *English Historical Review*, 118 (2003).

<sup>90</sup> Walsh, *Souvenirs*, p. 398.

however later on in her salon in London, she says that 'La patrie était au fond de toutes les pensées'.<sup>91</sup> The idea of the patrie, and that one could be attached to this abstract entity, seems to predate the Revolution here, since Ménéville laments on the wrong-doings of the revolutionaries on her 'patrie'. This curious juxtaposition attests of the intertwining of aristocratic ideology with the patriotic feeling, reflected on much later when compiling emigration memoirs. Boigne wrote in her memoirs that she was ashamed of hearing the 'vò ux antinationaux' formed by the French émigrés abroad. The quick pace of victories and defeats of the French army challenged and clarified the attachment to the 'patrie' for the community of aristocrats in hiding abroad.<sup>92</sup> However for many, the attachment for the 'patrie' was still coloured by the desire to see the monarchy restored. Gontaut analyses the entrance of Louis XVIII in Paris, as the happiest day of her life: 'rien enfin ne peut donner idée de ce bonheur'; 'ce moment [í ] un de ceux que l'on n'oublie jamais'.<sup>93</sup> Nonetheless she is saddened by the English interfering with French politics after Napoleon's defeat, and when she hears news of 'une grande victoire [í ] celle de Waterloo !' in London, she has conflicting feelings: 'la plume s'écchappe de mes mains pour décrire cette victoire de ce moment ; mon cò ur ; tout français, en fut profondément ému'. It is hard to decide whether she is touched because this means the return of the King or because she is disappointed the French were beaten.<sup>94</sup> Thus the emergence of patriotic feeling amongst the émigré caste is not black and white, but fluctuates according to the speaker and the socio-political climate at home, and seems to be evoked in a very emotional way.

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<sup>91</sup>Ménéville, *Souvenirs*, p.26; 171.

<sup>92</sup>This is well rendered in Souza's emigration novel: the Revels feel proud of their country's military exploits even though they are performed by the new Republic, and the troops threaten their safety in Brussels: 'les Français marchoient sur Bruxelles! Quel trouble! Cependant (...) tous éprouvoient, sans se l'avouer, un sentiment d'orgueil national' in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p. 72.

<sup>93</sup>Gontaut, *Mémoires*, p. 130-1.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid, p.108; 145.



The émigré novel did not emerge in a historical and cultural vacuum. There is at least a non-negligible link forming around the 1800s between the emigration as historical event, the emergence of the attachment for the 'patrie' for the French nobility, and melancholia as represented in fiction works, émigré or otherwise. In contemporary novels by non-émigré writers set during or after the emigration, we find this link made between the two conditions of melancholia and lack of 'patrie'. Acknowledging this rich literary landscape is not invalidating our argument about the originality of the émigré voice in voicing a poignant sense of loss and, as we will show, a personalised attachment to the *patrie*. Thus, based on our previous conclusions about the genesis and functions of émigré melancholia, it is possible to affirm that the real exile authors were certainly not isolated in speaking of the loss of the *patrie*; even though they were best situated to articulate it.<sup>95</sup> Non-émigré writers developed the idea of aimless errance. Aloys, Custine's hero, laments: 'je n'avais plus de projets, plus de patrie, plus de passé' when realising his impossible passion for Madame de M\*\*\*.<sup>96</sup> The feeling of belonging to no *patrie* allows writers to meaningfully express the incapacity of the hero to fulfil society's task, such as marriage. Souza's Ladislav is also cut from the same cloth and is the stereotypical melancholic soul: 'Il fatiguoit dans ces dangers inutiles un courage qui n'avoit plus d'emploi, depuis qu'il n'avoit plus de patrie'.<sup>97</sup> There is, however, a difference in intensity in the way the longing for the *patrie* affects the main character in works by ex-émigrés and non-émigrés. In *Les Natchez*, Chateaubriand's novel started in emigration and revised after, but set in the New Continent, the respect for *patrie* is

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<sup>95</sup>We are not arguing here that our female novelists copied from others novels; but the possibility of being inspired by and emulating a new type of melancholia repeated by other voices having not necessarily lived the emigration but at least witnessed it. This does not detract from the originality of their prose and the systematic evocation of an émigré melancholia highlighted earlier in the chapter.

<sup>96</sup>Aloys, p. 88.

<sup>97</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p.108; 153.

the key dilemma at the root of René's mal être. The allegiance to one's patrie poses a problem to the hero as he lives with a native American tribe attacked by the French army: this situation very much resembles that of the French émigrés in London during the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. The hero carries in himself 'les regrets de la patrie', something that is likely to shorten his stay with the tribe, since he ultimately goes back to his country.<sup>98</sup> René's situation is constantly unstable, oscillating between 'ma nouvelle patrie' and the lack of it, 'sans patrie, entre deux parties'.<sup>99</sup> The attachment to the patrie appears vital in Chateaubriand's prose, when it comes as an element of comparison in Custine's tale of melancholic love. The non-émigré novel does not invest the patrie with as much emotion as the émigré novel. The same applies for émigré novels by non-émigrés authors. Charrière argues in her novels that cosmopolitanism and tolerance are always preferable to being blinded by patriotism. If she engages with the struggles of the émigré abroad it is to underline the need to adapt to foreign culture.<sup>100</sup> In *La dot de Suzette*, it is the English host to the émigré Adolphe who mentions the patrie when warning him against going home: 'Vos diables de Français ! 'je sais que vous n'aimez pas que l'on dise du mal de votre patrie'.<sup>101</sup> Conversely, Boigne in *Une Passion* associates the evocation of France with the English word 'home', justifying this choice by the absence of an equivalent in the French language, showing how intertwined the thinking is between patrie and the emigration.<sup>102</sup> It is no longer a remark passed on by a peripheral character but comes straight from the author's own experience of life abroad, framing the way in which she saw her home country. As such the evocation of patrie by the ex-émigré author

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<sup>98</sup>*Les Natchez*, p. 10-11.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111; 117.

<sup>100</sup>'Gardons nous de vouloir établir ici la France, et de traiter des gens [ici] comme s'ils étaient étrangers chez eux', in Charrière, *Trois femmes*, p. 35.

<sup>101</sup>Fiévée, *La dot de Suzette*, p. 216-7.

<sup>102</sup>*Une Passion*, p. 17.

becomes a carrier of identity. This brief comparison suggests that the concept of patrie and attachment to it, is displayed with a greater emphasis on the emotional side in the real émigré texts rather than in other accounts.

The presence of the word patrie in the émigré accounts selected does not necessarily mean that the author tried to find solace after a long stay outside the frontiers of France.<sup>103</sup> However Duras' prose often displays an awareness of the tensions surrounding the concept, and offers a strategy for making peace between antagonistic definitions of the home land. The mechanism of merging personal and collective memories through the crystallisation of the images of the lost patrie is best seen in the *Mémoires de Sophie*. Duras proposed a nuanced vision of the patrie, one that is *en creux* rather than *en relief*, making evident the huge impact a forced exile in London had on the novelist, and on her vision of France, when putting pen to paper some twenty years later. Duras had an unstable position as she was liberal by heart, but frequented more conservative circles through her husband and had to maintain those ties, notably, in order to pull strings to obtain Chateaubriand lucrative responsibilities. In her novels she had to reaffirm her loyalty to her caste whilst not betraying the values she believed in.<sup>104</sup> The malleability of the concept of the patrie as underlined is tangible in Duras' novel. David A. Bell reminded us that the idea of the nation is first a political artefact, so it is not surprising that it is manipulated in

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<sup>103</sup>To seek closure is not a marker of a traumatic past in itself: Webster and Merriam have shown that it formed part of a long list of reasons why old people engage in memory reminiscing at the end of their life. What differs is the scope of this closure, how it emerges from a radical tear from the home land and seeks to obtain unity in the émigré community and post-revolutionary elite circles in general. In this respect, the insertion of the 'patrie' in our corpus is not absolute proof that there is trauma to be dealt with but still adds to the on-going process of finding solace, this time in a much more collective way. R.P., Webster, 'Construction and validation', pp. 256-262. S. B. Merriam, 'The structure of simple reminiscence', pp. 761-7.

<sup>104</sup>Duras was hurt by the refusal of Louis XVIII to welcome her during the emigration because her father was a Girondin. Boigne said Duras was 'fort ulcérée' by this refusal, in *Récits*, p. 276. After the emigration, her eldest daughter distanced herself from her own family after marrying the son of one of the most royalist clan.

our émigré texts at their convenience.<sup>105</sup> For example, belonging to a patrie is not always applied to oneself, as seen in *Une Passion*, when Augustine tells the foreigner Prince Doria: 'au fond c'est votre patrie puisque vous y avez passé plus des deux tiers de votre vie'.<sup>106</sup> In the *Mémoires*, the name of the patrie is pronounced almost in a whisper and with repressed tears. When Sophie rescues Mademoiselle Valory in a shabby lodging in London, she reacts to the mention of France: «La France ! répétais-je, puis repoussant ma propre émotion, la France, lui dis-je, ne contient pas tous vos amis.»<sup>107</sup> This indicates first how raw the idea of patrie is for the émigrés; as something generating contradictory feelings, of regrets and disillusion. It exposes the novelty of the term of patrie for many noble émigrés, who preferred to consider themselves as a group bound by social, familial and political values first. But Duras did not just convey this traditional view; she tinted it with more personal and emotional colours. The analogy between a lost self and the 'patrie' is evident in the *Mémoires*, «l'âme faite pour la vertu éprouve à son aspect une sensation plus vive [ ] elle la retrouve comme une patrie» and commented on by Diethelm. She insisted on the fact that Duras did not possess a «modern» conception of the patrie, preferring to refer to a community of souls, sharing the same ethics, education and sensible emotions.<sup>108</sup> First, this sentence suggests how banal the word patrie had become, employed as a comparative tool here. Secondly, to the malleability of the patrie noted by Diethelm, must be added its emotional significance, as if it was an integral part of the sentimental language, just like love, sensibility or melancholia. The singularity of the émigré voice is that the word patrie is employed as a meaningful comparative tool to highlight the process of recovering something one has lost, in this case the

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<sup>105</sup>David A. Bell, *The Culture of the Nation in France* (London 2001), p. 198.

<sup>106</sup>*Une Passion*, p. 72.

<sup>107</sup>*Mémoires*, p. 147.

<sup>108</sup>*Mémoires*, note 70, p. 125.

virtuous soul. It thus transforms into something intimate and individual, a term designed for expressing a collective feeling. Duras also acknowledges the change in the feelings of her community of outcasts. Having been forced to leave the country, the émigrés had the opportunity to reflect on what it meant to be French and aristocratic: «c'est surtout dans l'émigration qu'on a pu apprécier la différence de fortune à l'existence de ce lien invisible qui unit les membres d'une même société»<sup>109</sup> Therefore our émigré novelist shows awareness of the evolution of the idea of patrie for her compatriots, one that was already under way during the emigration she narrates and consolidated in the 1820s when she put pen to paper. It is likely Duras went through this process of appropriating the notion of patrie, relating it to her anxieties and regrets in exile, and becoming familiar with it once accepted back in its realm. The way she inscribes it in her émigré novel translates a back and forth movement between personal and collective experience of emigration, past and present, which provides closure because it asserts a more stable image of France and what it means to be French.

Not only does time allow this reflection on patrie at both an individual and collective level, but the contact with a foreign culture is presented as a trigger for those emotions; whilst the return to a changed France accentuates the distraught. Sophie misses France the most when confronted with the family portraits in Lord Arlington's house: this sight «me fit sentir avec une amertume nouvelle la privation de cette existence dont nous aussi nous avons joui dans notre pays»<sup>110</sup> Their feeling of belonging to a 'community of suffering individuals' more than a social caste is reaffirmed and clarified in the context of the emigration and the loss of one's home land. In the *Mémoires de Sophie* this realisation is almost like an emotional version

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid, p. 112.

<sup>110</sup>*Mémoires*, p. 112.

of withdrawal syndrome, the émigré protagonists construct an emotional picture of France, and invest it with the recovery of their lost identities. Thus Duras did not abandon the idea of a network of aristocrats, but neither did she embrace the republican idea of patriotism: she preferred to define patrie as a community of injured sensible souls in her prose. This is where the personal and collective mourning are combined productively in the émigré text, providing a form of middle ground from which to find solace. There are no boundaries between private and communal feelings, all souls are equal because they suffer the same hardship. She also insisted on the permanent scarring as a result of this uprooting, her fictive émigrés being unable to recover their former selves, believed to be rooted in France: «ce rang, cet état que la patrie [í ] nous assigne étaient perdus pour toujours» The trauma of the emigration seems to have involved the tearing of one's identity: gathered in a foreign city, the aristocratic caste grew aware that a part of them was left in France, and they could no longer feel at home just by being together abroad. It is clear that Duras wished to put behind not only her own exile, but a community's exile, finding solace in this dissolution of the personal into the collective, to reach a higher form of pathos. What the émigré novel also does particularly well is to follow up this particular individual and collective wound once back in Paris. The pain from the emigration follows them as they witness the changes operated in French society, making the ex-exiled the mourning outcast *par excellence*: «l'émigration [í ] en nous privant de la patrie nous jetait dans cet isolement social»<sup>111</sup> The idea that part of the noble émigré's identity was forever lost when the Revolution shattered the monarchic regime is corroborated by the insistence on émigré melancholia once settled back in France. In the novel, it is when evoking the return to France that the notion of patrie

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<sup>111</sup>*Mémoires*, p. 112.

and the stigmas left by the exile are conveyed most powerfully: the occurrence of the term indicates a reflection ripened by the context of a difficult settlement back into the everyday life of a changed French society. From the novelist's point of view, the time lapse between the events and their recollection in fiction made it possible to treat concretely the connection between personal loss and that of one's home land. From the Empire and Restoration's societies perspective, the heated debates and contradicting ideologies surrounding the political and social treatment of the returned nobility, made it acceptable and necessary to create cohesion around a collective acceptance of the horrors experienced or witnessed and the revived attachment to a land fantasized as perfect from the shores of Britain. The émigré novel played a non-negligible part in this collective processing of the trauma of the Revolution. The notion of patrie is therefore a constitutive part of the coming to terms with the trauma of the emigration in the explicit émigré novel.

Given this, it is justifiable to take a closer look at the implicit émigré novels of our corpus, the ones avoiding the topic of the emigration: here the patrie often comes into consideration and carries strong emotional meaning too. In *Olivier* Duras describes the emotion its eponymous hero feels when returning from England, which echoes that of the returned émigrés. By utilising Olivier, a non-émigré hero, to voice these poignant emotions, Duras universalises the specifically émigré feeling of being torn from one's home into other settings, as if it had become a common, sentimental trope. Missing one's patrie is enhanced by verbs of perception and sensation, and a lexis pertaining to the natural and the genuine: «vous n'œn pouvez *concevoir* sans *l'œavoir senti* ce qu'œn *éprouve* après un long voyage en foulant le sol qui nous a vu naître, ce que c'œst que d'œntendre parler sa langue», «Aimer sa patrie est peut-être un

*sentiment* irréfléchi mais il n'en a que plus de force<sup>112</sup> France is evoked the same way the loved subject would be, and 'patriotism' becomes a passionate 'sentiment'. This reshaping of the patrie as an emotional person is visible in Boigne's non-explicit émigré novel *Une Passion* set in the context of Napoleon's dismissal and the two Restorations.<sup>113</sup> The patrie is evoked by the female characters when they are uprooted: Euphémie addresses her country like she would a loved relative, 'notre chère France'; Odille is 'exiled' for her marriage and contemplates the ocean, 'seul lien avec la patrie que je regrette'.<sup>114</sup> The matriarch Madame de Romiginière is said to be seduced by 'la gloire impériale' of the expansion of French territory.<sup>115</sup> The patrie is not an abstract entity, to defend in wars, to serve in politics; it is almost like a missing family member. Our émigré authors softened and 'sentimentalised' the concept but equally intensified its evocation, by making it the core reason for the heroines' sufferings.<sup>116</sup> The female émigré novel most powerfully voiced how a traumatic emigration locked in the mind notions of loss and patrie, the individual and collective throes. Moreover, the patrie is seen simultaneously as vital energy helping the fortification of the senses but, if torn apart, potentially fatal to the individual. Euphémie has to recover from heartbreak in 'son air natal' of Paris if she stands a chance of surviving; later a young child is said to be 'bien fortifié dans son air natal

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<sup>112</sup> 'je l'estime [i] on n'aime de cõ ur que son pays, il semble que tout vous accueille, on salue sa terre natale par je ne sais quel hymne muet, langage de l'âme. Il me semble qu'en France tout est en analogie avec moi' in *Olivier*, p. 216. We will add here that the primacy of feelings and sensations over reason is omnipresent in the sentimental novel and goes back to the sensibility erected as quasi-philosophy in the eighteenth century.

<sup>113</sup> It is reaffirmed in times of defeat and foreign occupation, suggesting a certain confusion between the allegiance to country, king or French military exploits. This confusion is translated by Bliane, Romuald's friend, during the Cent Jours: he says it is difficult to 'voir le camarade dans le soldat étranger et l'ennemi dans le soldat français', in *Une Passion*, p. 118.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, p.58; 87.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>116</sup> It is clear that the loss of her husband throws Mathilde in *Eugénie et Mathilde* into 'sa rêverie' where she 'se croit des images fantastiques' and subsequently bringing regrets for the 'beau pays de France' in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.3, p. 142.



de France<sup>117</sup> The notion of patrie as a political entity one has to honour and serve is briefly evoked for female protagonists. Elise, bride to be for Bliane, has 'des sentiments patriotiques auxquels je ne m'attendais guère' which are seen positively.<sup>118</sup> It is not threatening her femininity, but making her a better wife. Similarly, Euphémie acquires love for her patrie and a sense of responsibilities from her exile during the Cent Jours: it is a 'sentiment plus profond que je ne le savais'; and 'des devoirs à remplir envers eux'.<sup>119</sup> Superposed to this is Souza's accentuation of the naturalness of loving one's patrie in times of hardship, even for female members of the family. The patrie as the beloved home land one leaves behind appears at the very moment the Revels cross the frontier and thus become émigrés. This is even communicated by the least politically aware character of the novel, and overcharged with emotions: Eugénie is astonished 'à l'aspect d'une grande et riche contrée d'un espace sans borne'.<sup>120</sup> It seems Souza wanted to show the universality of the feeling of leaving one's country and becoming an émigré, rather than a style of patriotism based strictly on honour. This overview demonstrates that the explicit - and even non-explicit- female émigré novels stood out in the way they tended to find a middle way of defining the patrie, reconciling the individually felt experience and ideology of the nobility, and assigning an emotional power to the evocation of France, almost transforming the country into a protagonist in its own right. They were at the forefront of the 'modern' coining of the notion of patrie. This was not done in a bid to separate male and female characters in their duties to France, but for the purpose of associating personal and collective mourning, hence building a more appeased and coherent community of wounded souls, as opposed to a community of

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<sup>117</sup>*Une Passion*, t.2, p.68; p.183.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid*, p. 124.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid*, p. 199. The dilemma patrie-women/love/family is clear throughout *Les Natchez*: 'La patrie ! [ ] et que me fait, à moi, la patrie, si elle est injuste ?' Chateaubriand, *Les Natchez*, p. 128..

<sup>120</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 232. Madame de Revel laments: 'reverrai-je jamais mon pays?' p.233.

frivolous aristocrats. The evocation of the patrie in prose served therapeutic and ideological purposes in the émigré novel more than in other contemporary novels.

## **2. The 'terror-weather' and the foreign environment: ways of voicing trauma for the émigré community**

The vision of the Revolution as ineluctable, God's punishment, or bad fate, was conveyed in the contemporary counter-revolutionary discourses, such as De Maistre's *Considérations sur la France*. As such it is a theme that both the émigré writer and his/her audience had been accustomed to hear or read. The way Souza played on the figure of the threatening weather in *Eugénie et Mathilde* as representation of the progress of the Revolution and descending into misery in exile goes beyond ideological objectives: it translates the need to fictionalise and make collectively acknowledgeable an extremely traumatic personal experience. As such this 'émigré step' is significant because it plays with personal and collective experience of the emigration through the narrative tools offered by the sentimental novel. It is undeniable that the emigration offered greater novelistic possibilities to Souza: the novel takes place in France, Brussels, and Holland with numerous journeys back and forth by land and by sea. She exploited the novelistic potential of the Revolution and emigration to the maximum, showing unexpected landscapes the reader would normally expect only in a picaresque novel. This is a key element of the émigré novel: it reverses the readers' expectations since the reality has become more extraordinary than fiction.<sup>121</sup> The thematic threatening storm forming above the

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<sup>121</sup>Jaquier, et al., *Destins romanesques*, p. 15; Sénac de Meilhan, the most famous of the émigré writers wrote in his foreword: 'Tout est vraisemblable, et tout est romanesque dans la révolution de la France [í ]. Les rencontres les plus extraordinaires, les plus étonnantes circonstances, les plus

family's head, and the melancholic countryside of northern Europe, pace the plot and transform the trivial emigration into a much more spiritual experience. The recurrent image of the weather depicts the unpredictability of the Revolution, whilst it frames its progression: «Un nuage effrayant s'étendoit sur la France, et cependant n'empêchoit aucun des plaisirs de la société»<sup>122</sup> The cloud develops first into a storm and then a thunderstorm, hitting the country more violently: «Voyaient-ils un orage? Ils redoutoient [i] ceux qui pouvoient les atteindre» and «l'orage s'étendoit sur la France»<sup>123</sup> This theme of weather supersedes the typical émigré steps; anxiety at reading the news, or the naivety of some about the gravity of the situation. For instance, using the metaphor of the thunderstorm helps Souza to convey the sheer powerlessness of the individuals: «les journaux se lisoient bas et en tremblant: chacun regardoit tristement venir l'orage» The parents do their best to hide the outside events from Mathilde, a strategy which culminates when she gives birth to her son and falls ill. She is not informed of the latest news and kept in a closed room, as if «ces temps paisibles» of pre-Revolution had come back.<sup>124</sup> Again, the threatening weather is employed to make the characters' naivety more acute with regards to the danger of the political troubles: the abbess recommends her nuns to go home or to find «une demeure obscure pour laisser passer l'orage»<sup>125</sup> The image of the weather both symbolises and aggravates the anxiety and denial felt by the French nobility at the start of the revolutionary outbreak: their trust in the Ancien Régime lives its last moments in the passive and naive hope for brighter tomorrows. This metaphor is well suited to characterising the first steps of the emigration, such as fear and first

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déplorables situations deviennent des événements communs, et surpassent ce que les auteurs de roman peuvent imaginer» in Sénac de Meilhan, *L'Émigré*, p. 1549.

<sup>122</sup> *Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 89.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118; 134.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140; 197.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

illusions, and was Souza's method of voicing the non-voiceable: the immaterial fear of the Revolution felt by the French nobility. Astbury gave an example of another novel making a parallel between meteorological changes and the Revolution, however such a consistent metaphor is not common in other contemporary novels about the emigration.<sup>126</sup> The idea that the Revolution was a punishment sent by God for the vices spread by the Enlightenment philosophers -which was therefore both unstoppable and was the fate of France- was common in the counter-revolutionary propaganda. However, in the émigré novel this fate is made natural and non-religious, drawing the attention onto the relationship between the elements and the individuals. This betrays an effort to tell the emotional impact of such a traumatic experience, to ignore the political debates, hence forcing the reader into adopting a more tolerant outlook on the fate of the émigrés. The narration of the emigration enabled Souza to enforce a more conciliatory vision of the events and their damages, shifting the focus from the political and the collective to the emotional and personal.

The threatening storm does not stop after the first panic, but follows the Revels and their friends during their emigration. In Holland it momentarily prevents Ladislas from leaving them. Whilst in *Adèle de Sénange* and other non-explicit émigré novels of our corpus like *Une Passion* and *Olivier*, we found mention of the dangerous crossing of the Channel, in *Eugénie et Mathilde* the attention is concentrated on the recurring storm rather than the ocean as such. Ladislas' boat cannot leave the port because «le temps était orageux» Later he will also struggle to make his way back to them, after a storm threatens to jeopardise his escape.<sup>127</sup> The refusal to narrate the specific crossing of the Channel to England and instead to enhance the dangerousness of the ever present storm, wherever the family is, hints at

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<sup>126</sup> Astbury mentioned the Swiss novel by Liomin, *La Bergère d'Aranville*, (1792) in *Narrative Responses*, p. 166.

<sup>127</sup> *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.3, p. 35; 152.

the author's attempt to make the emigration experience recognisable by all returned exiles. The acme of the 'terror-weather' coincides with Eugénie's deterioration. The doctor warned the Revels of the lethal effect a violent weather could have on her fragile emotional state: «Le soleil, l'orage, la joie, les chagrins, tout lui seroit mortel»<sup>128</sup> Nowhere else in the novel is the correlation between weather and emotions clearer and more tragic. It places the heroine at the mercy of an unpredictable and unstoppable natural element, just like the Revolution was for the émigrés. This is where the true experience of the emigration is palpable, because it goes further than a mere description of the family's experience of successive physical and psychological deterioration. Instead it productively synchronises the individual struggles with unpredictable and unstoppable meteorological conditions. The last mention of extreme weather conditions is indeed fatal to the weak Eugénie: during a stroll in the family cart, a brutal storm with torrential rain hits her. The panic of the family is tangible: Madame de Revel and Mathilde «jetèrent leurs schalls sur Eugénie» and they rush back home.<sup>129</sup> It is the first time there is a physical contact between the storm, which previously remained at a distance in the sky, and the protagonists. It is a final blow Eugénie will never recover from. This sudden atmospheric wrath is followed by a morbid silence, the wind has ceased and the members of the family are all mute: «pas un souffle ne agitoit la campagne: on ne entendoit que la pénible respiration d'Eugénie»<sup>130</sup> To a certain extent this recalls the role of natural elements at the end of *Emilie et Alphonse* which, after having frightened the heroine, eventually fail to affect her at all, as if the emotional struggles felt inside were so great they could not be worsened by the violence outside. It attests to our novelist's efforts to materialise emotions she and her readers were not familiar

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid, t.3, p.190.

<sup>129</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.3, p.203.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid, t.3, p.208.

with. In *Eugénie et Mathilde*, from the building up of threatening clouds, to the regular thunderstorms, until the last deluge, Souza mirrors the steps of the emigration in the meteorological conditions. She did not detail the political and military progress of the Revolution much in her novel; instead expressing its relentless process thanks to the weather. It has been shown that contemporaries saw the Terror as organic, unavoidable and anonymous: it happened by itself and was not activated by people.<sup>131</sup> In Souza we recover part of this image of a tentacle-like Terror, hunting the émigrés dispersed in Europe. The lexical field and recurrent images of the storm mirror the author's creative representation of a lived traumatic event. They materialise the non-voiceable on paper and, as such, it communicates a personal upheaval to a wider audience, bringing solace to a community of victims of the Revolution.

The positioning to tap into collective mourning present in Duras and Souza's works minimises their past trauma because it immortalises an individual past by turning it into a more standardised émigré experience. The émigré writer sought actively to create an echo between the collective language of the Revolution's upheavals and their own as yet non-voiced personal experience: this bridge between the two contributed to universalising a personal trauma, something they often already had explored metaphorically in non-explicit émigré novels. Consequently, it shows a progression in the coping with the emigration experience, where trauma is tackled directly, with tools recognisable by a broader community and original literary strategies to depict the fleeting nature of traumatic memories. In that respect, Duras' fictive memoirs and Souza's émigré novel stand out in the way they engage with the emigration journey and its effect on the psychology of individuals.

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<sup>131</sup> Steinberg, 'Trauma before trauma', p. 178-180; 182. He points at the difficulty of looking for trauma in texts written before the concept was born.

## Conclusion

This chapter ends our investigation into the various ways in which our three émigré novelists chose to represent and come to terms with their traumatic experience of exile in London. To the notion of 'exile within' was added that of 'exile without' to deal with the realistic intensity and the variety of ways in which the trauma of the emigration was worked through in fiction. This led to an understanding of the porous relationship between explicit and non-explicit émigré novels and inward -as opposed to external- images of exile. This chapter has defined the concept of 'émigré melancholia' and how it oscillated between mainstream melancholia, the sentimental literary framework and a more personal type of *mal être* directly linked to the exile trauma. Another strategy for dealing with a traumatic emigration observed is the re-appropriation of a shared collective trauma by inserting in an explicit émigré novel all the steps each exiled individual had to go through; from the first tumult of the Revolution, until the radiation from the émigré list. Amongst those steps, the attachment to France and the utilisation of the weather, as a way to figure the ineluctable character of the Revolution, are specific to the émigré novel because they emerge from personal experience and yet aim at touching a wider community mourning the Ancien Régime. Putting the past behind them by bringing others into it indicates that the trauma of the emigration was being worked through. Thus the émigré novel as a genre is not defined by its explicit references to an emigration, from start to finish, but by the ways in which it attempts to voice the non-voiceable, the psychological trauma of uprooting, displacement, constant fear

for one's and others' lives and of the future.<sup>132</sup> Further still, what we have started to unearth is the two-fold specificity in our corpus: of having emigrated and being a woman.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup>As such any attempt at categorising the émigré novel by a strictly thematic rule does not work: Carpenter pretended that *Eugénie et Mathilde* came too late to be categorised as émigré novel, which she situated between 1792 and 1800, Carpenter, *Madame de Souza, Eugénie et Mathilde*, p.3.

<sup>133</sup>As Marilyn Yalom said there was a connection between victimisation and gender in the revolutionary era because women were excluded from the public sphere and felt they couldn't be accomplice to the main events. Marilyn Yalom, *Blood sisters, the French Revolution in Women's Memory*, (London, 1995), p. 8.



## CHAPTER 4

### **An émigré dream of modern gender relationships**

In Souza's *Emilie et Alphonse* during a salon conversation, one guest mentions a quote from Rousseau who blames the 'maris jaloux' for their own anxiety: at the origin of their worries was the fact that their wife was 'mal choisie, ou mal gouvernée'. A woman suggests that it may be otherwise: 'Et pourquoi pas aussi [í ] pour n'avoir pas su la rendre heureuse ?'.<sup>1</sup> This small comment, immediately discarded, crystallises the subtle critique of gender roles specific to our female émigrées' novels. They condemn arranged marriages, present equal women-men relationships as ideal, and demonstrate how family harmony is preferable over patriarchy. Their heroines infringe the codes of the sentimental model and of women's conduct in society, while the male protagonists lack courage for their love and are stuck in between two contradictory modes of manly conduct.<sup>2</sup> Our preceding chapters established that the émigré novel was a hybrid genre which meaningfully voiced traumatic memories of the exile, notably coining a different type of melancholia, more aptly conveying what uprooting and loss feel like. Thus far, we have refrained from engaging too much with female specificity in the émigré novel, concentrating on the 'émigré' aspect first. To complete our efforts to define the

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<sup>1</sup> *Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2, p. 90-91.

<sup>2</sup> The novels of Riccoboni described a similar state of things, the difference with the émigré novels of our corpus being that the motif of the exile was never combined with depictions of unbalanced gender relationships.

émigré novel, it will be argued that, unlike other novels of the first half of the nineteenth century, the female émigré novel pragmatically proposes a way out of rigid gender boundaries thanks to the exceptional circumstances of exile-style reclusion they describe. In addition, their criticism of the absurdity of male behaviour is no longer excused by family and societal pressures, or even by melancholia.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will advance that this specific outlook is nurtured by the observation of British gender habits in London and the witnessing of radical societal changes for the returned noblewomen.

The gender perspective helps to frame our reflection on the degree of evolution expressed in the female émigré plots. By 'gender' we imply the scrutiny of female-male and family relationships in the plots; but also the particularity of being an émigré noblewoman and female novelist in post-revolution France. Thus we will take into consideration on the one hand, the women authors' conditions of living, and their compliance with the sentimental novel trend as feminine genre; and on the other hand, how within this structure they criticise French society's restrictive gender norms. This means understanding what gender rules were in place, how they are represented, critiqued and modernised in the plots. Thus, in stating that the female émigrée novel challenged existing gender restrictions in relation to the emigration experience, this chapter reinforces the claim that it is a sub-genre worthy of consideration in its own right.

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<sup>3</sup>In Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* women appear as victims of ruthless immoral men, who take pleasure in seducing and then leaving them: 'cela leur fait si peu de mal, et à nous tant de plaisir', says Adolphe's father. Later a friend of his father warns him against staying with an older woman; he ridiculises 'ces démonstrations de douleur' of the 'sexe faible', in *Adolphe*, p. 22; 144; 141-2.

## Gender in the female émigré novel

Gender, as the scrutiny of the prescriptions in late eighteenth and nineteenth-century France expected from and at times interiorised by women, both in society and in literature is useful to this study on the émigré novel. It will help to make sense of the representations of men versus women, pervading nineteenth-century literature and in which the émigré novel inscribes itself and may differ. The masculine was synonym of reason and genius, whereas the feminine was seen as passion and body. By refusing to focus solely on the weaker sex, as the one being oppressed by patriarchy, Scott and her followers have transformed the way we think about gender relations, even though a systematic binary system can be misleading at times.<sup>4</sup> Butler's idea of performative gender fits the investigation of novels well since the author performs an idea of gender in writing. Gender is not performed in a vacuum, but is impacted by factors such as literary trends, personal challenges, or socio-political context. This chapter will argue that the émigrée noblewoman performed a specific gender because she was exposed to the emigration, lived in both pre- and post-revolutionary France and frequented an educated and elitist milieu. Performative gender thus helps to visualise how the émigrée novelist set down on paper her idea of modernised gender relationships within a very precise context.

The gender perspective has had an impact on historical and literary research on women's works, which will be of use for our study. Scholars have attempted to reassess women's roles in the nineteenth century, without immuring this within a restricted space. As mentioned in the introduction, the debate about the level of freedom enjoyed by women before and after the Revolution is a controversial one.

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<sup>4</sup> Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', pp. 1053-1075. A binary system ignores alternative modes of gender representation such as feminine men, androgynous women, transsexuality, and homosexuality. In Duras's novels it can be said that male heroes are not strictly manly, but adopt some feminine traits.

The view that the salonnieres lost their powers with the Civil Code of Napoleon has been rethought. Now the idea of a linear regression after the Revolution is contested, and it is recognised that the salonnieres also participated in their own gender restrictions.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, the belief that the Civil Code enclosed women in the household is biased when based only on the analysis of official and legal documents, and educational or moralising treatises, which do not reflect the heterogeneity of practices and beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Still there is a level of hesitation about how to qualify the conservative shift in gender rules from the late 1790s: was this restriction of women's role originating from above or did it also derive from the nobility's desire to fit with changing sets of morals in a growing bourgeois society?<sup>7</sup> Those evolutions are crystallised in the female émigrée novel, which makes it a pertinent object of study.

The émigrée novel also subverts the literary canon with originality and participates in the renewal of literature of the second half of the nineteenth century. The idea of a 'female voice', as explained by Wolfgang, is useful to apply to it because it does not consider women's expression as isolated but within a set literary and social context from which it emerges and possibly diverges. Finch stated that the specificity of female writers 'operate(s) [...] on a more complex level' because of the double exploitation of women by upper class men, since the latter are higher in status and of 'higher gender'.<sup>8</sup> This is pertinent to *émigrées* writers, since the condition of exile ought to be superposed and combined with that of being a woman, an aristocrat and a writer. In light of this, gender will be considered in terms of power relations and mainly amorous interactions between men and women, as painted in fiction and

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<sup>5</sup>Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition*, p. 205-6.

<sup>6</sup> See chapter by Denise Davidson, 'French women respond to Napoleon', in Maierhoffer, *Women against Napoleon*, pp. 95-108, p. 95. She notably nuances Carla Hesse and Suzanne Desan's views, in Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment*; Desan, *The Family on trial*.

<sup>7</sup>Darrow, 'French Noblewomen', pp. 41-65. She opted for a voluntary self-reform of the nobility in order to fit in the new bourgeois society.

<sup>8</sup>Finch, *Women's Writing*, p. 59.

reflected on with the purpose of reform, without falling into the excesses of previous feminist histories. Wolfgang looked at how specific literary and stylistic conventions of women's writing were articulated over the century and how different men and women writers exploited these varying conventions to their own ends.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, this chapter will consider how the sentimental trend is enriched and personalised with the added element of the exile as literary motif, in order to emphasise alternative gender conduct.

### **Being a woman émigré in London: witnessing different gender behaviours**

In the emigration experience, what could be seen to influence our three noblewomen writers' views about gender relationships? The cultural exchanges and forced cohabitation between the British and French elite during the emigration, possibly fixed or radicalised their views about how much liberty women should enjoy in family and marriage. For a former salonnière like Souza, or a young girl accustomed to following the rules of the French aristocracy like Boigne, the forced stay in London presented a new apprenticeship of womanly behaviour in elite society. The emigration accentuated this awakening to different gender roles: for instance, our émigrées novelists made British female friends.<sup>10</sup> It would certainly be misleading to claim that British customs were more favourable than French ones or vice versa: the picture is not that contrasted. But there were examples of British women penetrating the public sphere for charitable causes available for a French émigrée to compare herself with: Frances Burney and Hannah More spoke in favour of the destitute émigrés and organised support.<sup>11</sup> They utilised their femininity as

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<sup>9</sup>Wolfgang, *Gender and voice*, p. 1-2.

<sup>10</sup>Boigne's English friends included Lady Harrington and Lady Hester Stanhope, in *Récits*, p.80; 154; 164; 166; 167.

<sup>11</sup>Cracium, *Rebellious Hearts*, p. 12-3.

means to generate appeal for their social concern. They openly attached qualities viewed as 'feminine' to their political demands. Within literature, the traditional form of the sentimental novel allowed them to voice more political messages: Charlotte Smith in *Desmond* passes her views as the hero's own.<sup>12</sup> The life of a British woman in the late 1790s was still regimented, but perhaps it is in the cultural differences and greater opportunities that the French women émigré saw an appeal. There is definitely a case to be made from the exotic nature of those new and learned codes of conduct, which would constitute, especially when learned at a young age, a reference point in later life, and this will be systematically investigated in the selected émigrées novels. At some point our novelists all mention the behaviour and gender rules of British elite women, based on their memory of exile: the Romignière family has emigrated to London and cherishes its memories in Boigne's *Une Passion*; Lady B. in *Adèle de Sénange* is a model of maternal and conjugal devotion; Eudoxie and Sara are strong independent young women, educated in Oxford and hunting on horseback in *Charles et Marie*; in the *Mémoires de Sophie* Lord Arlington's family is painted in a positive light, and comments are made regarding the freedom enjoyed by single women. Finch hinted at the fact that England was seen as a country where merit came before rank, meaning that it was thought a better place overall for women of genius, able to penetrate the public space with less ridicule.<sup>13</sup> She argues that in their inner self-imaging as well as in their social lives, these brilliant women of France were struggling against greater odds than their Anglo-American counterparts.<sup>14</sup> Not all female émigrés in London saw England as a better place for women: Germaine de Staël is said to have asked 'Mais est-ce qu'une femme est en tutelle pour la vie dans

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 18-19. Mary Wollstonecraft is another prime example of feminine writing incorporating political or social demands.

<sup>13</sup> She adds that women's experience and rights' differences can be attributed to the difference in Protestant society as opposed to Catholic one, in Finch, *Women's Writing*, p. 220; 223.

<sup>14</sup> She cites as example the Bluestocking circle, in Ibid, p, 225.

ce pays ?<sup>15</sup> Her frustration at the level of control exercised on women attests to the cultural differences and potentially confirms the view that salonnières felt they enjoyed greater freedom before the Revolution. However this reaction could also be linked to her bad press in the English capital: she was accused of adultery -living in concubinage with Narbonne in Surrey- and of having abandoned her new born in Switzerland, and consequently ostracised from the polite societies of London. Having emigrated to Britain changed the outlook of women on their position in family and society. Klein-Lataud affirmed that women émigré brought back from exile 'a spirit of female independence' which clashed with their times, citing the example of Madame La Roque who 'could never reconcile herself with her reduced station in life'.<sup>16</sup> It is our belief that this was shared by many returning female émigré after often a decade of living in a more intimate family circle, with some taking charge of their own fate in taking up paid work. Conversely, Darrow argued that the influence of the English upper class lifestyle upon French noblewomen 'which was already permeated by domestic ideology in the eighteenth century' meant that: 'When these women became dependent upon English charity, often they were pressured to conform to English notions of propriety'.<sup>17</sup> Without falling into generalisation, it is hard to say whether the emigration reinforced French noblewomen in their cultural practices or whether it seduced them into modernising gender relationships and the range of action possible, notably writing novels. Nevertheless, this chapter will

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<sup>15</sup>Cited in *Diary and letters of Mme d'Arblay*, edited by her niece, vol. V, 1789-1793, (London, 1842), p. 415.

<sup>16</sup>Les Mémoires d'une Vivaraise émigré sous la Révolution, *Revue du Vivarais*, 53 (1949), 13-21), in Christine Klein-Lataud, 'Ere nouvelle, nouvelle pandore ?' in Bertrand Jennings, *Masculin/féminin*, pp. 199-213, p. 213-4; 234- 235.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Stone, 'The Family Crisis Today' in Christopher Wolfe, (ed) *The Family, Civil Society, and the State*, (London, 1998), pp. 17-20, cited in Darrow, 'French noblewomen', pp. 41-65, p. 55; 58. She added that it was not quite the same domesticity as in Britain: in France the conservation of Ancien Régime traits in aristocratic domesticity meant there was more insistence on looking after the household with charm and wit. In her bid to picture 'the aristocratic adaptation to domesticity', Darrow may have forced the traits of British domestic influence on French women émigrés.

combine gender with the emigration experience in London, showing how British gender relations in the novels were more than a merely contrasting picture to hold next to the disappointing French situation. The émigré experience prompted the voicing of our female writers' frustration and/or desire to modernise gender roles in a creative but also a pragmatic way.

This chapter will state that our female émigré novels are actually rather modern in the vision of gender relationships they propose. Our objective will be to exhibit how far Boigne, Souza and Duras went in their reformation of gender roles in writing, how much of this was due to the impact of the emigration and the contact with English society. This chapter will thus systematically relate emigration experience and the feminine voice in writing, without nonetheless over-exaggerating the originality of our authors who were still following the sentimental novel's mould. Departure from literary traditions and from societal expectation in terms of womanly behaviour will thus be scrutinised in parallel. The authors' viewpoints on amorous relationships also reveal dissatisfaction with the traditional code of manly behaviour and inconstant expression of love. For clarity, heroines and heroes are studied in two separate parts but they will not be considered as autonomous entities, as Kelly in *Fictional Genders* did in looking at the *moving* relation between the two genders and the problems involved in the constructions of the gender identity<sup>18</sup> The notion of performative gender as coined by Butler will guide our analysis: the heroines are acting their gender in front of society, their family and the men they love: how much they perform in accordance to an Ancien Régime script, or following their desire for freer and more authentic relationships is what we will uncover. First the heroines' characterisation will be examined to show how their incursions outside gender

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<sup>18</sup>Kelly, *Fictional Genders*, p.21.



boundaries are justified by the authors. Secondly, the heroes' behaviour and failure to live up to the heroines' expectations reveal what the novelists thought about gender relationships and how they might potentially be modernised. Finally, this chapter will demonstrate that the fantasy of changed gender roles expressed in the émigrées texts is constructed and reflected upon through the memories of emigration in London, and its praised liberal society where women supposedly can make a love match.

## I. The émigrées take on the sensible heroine

The female émigrée novel crystallises the inner contradictions of the sentimental novel post-Revolution: the heroines depicted are surprisingly rebellious at times whilst seeking an acceptable way out of the strict arranged marriage and loveless family environment. It is useful to remind ourselves how complex and contradictory the moral mission of the sentimental novel by and/or for women had been pre-1790s. The sentimental novel, which had elected sensibility as its quasi philosophy from the second half of the eighteenth century, was far from static and evolved along the way. Sensibility became more and more associated with morals, with a greater emphasis on violent passions and tragic outcomes, bringing the reader to model his/her behaviour through compassion for fictional but always plausible fates. Thus the novel was pulled in different directions, between the plausible and the extraordinary which questioned its very credibility.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, the role played by and given to women in the making and reading of the sentimental novel was ambiguous. In *La*

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<sup>19</sup> Astbury, 'Passion, sensibilité and Baculard d'Arnaud's *Epreuves du sentiment*', p.423-428. She shows how Baculard d'Arnaud operates a shift in his moral tales, painting extreme passions and less realistic plots to fit the demand for sensible fictions: 'the plot devices have become much more extreme and there is an increased sense of melancholy' p. 426.

*Nouvelle-Héloïse*, reading is deemed dangerous for women, and yet the novel recorded a great success with female readership.<sup>20</sup> The sentimental heroines of the émigré novels are often described reading and discussing the sensibility of bestsellers.<sup>21</sup> Patricia Spack identified a gap between what the activity of writing implied and the reality of the female condition: writing demanded that the author talked to herself, seeking transcendence and displaying her view on reality and her identity. However women's reality and their imagination did not match, meaning that displaying sensibility was a way of defusing attack. Spack added that women authors were saying: 'don't judge me by the quality of my thought, note the fineness of my sensibility'.<sup>22</sup> The inner contradictions of the female sentimental novel, pulling the author, heroine and reader in opposing directions, burst out when it is reproduced by the émigrée noblewoman who witnessed the fall of the Ancien Régime, English traditions, and the conservative reconstruction of the post-revolutionary years in just a decade.<sup>23</sup> Seeing beyond the sentimental and considering the social, political and realist flavour of women's early nineteenth-century production provides a frame from which to think about the originality of the female émigrée novel. First the heroines' rebellious personalities will be scrutinised, before dissecting the way our émigrées transformed the sentimental frame to voice their desire for more satisfying relationships between the sexes.

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<sup>20</sup>Sandrine Aragon wrote for the period 1730-1860: 'Paradoxalement, c'est donc Rousseau, [í ] qui a remis en cause [í ] la collusion entre lectrice assidue et sexualité débridée et a créé une image de femme instruite et sage, sans dérive sexuelle'. Sandrine Aragon, 'Des lectrices passionnées : lecture féminine et passion dans la littérature française des lumières (1730-1860)', *SVEC* 2001:12 (2001), pp. 445-450, p. 450.

<sup>21</sup>Sophie reads *Paul et Virginie*, 'qui venait de paraître', which prompts a debate on sensibilité, in *Mémoires*, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup>Patricia Meyer Spack, *The Female Imagination: a Literary and Psychological investigation of Women's Writing*, (New York, 1975), p.11; 16.

<sup>23</sup>'the Revolution kicked up alternate and intersecting gender models of femininity and masculinity', in Desan, *The Family on Trial*, p. 11.

## 1. The 'rebel sentimental heroine'

### *Gudule or the apprenticeship of independence*

The novels of Boigne, Souza and Duras make the most of, and overcome, the sentimental novel's contradictions: sometimes their heroines manipulate the traditional gender boundaries to their own ends. Louichon advanced that novels often classified as sentimental were in fact about topics as diverse as their authors' personalities.<sup>24</sup> Boigne's *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* is more about the heroine's journey to being independent and happy, rather than a tale of sentimental love. This is symbolised by the evolution of Gudule's name, from being called by her husband's name 'comtesse Lionel de Sauveuse' to being simply 'Gudule'.<sup>25</sup> Gudule starts as passive and easily led by matrimonial obligations: the fact that she is not forced into this decision by her mother strengthens how conventions were deeply embedded in young girls' minds.<sup>26</sup> Burton in her case study on the education system for girls in the Empire noted that, at times, women participated in the stricter enclosing of their range of activities.<sup>27</sup> Gudule is also a typical female character according to Spack because she adopts external modes of self-representation, and cannot make free choices.<sup>28</sup> This is often the starting point from which the heroine later departs: in Souza's *Emilie et Alphonse* there is complete filial devotion of Emilie at first sight,

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<sup>24</sup>Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales*, p. 291.

<sup>25</sup>*La Maréchale*, p. 80; 163.

<sup>26</sup>'elle jura paisiblement de lui dévouer sa vie' 'destinée s'accomplit sans lui causer aucun souci' 'j'ai toujours été enseignée à le considérer comme devant être mon mari' 'je voulais rester [ici] auprès de mon gd père et ne jamais quitter maman' in *La Maréchale*, p. 66; 68; 232. This echoes Boigne's own marriage and her regretted innocence, in *Récits*, p. 140.

<sup>27</sup>'That abiding perception that there must be an inescapable controlling relationship between the sex organs of women's bodies over their minds was present less in the humanistic manuals penned by both sexes than it was in those prepared solely by the women who operated boarding schools for girls', in June K. Burton, *Napoleon and the Woman Question, Discourses of the Other Sex in French Education, Medicine, and Medical Law, (1799-1815)*, (Texas 2007), p. 78.

<sup>28</sup>Spack speaks about women considered as a reflection, a mirror, in which men like to project themselves, in Spack, *The Female Imagination*, pp. 49-51.

although not without protest: 'il faut que je prononce le malheur de ma vie, ou que je déchire les derniers moments de ma mère!ø'<sup>29</sup> However after the death of her mother, she complains: 'comment avez-vous pu me donner à un homme qu'il m'était impossible d'aimer?'<sup>30</sup>

Gudule's introduction to Parisian society marks her subtle emancipation from her husband. She shows resourcefulness and uses her submissive status to her advantage: he is angry to be 'le mari d'un bas bleu !ø she replies that 'je suis bien trop ignorante pour vous faire courir ce risqueø'<sup>31</sup> She embraces the perceived limitation of her sex and uses this as a tool to invalidate the accusation. The effect is radical, Lionel is 'déconcerté de n'avoir ni courroucé sa femme ni réussi à lui imposer par son ton maussadeø'<sup>32</sup> Gudule can be seen here 'performing' her gender-based role in reinforcing what her husband expects of her, but with the aim of freeing herself from his judgement. Gudule's suffering is still depicted via the traditional vocabulary of sensibility: she feels a 'sentiment d'isolement, de souffranceø when Lionel has an affair with her rival.<sup>33</sup> But Boigne is careful to not exaggerate this and instead stresses the positive consequences of this betrayal: Guduleø reaction to pain is

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<sup>29</sup>She is blinded and willingly sacrifices herself in sentimental fashion. Emilie's 'amour pour sa mère est si vraiøand she is 'naturelle, bonne, vraie, simpleøso much so that she is oblivious to gender conventions and unknowingly endangers her reputation: 'sa candeur, son innocenceø 'son 'cette douceur enchanteresseø 'la plus sensibleø she is described as 'un enfant' in *Emilie et Alphonse*, p. 39; 50; 126. Her mother suspects Emilie has been seeing Alphonse in the woods in secret but she reasons, 'l'ingénuité d'Emilie, son propre étonnement me prouvent qu'elle l'ignoreø in Ibid, p. 68; p. 144.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, t2 p.70. Similarly, she obeys her husband's commands but more or less knowingly oversteps the prescriptions for a married woman: she upsets him twice which in both instances trigger hurt and death. Emilie writes to her husband after being notified of her 'exile' to the Pyrénées: 'mon choix n'est pas douteux, ou plutôt il ne me reste pas d'option'; 'ma prompt obéissance'; 'soumettre ma vie entière à vos volontés', in Ibid, t.2, p. 134

<sup>31</sup>*La Maréchale*, p. 102.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, p. 104. Another example is when Lionel is anxious about the 'provincialølooks of her wife: 'Eh bien, mon cher ami, le grand malheur !øand when he presses her to sing something else than provincial songs in front of guests she shows her disagreement publicly, in Ibid, p. 115; 178-9.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, p. 193. Her sorrow is toned down, she is mentioned crying once, and subsequently the word 'melancholiaøis used instead: 'larmes pourtant coulaient abondammentø 'la mélancolieø 'douce mélancolieø in Ibid, p. 194; 213; 164. On top of resisting the abuses of her husband, Gudule has to show a strong personality to survive amongst other noblewomen constantly threatening her integrity. She uses her simplicity to defuse once again attacks on her 'provincialøstatus: 'effet de ridicule manquéø in Ibid, p. 164.

emotional detachment, dignity and maturity. She is truly the opposite of a woman of sensibility, no more blinded by love and duty, and renounces her *rêve ridicule* about marriage.<sup>34</sup> Her solace comes from a strategy passed amongst women in the family: *les préceptes de sa mère sur le devoir imposé aux femmes de toujours dissimuler les torts de leurs mari*<sup>35</sup> and a growing passion for Henri, which shows her resourcefulness. Gudule switches her naïve sensibility to real love, taking charge of her well-being.<sup>36</sup> Boigne writes: Gudule *n'était pas femme à se complaire à ces tendres langueurs* stressing that she is, in fact, the opposite of a sensible heroine.<sup>37</sup> This is not synonymous with immorality or ruthlessness but emanates from the experience of being uprooted from her family home and betrayed by her husband, alongside the stress of being scrutinised by Parisian elite society. The metaphor of the growing flower crystallises this evolution towards independence and maturity.<sup>38</sup> Boigne definitely stepped away from the model of the female character as a passive guide of virtue and priestess of morality. Gudule's risky decision to re-marry a former courtesan, who she met when her husband was still alive, is approved by the *maréchale*. This implies that a society where women are in charge of their destiny, and supported by elder women, is a good thing. Souza also describes women who behave at the margin of what is acceptable are nevertheless justified.<sup>39</sup> Gudule's

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 239. About Gudule's husband we are told she is *Accoutumée à le peu compter dans les circonstances importantes* p. 267.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, p. 195. This bears a striking resemblance to Boigne's sentence in her memoirs after narrating how her mother hid her deep anxiety from her husband: *dans aucune occasion de ma vie depuis, je ne me suis laissée aller à des démonstrations qui pussent aggraver le chagrin ou l'anxiété des autres.* in *Récits*, p. 77.

<sup>36</sup>Furthermore, the description of her sorrow after her husband's affair and the start of her love for Henri are concomitant in the plot, meaning that the reader is confused as to what makes Gudule so melancholic: *son esprit avait perdu toute élasticité* *la langueur qui l'accablait la suivit à Paris* in *La Maréchale*, p. 201.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid, p. 266.

<sup>38</sup>Gudule is growing like a flower: *plus charmante encore* *sensibilité plus intime* *fraîcheur* *fleur d'élégance* *ne récolte [í ] que sur ce sol privilégié* in Ibid, p.286-7.

<sup>39</sup>The figure of the independent and strong woman as viable option appears in Souza's *Charles et Marie*. Marie's elder sisters Sara and Eudoxie are portrayed as fierce and almost impertinent: 'Sara est bruyante et inconsidérée'; 'son ton vif et assez impérieux'; 'je fus donc obligé de la suivre', says

emancipation through personal upheavals and uprooting from the countryside to be placed in Parisian society brings closer exile experience and female resourcefulness. In making the heroine's virtue and the search for love compatible, Boigne is eminently pragmatic and modern.

*Adèle and Euphémie: less than perfect heroines*

The experience of the emigration equipped our novelists with tools to justify less than perfect feminine behaviour. The character flaws are systematically excused by a more intuitive personality and/or by their station in life, as widow, exile, or a childless woman. The insistence on the temptation to be 'coquette' is recurrent and betrays a more realistic approach to the heroine. Even the most reserved of all, Marie in *Charles et Marie* is not insensitive to the pleasure of seduction: she wears the fashionable see-through gown popular after the Revolution, much to Charles' surprise.<sup>40</sup> The desire to appear attractive to men and to keep fame alive alludes to sexuality and libertinage, thus questioning the heroines' virtue. The selected émigrées endeavoured to justify this said immorality in their pragmatic painting of women's restricted frame of action. Arguably there is an evolution in the way the heroines are justified in their rebellious behaviour, from Souza's first novel in 1794 where improper behaviour is primarily excused by the heroine's innocence and ignorance of gendered rules, to the later productions of our corpus which insist on the extenuating circumstances. This is potentially related to the authors having witnessed opposing

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Charles p. 225. And yet Charles admits enjoying at times the company of 'cette folle Sara': 'ses grâces, son courage, et même sa témérité', because she has not 'la timide faiblesse d'une femme', in *Ibid*, p. 225; 218. Boigne's character of the princess de Kraminska is very similar: she is not 'languissante' but 'pleine d'énergie et de résolution'; 'chevaleresque et héroïque', in *Une Passion*, p. 80.

<sup>40</sup>The sisters 'étaient habillées à cette mode nouvelle qui laisse à peine ces voiles que désirent également la pudeur et l'amour'. But Marie feels shy when Charles sees her in this revealing outfit: 'quelle joie je ressentis lorsque, dès qu'elle m'aperçut, je la vis prendre un châle derrière elle, et s'en cacher en rougissant !', in *Charles et Marie*, p. 233.

gendered situations in society themselves and looking for a viable compromise in post-revolutionary society.

Adèle de Sénange learns at her expense the gender boundaries for a woman, or rather at the expense of the male narrator. Indeed Souza insisted simultaneously on the extreme innocence of the young girl, whilst underlining her 'coquetterie' and almost immoral actions, which especially hurts her husband and lover. Adèle is the model of this precarious combination of innocence and disobedience to the strict code of conduct for women. She behaves like a child, and is called an 'enfant' several times,<sup>41</sup> but seems to 'play' with people's feelings, managing to upset both husband and lover. She is almost selfish in her pursuit of immediate pleasure: she asks for a new garden, which her husband refuses. He palliates her impatience by promising she could have free reign over the island in the Neuilly property.<sup>42</sup> On the way to see this island, Adèle rushes her disabled husband, irritating even her lover Sydenham.<sup>43</sup> She also flirtatiously engages in small talk with the young M. de Mortagne, making Sydenham jealous: 'il jouait de son éventail, tenait ses gants qu'elle avait ôtés, et elle riait de ces folies. Son bouquet tomba, il le ramassa, le mit dans sa poche, elle lui laissa : je n'ai jamais vu de coquetterie si vive de part et d'autre'.<sup>44</sup> Even when Adèle is freed from marriage obligations after her husband's death, she does not respect the word she gave her lover to be his, and invites his rival to visit her. A childish personality, innocence and a generous heart excuse the heroine's misbehaviour at all times, even though the story is told by the judgemental Sydenham: 'c'est Adèle, jeune

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<sup>41</sup> Adèle is said to look and behave like a child, in *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 11; p. 74-5; 79; 121; 130; 131.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 69-70.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 74-5.

<sup>44</sup> 'Adèle, enivrée d'hommages, voulut danser encore, et toujours avec Monsieur de Mortagne', Ibid, t.2, p. 68.

sans être enfant, naïve sans légèreté, généreuse sans ostentation'.<sup>45</sup> Souza's tale of a free-spirited women picking a lover to marry in a safe Ancien Régime-type of society contrasts sharply with her sordid emigration in London, during which she wrote it. This betrays the need to fantasise about better living conditions and emotional fulfilment by the women émigré turned author.<sup>46</sup>

Boigne's heroine in *Une Passion* is a far cry from the stereotypical sensible heroine: Euphémie has 'real' feelings of jealousy and envy.<sup>47</sup> Her less virtuous tendencies are excused by her lonely station in life. These are still interlocked with the recognisable and expected sensible qualities: her fragility is valorised and she articulately describes her emotions in the letters.<sup>48</sup> As the plot progresses, Euphémie becomes less stereotypical and more complex in her multi-faceted individuality. Unlike the inexperienced Adèle, she is married at the start of the novel and described as a 'femme à la mode'. She admits she enjoys increasing her reputation in elite society, and her preoccupations are very superficial: 'je veux dormir, je ne veux pas avoir les yeux battus ; il faut bien que je sois jolie demain' even though they are justified: 'lorsqu'une femme ne peut être ni épouse ni mère, elle n'a de choix qu'entre les fausses joies'.<sup>49</sup> The dead-end situation affecting women is clearly exposed: outside the status of wife or mother, a woman has no alternative than to

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid, p. 137. Sydenham also writes 'elle est aussi coquette par instinct' when other women would be 'par calcul', p. 125.

<sup>46</sup>Mathilde in *Eugénie et Mathilde* also does not foresee the consequences of her actions. With her natural behaviour, making informed choices according to the gravity of the situation, Mathilde oversteps almost all the codes of conduct for a daughter, a mother, a sister and a Catholic noblewoman. Her walking alone and holding Ladislas' arm is done in all innocence. She even overcomes religious rules by praying in a protestant church, t.2, p. 136; t.2, p. 211-3; t.3 p. 240. According to Carpenter, Mathilde was the 'model of the new independent woman of the Revolution', not ruled by Ancien Régime code of honour, in Carpenter, *The Novels of Madame de Souza*, p. 134.

<sup>47</sup>'envie [í ] se glissa dans mon cøur'; 'je ne suis pas jalouse' in *Une Passion*, p.377.

<sup>48</sup>For instance her fragility is seen as positive: 'et pourtant j'aime mieux Euphémie' 'sa santé succombe aux peines de son àme' in Ibid, t. 2, p. 183; t. 2, p. 63.

<sup>49</sup>'un petit empire qu'il faut sans cesse combattre pour conserver', Ibid, p. 197; 242; 340.



seek the blameable but soothing distractions of the 'monde'.<sup>50</sup> By strengthening the excuses for Euphémie's behaviour, not solely based on naivety and ignorance like Adèle, Boigne's approach has to be understood in the context of the emigration decade and the need to adapt to a transformed society once returned. She overcomes the contradictions of the sentimental novel and seems to claim that to be 'femme à la mode' is fine when one has lost a husband or lover, and has no children. Later Euphémie courageously crosses the boundaries by proclaiming her love to Romauld, who is a married man, in front of friends: 'ce n'est pas le moment des réticences et des petites considérations, ne peut-on, bon Dieu ! laisser deux malheureux se consoler ensemble ?...'. Boigne reflects on what true virtue is: 'le ciel n'ordonne que les vertus possibles !'.<sup>51</sup> Euphémie is both brave and insolent in this scene, breaking the tropes of the docile sensible heroine. She heroically attempts to find a virtuous way out, one that would pragmatically satisfy society and her passion. Eventually Euphémie has to silence her rebellious project as the threat of society and her cousin Odille's disapproval is unbearable: 'la morale et l'honneur réprouvent entièrement le projet de vie que tu m'annonces'.<sup>52</sup> Boigne's pragmatic approach personalises the sentimental novel, making it a tale of women's survival in a loveless and cruel society.

Where does the émigré novel stand next to contemporary novels in portraying heroines almost breaching gender boundaries, and what can explain such a view historically and creatively? At first sight, the émigré novel's is not original in the way

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<sup>50</sup>This idea is conveyed in *Adolphe*: Elléonore is cast aside from a cruel 'monde' for having abandoned husband and children, she is called 'une mère dénaturée', *Adolphe*, p. 91-2.

<sup>51</sup>*Une Passion*, t. 2, p. 221-2; 232; 249.

<sup>52</sup>*Une Passion*, t. 2, p. 238. Disapproval coming from an esteemed friend is both powerful and void: in Duras' *Olivier*, Louise asks her confidante to be kinder and stop condemning her concubinage with Olivier, p. 217-220.

it presents the heroine's behaviour occurring outside gender conventions. Sophie Cottin's Claire d'Albe can be seen as another rebellious heroine in the way she succumbs to Frédéric physically, however the whole novel is built on her feelings of guilt and hesitation, which aren't suggested in Souza's Adèle or Boigne's Euphémie.<sup>53</sup> Arguably, the character of Elléonore, in Benjamin Constant's 1816 *Adolphe*, is a model of the rebellious woman as she braves social opprobrium and leaves her husband and children for the hero. Nonetheless, in the way she is swept away by Adolphe, she is not presented as being in charge of her own destiny, unlike Euphémie. What is original in the female émigrée novel is the pragmatic way in which unconventional demands are justified by exceptional conditions, and superficial distractions are convenient ways to escape the pressures of gender on women. Euphémie's interest in the pleasures of glamorous balls and social gatherings is explained by her frustration in life. Just as with the maréchale, lack of love, family and isolation push her to seek entertainment. This is also momentarily the case of Souza's Emilie and Ernestine.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the example of Charrière's émigré novels attests to the difference between real and non émigrées novelists. Charrière demands more freedom of action for women in her fictions set during the emigration; she too depicts heroines who oscillate between acceptable and rebellious behaviours.<sup>55</sup> Whilst Charrière's moderation and wish for tolerance is similar to that expressed in our corpus, her political tone is far stronger. The female émigré novel

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<sup>53</sup>Having sex with Frédéric literally kills Claire, Cottin writes: 'le crime a anéanti l'amour', in *Claire d'Albe*, p. 269.

<sup>54</sup>Both Emilie and Ernestine experiment with the frivolous and mean world of the aristocracy, as a way of distracting themselves from a traumatic episode, before deciding to avoid it: 'tous les hommes se tenaient derrière moi pour admirer mes pas'; 'Comment résister à tant de séductions ?' in *Emilie et Alphonse*, t.2, p. 66. Ernestine seeks to seduce a fellow émigré in Brussels: 'à parler bas avec monsieur de Trèmes'. She seeks also many light distractions, 'des spectacles, des bals; une toilette différente pour différents moments de la journée' amongst a society solely 'occupée à s'entourdir' in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p.25;29; 33.

<sup>55</sup>See Colette Piau-Gillot's preface to Charrière's *Lettres trouvées* (1993), where she explains that Charrière 'ne revendique pas une fonction politique officielle pour les femmes' but she wishes that they 'prennent leur place dans la vie de la cité', p.18.

gravitates between three poles, never falling within one trend: the sentimental novel's tradition of repressed love; the male melancholic love story; and the political appropriation of emigration within the fiction.

Secondly, from a historical perspective, the depiction of a systematic recourse to distractions as solace, the demand for love and simpler relationships entrenches the émigré novel in the post-revolutionary era. The lack of opportunities for returned noblewomen in the Empire and Restoration could have inspired our three writers to describe a new model of gender behaviour and practical ways to cope with the disillusion heartbreak provokes. However the restrictive range of action for women during the post-revolution period is still not firmly demonstrated: Burton showed that we must not exaggerate the misogynistic politics enforced by Napoleon. In some cases French women were recognised as powerful elements of society: as baby-making machines; it was through motherhood that women became elevated and to be trusted, as 'the bees in the Bonapartist hive'. As widows they could be more in charge of their own household and destiny.<sup>56</sup> Claiming our three émigré writers were the first and the strongest in their claim for freer gender rules would be misleading; rather they adopted a down-to-earth attitude, in the context of their own perceived limitations as former noblewomen émigrées, in a society which felt like a patchwork of progressivism and conservatism. In portraying a coquettish but love-deprived heroine, our writers insisted on the available margin of manoeuvre. Enjoying the delights of social events and taking charge of one's well-being, is no longer seen as synonymous with indecency but as bringing a well-deserved relief from emotional

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<sup>56</sup>Burton conveys in her study the idea that Napoleon's educational programme for women, i.e. deciding how much to teach them outside of household duties, was often hesitating and operating by trial and errors, in Burton, *Napoleon and the Woman Question*, p.24.

distress. There is even a sense of sacrifice and opportunism in throwing oneself into the turbulence of balls and salons, for want of better options.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, because of its modernity in painting the opportunistic breach of gender roles by their heroines, the female émigré novel can be linked to the shift of the sentimental novel towards realism, as underlined by Margaret Cohen. Her definition of the 'sentimental social novel' allows us to identify the overlaps and differences between sentimental and realist novels. She argued that women novelists did not experiment with realism but instead adhered to the 'sentimental social novel'.<sup>58</sup> She situated the sentimental social novel next to and after the sentimental novel: it still possessed the same 'light touch', which she defined as the tendency not to describe physical details, for instance the appearance of the protagonists, or the furniture of a room. The sentimental social novel developed during the July Monarchy and tended 'to frame its tales as exemplifying the sufferings of a group rather than the tragic story of private individuals', to target a wider 'social spectrum'. Cohen added that since authors were women, this larger group of suffering individuals in the novels was exclusively female.<sup>59</sup> Thus women writers did voice their desire for social change in post-revolutionary society but she insisted 'it represents social suffering with conventions drawn from the sentimental rather than the realist lineage'.<sup>60</sup> This

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<sup>57</sup>*Emilie et Alphonse*, t. 2, p. 97.

<sup>58</sup>Margaret Cohen, 'Women and fiction' pp. 54-72, p. 61. This evolution towards a more social concern is confirmed by studies on women fiction works from a later period: Christine Klein-Lataud draws a parallel between sentimental narrative structure and social aim of the novels towards the end of the nineteenth century: she argues for a move away from the personal sentimental aim towards a socially pertinent discourse. Klein-Lataud 'Ere nouvelle, nouvelle pandore ?' in Bertrand Jennings, *Masculin/féminin*, pp. 199-213, p. 213.

<sup>59</sup>Unlike men writers she argued, who showed sufferings of both genders, in Cohen, 'Women and fiction', p. 62.

<sup>60</sup>Cohen also suggested that to combine neoclassical devices such as the 'light touch, narrow milieu, uniformity of diction, restricted number of characters' with the ambition to make a social claim about a group did not quite work in terms of literary quality. She concluded then that 'The most aesthetically successful sentimental social novels either stick closely to the post-Revolutionary sentimental novel, telling one simple but powerful story of suffering, or frankly exploit the contradiction between the sentimental novel's literary convention and the novel's new social and cultural ambitions.', the first case typically echoes novels such as *Ourika*, in Ibid, p. 61-62.

view fits well our findings about the pragmatism of the demands for more tolerance concerning women's behaviour. The categorisation and chronological view is helpful when considering the female émigré novel's borrowing of sentimental and more realist traits. The 'social' feature certainly rings true when applied to our corpus, since it tells the story of a whole caste of surviving émigrées.

This gallery of 'rebel' heroines reveals the émigrée novelist's wish to tell the inadequacy of society's rules for women. We have showed that the 'light touch' of the sentimental genre partially helped to disguise demands which were less admissible. Adèle is protected by her ignorance of the rules, whilst Euphémie explains she has nothing else in her life than her 'coquetterie' and balls. The novels by émigrées are far from being obsolete tales of sentimental love, they are original records of women's disadvantaged station in society, without however formulating a militant political message. The comparative study of heroines allowed us to cast light on how the female émigrée novel subtly enshrined literary and societal evolutions. Gender rules enforced by family, rank, society, or even embedded from a young age, remain but are superposed onto potentially better options; the sentimental tale thus assists in the task of pointing at the need to modernise the social world. The émigrée novel is the place where historical and social reality meets fiction the most acutely. The interrelation between emigration and demands for better gender relationships we have started to foresee is the object of the following part of this chapter.

## 2. The émigrée twist on the sentimental novel

Madame de Renneville in her education manual summarises parents' priorities in raising young girls well: 'que désirez-vous dans vos filles?' 'qu'elles soient respectueuses, soumises'; 'qu'elles soient [í ] chastes sur-tout'; 'telles qu'elles doivent être pour leur bonheur, le vôtre et celui des époux que vous leur destinez'.<sup>61</sup> Whilst this view subsisted well into the mid-nineteenth century when the manual was re-edited, it is a very different picture our three émigré noblewomen offer in their fictional works. The subversion of the sentimental genre from within enables them to show its inadequacy in painting realistic love stories and criticise their society's gender relationships. They use several literary strategies to this purpose: Boigne used irony to point out the inadequacy of the sentimental tale and its chimeras; Souza hypothetically turned the sentimental vocabulary on its head, to flirt with less admissible fantasies. Lastly Duras used the metaphor of the outcast to materialise the unsatisfying condition of her female contemporaries.

*From mockery to camouflaged subversion, the end of the 'sentimental'?*

In Boigne's *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* the various stages leading to the marriage between Gudule and Henri, such as the initial quiproquo, Henri's accident helping to reveal the heroine's passion for him, the silent promise of love between them, are similarly very succinct, almost rushed, and could be mimicking the stereotypical 'good' sentimental novel.<sup>62</sup> It seems Boigne followed a checklist of twists and turns to build the canonical sentimental novel. In *Une Passion*, the plot is

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<sup>61</sup> Renneville, *Galerie des jeunes vierges*, pp. v-vi.

<sup>62</sup> Since Lafayette's masterpiece the progressive steps of the sentimental novels are familiar to eighteenth-century readers, notably the accident, voyeurism, the theft of portrait. Marie Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne, comtesse de Lafayette, *La princesse de Clèves*, (Paris, 1678).

less rushed, but still the sensible is pushed to caricature at times. Boigne stresses the ridicule attached to the evocation of the sentimental heroine: 'enveloppée perpétuellement d'un nuage de rêverie sentimentale' and warns against 'tomber dans la sensiblerie'. The 'sensiblerie' appears as a pejorative derivation from 'sensible'. She proceeds to a 'mise en abyme' of her female protagonist: Euphémie is 'intime, intense, *palpitante d'actualité* comme disent vos écrivains du jour'<sup>63</sup> Evidently Boigne was reflecting on the models of heroines available in other novels around her, and building Euphémie's character from it. When Romuald meets Euphémie for the first time, the accumulation of sentimental topoi, in the setting, the description and the lexical field of sight and wonder, transforms the scene into a caricature of the genre.<sup>64</sup> This is enhanced by Romuald's friend turning the same scene into ridicule in a letter: 'la vaine image d'une petite fille que tu as entendue gazouiller un instant dans un vallon des Alpes'<sup>65</sup> It appears Boigne was aware of these sentimental 'must haves' and played on them. In addition, she questioned society's expectations on women through her questioning of the validity of the literary trend. Her originality lies in the way she departs from dated attitudes about gender relationships.<sup>66</sup> This critical take on the sentimental trend and its damage to women reflects the disillusioned view of an ex-émigrée.

If we push the argument of subversion further, it is possible to believe that what one sees as 'typically' sentimental, both in the way the heroines behave and in

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<sup>63</sup>*Une Passion*, p. 50; t.2, p. 37. Senancourt offers a similar perspective on the excessive painting of the man of sensibility in novels: 'On a communément une idée trop étroite [í ] on en fait un personnage ridicule, [í ] une femme [í ] que le sang d'une piqûre d'aiguille fait pâmer'. According to him, sensibility should possess 'une certaine modération', in Senancourt, *Oberman*, p. 120. This makes evident the erosion of the sensibility already happening in novels of the early nineteenth century.

<sup>64</sup>We observe a correlation between nature and love: 'site enchanteur', 'délicieux vallon', 'murmure du ruisseau', 'clair de lune', 'calme profond', 'féerie', 'fantasmagorie' and also a strong will to be alone to 'digest' passion, in *Une Passion*, p.140-2; 147; 151.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>66</sup>For instance Armance's imagination is said to be too excited by reading novels; she has ideas which are 'trop romanesques et surtout trop usées par les romans pour être rapportées', in Stendhal, *Armance*, t.2 p. 62; t.3 194.

the way their actions are presented by the author-narrator, is actually a disguise for a more assertive critique of a set of rules for women still in force at the time of writing. This point has been proposed by Stewart in her analysis of Souza's *Adèle de Sénange*. For her, the conventional sentimentality masked less admissible tendencies, and this happened through the vocabulary employed.<sup>67</sup> It strengthens our search for disguised criticism of the sentimental genre and the gender behaviours it presents for female characters. Stewart explained that what had been seen as the seemliness of *Adèle de Sénange*, and written with a moralistic and 'feminine' tone, was in fact 'the sign of flirtation with the illicit'.<sup>68</sup> By 'the illicit' she meant matricide, patricide, incest and adultery, enclosed in metaphorical expressions.<sup>69</sup> In her opinion, the flowery language allowed the author to violate subtly social and moral prohibitions and to promote female autonomy, even though it was communicated with the language of obedience. The very fact Adèle obtains what she desires at the end, love, status and money, despite her immoral conduct is the evidence of this theory for Stewart.<sup>70</sup> This theory seems fit to apply to the originality of the émigrée novel in terms of departure from the sentimental vogue, and contesting the gender boundaries from within. Brigitte Louichon has nuanced Stewart's view arguing that Souza was not aiming at radically reforming society through her publication but showed a way in between rebellion and submission, a way of finding happiness for women.<sup>71</sup> Carpenter in her

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<sup>67</sup>She suggests the slight change of meaning of crucial words such as 'virtue'; 'beauty' and 'happiness'. In Stewart, 'Vocation and provocation', in *Gynographs*, pp. 1-23, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup>Stewart, 'Gilded cages, *Adèle de Souza*', in *Gynographs*, pp. 152-170.

<sup>69</sup>Stewart, 'Gilded cages', p. 157. There are ties between M. de Sénange, Adèle and Sydenham: Lord Sydenham is himself the adoptive 'son' to M. de Sénange and thus 'brother' to Adèle. Adèle is 'daughter' and wife of M. de Sénange; but lover of the English lord.

<sup>70</sup>Stewart also added that in the light of the troubled conditions of writing, Souza's novel was the 'guiltless fantasy of impossible plenitude' and of 'never ending innocence', in Stewart, 'Gilded cages', p. 158; 169.

<sup>71</sup>Louichon, *Lire Adèle de Sénange*, in Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales*, pp. 412-15.

Furthermore, we will add that this subversion of the moral in between the lines proves hard to defend in Souza's other novels such as *Eugénie et Mathilde*. Besides, such violation of morality would have been tricky to sustain in her first claim for authorship in 1793.



annotated edition of *Eugénie et Mathilde* went back to the idea that Souza was actually 'more than riskily revolutionary' in her demand for more political tolerance and the end of patriarchal tyranny.<sup>72</sup> This thorny debate makes evident how difficult it is to identify criticism within both the much coded and very vague genre boundaries of the female sentimental novel. All agree that the author is manipulating literary trends to her advantage, and we would argue that she does this in order to convey a slightly more modern picture of gender relationships. The inner contradictions of the sentimental novel, simultaneously reassuring and restrictive, are definitely exploited consciously by the ex-émigrée woman writer to make subtle social claims about the fate of the uprooted heroine.

It is possible to say that Souza manipulated the model of the sentimental heroine, the naïve and innocent child-like woman, in order to show more vividly the realities of frivolous temptations, and especially the desire to be set free of strict gender codes of conduct. The way she approaches it in her émigré novel *Eugénie et Mathilde* is less by using subversion than by painting the damages done to the individual by self-embodied gender rules, remaining even in exile conditions. Eugénie is the purest of heroines because of her early renouncement of lay life and love. Carpenter saw in this character the 'self effacing nature' of love, the ideal woman according to René de Chateaubriand.<sup>73</sup> Because she is above the social norms as a nun and sacrifices herself for the survival of her family, she could seem to have no temptation to contradict the destiny shaped for her by her parents. However *Eugénie et Mathilde* retraces the struggles of Eugénie as much as it paints the misery of a family in emigration. Eugénie is first sûre de sa conscience, elle ignoroit l'empire des passions, but progressively new passions are developing and slowly

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<sup>72</sup>Carpenter, *Madame de Souza, Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 11.

<sup>73</sup>Carpenter, *The Novels of Madame de Souza*, p.137. She cites for this *Le Génie*, (Paris, 1966), vol I, p. 211.

ravaging her fragile body. In emigration, Eugénie is taken by surprise when her father goes back on his decision and wants to marry her to Ladislav: she catches a glimpse of a happier life through marriage, represented by *un rayon de soleil*<sup>74</sup> However this is but a fantasy Eugénie is incapable of realising: she dies from *les peines de l'âme* because she finds it impossible to assume her lay love for Ladislav, which she feels is a treason to God.<sup>75</sup> In that respect, she is not the sentimental heroine *par excellence* if one pays attention to the nature of her dilemma.<sup>76</sup> Her heartbreak and death are not provoked by her family or other obstacles in the end, but by her own terror of being a bad Christian. Ladislav *la voit passer en un instant, de l'espoir d'être à lui, à la crainte d'un Dieu vengeur*<sup>77</sup> Eugénie does not renounce marriage to uphold her virtue, but for fear of a later punishment from God. The fight between devotion and rebellion in Eugénie results from the contradictory gender etiquette of the Ancien Régime, inculcated in girls, and still present after the Revolution. It underlines the fact that this was self-imposed from within and without. This example fits the idea of a manipulation of the sentimental tropes in order to contest the gender rules and the behaviour they support. The representation of a lived emigration in the novel makes it possible for Souza to rework the sentimental representation of woman.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p. 280.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid*, t.3, p.186.

<sup>76</sup>The Doctor's prescriptions mirror the theory on sensibility in the eighteenth century, largely reproduced in novels. The exhaustion of nerves was to be avoided in a sensible soul at all costs. Eugénie's doctor recommends she drinks milk and avoids harsh weather conditions, *Ibid*, t.3, p.190.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid*, t.3, p. 231.

<sup>78</sup>It is in the nuance that we detect the mark of the émigrée writer. Indeed Charrière who wrote émigré novels but did not emigrate, also contested the prescriptions for women in her society. Her strategy was much more straight forward and political, placing the reproach in the maid's mouth through a ridiculisation of her noble mistress' principles: 'C'est fort bien [í ] abandonnez et trahissez Joséphine plutôt que des mots, de grands mots, la vérité, vos principes, vos habitudes', in Charrière, *Trois femmes*, p. 44.

*Duras' émigrée woman and her new sentimental demands*

Bertrand Jennings' idea of a rhetoric of the 'non dit' in Duras' prose resembles Stewart's idea of subversion from within.<sup>79</sup> According to her, Duras' demands for better gender relations are not militant or outright political like in Staël's *Corinne*, nonetheless they expressed a «l'antériorisation culpabilisatrice, paralysante et mortifère de la condition de marginal»<sup>80</sup> Bertrand Jennings stressed that the representation of the lack of opportunities for contemporary French women is camouflaged under the story of racial and social outcasts, and the physically weak.<sup>81</sup> Alison Finch confirmed this: the frustration with strict gender relations meant that women writers such as Duras were the best at voicing the failure of revolutionary egalitarianism and the revalorisation of the «low». She added that a «symbolism of disadvantage» shaped Duras' novels.<sup>82</sup> Therefore the low, by race or class, becomes an analogy for women's condition, showing an acute awareness of the inequality of gender. To this must be superposed the emigration's impact on Duras' insistence on the condition of the marginal as a way of displaying the social struggles of women in her society. It means that the exiled woman joins the other outcasts to denounce society and men's lack of care. We will show that there are many points of junction between what Bertrand-Jennings and Finch have identified as a rhetoric of the low and the outcast to represent women's lack of opportunities and the émigrée woman, and that this is how the demands for modern gender relationships are voiced within the adapted frame of the sentimental novel.

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<sup>79</sup>Bertrand Jennings, *Un Autre Mal*, p. 69; 83.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, p. 84-5.

<sup>81</sup>Bertrand Jennings insists on Duras' «perception encore diffuse et non véritablement consciente de la condition féminine». Each portrayed hero or heroine reproduces the steps of the realisation of feminine alterity; from a brutal awakening until the incapacity to cope with it and death. Her comparison of Duras' novels leads her to argue that they all possess «une même thématique [...] et la récurrence de motifs [...] autour des concepts de différence, d'altérité et d'impuissance sociale» in Ibid, p.73.

<sup>82</sup>Finch, «Rank and Race: Claire de Duras» in *Women's writing*, pp. 50-61, p. 56; 61.

Duras depicts in *Ourika* and her inédit novels how her heroines' trademark sensibility increases with the Revolution, its promise of more freedom and the intimacy of the exile; to then be utterly crushed upon return.<sup>83</sup> For the returned émigré, the insistence on depicting the bitter realisation that society has not changed in its lack of opportunities for women, and that it will not make her dream of free love possible, is truly where the writers' emigration experience informs the depiction of the low. The pre-revolutionary childrearing traditions are dissatisfying, separating women and men drastically from birth, and through the heroines' inadequate education and upbringing. In *Amélie et Pauline*, Henry studied the classics while his defunct sister Cécile had no other education than reading novels.<sup>84</sup> The convent education Sophie receives is described as useless: «Une vie de dissipation serait plus salubre à une imagination vive [...] que trois années de retraite passées dans [...] un couvent»<sup>85</sup> The characters' pathological sensibility is aggravated by the failings of the Ancien Régime's gendered education system and society.<sup>86</sup> Ourika herself blames her benefactress' society for its indolence and failing to prepare her for a reduced station in life.<sup>87</sup> It is, however, in the insistence on the shattered hopes post-emigration that the female émigré novel is original in its criticism on unsatisfying gender roles.

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<sup>83</sup>Sophie is sensible from birth but she does not use this to get social recognition like others: «il fallait [i] présenter l'image de toutes ces nobles [i] qualités qu'on ne possédait pas» «une jeune personne pour réussir devait être naïve» «les juges de ces convenances étaient quelques femmes âgées, dont ma grand-mère était la principale.» By contrast Sophie is: «vertueuse par passion et non par principes» in *Mémoires*, p. 30; 31; 55; 155.

<sup>84</sup>The fact that her heroines are drawn to novel-reading is not mocked like in other fiction works of the period, but is the only thing available and fitting with their exacerbated sensibility. As shown earlier, women are often pictured as more influenced by novel reading than men, with the exception of Boigne's *Une Passion* which puts forward an equal ridicule in heroines and heroes in giving in to the 'romanesque'. It makes evident the fact that Duras' novels are not militant but subtle and they work from within an embraced literary structure. This echoes what Bertrand Jennings said about Duras hesitating in her novels between revealing her affiliation with her caste's aristocratic honour and challenging it, in Bertrand Jennings, *Deux siècles l'autre*, p. 66.

<sup>85</sup>*Mémoires*, p.32.

<sup>86</sup>Duras judges convents more damaging than beneficial and accuses them of failing to prepare girls for life in society. This rejection of the convent style education is also central in *Adèle de Sérange*.

<sup>87</sup>«on transformait en qualité les défauts mêmes» in *Ourika*, p. 32; 34.

In Duras's novel *Ourika* laments: 'Le espoir sitôt détruit que m'avait inspiré la Révolution'.<sup>88</sup> This evokes the women's short-lived and dramatic hope for marriage of love.<sup>88</sup> In Duras's *inédit* novels the heroines, despite the divorce possibilities offered by the Revolution, volunteer to orchestrate the reunion of their lover and the lover's estranged wife, in a movement of heroic resignation. Sophie says 'j'entrevis mon devoir et je pressentis que je le remplirai'. This selfless act is driven by the bitter realisation that her lover would eventually opt for the safety of a normal conjugal life: 'M. de Grancey ne tenait pas assez à moi pour vaincre ma résistance'.<sup>89</sup> Thus the choice is self-imposed and an act of deliberated self-harming. The reader is not tempted to blame the wives either for precipitating the heroines into despair since they are depicted as suffering women too.<sup>90</sup> Thus Duras offers a far less Manichean vision than found in traditional sentimental novels, where those who oppose the lovers' union are uniquely villainous. She highlights a pragmatic picture of the failings of the post-revolutionary society to modernise itself, and the huge sacrifice women have to make in curbing their desire for more genuine gender relationships, as fantasised about and/or experienced during the exile. Darrows has commented on the fact that the exile years were considered in a better light by some noblewomen in comparison to the post-revolutionary years and this is confirmed by the novels.<sup>91</sup>

This émigrée outlook on the bettering of gender relationships implies a position on what is a satisfying marriage. The traditional Ancien Régime marriage is rejected as sterile and unfulfilling. With accuracy, Duras details the vacuity of a loveless marriage: Amélie's defunct husband used to be preoccupied by frivolous and

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<sup>88</sup> 'la Révolution [ ] fit naître dans mon cœur quelques espérances', in *Ibid*, p. 44; 46.

<sup>89</sup> *Mémoires*, p. 134-5.

<sup>90</sup> Grancey's wife is profoundly affected by her husband's neglect: 'il ne m'a pas connue!' which makes Sophie pity her, in *Ibid*, p. 133-4; *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 175.

<sup>91</sup> The tighter family net which came with the forced frugality, was missed once back in France she argued. Darrows, 'French Noblewomen and the New Domesticity', pp. 41-65, p. 52.

materialistic activities such as new cars and hunting, 'la place d'Amélie était bien petite'<sup>92</sup> Louise's husband is also entirely devoted to 'le monde, la chasse, le spectacle'<sup>93</sup> The fact that all of Duras' heroines fail to marry within this conventional frame, or are precipitately thrown out of it, makes evident her wish for a renewal of conjugal habits. The originality and singularity of the heroine's demands in terms of gender relations is enhanced by other female protagonists at the antipode of her behaviour: they are the by-product of the Ancien Régime's strict code of behaviour thereby compensating their uneventful conjugal life by frivolous distractions.<sup>94</sup> Thus Duras' heroines are almost alien in nature as they refuse to identify with those dominant rules and rebel against the demands of traditional marriage. Louise asks: 'Qu'est ce que le mariage qui n'en double pas l'existence ? Il la frappe de stérilité, il ne fait que défendre de chercher ailleurs ce qu'il ne donne pas' She feels that couples in such marriages are 'séparé[s] comme par des murs de cristal' Furthermore, society is blamed for imposing restrictions on who and how to love: 'quand je pense que celui qui m'écrit ces lettres est mon mari, celui à qui ma vie est liée pour toujours, le seul que je puisse aimer et dont je doive être aimée, je sens des mouvements de désespoir si violents que je déteste la vie'<sup>95</sup> The heroine desires a husband for whom 'l'amour lui fait oublier la pêche et la chasse'<sup>96</sup> In *Amélie et*

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<sup>92</sup>*Amélie et Pauline*, p. 164.

<sup>93</sup>*Olivier*, p. 195.

<sup>94</sup>Duras made sure she provided a counter example of the sensible heroine. Sophie's sister in law is satisfied with loveless marriage provided it guarantees stability. In Switzerland the émigrée 'Mme de l' était la plus froide et la plus incapable d'attachement' Later on, Mme de Fosseuse, an émigrée in London is described in those terms: 'elle avait de sensibilité tout juste ce qu'il en faut pour satisfaire les convenances' 'mélange de gaieté, de finesse, de raison, de déraison et de coquetterie' Mme de Maillanes is even more 'coquette' and eccentric, in *Mémoires*, p. 33; 52; 93-4. Just like the model of loveless but peaceful marriage is tempting, these women's behaviour could provide easy happiness thanks to perpetual distractions, in *Ibid*, p. 97. Pauline is described by Henry as 'dominée par sa mère', 'réservée, calculée', 'elle semble vouloir arranger son bonheur comme on construit un édifice en en disposant d'avance toutes les pièces' in *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 152-3. Mme d'Albigny, Amélie's aunt, is a counter portrait *par excellence*: 'elle ignorait entièrement ce qui se passait dans le cœur des autres', 'quant aux nuances du sentiment, elle ne les comprenait point' in *Ibid*, p.165.

<sup>95</sup>*Olivier*, p. 197-9.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid*, p. 277.

*Pauline*, Duras summarises in a few words what a normal marriage is: «la multitude des petites chaînes imposées par la société leur sont communes»<sup>97</sup> Despite her criticism she seems to say it may be preferable after all «parce qu'il est établi par les convenances sociales et à l'abri de l'inconstance et des variations du cœur».<sup>98</sup> Hence the pragmatism of Duras' treatment of marriage, not ruling out settling for a traditional arranged marriage if it guarantees respite, a lesson Sophie, Amélie and Louise learn unfortunately too late. Duras' modernity in her gender demands is to adapt the sentimental tropes to the journey of the emigration, centring the disillusion of the heroine on the disappointing post-revolutionary society. The reference points are measured against the young émigrée's thirst for emotional intimacy, no longer on Ancien Régime etiquette, and therefore it can be said that the emigration experience provided the novelist with the tools to develop a rhetoric of the low in a bid to express her frustration with stagnating gender behaviours.

Alison Finch summarised the particularity of nineteenth-century female novelists well: «They may stage innocence versus villainy, but they also show the interplay between oppressive and rebellious character in the same individual»<sup>99</sup> The multifaceted personalities of the heroines in the corpus allows for courageous requests in terms of genuine and loving relationships. In doing this, the novelists were thus highlighting how unfitting literary and social models of behaviour were, whilst trying to cater for a wider social group in their demands. Having emigrated in this respect is important: the extraordinary revolutionary events in the background are utilised for testing relationships and as a foil to the unbalanced and archaic female-male

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<sup>97</sup>*Amélie et Pauline*, p. 175-6.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid*, p. 175-6.

<sup>99</sup>Finch, *Women's Writing*, p. 5. At least, in the case of Duras, Finch acknowledged the participation of the female novel to the shift in aesthetic theory operating in the mid to late nineteenth century. This is due to Duras privileging physically weak heroes, low-casts or racial outcasts, in *Ibid*, p. 61.

relationships at a time when divorce and concubinage in exile were practised. Perhaps the main obstacle to the happiness of the heroines of our corpus is the fact they are never matched with a similarly minded man. A study of male heroes will complement this view by exploring which aspects precisely are critiqued.

## **II. The sensible heroes: a difficult balance between old and new codes of honour**

This section concentrates on the portrayal of male protagonists in Souza and Duras' works. We will argue that the female émigrée novel stands out in the way the failure for the relationship rests with the male heroes. Scholars have shown that male characters' sensibility was overhauled in novels from the mid-eighteenth century, yet that dominant figures remained such as the patriarch, or the dangerous libertine.<sup>100</sup> Finch noted however that heroes after the Revolution 'have lost their heroic stature' in the realist novels. Those anti-heroes don't 'possess the high social or moral status' expected.<sup>101</sup> This part examines where the male protagonist in émigré novels is situated between the vogue for sensibility and the anti-hero, asking whether this toning down of the valour of the male hero betrays the authors' opinion on unbalanced gender relationships.

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<sup>100</sup>Katherine Astbury, Marie-Emmanuelle Plagnol-Diéval, (eds), *Le mâle en France 1715-1830*, (Oxford, 2004); Paula R. Backscheider, Catherine Ingrassia, *A Companion to the Eighteenth Century English Novel and Culture*, (Oxford, 2005). In her study of libertine fictive memoirs, Allistair Tallent pertinently asks: 'to what extent do these characters "escape" the heterosexual male fantasies of womanhood and present instead a proto-feminist and subversive image of womanhood?', in 'Listening to the Prostitute's Body: Subjectivity and Subversion in the Erotic Memoir Novel of Eighteenth-century France', in *The Western Society for French History*, vol. 33, 2005, pp. 211-223, p. 214-5.

<sup>101</sup>She adds: 'Hence, it has been argued, the dominating modern literary mode -the novel- lacks not only a sense of the epic but also a sense of the tragic', in Finch, 'Reality and its representation' in Urwin, *The Cambridge Companion*, pp. 36-53, p. 45.



## 1. Old and new masculine ideals at war in the émigré novel

Bertrand Jennings analysed the shift of the old code of honour in Duras' novels, where tragically female and male protagonists could never be together due to clashes in their conception of honour.<sup>102</sup> She proposed to see 'honneur' in society as regrouping several moral and social meanings, depending on the period and the gender concerned. Medieval honour continues in the eighteenth century; it involves warfare and heroism. Virile honour is very similar to the medieval one, it emphasises sexual power and is diametrically opposed to feminine honour, which is restricted to the familial sphere and remaining chaste. Finally Bertrand Jennings identified a form of honour arising from the Revolution corresponding to self-esteem and individualism, or how to conduct oneself according to moral principles in every occasions.<sup>103</sup> The painting of male heroes caught between antagonistic modes of gender conduct is a concept fruitful to apply to the émigré novel to reveal their desire to see change in male behaviour.

First the chosen novels displays a multitude of male characters embodying the virile code of honour almost to the point of caricature, and who are foils to the sensible hero.<sup>104</sup> The authoritative father or the immoral nobleman both have rigid codes of conduct and/or have given in to the immorality of the Ancien Régime, treating love as a game. Although not original, the cohabitation of two types of men still carries the message that there needed to be a change in gender behaviours. The old-fashioned patriarchal figure, whose priority is the safeguarding of rank and assets

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<sup>102</sup> Bertrand Jennings, 'Masculin/Féminin, Codes de l'honneur dans *Olivier ou le secret* de Claire de Duras', in *Masculin/féminin*, pp.89-104.

<sup>103</sup> Bertrand Jennings, 'Masculin/Féminin', p. 91-94.

<sup>104</sup> In *Adèle de Sénange*, Lord Sydenham is opposed to M. de Mortagne; in *Emilie et Alphonse* Alphonse is compared to the duc de Candale; in *Eugénie et Mathilde* Ladislav defends Ernestine against M. de Trèmes.

rather than affection and love, is typically located within the sentimental trend. In *Charles et Marie* a remark by Lord Seymour, Marie's father, highlights the real split existing between the two types of behaviour for men. Speaking to his dog, he says: 'je t'aime, toi, parce que tu n'es pas sensible'.<sup>105</sup> In Duras's novels, the stereotype of this Ancien Régime style of behaviour is seen with M. de Nangis in *Olivier*.<sup>106</sup> To invalidate Louise's complaint about his lack of sensibility, he insists on the idealism of her demands: 'c'est dans les romans et les tragédies que vous trouverez les caractères qui vous plaisent ; je n'aime point les fictions, je ne suis nullement romanesque'.<sup>107</sup> Duras does not solely refer to the widespread belief that sentimental novels are detrimental to women because they drag them outside of reality and make them dream of 'héros de roman' as husbands.<sup>108</sup> She also regrets the absence of an alternative to the too negatively charged 'romanesque', meaning there is no hope for women who want a marriage of love. She underlines the hypocrisy of men of the Nangis caste and announces the tragic ending awaiting the disillusioned heroine.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>105</sup> *Charles et Marie*, p. 256. In La Fontaine's novel Claire's father is shown to be extremely rigid in his conception of honour and regularly mocks his daughter's sensibility: 'Des larmes ! Bagatelles ! Séduis ta mère avec cela, mais non pas moi !'; 'un évanouissement de comédie', in La Fontaine, *Claire du Plessis*, p. 123; 126. The novel challenges the permanence and upkeep of the old code of honour in the extreme conditions of the emigration. A family friend tells Du Plessis: 'Chacun juge de l'honneur à sa fantaisie' l'important 'c'est de savoir si l'honneur vous consolera près du cercueil de votre fille', in, *Ibid*, p. 223.

<sup>106</sup> Other male protagonists include in *Edouard*, the duc de L. and in the *Mémoires*, Charles.

<sup>107</sup> *Olivier*, p. 196.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p. 196. The metaphor of the 'romanesque' can be used in the novels at the crossroads of the two centuries to castigate an overly sentimental and old-fashioned behaviour. Boigne for instance mocked the 'romanesque' of her characters in *Une Passion*, proceeding in a mise en abyme of the sentimental novel in order to accuse the gap between desires and the crude reality of gender relationships in her society. Furthermore, Henry d'Estouville's transformation underlines the changing meaning of 'romanesque' in *La Maréchale*. It is used in contradictory ways: as ridicule excess of sensibility, as shown by Zanone, in 'Le romanesque des femmes', in Zanone, Catherine Mariette-Clot, (eds), *La Tradition des romans de femmes, XVIII-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, (Paris, 2012), pp.343-356. The shifting meaning of 'romanesque' also signifies that manly courtship and courage have disappeared. We will argue later that the émigrée writer offers a revisited version of medieval honour to palliate to the end of 'romanesque' and its excesses.

<sup>109</sup> Nangis is both fictive as invented by Duras; and real, as he affirms himself not being a novel hero. The fictional character himself penetrates reality provoking the bitter realisation for the heroine that not only can she not dream about sensible heroes but they don't exist for real in her world.

Next to these traditional one-sided male figures, our writers place hybrid heroes hesitating between sensibility and old-fashioned honour, often triggered by the extraordinary circumstances of the Revolution. Such is Charles in *Ourika*, who is both brother by adoption and love interest of the heroine, who then neglects the heroine as he is blinded by a new love interest. Souza's Chevalier de Fiesque sees a challenge in his conquest of Emilie's heart in his jealousy for his rival Candale, but is later repentant of his immorality.<sup>110</sup> Arguably, the emigration setting serves as a test environment to castigate the Ancien Régime nobleman's immorality, like the memoirs of the emigration had done. Edmond in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, who previously showed love and care for his wife and child, openly chooses his duty over his love in emigration.<sup>111</sup> As the line blurs between villains and heroes, this reinforces the idea of an erosion of the traditional male attributes in the émigré novels, close to the realist anti-heroes. It also questions our novelists' views on sensibility as guarantor of long lasting relationships. We will study next how old codes of honour and sensibility clash in the heroines' love interest and to what effect.

*Brave heroines, cowardly men.*

The selected émigré novelists paint unbalanced gender relationships, and shift the responsibility for heartbreak onto the shoulders of male characters, rather than blaming outside obstacles. This failure is due to the conflict between sensible qualities and attachment to the old code of honour in one man. The heroines' bravery is highlighted by contrast to the heroes' cowardice in fighting for their love,

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<sup>110</sup>The Chevalier de Fiesque in his lucid seduction game resembles Boigne's Henri d'Estouville: despite an immoral education 'à la' Ancien Régime, he is able to reform his old ways through his genuine love for Gudule.

<sup>111</sup>This is visible also in *Les Natchez* which develops the dilemma between attachment to patrie and family. A woman from the tribe claims: «La patrie ! (í ) et que me fait, à moi, la patrie, si elle est injuste ?» Chateaubriand insisted on this strong separation between men and women: the first being drawn in the patrie and its defense, whilst the later in defending love and familial unity. Chateaubriand, *Les Natchez*, p. 128: 148.

underlining the fantasy of a society where men would also have the courage to breach their own honour to be with their loved one. This part will thus investigate how the unbalanced representations of honour valorise women's demands in terms of love. It is inspired by Bertrand Jennings' argument that the shift in the female conception of honour in Duras' prose was innovative within the sentimental vogue.<sup>112</sup> She interpreted Louise's extreme sensibility in putting the sincerity of her own emotions first as a renouncement to her own feminine honour, which is the respect of chastity and decency. It is noted that, despite ravaging guilt, Louise wants to «[immoler] sa vertu à [t]on bonheur» because she explains, «en me perdant je te sauve, et alors je supporterai avec courage la honte et mon propre mépris». For Bertrand Jennings, unlike other traditional sentimental heroines like in *La Princesse de Clèves*, «l'héroïne de Duras s'achemine vers une conception plus moderne et plus individuelle de l'honneur féminin car elle accepte le «crime» pour sa part».<sup>113</sup> She spotted a shift that is visible throughout our corpus, and we believe it is related to having lived as an exile where gender conventions became less pressing, reshaping the émigrées' view on what is acceptable behaviour for women.<sup>114</sup> We will add that,

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<sup>112</sup>Bertrand Jennings, 'Masculin/ féminin', pp.89-104, p. 93-94.

<sup>113</sup>Bertrand Jennings, 'Masculin/ féminin', p. 99-101. It seems the novel chosen for comparison is willingly conservative in order to prove her argument about Duras' modernity. Before the émigré novels of our corpus saw the light, the sentimental novels of the mid-eighteenth century had already slightly resisting heroines, for instance Jeanne-Marie Riccoboni, *Lettres de mistress Fanny Butlerd à milord Charles Alfred de Cailombridge, comte de Plisinthe, duc de Raflingth. Ecrites en 1735. Traduites de l'anglais en 1765 par Adélaïde de Varançai*, (Paris, 1757).

<sup>114</sup>Maybe another way to give perspective to Duras' representation of unequal expectations and codes of honour between male and female protagonists is in Clare Broome Saunders' analysis of British poetess Barrett. Through the comparison with chivalric ideals of masculinity Barrett accused the cowardice of men and lamented that women could not be brave as it is 'unfeminine'. Both knight and lady suffer from unachievable and oppressive ideology in society: the first fails to achieve the society's ideal of manhood; the latter has to remain chaste to be married. Saunders concluded that Barretts' objective was «to highlight the suffocating social stereotypes of Victorian gender ideology». The idea of contradictory and unachievable ideals of masculinity and femininity is meaningful to apply to the plots of Duras and our émigrées authors, even though Saunders' case study is for a later period, and on British poetry. Clare Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth century Medievalism*, (New York, 2009), p. 55-7; 65.

in doing so, the heroines show what true courage is; courage of the heart. We will examine Olivier and Edouard's disappointing conducts to illustrate this crucial shift.

In *Olivier ou le secret*, the eponymous hero fails to fulfil the desired heroic and virile honour because of his secret, presumably his impotence.<sup>115</sup> The combination of passivity and fear on Olivier's part, of being outside society's rules for men, dooms the passion from the start as the male hero is morally and physically incapable of contracting a union with his beloved. The fact that there are fewer letters from Olivier weakens his voice and spontaneity as he is mostly seen by the reader through Louise's narration, indirect discourse, and interpretation. Trying to make sense of Olivier's flimsy nature is a tedious task both for the heroine and the reader: «on a cru Olivier amoureux sans qu'il le fût, sa mélancolie habituelle donne à sa galanterie l'apparence du sentiment»<sup>116</sup> Contrary to what the sentimental novel often pictured, the extreme sensibility of the male character is far from facilitating the communication of the lovers. The novel sets out progressively to shatter Louise's hopes of turning Olivier into her perfect «héros de roman» His melancholic demeanour appears to match the sentimental novel, but his actions disappoint, bursting the fictive idyllic bubble: «il ne vient plus me voir le matin, il m'a donné des prétextes»<sup>117</sup> Olivier's initially attractive sensibility becomes deceitful. Whilst sensible men are described pejoratively, the traditional virility and libertinage of Ancien Régime is blamed too, as if the author was stressing the sheer inadequacy of her society. Edouard also accumulates the characteristics of an eighteenth-century female heroine: «il avait ce dévouement, cette vertu touchante»<sup>118</sup> He is emotional but timid and shows unlimited devotion to others, just like women are expected to be

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<sup>115</sup>Bertrand Jennings, 'Masculin/Féminin', p. 102. See also on this topic Waller, *The Male Malady*.

<sup>116</sup>*Olivier*, p. 204.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid*, p. 254.

<sup>118</sup>Bertrand Jennings, 'Un homme sensible et déclassé: Edouard' in *Un siècle à l'autre*, pp. 59-81, p. 70-1. See also Waller, *The Male Malady. Fictions of Impotence*.

in society and in fictions. Finch, following on her idea of the revalorisation of the 'low', indicates that Edouard's low status makes him the woman, and Natalie the man.<sup>119</sup> The purpose of Edouard's life is to love Natalie, and this passion morphs into a religion: 'C'est un culte que je lui rend, l'adorer c'est ma vie'<sup>120</sup> When his father dies, he behaves exactly like the sensible heroine by fainting.<sup>121</sup> Finally, Edouard plays the passive role in his relationship with Natalie, usually granted to female heroines. Natalie favours action to make the marriage possible, she is ready to overcome all obstacles.<sup>122</sup> On the contrary, Edouard is almost satisfied in his constant 'rêveries' 'je me pénétrais d'elle ; elle devenait comme une réalité'<sup>123</sup> Edouard is relegated to the world of the imaginary, while Natalie takes charge of her fate, and here we are far from the image of the typical passive heroine choosing rest over troubles. A paradox lies in the fact that Edouard refuses to marry to preserve his honour and respect society's conventions, but simultaneously behaves like a female heroine, at the antipode of virile ethics. Natalie disapproves of his refusal to breach gender conventions: 'ne sacrifiez pas notre bonheur à une fausse délicatesse' she begs him, just like Euphémie had protested in Boigne's novel.<sup>124</sup>

So what makes the male characters of our corpus stand out in their conflicting conception of masculine honour and passive behaviour? In the second half of the

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<sup>119</sup>Finch, *Women's writing*, p. 57-8.

<sup>120</sup>The evocation of love as a cult, a religion, is also a key aspect of Duras' conception of love which reinforces this reinterpretation of gender roles, *Edouard*, p. 103.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid, p.59; 66; 88. She adds that the fact that Edouard has no last name, whereas Natalie is Madame de Nevers or Madame la duchesse de Nevers, makes him doubly inferior to his lover, in rank and in sex and denies him from the attributes of the patriarch. In Bertrand Jennings, 'Un homme sensible et déclassé' *Edouard* p. 72-3; 75.

<sup>122</sup>Natalie invites Edouard to her 'cabinet' one evening to tell him she loves him. Later she clearly states that she is ready to run away with him and live in a 'humble asile, au fond de nos montagnes' Her final attempt is when she sends him a letter where she minimizes the importance of honour, 'que peux-tu m'opposer ? Un fantôme d'honneur qui en reposerait sur rien.' in *Edouard*, t.2 p. 26; 37; 57-8.

<sup>123</sup>Here it appears the hero gives up on his active role, he wants Natalie to be the one 'penetrating' his imagination, Ibid, t. 2 p. 34.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid, t.2, p.36. Euphémie shouted: 'ne peut-on, bon Dieu ! laisser deux malheureux se consoler ensemble?... 'le ciel n'ordonne que les vertus possibles !' in *Une Passion*, t. 2, p. 221-2; 232; 249.

nineteenth century, Zanone argues that male heroes are 'faire-valoir' to the heroines in women's novels, explaining they are often unreliable and totally insensitive to the female demands.<sup>125</sup> The blurring of gender distinctions is also identified in the works of French male writers contemporary to or shortly succeeding our three women novelists.<sup>126</sup> Dorothy Kelly talks about a 'chiasmus of gender' in French nineteenth-century fiction: she gives the example of Balzac's *La Cousine Bette* where Steinbeck is feminine and Bette is masculine: in marrying they form an androgynous couple. According to her, this examination of what is a man and a woman corresponds to a contradictory movement of radical questioning of gender and conservative return to tradition.<sup>127</sup> Still, writers such as Balzac tend to adopt solely a male perspective, and reproduce the gendered stereotypes of the heroine who has read too many novels, in face of a melancholic but lucid hero, whose heartache is presented as more essential.<sup>128</sup> The question about the evolution of the way men are depicted in the literature of the long nineteenth century is a problematic one. Firstly, because studies on the masculine have only recently been under scrutiny with up to date gender concepts after decades of women studies. Secondly, because untangling what is historical and what is created for literary effect in the expressions of virility in a novel is a challenging task. The difficulty of making sense of these conflicting ideas of masculinity was made evident for instance by Robert Nye, for the later period of 1870-1940. He spoke of unstable conceptions of gender and a crisis of masculinity. For him, paradoxically, male honour was still in construction despite being somehow

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<sup>125</sup> Zanone, 'Le romanesque des femmes' p. 362. Finch initiated the idea that it is in nineteenth-century women novels that 'a persuasive case against gender stereotyping' was suggested, with androgynous heroes and masculine heroines, in Finch, *Women's writing*, p.229

<sup>126</sup> In Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (London, 1793) there is a critique of masculinity in the way Orlando is described as feminine, dependent on a rich aristocratic woman, and passive. Cited in Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, p.9.

<sup>127</sup> Balzac, in *La Comédie Humaine*, vol. 7, (Paris, 1977), p. 107-110, cited in Kelly, *Fictional Genders*, p. 2-3.

<sup>128</sup> See for instance the novel of Senancour, *Oberman*; and of Custine, *Aloys*.

fixed.<sup>129</sup> Without speaking of a crisis of masculinity that our émigré writers were picking up on, we believe they started to de-construct the solid edifice of the positively seen sensible hero. It is likely that the experience of emigration and/or its use as a setting for fiction meant that post-revolutionary gender relationships are more critically presented in émigré writings than elsewhere. Zanone identified a vanishing of the traditional obstacles to marriage in the female novels from the 1830s: obstacles become secondary, arbitrary and hazardous. He interprets it as the sign of an erosion of class ethics, arranged marriages, family honour, and patriarchal power.<sup>130</sup> In our émigré corpus the traditional obstacles to marriage for love vanish thanks to the revolutionary laws and the reclusion of the exile: and yet the heroines ultimately fail to obtain the happy ending they yearn for. We believe that the status of émigré grants our novelist with an avant-garde perception of men-women relationships.

Bertrand-Jennings reminded us that in the female novels of the early nineteenth century, «C'est bien en effet l'incapacité masculine à accepter une quelconque supériorité féminine qui est à l'origine de la tragédie»<sup>131</sup> Can the émigré novel be at the core of this criticism of men's failings? The works of Duras clearly link the emigration and the disillusion of equal male-female relationships. Henry's feminisation is somehow similar to that of Edouard and Olivier's however it is directly rooted to the brutal events of the Revolution, provoking in him «exil et

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<sup>129</sup>In his study he shows that male honour in elite classes and bourgeoisie was seen as productive capacity, reproductive fitness, familial and political power, and public display of honour through duelling. It excluded women and lower class men too. This conception of male honour appears to have been unchanged from the first half of the nineteenth century when our three writers were active. Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honour*, (Oxford, 1993), cited in Elinar Accampo and Christopher E. Forth, «Introduction: Confronting Modernity in Fin de siècle France», in Forth, Accampo, (eds), *Confronting modernity in fin-de-siècle France; Bodies, minds and gender*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1-14, p. 3.

<sup>130</sup>Damien Zanone, «Le romanesque des femmes» p. 382.

<sup>131</sup>Bertrand Jennings, *D'un siècle l'autre*, p. 66. This recalls Stael's *Corinne* where this idea is central too.



isolement et son mépris pour l'intrigue et a certain désœuvrement<sup>132</sup> Arguably, this link between melancholia and exile is found too in other male émigré works, notably in *René* by Duras' friend Chateaubriand. But Chateaubriand did not narrate the return to France and its crude effect on the male behaviour. As for émigré novels written by women who were not exiles, such as *Claire du Plessis*, the dilemma of the novel is also about male honour versus conjugal happiness: Clairant 'ne pouvoit concilier son amour pour Claire avec celui de son pays' since he is a jacobin and she is an émigrée.<sup>133</sup> The originality of Duras' prose, of a large part of our authentic émigré novels corpus, comes from the narration of the intrinsic cowardice and inconsistency of men, once returned to normal living conditions. The melancholic superiority of the male contemporary novels is annihilated; whilst the political and social class reality constituting the base for non-émigrée authors is secondary. For instance, when the return to France is imminent, Henry's passivity leads to Amélie's despair: he lets himself be controlled by the situation, does not protect her reputation and finally yields to his desire to lead a normal life, sheltered under society's approval.<sup>134</sup> Grancey similarly disappoints once the emigration is over: the same man who distinguished himself in the émigré wars, and went to Quiberon becomes frankly weak, almost a coward, in the way he seems to hide his plans of getting back with his wife.<sup>135</sup> The dissolving of the hero's sensible qualities is concurrent with the emigration elsewhere in the corpus too. Souza's Edmond causes problems for Mathilde as the Revolution begins, and his military exploits in the émigré army are

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<sup>132</sup> 'Le comte avait un abandon plein de charme et a l'air noble et passionné' but Henry struggles to find 'l'ami qui le comprend et lui répond !' in *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 152-4.

<sup>133</sup> Clairant hesitates between the two but ultimately gives up his attachment to patrie, unlike Claire's brother: 'il combat pour l'honneur, et moi pour le bonheur', in La Fontaine, *Claire du Plessis*, t. 2, p.4, p. 112.

<sup>134</sup> While Amélie is badly received in her family for her misconduct, Henry is charmed by his wife. Amélie 'reçoit avec honte et douleur ces témoignages d'une affection qui appartient à une autre' when Henry visits her while he is also considering his reunion with Pauline, in *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 175-6.

<sup>135</sup> Whereas he is strongly involved in the émigré wars, and participates to the Quiberon expedition, in *Mémoires*, p. 101-2.

not stressed: it is the intensity of the pain he causes to his abandoned wife and child that is described instead. The male heroes' passivity and disappointing behaviour is framed and revealed by the emigration event. When the novel refers to the emigration implicitly, like in Souza's *Emilie et Alphonse*, the places of exile are also testing the male protagonist's consistency: Alphonse fails this challenge and merely reproduces the mistakes he has made in the past.<sup>136</sup> Thus the original way male characters are shown damaging the heroines has to do with the reflected émigré past, which is both original and makes the demands more relevant to the women writers' contemporary society. The emigration and its aftermath which shakes up traditional gender values initiates a modern depiction of the conflicting codes of masculine honour, of the deceitful heroes' sensibility and of the bravery displayed by the heroines. In its questioning of the sentimental tropes of sensibility and male conduct, the émigrée novel stays entrenched in its society whilst making it both different and innovative. As for the English heroes Lord Sydenham and Charles, as we are about to demonstrate, they risk losing their beloved as a result of their character flaws. In a way they incarnate both the ideal British sensible hero and its opposite, showing there is an awareness of clashing ideals of masculinity in literature and in society in the émigrée novel.

## 2. The impossible quest for the ideal sensible hero

### *The controlling man*

Kelly argued that reoccurring images about women in Balzac's texts, and in other romantic texts, are defined by lack and absence, whilst male representations

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<sup>136</sup> Similarly, in *Une Passion* the passion-hate of the male character for the heroine evolves in rhythm with his travels, just like the émigré. He dies absurdly by drowning, unable to overcome his doubts about Euphémie's moral integrity.

and characters are associated with property and presence.<sup>137</sup> Balzac was developing competing and complementary clichés about women: the woman was seen in turn as child, muse, mother, and fragile creature.<sup>138</sup> Kelly stated that the assignation of proper gender roles corresponded to the assignation of roles of desire exclusively to men. In that respect, the female element is defined by reference to its male counterpart, only it lacks something from the male element. Her approach is useful to our study since it frames our reflection on how our novelists depicted male characters as those which lack essential qualities, rather than the heroines. What men lack is made essential; it is the capacity to love genuinely, intensely and over time. As a consequence, our émigré writers operate a reversal of the widespread representations in nineteenth-century male fiction which saw women as lacking. Boigne placed a strong matriarch at the head of families; the mature female characters of the *Maréchale*/Mme de Romignière; and described how women like Gudule, Euphémie and Odille took charge of their destiny even through hardship, in face of inconstant or brutal men, such as Henri d'Estouville, Romuald or the comte d'Amézaga. Duras portrayed men as intrinsically lacking in their conception of love but it is in Souza's novels, that the male characters' melancholia is the most pejoratively conveyed. We have previously argued that the 'émigré melancholia' -a melancholia which has emerged from a productive collaboration between the emigration experience and literary tropes, resulting in a systematic association in the prose of the malady of the soul with uprooting and distaste for the new society- is more often positively described for the heroines.<sup>139</sup> The male hero's melancholia however is shown as

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<sup>137</sup>Dorothy Kelly, 'Gender and Rhetoric: Balzac's clichés' in *Fictional Genders*, pp. 75-117, p. 116.

<sup>138</sup>Kelly argues also that there is something else beneath Balzac's clichés, notably in the degree of nuance and unpredictability in them, in Kelly, 'Gender and Rhetoric' p. 76-7.

<sup>139</sup>The *Maréchale* in Boigne's eponymous novel, Emilie in *Emilie et Alphonse* or Sophie in the *Mémoires*, all have a heightened sensibility and intrinsic disillusion from the world due to their uprooting and experience of loss.

damaging or counter-productive despite at first sight fulfilling all the expectations of the 'sensible and melancholic hero' for a nineteenth-century reader. This differs from contemporary male novels taking the side of the melancholic protagonist. This section will demonstrate how Souza postulates the male melancholic lover as the one lacking something essential, in front of a heroine justified in her demands for long-lasting love. This will help us build on the idea that the émigrée prose was original in the way it pictured dysfunctioning gender behaviour.

In Souza's novels male melancholia is highly pejorative and jeopardises the happy ending she suggests without concretely writing so. The way in which Alphonse in *Emilie et Alphonse* allies beauty and melancholia is almost a caricature: the large black eyes and suffering expression are but a mirage, since he won't put love first and precipitates the heroine into a lonely reclusion.<sup>140</sup> The male hero is almost psychologically abusive to the frail heroine. Charles Lenox and Lord Sydenham possess sensible and melancholic souls, but they are certainly not genuinely compassionate and morally sound.<sup>141</sup> Charles' melancholia is permanently teetering on the edge of the immoral or mean. He is 'jaloux, susceptible, exigeant, inquiet et léger'; even though he is capable of some compassion.<sup>142</sup> His suffering seems to come from the incapacity to dominate his emotions: 'je passe promptement du bonheur à l'inquiétude'.<sup>143</sup> Lord Sydenham similarly goes from adoration to hatred rather rapidly.<sup>144</sup> Charles wonders if he is a 'tyran ou victime ?' for Marie.<sup>145</sup> Charles'

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<sup>140</sup> Also in *Les Natchez* René's melancholia prevents him from giving in love with Céluta. He has the physical and psychological incapacity to have a loving relationship, p.149.

<sup>141</sup> The choice of British lord as hero is not by random. It shows how Souza re-employed the tropes of the novel of sensibility, imported from Britain, to formulate a very post-revolutionary critique of gender roles.

<sup>142</sup> 'je souffrais pour elle et pour moi', in *Charles et Marie*, p. 227; 258.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p. 277.

<sup>144</sup> 'Sa légèreté me révoltait plus encore'; 'j'ai été bête et cruel'; 'Cette impatience me déplut'; 'voilà cette sincérité que j'adorais, et qui n'était qu'un raffinement de coquetterie', in *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 50; 73; 74-5.

vision of love is one that threatens one person's entity and is a power struggle above all: 'Je ferai à Marie le sacrifice de ma vie, ou j'exigerai le dévouement de toute la sienne'.<sup>146</sup> Sydenham wants to exercise entire control over Adèle too, and hopes her young age will help him better shape her to his taste; a view which, at the very least, appears slightly disturbing.<sup>147</sup> The male heroes possess high expectations: the heroines must have moral qualities and be physically attractive, but be destitute of vanity, for fear it will ruin the relationship.<sup>148</sup> When Eudoxie and Sara arrive 'habillées à cette mode nouvelle qui laisse à peine ces voiles que désirent également la pudeur et l'amour', they are disregarded by the hero, whereas Marie satisfies his expectations: 'quelle joie je ressentis lorsque, dès qu'elle m'aperçut, je la vis prendre un châle derrière elle, et s'en cacher en rougissant !'.<sup>149</sup> Lord Sydenham loves the woman-child in Adèle but also resents her tendency to give in to 'coquetterie' and flirtation.<sup>150</sup> After Charles hears that Marie had a potential suitor, his disappointment is linked to his idea of her being tainted: 'puissiez-vous être telle que vous m'aviez paru ! [í ] être celle qui sur la terre me donnait une idée du ciel'.<sup>151</sup> Charles' lack of tolerance is extreme when he tests Marie's sincerity: 'je cherchais avec un secret plaisir comment elle pourrait se justifier'.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> 'Avec cette âme passionnée, ce caractère ombrageux, comment ai-je pu m'abandonner à l'amour ?', in *Charles et Marie*, p. 279.

<sup>146</sup> This echoes Duras' depiction of passionate love in *Olivier and Edouard*: it is an absolute dedication to the loved one, to the point of losing one's identity.

<sup>147</sup> 'quel plaisir de l'instruire, et de lui montrer le monde peu à peu'; 'de la former pour soi !'; 'Soumettre un cœur tout neuf donne plus de plaisir', *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 14; 39-40.

<sup>148</sup> Ladislas falls for Eugénie because she is sensible like him and possesses a 'réserve craintive' in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2 p.58. Charles falls for the sound of Marie's 'voix céleste' but fears she may be presumptuous or vain since she sings so well, and even fears 'Si cette femme était laide ?' which is very unusual in a sentimental novel, in *Charles et Marie*, p. 227.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p. 232.

<sup>150</sup> Sydenham accuses Adèle of 'perfidie' and 'vanité', in *Adèle de Sénange*, t.2 p. 202.

<sup>151</sup> 'toute la rage que j'éprouvais contre Marie... sa coquetterie pour ce jeune homme... sa vanité qui lui avait fait sacrifier l'amour à l'orgueil', in *Charles et Marie*, p. 252; 255.

<sup>152</sup> 'je passais en revue les vains prétextes des femmes, leur feinte innocence, leurs prétendus égards, leur craintive faiblesse, leur silence timide !', in Ibid, p. 259. Romuald reacts similarly: he is very harsh to Euphémie, 'une coquette de profession'; 'perfide talent'; 'odieuse insensibilité', in *Une Passion*, p. 382-384.

The picturing of deceitful and mean male characters is not new to the female émigré novel as the female novels of the previous century already had such scenarios. In Riccoboni's novel *Lettres de mistriss Fanny Butlerd* (1757) the heroine relates her language to her feelings and her heart. Thus her tone changes according to her feelings, there is no irony or lies and no dissimulation, contrary to the deceitful behaviour of Alfred who betrays her by feigning love to abandon her for an advantageous marriage. Fanni abhors Alfred's artificial writing because she trusts writing as a revealer of feelings and one's soul. Wolfgang claims that this shows how Riccoboni reverses the traditional accusation of 'feminine' dissimulation and manipulation.<sup>153</sup> Within the contemporary tradition of sensible novels, across the Channel, Frances Burney produces plots where women's integrity is permanently threatened by ill-intentioned men.<sup>154</sup> Likewise, in *Daughter in Law* (1813) and *Merchant's Widow* (1814) Reydhane Vadidar showed that Barbara Hofland depicted the decline of men's protective abilities, compensated by women's desire to be in control of their material lives. Hence by taking 'the agency of power and control away from the male characters, her female characters become closely associated with [í ] men's [í ] virtue: namely, their honor'.<sup>155</sup> The way Vadidar associated male protagonists' decline of power with women's assertion enlightens our argument about the modernity of the émigrée novel within nineteenth-century literature. How does it differ from earlier and contemporary novels criticising the defects of men? Firstly, the attack on the controlling nature of the hero is much stronger in the émigré texts, because it takes place in a French society which had started to reform itself. This is

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<sup>153</sup>Wolfgang, *Gender and Voice*, p. 138-9; 140.

<sup>154</sup>Frances Burney, *The Wanderer: Or, Female Difficulties*, (London, 1814).

<sup>155</sup>Faced with the decline of their protective abilities and despite their strong desire to be in control of their surrounding financial circumstances, [í ] are now shown to be impotent in Reydhane Vadidar 'Late Eighteenth century Women's Fiction; Hero, Heroine & Financial Authority' in *European Academic Research*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, May 2013, pp. 193-203, p. 201. In *The Merchant's Widow* the independent character of Mrs Davenport recalls Boigne's Maréchale.

visible in the way the patriarchs in Souza are self-effacing and the emigration makes concubinage acceptable in Duras' *Mémoires*, something which should have bettered the conditions of women. Secondly, the male protagonists reproaches expressed in the letters are all the more shocking for as aiming at independent and perfectly well-meaning heroines.

The narrative point of view is important to consider, confirming what Kelly showed about male authors' unilateral conceptions of gender. The narrative strategy in the selected corpus differs from that of male contemporaries, even though both describe melancholic souls in search of love. This shift in the way melancholic behaviour is presented betrays our authors' view on how ill-fitting literary and, above all, societal rules of masculine conduct are, and simultaneously highlights their heroines' benevolence. Again Souza's *Charles et Marie* and *Adèle de Sénange* are pertinent examples: the enunciation by a first person male narrator, through either letters to an absent correspondent or a journal-type monologue, makes the reader think that the male gaze is wrong in putting the heroines to such a harsh test and in hesitating so much to fight for their love.<sup>156</sup> This narrative strategy enables her not only to explore with great depth the tortuous personalities of her two distraught lords but, especially, to show how unbelievably crushing their expectations are in comparison to the genuine heroines. Souza produces this effect by juxtaposing the heroes' successive hesitations after each of the heroines' actions, in a perpetual move between love and hatred, between a desire to dominate or relent. Charles recognises his sadness comes from Marie's 'disposition à se laisser dominer par tout ce qui

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<sup>156</sup>In Boigne and Duras the strategy is more straight forward: *Une Passion* is an epistolary novel placing next to each other contradicting letters of a controlling Romuald and a misunderstood and always threatened by social opprobium Euphémie. *La Maréchale* is told in third person but it is the matriarch and heroine's point of view which dominates.

l'environne'; but then laments, 'je vis sa faiblesse'.<sup>157</sup> The reader is left unable to decide whether the heroine has character flaws or whether the narrator is simply overlaying his unrealistic expectations onto her. Therefore the pejorative portrait of the heroine painted by her lover appears untrustworthy and biased. It almost mocks the tropes of the sentimental novel in pushing to the extreme the male protagonist's unachievable expectations. As an obstacle to the union of the two lovers, this indecisive and exigent attitude clearly indicates the shallowness of expected gender behaviour for women in general, and partially displaces the blame onto unrealistic male expectations.

If we compare Souza's heroes with Constant's novel *Adolphe* we obtain a better sense of how the émigré prose differs in its view on male melancholic behaviour and the damage it causes to women. This is valid for the rest of our corpus, particularly in Duras' *Edouard* and *Olivier*. Constant's novel describes the usual melancholic hero falling in love but feeling at odds with society.<sup>158</sup> The point of view is very different, not so much because it emanates from the hero, since this was the case in part of our émigrée corpus, but because this perspective does not allow the reader to doubt the hero's integrity: something went wrong but it is not the hero's fault after all. Adolphe seduces Elléonore almost out of boredom, and this is made a fatality which cannot be fixed. Despite his lucidity on some of his failings, the point of view is eminently his, which does not offer the chance to see things from the woman's perspective. Conversely, in *Adèle de Sénanque* Lord Sydenham's attitude is invalidated by the narration of the innocent actions of Adèle, as if the author wanted to re-establish the

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<sup>157</sup> *Charles et Marie*, p. 278. In *Une Passion*, Euphémie is too described from a male point of view only. The contrast between beauty and ugliness is striking, to emphasize the sudden disgust Romuald has for Euphémie: 'froide coquette' and 'grimacer ce joli visage' in *Une Passion*, p. 382; 384-5; t.2, p. 2.

<sup>158</sup> We could have used here also Custine's *Aloys*.



truth within the subjective letters of the hero.<sup>159</sup> Elléonore never has the same status as Adèle, and yet they are both novels of one male voice. Thus it seems the originality of Souza, and the émigré novels in depicting the failings of male conduct, lies in the narrative position adopted, disguised behind the 'safety' provided by the male epistolary or journal-style novel. They succeed in bringing the reader to blame the deceitful hero instead of the authentic heroine.<sup>160</sup>

### *The sensible knight*

The way Souza overlays chivalric qualities onto the male character, whilst making sure he keeps his sensibility, is a response to the dilemma posed by antagonistic codes of honour as shown earlier, and this is what will close our investigation into the male protagonists of our corpus. The reform she desired in gender relationships, inspired by the experience of the emigration, will become clearer by decrypting this alternative. The character of Ladislav Opalinsky in *Eugénie et Mathilde* embodies the productive combination of old and new codes of behaviour. According to Souza, the new and ideal male hero is of noble descent, originally from the Ancien Régime, but also foreign and a partisan of liberal ideas. Souza had travelled through Europe herself, inspiring her to create a male character who would opportunistically combine old and new qualities. Ladislav is called 'cet étranger' and not immediately welcomed by the Revels, because «il étoit un des plus grand partisans d[e la] liberté»<sup>161</sup> His

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<sup>159</sup>We will add that Adolphe's self-admitted problem throughout the novel is more than his struggle to adjust to the role of the illegitimate lover, it is above all to provide the constant love required: he admits permanently being tempted to leave Elléonore. Her constant love and devotion are at times repulsive to him, in *Adolphe*, p. 151.

<sup>160</sup>We will add here that the tone is not political either, like Staël can be in *Corinne*, asking for more freedom of speech for intellectual women. The émigré novel, in taking the side of the heroine over her controlling lover, justifies the demand for more tolerant gender rules. This gives a social aim since it displays the dead-end scenario women are in, unable to get love but also immediately chastised when they assume their seductive powers. Charles admits: 'comment me résoudre à perdre le pouvoir de bouleverser votre âme, d'un regard détruire votre joie?', in *Charles et Marie*, p. 208.

<sup>161</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p. 46.

foreign identity is frankly fluctuating through the plot, which contributes to shake up the Ancien Régime's traditions, held by the Revels. He is Polish and a defender of liberty, which places him as vehicle for change, unlike the émigré family, and fundamentally the Other.<sup>162</sup> Nonetheless, Ladislav is high born and a member of the same social class as the Revels; ostracised from his country in a similar vein to them.<sup>163</sup> Souza highlights the common grounds between Ladislav and the émigré family which, combined with his constant protection, makes him no longer a feared foreigner. This allows her to insist on the attractiveness of compromise, of a modern and free spirit together with respect of aristocratic ethics. The Polish count joins the counter-revolutionary armies in the Vendée, only to help Edmond de Revel, and is arrested. This enhances his selfless bravery, risking his own life for a political cause that is not his. Military courage grants him a place within the code of honour, but unlike Edmond who abandoned his pregnant wife, Ladislav's actions are ultimately to bring the family back together. Evidently, Ladislav's fluctuating identity and reworked code of honour enables the author to challenge the gender rules from within. It is because of his progressive views about Eugénie's fate that Ladislav really emerges as the ideal male hero. Since he was raised *«dans des principes de liberté»* he does not believe in perpetual vows.<sup>164</sup> Ladislav even asks Mathilde about Eugénie's oath: *«Dans vos mœurs, ne peut-on pas la relever de ses vœux?»*<sup>165</sup> His otherness and original treatment of honour make him the perfect character to bring a critical perspective into gender traditions and, through him, Souza delivers her implicit message about the destiny of wives, mothers and daughters in her society. Ladislav deplores the Revels' decision about Eugénie because it denied her the right to

<sup>162</sup> He is freed from the Republican prison thanks to his non-French nationality.

<sup>163</sup> His family is *«proscrite»* and *«[s]on pays malheureux»* in Ibid, t.2, p.58; t.3, p.149.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, t.2, p. 66.

<sup>165</sup> What matters for Ladislav is *«lui rendre la liberté d'être heureuse»* in Ibid, t.2, p. 139.

'éprouver cet amour de mère...'<sup>166</sup> This preoccupation with maternal love is not often found in the mouth of male protagonists. Thus Ladislav is a prototype communicating the émigrée novelist's expectations in men; expectations which were formed as a result of the extraordinary experience of European exile and return to the Empire and the Restoration societies. His heterogeneous character betrays a desire to enhance compromise rather than radical change. The émigrée novel wishes for a moderate reform of gender relationships, consisting of a patchwork of Ancien and new Regimes.

Souza purposefully takes an optimistic position on the reform of male behaviour: unlike the cowards Olivier and Grancey, or the judgemental Romuald and Lord Sydenham, her Polish count fulfils both masculine honour and the heroine's thirst for faithful love. He is capable of avenging Ernestine by provoking a duel with M. de Trèmes and flies to Edmond's rescue in the Vendée; but each of his virile actions is driven by the higher motive of obtaining Eugénie's hand.<sup>167</sup> In Duras' *Mémoires de Sophie*, there is a similar secondary protagonist, M. de Reuss, who has an affair with Sophie's sister-in-law: he is foreign and discreet but his actions speak a thousand words: he saves Charles' life from a mob, and later on helps Sophie's family to escape from imprisonment and death.<sup>168</sup> His actions contrast sharply with Grancey's deceitful promises to Sophie. The true value to be had is courage and loyalty to the woman loved, not cowardice and dissimulation. How original were our émigrée writers in building this better novelistic hero? This insistence on subordinating male bravery to the realisation of love, as opposed to aimless belligerent 'bravery' recalls

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<sup>166</sup>Ibid, t.2 p.93.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid, t.2, p.131 Ladislav avenges Ernestine by provoking a duel with M. de Trèmes, however he is ridiculed by Trèmes, who is very nonchalant about it. This underlines the perceived archaic nature of duel in the late 1790s and early 1800s, and the clash of true and sincere honour with fake and artificial honour.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid, p. 44; 131.

the medieval knight and courtship. This angle could be the key to understanding the émigrées' originality in coining an alternative to disappointing gender relationships. Of Ladislas Souza writes: «qu'il étoit beau, lorsque luttant de force et d'adresse contre un cheval fougueux, il revenoit triomphant après l'avoir dompté !» «Il fatiguoit dans ces dangers inutiles un courage qui n'avoit plus d'emploi, depuis qu'il n'avoit plus de patrie»<sup>169</sup> The medieval revival has been identified as a socio-political and cultural movement concomitant to Romanticism in Europe. Alice Chandler defined this revival as 'a reaction to the shock wave of the French Revolution and to [...] the whole post-Napoleonic period' in a bid to get a sense of coherence between a mythic past and present which feels as though it is not harmonious or ordered enough.<sup>170</sup> In its eighteenth-century literary manifestation, Chandler argues, medievalism took the shape of Gothic novels with ruins, dilapidated castles, encouraging the reader to imagine a different society.<sup>171</sup> This generalist overview did not fully consider the potential differences between men and women's re-interpretations of Middle Ages' images and ethics. For Saunders there was «a contrasting «male» and «female» version of the medieval» with a «female medievalism» opposed to the dominant «male» one.<sup>172</sup> Through the study of women's history books, she demonstrates that medievalism was both a cover for criticising their contemporary society and «gave women an imaginative means to express this struggle»<sup>173</sup> If we follow her argument, it is clear that there is a link between women's interpretation of medieval gender culture and the demands for a better

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<sup>169</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 152-3.

<sup>170</sup>Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order, The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth century English Literature*, (London, 1971), p. 4.

<sup>171</sup>Chandler, *A Dream of Order*, p. 8.

<sup>172</sup>Broome Saunders, *Women Writers*, p. 1.

<sup>173</sup>Medievalism offered an appeal to female writers: it was thought that pre-Norman conquest, Anglo-Saxon England was freer as legal rights and property management for women, which explains why criticism was more easily done if shielded under medievalism, in Broome Saunders, *Women Writers*, p. 5; 7-8.

station in life for nineteenth-century women.<sup>174</sup> The traditional knight figure is coupled with that of the melancholic wanderer, fed with the emigration experience, who struggles to adapt to a changing world where his virile honour is less valued and therefore almost useless. The fact that Ladislav survives Edmond proves further that he is the man of the future who is able to adapt to the changing gender roles, and suits the demands of women. This confirms the idea that the émigrée novel provides options to tackle the lack of satisfying codes of conducts within the sentimental vogue and society. Using ancient ethics of virile behaviour, to fit with a modern approach on male sensibility and tolerance, is not without its contradictions; nonetheless it translates the émigrée novelist's dissatisfaction with gender relationship as pictured in sentimental novels and as observed in post-revolutionary society.

Bertrand Jennings advanced that the subversion of gender roles in *Edouard* is what makes Duras a modern novelist, comparing her to George Sand: «Les textes de femmes [í ] prennent parti pour une conception de l'honneur au féminin qui passerait par un épanouissement affectif personnel, ce qui constituerait une certaine affirmation de soi»<sup>175</sup> In the face of inconsistency and cowardice, the female heroine stands unchanged and loyal to her passion until the end. Her desire is no longer seen as a fault; the problem emerges from her lover's lacking the will to place love above honour. The painting of male heroes as selfish melancholics translates a desire to re-focus gender relations onto love and authenticity rather than honour and rank. The émigré novelists' original and modern take on gender relationships is linked to

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<sup>174</sup>Her case study revealed that the Crimean war was «a catalyst for women's use of medievalism» and that «Barrett's exploration of gender roles in the scenes of medieval conflict reflects her discussion of women's roles in contemporary wars and affairs of state», which were in this case the Napoleonic wars. In *Ibid*, p. 54; 58.

<sup>175</sup>Bertrand Jennings, 'Masculin/Féminin', p. 103.

having lived the emigration and particularly, having envied British gender behaviours.

### III. The female émigré novel, a novel of double disillusion?

'Le marquis quoique fort brave, n'avait point l'âme de ses aïeux du temps de Louis-le-jeune ; il était père et un tendre père du dix-neuvième siècle'.<sup>176</sup> This quotation from Stendhal's 1837 novel *Armance* attests that the reform of paternal authority was felt by contemporary writers. This section will ask whether the novels of our corpus, because of their inspiration from the emigration and the contact with British culture, propose a modern vision of the family and gender behaviours. Lynn Hunt has shown that noble French families became less rigid in dealing with education and relationships, and the family unit became closer from the Revolution onwards.<sup>177</sup> However the reasons for this shift are hard to untangle: whilst Darrow spoke of the aristocracy's conscious effort to re-integrate the post-revolutionary society by adopting the bourgeois domestic lifestyle; Hunt focused on the impact of the Revolution's politics and social reforms on mentalities and practices, such as the execution of the King or divorce laws: 'The political discourse and iconography of the revolutionary decade told a family story'. According to Hunt: 'In no domain was the invasion of public authority more evident than in family life'.<sup>178</sup> The selected noblewomen all witnessed the irruption of the revolutionary state into the private, often from discussions in their émigré gatherings or in London's newspapers. By

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<sup>176</sup>Stendhal, *Armance*, p. 174.

<sup>177</sup>Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, (University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>178</sup>Hunt, 'The Unstable Boundaries of the French Revolution' in Michelle Perrot, (ed), *A History of Private Life, IV From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War*, (Cambridge, 1990), pp.13-45, p. 23; 29.

their exiled status, they were both the number one suspects for the revolutionaries and yet observed those successive passing of laws from afar. Their take on the evolution of family relationships is necessarily different, as noblewomen and émigrées, from that of French citizens who stayed within the borders of the country. First we will determine the link between having lived the emigration and writing about smoother family relationships. Subsequently we will look at the way that having stayed in London justifies the painting of womanly behaviour at the fringes of the immoral.

### 1. The aristocracy in exile: a tightening of family relations.

M. de Revel's transformation makes Souza's *Eugénie et Mathilde* the novel of family reconciliation.<sup>179</sup> The patriarch in exile M. de Revel observes: *le malheur et la solitude resserrent tous les liens*<sup>180</sup> Souza does not oppose diametrically old and bad with new and good behaviours in the family but shows, in a nuanced way, how small changes can have a huge impact on the well-being of single individuals, without attracting social blame. This precarious situation, framed by the emigration journey, is thus depicted in a non-linear and realistic way, and will help us show how the émigrée novel suggests modern gender rules for post-revolutionary France.

The softening of the father figure recalls *Adèle de Sénange*, when M. de Sénange narrates how he reconciled and made peace with his own inflexible father after his

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<sup>179</sup>Other novels of our corpus stage the increase of intimacy enjoyed by the heroine in exile, as we will show subsequently.

<sup>180</sup>The grandmother Madame de Couci on the contrary, sees this 'resserrement' more conservatively, as a shield against novelty: *il falloit que tous les liens fussent maintenus, resserrés, par ceux qui s'opposoient aux novateurs qui vouloient les détruire !* Thus the act of 'resserrer les liens' is ambiguous as meaning something different according to the speaker: either as more intimate relationships or their opposite, which is the resistance to new gender behaviour imported by the 'novateurs'. *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p. 211; t.3, p. 235.

return from England.<sup>181</sup> Elsewhere in our corpus the father figure is absent or threatening the well-being of the heroes and heroines. Lord Seymour and Alphonse's father, in *Charles et Marie* and *Emilie et Alphonse* respectively, are selfish and tyrannical.<sup>182</sup> In Boigne and Duras' novels the father figures are absent, with the exception of Edouard's father, who dies early in the plot. In their place are mature women capable of more compassion, even if they incarnate the Ancien Régime lifestyle. Obsessed by preserving the family's fortune and rank, the authoritarian father never listens or shows love to his relatives. When he is not deciding the destiny of his children, the father is shown as self-effacing because of physical weakness: M. de Sénange is a prime example, but also in *Emilie et Alphonse*, Emilie's father is said to be senile and incapable of recognising his own relatives, let alone making decisions for his family.<sup>183</sup>

Through the realistic depiction of the father's self-reform in emigration, Souza possibly voiced a political message about family life in the dying Empire in her 1811 novel *Eugénie et Mathilde*. Carpenter wrote that there was 'anger at the lack of control women had over the decisions that ruled their lives in Souza's novels'.<sup>184</sup> More recently, in her introduction to *Eugénie et Mathilde* Carpenter insisted heavily on how Souza stressed the need for more tolerance and less military aggression, in the context of the Napoleonic wars where Souza's son was engaged.<sup>185</sup> Carpenter concluded that Souza's works were clearly politically engaged. The idea that the revolutionary cultural representations shifted people's practice in private has been

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<sup>181</sup> *Adèle de Sénange*, p. 116.

<sup>182</sup> Lord Seymour is 'uniquement occupé de ce qui lui convient à lui même' and 'il ne se doute pas de son égoïsme'; 'il est insupportable', *Charles et Marie*, p. 226. Emilie and Alphonse write a reconciliation letter to his father, in vain, in *Emilie et Alphonse*, t. 3, p. 157.

<sup>183</sup> Mme la comtesse de Foix's husband is 'dans un état d'enfance' senile, unable to 'protéger sa famille' in *Ibid*, p. 3; 90.

<sup>184</sup> Carpenter, *The Novels of Madame de Souza*, p. 12; 19-21.

<sup>185</sup> She wrote that Eugénie et Mathilde was 'more than riskily revolutionary', in Carpenter, *Madame de Souza, Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 11.



explored by Desan: intimate relationships became a politically contested terrain [1] because the family acted as the crucial matrix -natural, moral, and legal- that linked each individual to the new nation-state.<sup>186</sup> Thus family practices, reproduced in fiction, and political injunctions are permeable. Piau-Gillot noticed in Charrière's *Lettres trouvées* that 'Imaginaire et réalité interagissent et la conduisent à élaborer, sous forme romanesque, un système politique utopique où la femme joue un rôle actif de médiatrice socio-culturelle, capable de restaurer l'harmonie, de concilier les contraires'.<sup>187</sup> It then seems hard to distinguish how the émigré novel written by real ex-exiles differs -in its modern social demands through the interaction of imaginary and reality- from novels written by non-exiles. Whilst it is necessary to acknowledge the political degree in writing, especially when formulating demands for more modern gender roles, it would be misleading however to over-politicise the female émigré works. As shown in chapter two and three, the particularity of authentic émigré novels is that they were primarily concerned with transcending a painful past and, in the case of Souza, writing in itself was a survival strategy in London. The émigré novel is less concerned with formulating a coherent political message than presenting a way to exist with a traumatic past and an inadequate present. Souza, Boigne and Duras were not primarily politically militant in their demands: they operated within a system that was still ruled by religion, nobility ethics and morality, and none of them wanted to overthrow the order in place.

It is through a careful analysis of the prose in *Eugénie et Mathilde* that we can see how nuanced Souza's wish for more modernity in the family really is. We argue that the apprenticeship of sensibility for the father is not a linear progress, and is framed

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<sup>186</sup>With the Revolution, the transformation of intimate relationship in family was linked to 'forging the revolutionary state and politics' because the family was like a mini cell in which to experience the political innovations, in Desan, *The Family on Trial*, p. 4-5; 7.

<sup>187</sup>Charrière, *Lettres trouvées*, p. 9.

by the emigration journey before being politically charged. M. de Revel feels for his daughters' sorrows but tends to hide his emotions: *touché* ; [í ] il s'efforçoit de cacher son émotion, he is torn because he *ne* pouvait supporter l'idée que sa belle-mère le crût gouverné par sa femme, dominé par sa fille.<sup>188</sup> There are relapses in his journey to be a better listener: *Pour la première fois [í ] je consens à [í ] écouter l'avis de tous, -ce [í ] n'est pas encourageant.*<sup>189</sup> The main issue is that M. de Revel fears he will appear weak if he lets the women make decisions or have the last word: clearly here Souza depicted the complexity of gender power struggles in the family unit, just as she did with the lovers elsewhere. Souza very subtly conveys the issues M. de Revel has with giving up his power in full sight of his 'inferiors': in the power struggle taking place, losing face in front of his wife, mother-in-law and daughters is not an option. On top of the difficulty of relinquishing his power as patriarch in his family, the Revolution overthrows his class privileges and prerogatives. Here, Souza interlocks the outside politics within the main family affair, reinforcing the urgency for the father to adapt quickly. In the first stages of the emigration, in Alsace, not only do M. de Revel's daughters resist him, but his servant Antoine appears less obedient and seems to be plotting to buy his property after their departure.<sup>190</sup> As a consequence, M. de Revel's status as patriarch and master, and therefore his masculinity, is shaken. And yet, during the dramatic escape where M. de Revel himself drives the makeshift cart, he is able to compensate this loss with a somehow satisfying role of natural protector: *quel sentiment il éprouva [í ] obligé de conduire, et de servir lui-même sa famille!*<sup>191</sup> Souza exploited the narrative powers of the revolutionary decade, combining the self-reformation of the father to

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<sup>188</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, p. 169; 173.

<sup>189</sup>*Ibid*, p. 224.

<sup>190</sup>*Ibid*, p. 250.

<sup>191</sup>*Ibid*, p. 255.

show how this shift was needed both contingently, to make the emigration less a traumatic experience for all, and structurally, as a conscious effort towards more tolerance and equality in the familial circle. The subtlety with which Souza describes this interior shift in M. de Revel, not falling into a politically charged tone, corroborates our argument about the specificity of the émigrée prose as opposed to non-émigré texts. The real victims of the emigration laws in becoming writers did not wish to provide readers with a lesson in politics that mattered, but to underline the reform of the intimate. This is very different from the emigration being used as an excuse to engage in political debate about the Revolution and its consequences on society, like Charrière did in her imaginary émigré plots.

The permanent threat of losing a loved one forces once cold individuals to show their love more demonstratively: 'La crainte de perdre Mathilde avoit donné une nouvelle vie à ses sentiments d'amour paternel'<sup>192</sup> This is also the case for the strict and conservative Madame de Couci, who is 'devenue douce par le malheur' From intransigent and selfish, the duress of exile transforms her into an elder motherly figure: 'c'étoit une mère éplorée, tremblante pour une nombreuse famille'<sup>193</sup> However the emigration is used as a trigger rather than the reason for reform: the novelist depicts the reform from within above all, as in the enhanced remorse, feeding a newly acquired sensibility. M. de Revel laments his regrets 'd'avoir affligé sa fille d'une sévérité juste mais excessive !' and thus willingly renounces his traditional patriarch role; 'il conseilla, car il n'ordonnoit déjà plus'<sup>194</sup> Hunt has outlined the progressive rather than rapid changes that took place from as early as the 1750s, pushed by Enlightenment philosophy, when the father figure in novels becomes ambivalent, hesitating between authority and compassion. She spoke of the

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<sup>192</sup>Ibid, p. 192.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid t.2, p.173; t.3, p. 224.

<sup>194</sup>Ibid, p. 185; 195.

sentimentalisation of the father<sup>195</sup> and argues for a precision of gender roles rather than a dramatic shift, even if the killing of the King marked the symbolic end to patriarchal power in society and in families.<sup>195</sup> This remodelling is not done without anxiety and hesitations, and it is what M. de Revel undergoes as he does not totally abdicate his power but exercises his authority with fairness, as an adviser rather than a tyrant. Hunt added that, parallel to the softening of the father, mothers were also expected to be educated and have a more hands-on approach to child rearing. She linked this evolution to the educational impact of treatises on medicine and philosophy, drawing links between body and mind to justify the need to have women undertake specific tasks.<sup>196</sup> This is visible in the care Mathilde has for her son Victor, as opposed to the old generation represented by her mother and grandmother Mme de Couci, the first dispersing her children for financial reasons, the later championing the Ancien Régime style of education. Thus Souza does not propose something revolutionary, cut off from tradition, but an organic reform which grows proportionately within individuals as their living conditions worsen. The softening of the father is fed by his regrets on the decision to lock Eugénie in a convent to save for Mathilde's dowry.<sup>197</sup> Souza describes here the true repentance of the father by insisting on the irremediable character of his past choices, 'il souffroit trop d'avoir une fois abusé de son autorité'<sup>198</sup> Therefore the emphasis on the intense feeling of guilt indicates that the acquisition of a new sensibility ultimately originates from within rather than from the outside. As Eugénie fades away, the transformation of the paternal figure is complete. His priorities include happiness over reputation or rank:

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<sup>195</sup>Hunt, *The Family Romance*, p. 24-5; 26; 156.

<sup>196</sup>Hunt mentions works by Pierre-Jean Cabanis, *L'influence des sexes sur le caractère des idées et des affections*, (1795-6) and Pierre Roussel, *Du système physique et moral de la femme* (1775) as reference point for any discourse on women. Hunt, *The Family Romance*, p. 190. Jacques-Louis Moreau, *Histoire naturelle de la femme* (1803) also carried ideas on women, as demonstrated by Hunt in 'The Unstable Boundaries of the French Revolution', pp. 13-45, p. 44.

<sup>197</sup>*Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p. 232; 264; t.3, p.6; 8.

<sup>198</sup>*Ibid*, t.3, p.10.

-pensez à moi ; pensez à ce que doit sentir un père, contraint de'avouer que sa fille n'a  
 jamais été heureuse !<sup>199</sup> Despite his heightened sensibility, M. de Revel could not  
 provide Eugénie with happiness. Is this to say that his transformation was in vain?  
 Souza underlined the long-lasting psychological impact of decisions taken under the  
 Ancien Régime for the future of young women. The death of Eugénie is necessary  
 implicitly to put forward the idea of the desperate need for a reform in gender  
 relationships. She is a victim but also the element that links members of her family  
 together, as her reunion with them marks the beginning of the father's softening, and  
 in emigration she -commença ainsi son pieux dévouement à tous les siens<sup>200</sup> Souza  
 thus suggests that Eugénie's sacrifice is necessary in order to achieve the  
 compassionate turn of the father. The emigration is structuring this metamorphosis  
 by building upon its tragic elements and justifying its developments, nonetheless  
 Souza's focus is not to show the return to safety and recovery of prerogatives -the  
 Revels are still émigrés at the end- but the acquisition of a tenderer mode of  
 behaviour in the family. Arguing for an analogy of family-state with the softening of  
 the father figure and the fall of the monarchy is tempting, but in this respect her  
 novel is more pragmatic and intimate than ideological or political.

## **2. The émigré novel's fantasy of freer gender roles inspired by the emigration in England.**

The exile gave the émigrée an experience of more genuine gender behaviours, not  
 only because of the necessity to show more compassion and solidarity as scattered

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<sup>199</sup>Ibid, t.3, p. 194. The father is not the only one being devoured by guilt: -Madame de Revel se reprochoit [í ] de n'avoir pas soigné davantage la douce Eugénie. Later on Eugénie's death bed, M. de Revel -implore un pardon. She reassures him by saying she was never unhappy in the convent, t.3, p. 274.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid, t.2, p. 189.

members of an exiled community abroad, but also because of the observation of the British elite gendered behaviour. Furthermore, the effect of time between a decade in exile and the moment of putting pen to paper meant that, in writing, the exile setting was embellished according to the author's ideological agenda.<sup>201</sup> In Duras' *Mémoires de Sophie, Amélie et Pauline, Edouard and Olivier*, England is referred to as an idyllic backdrop for the protagonists in their quest for less rigid gender relationships in marriage and in family, followed by a harsh disillusion when back in the unfitting post-revolutionary society. This, we will show, makes evident the huge impact the emigration in London had for the evocation of more modern gender relationships.

*The emigration, idyllic and fantasised respite helping to highlight the dysfunction of the Ancien Régime.*

The emigration removes the protagonists in the *Mémoires* and *Amélie et Pauline* from a corrupted soil, presented in the first paragraph of both inédit novels. The 'philosophie moderne' is blamed since it displaced 'toutes les idées et [a] changé l'acception de tous les mots' in the years running up to the Revolution. Hypocritically, each virtue became a superficial quality to demonstrate in society without any intention to better oneself: 'A force de se jouer des principes et des devoirs, on en a perdu la trace, chacun est comme égaré dans la conduite de sa vie.'<sup>202</sup> This was a common thought amongst the émigrés and counter-revolutionaries, in an attempt to identify where things went wrong in the run up to 1789. However Duras also links this decadent behaviour with the impossibility of finding true love and happiness for the heroine, who unlike fake Parisian society

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<sup>201</sup>Rossi linked the nostalgic bitterness of women memoirs writers of the first half of the nineteenth century with the awareness that with the fall of the Ancien Régime, their roles were restricted to domesticity, in Rossi, *Mémoires aristocratiques*, p.15.

<sup>202</sup>*Mémoires*, p. 29; *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 151.

which makes timidity fashionable, possesses naturally 'une profonde sensibilité'<sup>203</sup>

There is a paradoxical reversal of worlds, with the social world pretending to be naïve, while mocking genuinely naïve individuals. Duras justifies her heroine's character against this corrupted society in order to enhance the purity of her extra-conjugal affair in exile later on. The emigration appears as the ideal secluded space from which to let natural qualities thrive. The strength of Duras's demand for smoother relationships rests in the systematic depiction of an episode of respite in exile from this fake elite society, when the fantasy of more passionate and intimate love is almost realised. In Switzerland, Sophie cohabits in a small cottage with her grandmother, her brother and Grancey in what she describes as 'cette bonhomie d'hospitalité qui a été une des consolations de l'émigration'. The removal from social pressure is a 'vive jouissance' for Sophie since she can embrace her growing passion without restraints: 'M. de Grancey ne me quittait pas'<sup>204</sup> Amélie is astounded by 'ces mœurs' she observes in Switzerland where 'des jeunes filles qui cherchaient à plaire, elles aimaient, elles étaient aimées, et elles épousaient celui qu'elles avaient choisi'.<sup>205</sup> The spectrum of social reputation and hypocrisy is forgotten momentarily but does not disappear altogether.<sup>206</sup> The peaceful 'ménage' is surrounded by émigré

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<sup>203</sup>The social elite praised natural simplicity which had to be, necessarily, acted: 'C'était peut-être pour faire plus d'illusion sur la fausseté de ces dehors, qu'on vantait avec tant d'emphase les charmes du naturel et de la simplicité'. Sophie is originally like this: 'Une jeune personne pour réussir devait être naïve, on lui passait même l'étourderie, on s'attendrissait sur un premier mouvement qui révélait le secret de son cœur, mais les nuances du tact étaient si fines, qu'il y avait un bon goût dans l'étourderie et une mesure dans le premier mouvement qu'il ne fallait jamais dépasser'. in *Mémoires*, p. 30-1.

<sup>204</sup>Ibid, p. 54-5.

<sup>205</sup>*Amélie et Pauline*, p. 165.

<sup>206</sup>This insistence on the social opprobrium whilst in emigration is present in Souza's *Eugénie et Mathilde* too, tearing apart members of the Revel family. Souza often evokes the tension between genuine and socially approved behaviour for women. The threat of a tyrannical 'monde' has to do with the reflections led by a woman émigré 'retrouvée'. In *Eugénie et Mathilde*, Mathilde coins her own sense of morality rather than what society expects, but bad reputation never ceases to be feared. The question of whether or not to follow the expected behaviour imposed by 'le monde' is challenged because of the extraordinary circumstances of the emigration: the dilemma tearing apart the Revel is whether Eugénie should marry the rich Ladislav and renounce to her religious vows, hence securing her family's future. Mathilde tries to convince her timorous father and declares about the 'monde' that

compatriots carrying with them everything that was wrong with pre-revolutionary society: «la morale était devenue arbitraire»<sup>207</sup> but still threatening to judge Sophie's actions. Later on, Grancey reminds Sophie of how reluctant she had been to have an affair with him: «ne me dites plus comme à Lausanne que mon devoir est [í ] de renoncer à la seule [í ] qui puisse faire mon bonheur»<sup>208</sup>

The image of the exile-idyllic retreat is a convenient narrative strategy to experiment with the viability of her idea of modern gender roles.<sup>209</sup> It exacerbates the gap between fantasy and reality, increases the tension between imposed gender principles and natural desires. Natalie opportunistically ornates her love with religious purity: «il se peut que j'offense, en vous aimant, les convenances sociales, mais je n'offense aucune des lois divines»<sup>210</sup> It is through the figure of the fictive exile that Duras establishes an almost militant hierarchy between love and social validation: «le regret de la vertu [í ] je l'aimais plus que tout, mais je t'aime plus qu'elle.»<sup>211</sup> The idea that the individual has to and can abdicate its social self, in order to fulfil authentic love, originates from an experience of detachment from French society in exile, where social conventions were blurred and personal desires could surface. Contemporary novels exploited too the narrative potential of travel, sublime landscapes and the discovery of foreign countries: in *Valérie* the hero Gustave follows his beloved to Italy. *Claire d'Albe* depicts a retreat in the countryside allowing lots of intimacy. *Aloys* stages the exile of Mme de \*\*\* in Italy, where the

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«Il nous blâmera peut-être, mais qu'importe ? Ne voyez-vous pas que dans le malheur il nous oublie ?» in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, t.2, p.223.

<sup>207</sup> *Mémoires*, p.47.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid*, p. 99.

<sup>209</sup> In Edouard's mouth we find the same hesitation manifested by Sophie: «j'avais perdu jusqu'à cette vue distincte de mon devoir qui m'avait guidé jusqu'ici» «je cherchais des exemples qui puissent autoriser ma faiblesse» in *Edouard*, t.2 p.57.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, t.2 p. 38. This association between love and religion is part of Duras's conception of love, as we have demonstrated with her systematic painting of lovers as brother and sister and the effort to strip passion from carnal desire, raising it to sacred status.

<sup>211</sup> Louise abdicates her identity too: «je ne serai plus que ce que tu me feras être» «je serai ta maîtresse, ton esclave, tu disposeras de moi à ton gré» *Olivier*, p.296.



hero's feelings develop. However none utilised the narrative potential of the retreat in a foreign space to question the validity of learned gender customs and suggest more modern ones. It is in this way that the émigrée novel written by real ex-émigrées stand out amongst its contemporaries: it systematises the theme of the exile-retreat as an idyllic situation for growth of love, and maximises new opportunities in gender behaviour offered by a revolutionised society and a stay in a foreign country.<sup>212</sup>

*An idyllic bubble made real by the reference to the British gender rule*

The emigration experience in London provides the émigrée writer with realistic scenarios with which to compare old, unsatisfying French gender rules. This is original as it departs both from the cultural strand of Anglomania and from the political agenda. It supports the novelist's demand for more love within marriage and a simpler social etiquette for young unmarried girls. Again Duras's inédit works are pertinent to study here. When the families of Sophie and Amélie take refuge in England, Duras underlines the specific areas in which women and men are freer than in France: a potential option for them to follow.<sup>213</sup> When Olivier does cross the Channel, it is to bring back a one-sided valorisation of English customs, nourishing Louise's fantasy of marrying for love and escaping society's prejudices. He states that «Nulle part les femmes ne sont plus heureuses, car nulle part elles ne sont mieux

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<sup>212</sup>In *Adèle de Sénange* this is also flagrant in the retired life of the Sénange and their guest Sydenham in the Neuilly property, far from Paris life. In *Emilie et Alphonse* the dangerous landscape of the Pyrénées serves as an idyllic background to the development of love for Emilie. This adds to what we advanced in chapter two and three where the idyllic settings of emigration served as soothing for a traumatised émigré novelist. When looked at with the angle of gender, the removal of harsh expectations on women is shown as a positive thing through the metaphor of the happy exile.

<sup>213</sup>The flexibility enjoyed by the heroine does not mean that gendered distinctions got suddenly looser, Sophie's grand-mother and her circle resist the evolution and seek to perpetuate the pre-revolutionary ideology: «là j'étais toujours la future abbesse de Remiremont» says Sophie. Sophie's grand mother is still hoping for the monarchy to be restored exactly how it was before the Revolution. Her society of émigrés in London includes many «absolutistes» who refuse to embrace changes in their titles and in society in general. The grand-mother is said not to take Sophie and Grancey's plan of marriage seriously, it is «une plaisanterie» according to her, in *Mémoires*, p.100.

aimées<sup>214</sup> In the *Mémoires* the English gender behaviour, as observed by the émigrée heroine, is truly the desirable ideal model to achieve. Sophie visits the house of Lord Arlington, and comments on the couple he forms with his wife: «je n'ai jamais vu deux natures plus confondues en une seule» and speaks of «l'union la plus intime»<sup>215</sup> They represent the ideal situation; combining nobility and tradition with genuine love and respect, and the episode works as a bitter reminder of what Sophie has lost or will never possess, be it the pre-Revolution motherland or being loved.<sup>216</sup> Duras associates exile with the discovery of both this fantasised and real marriage for love. In addition, the heroine enjoys more freedom as a single woman: «j'avais gardé depuis quelque temps un peu de cette indépendance dont les jeunes personnes non mariées jouissent en Angleterre»<sup>217</sup> This refers to the way unmarried girls in eighteenth-century England could search for a suitable husband under the distant surveillance of a chaperone. Sophie seems to have no problem embracing this tradition and mentions «[se] promener à cheval seule» and that the «délivrance d'un chaperon m'étais fort agréable» The heroine is happy to succumb to English gender traditions: «il faut subir l'influence des mœurs anglaises, elles sont dominatrices» making the exile a voluntary ostracism from French rigidity. In *Adèle de Sénange* there is a similar idea of the refreshing pleasure in indulging in foreign gender rules when abroad. On this occasion it reverses, as it is Sydenham who expresses his

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<sup>214</sup>Olivier, p.200. In *Edouard*, the more the English merit system is valorised, the more it becomes obvious that the hero is helpless at acting upon his future with Natalie. His praise for what England has in store for him is more complaints than project, for instance when he is tempted to ask Natalie to dance with him, «Ah ! lui dis-je tristement, je vous prierais en Angleterre» in *Edouard*, t.2, p. 9-10; p.50.

<sup>215</sup>*Mémoires*, p. 112.

<sup>216</sup>Lord Arlington's castle, Dudley Hall, where Sophie stays strongly echoes Natalie's childhood residence in *Edouard*, with the same insistence on medieval and ancestral heritage, and the presence of a park imitating nature. The castle of Faverange possesses a «grand parc fort sauvage» with «vieux châtaigniers» and «ces arbres vénérables avaient donné leur ombre à plusieurs générations» in *Edouard*, t.2, p. 18; Dudley Hall has a similarly large park: «nous eûmes trois milles à faire pour arriver au château» and «c'est quelque chose de grave, de solide, [il] c'est le vrai château de ces grands parcs centenaires» in *Mémoires*, p. 111. In *Adèle de Sénange* there is a valorisation of the English garden over the French one which could be related to Duras's attention to the English park.

<sup>217</sup>*Mémoires*, p. 116.

surprise at French traditions: 'Je sais qu'en France, les femmes se permettent d'entrer dans la chambre d'un homme qui se trouve malade chez elles à la campagne ; mais le souvenir de nos usages donnait, à la visite d'Adèle, un charme qui me troublait malgré moi'.<sup>218</sup> Later, when Adèle is free to re-marry, he confirms this clash of gender conventions: 'Son âge... le mien... j'ignore les usages de ce pays...'.<sup>219</sup> Her age is not an obstacle at the time, but the fact it is mentioned as a potential barrier to their union is interesting, and reveals Souza's engagement with the idea of opportunistically combining French and British gender conventions.

This brings us to question the originality of the émigré text in picturing in British customs a positive light next to old-fashioned French equivalents. Britain almost had the status of El Dorado in novels from the mid eighteenth century and this was seen as one of the manifestations of Anglomania, an admiration for anything British; from horses, novels and food, to the parliamentary monarchy. The representation of England, its culture, socio-political system and customs was utilised in the plots as an ideal picture to hold next to a French society in need of reform, especially in the run up to 1789.<sup>220</sup> Having been an émigré in London is therefore not the sole reason to explain references to Britain. However, in all our selected novels, the references are utilised in order to criticise dated gender habits such as loveless arranged marriages, far from the socio-political and cultural approach favoured by the preceding 'anglomanes'. This indicates that the reflections on French as opposed to British gender behaviours are intertwined with the émigré novelists' lived emigration, and also that they participate in surrounding and justifying the fantasy of passionate love with a newly acquired morality. A note by the editor makes a parallel between Durasø

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<sup>218</sup> *Adèle de Sénange*, t.2, p.76.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*, t.2, p. 144.

<sup>220</sup> As attested by Fougeret de Montbron's protests against this trend he judges ridiculous; for a detailed history of the Anglomania in France see also Grieder, *Anglomania in France*.

novel and fellow émigrée Staël: «L'Angleterre est le pays du monde où les femmes sont le plus véritablement aimées»<sup>221</sup> But, whilst Staël insisted on the importance of France following in Britain's steps regarding political regime, Duras focuses on the British companionship model for couples.<sup>222</sup> There are undeniably shared beliefs amongst ex-émigré women writers, who have visited England, concerning British gender behaviour. The association of Britishness with love and gender roles is however unique to the corpus.<sup>223</sup> This is because, as thrilling as the exile was, the picture painted in the texts was defined through the lense of French noblewomen returned to France, who possessed their own ideological agenda.

#### *Flirting with modern gender relations*

Duras' émigrées heroines are surrounded by what is presented as more modern gender behaviour in London but, fatally, are still never able to experience them. Depicting the exile in England gives the novelist an opportunity to accentuate the gap between French and British gender rules, but also the failure of the émigré cast to adopt these rules, and of French society to evolve post-revolution. The example of the Arlingtons, still in love after many years, proved that Sophie's demands to Grancey were not far-fetched and, above all, not ridiculous under this foreign set of gender behaviour. Parallel to this, the emigration provides a ready-made experience outside the Ancien Régime code of conduct for women. Grancey plays on those possibilities of living in concubinage with Sophie, since «exilés, ruinés, perdus,

<sup>221</sup>Staël, *De la littérature*, chap XV, (Paris, 1991), p. 244, cited in Olivier, p. 371.

<sup>222</sup>Victor de Pange, 'Le rêve anglais de Mme de Staël', in *Madame de Staël et l'Europe, Colloque de Coppet (18-24 Juillet 1966)*, (Paris, 1970), pp. 173-192, p. 173.

<sup>223</sup>Boigne does not reproduce the idyllic retreat and gender roles of Souza and Duras: in Boigne's *Une Passion* however the mention of England coincides with brutal and forced marriage, and not freer gender conventions, even though Odille does not marry an Englishman but a Spanish one. The only exception to this is *Ourika*, where England has not such a role.

errants sur la terre, savons-nous jamais si nous reverrons la France ?'.<sup>224</sup> His arguments are soon annihilated by his neglectful behaviour once returned in Paris. Duras did not depict the realisation of more modern gender behaviour, but concentrated on presenting how short lived the heroine's chimeras are once the happy bubble of the emigration had burst. She used the parenthesis of the exile to insist on the double-edged sword provided by this sudden confrontation with foreign and relaxed gender behaviour. And she carefully underlined that if the emigration provided the excuse to yield to what was seen as immorality due to extraordinary circumstances, it is always at the heroines' expense.<sup>225</sup>

The British companionable marriage is never achieved, and Sophie's natural sincerity is put to the test by the appeal of young émigré noblewomen and their frivolous distractions in London. She admits needing to compensate for the privations and the trauma of the exile by letting her desires dictate to her: 'Telle est l'excuse de ma faiblesse, il m'était impossible d'écarter ce qui soulageait mon cœur'.<sup>226</sup> Sophie hesitates between staying truthful to herself or sacrificing her innocence to follow the émigré crowd, perpetually torn between guilt and self-justification.<sup>227</sup> Without virtuous examples, available to her in emigration, duty becomes less pressing: 'je n'avais que la morale de Mme de Fosseuse et Mme de

<sup>224</sup>*Mémoires*, p. 56-7. The same is found in *Amélie et Pauline*: 'dans notre exil qui sera si long peut-être' Henry evokes a future with Amélie, protected by the situation of the exile, p.168.

<sup>225</sup>This is found also in *Emilie et Alphonse*: Emilie's 'inner' exile in Paris leads her to seek distractions with Mme d'Artigues and flirt with improper behaviour for a woman. Her rehearsal for the play, alone with Fiesque, is the cause of her husband's revenge duel and her ostracism. In Boigne's *Une Passion*, Odille takes charge of her own reputation and willingly plays the game of the court in Brazil.

<sup>226</sup>*Mémoires*, p.57; Mme de Fosseuse and Mme de Maillanes are wealthy émigrées who organise balls and dinners and surprise Sophie with their carefree attitude and taste for distractions.

<sup>227</sup>This is attested by all memoirists of the emigration, and especially Boigne in her *Récits*. Sophie is aware of her flaw: 'cependant j'aimais le mari d'une autre' but at the same time she tries to convince herself of being 'irréprochable' and to 'lever tous mes scrupules' in *Mémoires*, p. 105. This is present in Olivier too, Louise when on the Isle of Wight asks: 'je ne puis savoir [í] si j'approuve ou si je blâme ce que j'ai fait'. She will opt for being truthful to her heart rather than respect the social gender conventions, despite her sister's warning: 'il n'y a de bonheur que dans l'accomplissement de nos devoirs !' in *Olivier*, p. 217-220.

Maillanes<sup>228</sup> Duras even planned in her notes to describe how Amélie abdicates her chastity in exile: «Scène de passion, Amélie cède, remords d'Amélie, tous ses sentiments se concentrent sur le comte [í ] si on pouvait connaître le bonheur dans le crime, ces deux amants le connaîtraient.»<sup>229</sup> This scene of passion is rarely found in contemporary novels.<sup>230</sup> The model of British marriage for love is admired from a distance but never achieved because of the immoral and conservative social circle surrounding the heroines. The reconstitution of the emigration in London is thus suited to the depiction of the hesitation between old, foreign and reformed social and gender roles. But it does more than this, as Duras uses the conditions of the émigrés to excuse and insist on the unfair abandonment of the heroines once the fictive exile bubble no longer exists. It is as if she was asking her society to be more tolerant and pursue the evolutions introduced by the extraordinary circumstances of the Revolution and exile.

Either as idyllic refuge or a place to experience with freer gender behaviour, the recourse to the exile participates in making the demands of our novelists more realistic and gives them a social colour. Although the émigré authors often voice those demands from a mythical Ancien Régime setting, it is nonetheless entrenched within a specific social reality because of the references to the tension between gender behaviours before and after the emigration, and the temptation to replicate what is perceived as a better option for women in British society. The intensity of the

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<sup>228</sup> *Mémoires*, p. 105. On the other hand, Duras is careful to exhibit what an acceptable behaviour for an émigré is with the portrayal of Mademoiselle Valory, who is saved from starvation by the heroine: «elle était vive et douce ; sensible et raisonnable ; passionnée et pourtant toujours guidée par le devoir» By contrast Sophie appears all the more immoral since even in critical circumstances Valory has learned «de bonne heure à commander ses sentiments» This reinforces the feeling of guilt of the heroine, which she deals with by helping Valory financially, p. 109.

<sup>229</sup> «Amélie n'a plus la force de l'éloigner mais elle a celle de lui résister encore.» in *Amélie et Pauline*, p. 174-5.

<sup>230</sup> With some exceptions notably in Cottin's *Claire d'Albe*.

demand varies and is never militant, but it proves the originality of the émigrée novel in staging contemporary gender issues with exile memories, through the medium of fiction.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to emphasize the selected émigrées novels' originality in portraying evolving gender relationships between lovers and amongst noble families. It unearthed the circumstances of the heroines' rebellion in performing their restricted gender persona to obtain their desires. In comparison, the male characters lack essential qualities to match, and the model of the melancholic hero is turned on its head, since it does not result in an elitist sensibility but in mediocre cowardice. The reform of the family in our émigrée corpus is framed by the emigration journey and, together with the heroines' temptation with freer British gender rules, this is made both idyllic and realistic by the productive intertwining of the writers' memories and literary flair.

## CONCLUSION

### The afterlife of the émigré novel

The focus of this thesis has been to stress the originality and modernity of the novels of three female émigré within the early nineteenth-century French literary landscape, using a thematic approach. I would like to conclude my thesis with a few remarks on the afterlife of the émigrée novel, after summarising my findings on the writings of Souza, Boigne and Duras.

Firstly, despite their *àsentimentalø* qualities, the novels of the corpus tap into other genres in order to insert more of the self into the fiction. I have insisted on the pertinence of this approach, which refutes the idea that the autobiographical angle is reductive for women writings. Instead it has been demonstrated to enrich the plots and to show flexibility and modernity in place of the sometimes hypocritical rigidity of non-personal sentimental novels. Central to this understanding is the idea that the émigré novel is a sub-genre of the dying sentimental novel; it uses its frames to go beyond its scope. Since it flirts with other genres specific to narrating the self, like memoirs and the autobiographical novel, the assertion of authority is necessarily shaky, and oscillates between the research for a safe guarantee of authenticity and the desire for the new author to be recognised creative powers. This relates to the condition of the woman writer, and the complex status of the author in a literary world still unclear about how to define what the novel is. More specifically, I shed light onto the *àextraordinaireø* character of the Revolution as noted by Sénac de Meilhan, erasing the boundaries between reality and fiction, giving a new role to the émigré novel. Unsurprisingly, the Revolution shook our authorsø and their



contemporaries' conception of the novel and its potential. It was when the emigration had been digested and reflected upon that authors started to foresee other aims which this literary form could accomplish.

Unlike other contemporary novels artificially exploiting the revolutionary theme, the pillar sustaining the edifice of an émigré's prose is the expression of the trauma of the emigration of the 1790s. This considerably singles out the émigré novel from other contemporary writings. I have demonstrated that it is not in the presence or quantity of references to revolutionary years and the exile that we ought to measure the émigré text against. The female émigrées I chose voice less political issues and mention fewer laws and political twists and turns than their contemporaries who picked the 1790s as the background for their plot; instead they explore in depths the emotional and psychological impact of the emigration on the character. Thus it is the qualitative rather than quantitative references to the exile that the prose of the real ex-exiles is different from non-authentic ones. Two chapters were concerned with unearthing the strategies in the prose for working through such a trauma, reflecting the individual take on the experience but also the constraints of fiction-writing on the construction of cathartic and therapeutic tales. Through distanciation and re-appropriation, the ex-exile authors created original literary motifs: the depiction of a withdrawal into oneself as a response to oppressive post-revolutionary society, or the correlation of an insular exile with freer love are pertinent examples of the resourcefulness they gained through their own challenging past. To apply the concept of 'trauma' to émigré prose allowed me to gain greater insight into its genesis, the imbrications of the sentimental tone and fictitious exile, confirming its originality and modernity.

The novels of Boigne, Souza and Duras are also voicing a frustration with women's lack of opportunities in post-revolutionary society, reflected upon from the experience of the exile. The demands in terms of more freedom in gender behaviour, be it in the family realm or in marriage, is voiced via the novel. In this sense their novels can be seen as both subverting the literary canon and innovating from within. Traditionally sensible heroines are becoming braver and rebellious, justified in seeking the social distractions of the elite circles when they are denied love and motherhood. The hero of the émigrée novel encompasses many contradicting views on male behaviour. Sensibility no longer guarantees and justifies a happy ending, and melancholia is transformed into a doubly selfish and weak emotion. The traditional obstacles to marriage are dissolved thanks to the narration of the Revolution and its societal evolutions. Conjunctly, our émigré authors underline the failings of men and the subsistence of prejudice regarding women's behaviour. The pertinence of this has been to show how much the selected novelists were pragmatic and critical in their depiction of their society, how much they invalidated and went beyond the usual novelistic tropes of the novel of sensibility, and simultaneously how much the exile impacted on their ideas about what was acceptable behaviour.

The thematic approach I undertook had the inconvenience of isolating each angle and could minimize the overlapping between genre, trauma and the feminine condition. On the other hand, since not much has been done on the émigré(e)s writings, this was necessary ground work. Likewise, my method of investigation was conditioned by the source material; from a small sample of novels and memoirs I had to establish a grid of analysis which fitted most of them. By having content and form analysis in each one of the thematic chapters, and mobilizing each of my selected

writers when relevant, I was able to provide a fuller picture of émigré prose, and how it participated to the evolution of post-revolutionary literature. The comparative approach helped to uncover that, whilst each writer had their individual writing style and a greater or lesser attachment to the sentimental vogue, they all referred to the exile in a way that none of their contemporaries did. Thus what brings these depictions together is the common preoccupation with the emigration: the émigré novel should not be reduced to its 'sentimental shell', confusing it with the dying sensibility vogue. It is in the strategies these fictions designed and followed through to portray the unvoiceable moments of the exile years that they stand out. Despite focusing solely on women writers -arguably a male-authors only or inclusive study should be carried out to complete my research- I have come closer to a definition of this sub-genre. It is a genre which cautiously plays with multiple referents, French and foreign, traditional and new, and has the task of making the love story vividly realistic to post-revolutionary readers. In that respect, without making Souza, Boigne or Duras belong to Romanticism as such, I believe the female émigré novel already engages with the themes found in the subsequent literary movements such as the realist novel, or to be more precise, what Margaret Cohen called the sentimental social novel.<sup>1</sup> This realist touch manifests itself when combined with exile motifs and uprooted protagonists: the realism is not in the description of places or clothes, but in the pragmatic portrayal of the psychological ravages of displacement, isolation and loss in a foreign environment. The social concern, I argue, is already visible in women ex-exiles' writings, manifesting itself in the way the sentimental melancholic hero is de-constructed and invalidated because he fundamentally hurts the heroine's psychological well-being. It recalls what Ana Rosso identified in the novels of

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<sup>1</sup>Cohen, 'Women and fiction', pp. 54-72, p. 55.

Maupassant and Zola later: 'Husband-characters departed from the realm of the young girl's dreams and entered into a much more real, disillusioned discourse on sexual vice and infidelity.'<sup>2</sup> The émigrée female voice side-steps the traditional sentimental 'light touch' and progresses towards a more realistic and socially engaged tone, highlighting the importance of women's well-being in a society that the authors believed should accelerate its gender reform. Thus the modernity I see in the female émigré novels should not be understood as a guarantor of literary excellence: it is undeniable that Boigne should not be compared to Staël's skilful prose. On the contrary, and thanks to my three angles of research, genre, trauma and gender, the émigrées writings have been shown to have a social modernity that ought to be more systematically unearthed. The noblewomen writers of the emigration are relevant actors of the long nineteenth-century literary history. Unsurprisingly, like their authors, the émigré novel genre died out in the mid-nineteenth century. Their ephemeral appearance in the literary landscape of France does not justify them being forgotten by scholars of the nineteenth century, for they were the firsts and the lasts, to pertinently make sense of the emigration and its aftermath. The character of the émigré remained for long in people's imaginations, as the redundant senile aristocrat in Balzac's *Le Lys dans la vallée*, but not solely. Perhaps it is in fact because of the lack of research and these stereotypical representations being aplenty that the figure of the émigré(e) does not cease to attract interest, for it has a mysterious and tragic aura.

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<sup>2</sup>Ana Rosso, 'Female Sexuality in French Naturalism and Realism, and British New Woman Fiction, 1850-1900', unpublished thesis, (University of Exeter, 2012).

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## **Plot summaries of the novels of Madame de Duras**

### *Mémoires de Sophie* (inédit)

Sophie is from a prestigious family and very fond of her brother Charles, the only interest of her life, until his best friend M. de Grancey appears and steals her heart. She falls madly in love with him, even if she knows that he is to marry. The Revolution brings a distraction to Sophie's despair, and forces the family to flee Paris for Lausanne, while Charles and Grancey join the army of the princes. They come back after the dissolution of the army; Sophie and Grancey disguise their love under a fraternal friendship. They are constrained to flee Switzerland parallel to the aggravation of the Revolution and embark for London in the summer 1794. There, thanks to the preserved fortune of Sophie's grand mother, they belong to «la partie élégante de l'émigration» (p. 92). Sophie does not support the frivolity of some of the émigrés, especially Mme de Fosseuse who makes her jealous in inviting Grancey to her ball. Grancey desires to cancel his marriage, but Sophie starts to doubt the intensity of his love. After Grancey's return from the expedition to Quiberon in 1795, they move to Endicombe where they enjoy an ephemeral moment of happiness as a couple. Back in Paris, Grancey returns with his wife out of Sophie's initiative and sense of duty. The end of the novel is an ode for suicide.

### *Amélie et Pauline* (inédit)

The novel starts with a letter but carries on with the narration in the third person. Henry de Melcy has been married by force to Pauline, who he doesn't love, and after having joined the army of émigrés in Coblenz, goes to Lausanne. He meets

the Lillebonne family, where Amélie, young widow, reminds him of his defunct sister Cécile. Passionate love develops between them, but they convince themselves that it is innocent, a fraternal love. The rest of the novel is composed of detailed notes. Just like in the *Mémoires*, émigrés are no longer welcomed in Switzerland, Amélie and Henry escape to London. They give in to passion since Henry's wife, stayed in Paris with her father in law, asked for divorce. But progressively, Henry's love for Amélie decreases, as he realises that his wife asked for divorce to preserve his fortune and looked after his father. When the illegitimate couple returns to Paris, Henry returns with his wife and the novel ends with Amélie watching them caring for their newborn.

#### *Ourika*, (1824)

The action is set after the Revolution, when Napoleon had re-established Catholicism and the convents. A young doctor listens to the story of a black nun severely ill named Ourika. She was saved from slavery and brought up by Mme de B. with her grandson Charles. She received the same education as any girl of noble extraction and nurtured a strong attachment to her step-brother. Her insouciant happiness ends when she hears a conversation between her benefactress and the marquise de M. . She suddenly becomes aware of the limitations contained in her skin colour and especially her impossibility to ever marry someone from her rank: «Qui voudra jamais d'une négresse ?» (p. 37). From there Ourika falls into a long depression, hiding her body under clothes, lamenting on the fact that she won't ever be «la sœur, la femme, la mère de personne !» (p. 42). When the Revolution forces the family to take refuge outside of Paris, she becomes closer to Charles but renounces to open her heart to him. The hope provoked by the first outburst of the Revolution and

the recognition of equality between races soon evaporates. On top of this, Charles moves in with his wife and neglect his sister Ourika. Her disgust for life makes her ill and she decides to remain in a convent for the few years left she has to live. The doctor is finally unable to cure Ourika.

### *Edouard (1825)*

The story is told by a narrator embarking with Edouard for the American war. He cannot get Edouard to explain the reason of his melancholia. Once in Baltimore, the narrator is wounded and Edouard leaves a written story of his life for him to read. We learn that he is the son of a successful lawyer from Lyon. When his father suddenly dies in Paris he is adopted by the maréchal d'Orlonne, an old friend of the family, and falls in love with his daughter Natalie de Nevers. Edouard is powerless in the aristocratic society of his beloved and suffers greatly from his social condition. He dreams of going to England so he can be a lawyer and pretend to marry a noblewoman since *l'impossible ne se levait jamais devant le talent* (t.2, p. 9). Following a disgrace of the maréchal from the government of Louis XVI, the family retires to the Limousin. There, Edouard and Natalie catch sight of the possibility of an union without social obstacles: *ma position, la distance qui nous séparait, tout avait disparu* (t. 2, p. 27). Natalie is ready to renounce to her position and flee with Edouard to live a simple life. He refuses. When they return to Paris, Edouard hears from his uncle evil-minded rumours about him and Natalie and provokes in duel the duc de L., who declines since it cannot happen between a noble and a bourgeois. Edouard renounces to love and live and decides to leave for America to die on the battle field, leaving behind just a letter for Natalie. The narrator gets better and looks for Edouard, he arrives too late on the battle field, the young man is deadly wounded.

On his bedside table were French newspapers announcing Mme de Nevers' death after «une maladie de langueur» (t.2, p. 81). The narrator buries Edouard's body next to his beloved.

*Olivier ou le secret* (inédit)

This epistolary novel revolves around the impossible love between Louise de Nangis and Olivier de Sancerre. They were brought up together, as brother and sister, by their mothers. After the death of Louise's mother, Olivier comes back from England. Louise feels a guilty attraction for her «brother». When her husband dies, Louise cannot remarry yet but contemplates the possibility. Her friend the marquise de C. warns her against Olivier's weird behaviour and constant melancholia, something that has risks of «te faire vivre d'amour et [ ] déchirer ensuite ton cœur» (p. 243). Both suspect a secret preventing him to marry her: «un obstacle, un motif, un Devoir» (p. 257). Louise and Olivier enjoy some brief happiness near the place of their childhood and in the Isle of Wight, but Olivier oscillates between demonstrations of love and withdrawal. When he is insulted by M. de Rieux, Louise's suitor, he suffers from his incapacity to avenge himself. His behaviour becomes darker and darker and he eventually commits suicide in front of Louise. She sinks into madness, mechanically visiting each day the place where Olivier took his life. Nothing is revealed of Olivier's secret, the narrator hints at the lovers being in fact real brother and sister, which would have rendered their union incestuous.



## Plot summaries of the novels of Madame de Boigne

*Récits d'une tante, Mémoires de la comtesse de Boigne, née d'Osmond*. 5 tomes.

Tome 1. *Versailles. L'Emigration. L'Empire. la Restauration de 1814*. (Paris, 1921-1923) The first tome retraces her childhood during the first years of the Revolution until her emigration in England and her return to France during the Restoration.

*La Maréchale d'Aubemer* (1866)

This short novel is divided into 15 chapters. The story revolves around a noble family split between Paris and Limoges, and two sisters with very different destinies. There is no indication of the time of the story, but it is certain that it does not take place during the Revolution as no political event troubles the course of the plot. Emilie d'Aubemer in Paris organises balls and salons that are sought after by the aristocracy, while her sister Caroline lives a peaceful life in the province with her beloved daughter Gudule and her son-in-law Lionel de Saveuse. On a business trip to Paris the young Saveuse couple stays at the maréchale's house and integrates into the beau monde. While Lionel has an affair and boasts about it, Gudule falls in love with the most fashionable man of Paris, Henri d'Estouville. The lovers face many obstacles before they can be united, thanks to the maréchale, and to the convenient death of Lionel in a fencing accident.

*Une Passion dans le grand monde* (1867)

In her second novel the action takes place between 1813 and 1830, during the Empire and the Restoration. It is an epistolary novel and is much denser than *La Maréchale*. Two noble families are at the centre of the plot: the Bauréal and the

Lispona. At the head of the Bauréal family is Madame de Romignière, the benefactress of her nephew Romuald de Bauréal, very much like the maréchale was the benefactress to Gudule. Romuald falls in love with Euphémie de Lispona but their love is condemned as they are already engaged or married to someone else. Various twists and turns make successively the union possible and impossible. Secondary love stories are all linked to the main one, but they have happier endings: Euphémie's cousin Odille is freed from an unhappy union when her repentant husband recommends her to her beloved Eugène. Bliane, Romuald's best friend marries Elise and lives happily in a companionable marriage. Unlike *Boigne's* previous novel, this one ends with the tragic death of Romuald who dies after attempting to rescue a princess from drowning, and Euphémie's solitary existence in a convent.

## **Plot summaries of the novels of Madame de Souza**

### *Adèle de Sénange, ou Lettres de Lord Sydenham (1794)*

This is an epistolary novel, composed entirely by letters from Lord Sydenham, a young British man, to his friend Henry. He narrates his first encounter with Adèle when he rescued her in a carriage accident, and immediately became fascinated by her. Adèle had just been torn from her convent by her authoritative mother, Madame de Joyeuse, to get married to M. de Sénange. Sydenham then assists to her arranged marriage to a gouty man, which he thought was her father in the first place. He becomes friend with the couple and follows them to Neuilly, outside Paris, where he is supposed to help Adèle landscaping the estate. M. de Sénange reveals that he married Adèle to preserve her from a sad existence in the convent, and also confesses that he fell in love with Sydenham's grandmother while in England. Sydenham nurtures a growing passion for Adèle but never goes further than stealing her portrait and declaring his feelings in secret. Sydenham is caught between his duty towards Sénange and his love for Adèle. Eventually his love can be manifested openly when Sénange dies, leaving a huge heritage to his widow. However the authoritarian influence of Madame de Joyeuse gets in the way of Sydenham's plans to marry Adèle. The novel ends with the hero's resolution to force Adèle to obey him rather than her mother whilst he laments: 'Ah ! Je ne serai jamais heureux, ni avec elle, ni sans elle !...' (t.2, p. 218).

### *Emilie et Alphonse, ou le Danger de se livrer à ses premières impressions (1799)*

This is an epistolary novel, and the story is told by the letters of Madame la comtesse de Foix and her daughter Emilie, respectively writing to Madame and

Mademoiselle d'Astey, the daughter and grand-daughter of Madame de Foix. On a trip to Compiègne the young Emilie falls in love with Alphonse, a melancholic Spanish man, but is married to the duc de Candale upon her mother's wish, on her death bed. In Paris, her married life makes her deeply unhappy. She makes an unexpected friend in the person of Madame d'Artigue, her husband's ex-mistress, a frivolous and revengeful woman. The duke's friend, the cynical Chevalier de Fiesque falls slowly in love with Emilie, which he relates to his friend in letters. Emilie shortly becomes blinded by toutes les illusions de l'orgueil and attends parties and superficial distractions: when rehearsing a play with the Chevalier, her husband suspects an affair and provokes a duel with his old friend. She is exiled to the duke's property in the Pyrénées where she bumps into Alphonse again, with his newborn child. Alphonse tells her his tragic story: he fell in love with his cousin, Camille, when his father destined him to a more prestigious union with Eléonore. Camille forced him to secretly marry her, whilst Eléonore, realising Alphonse will never marry her, sacrificed herself for his happiness by becoming a nun. Camille, jealous of Alphonse's affection for Eléonore and threatened with social shame because she is pregnant without being officially married, hides in the Pyrénées. She dies from madness shortly after being reunited with Alphonse. Emilie falls in love with Alphonse and cares for his child. Unexpectedly her husband irrupts in Alphonse's house and believes Emilie is cheating on him again: in the duel the duke dies, whilst Alphonse is severely wounded. After his death, Emilie dedicates her life to his orphan daughter, 'celle qui, même avant de naître, semblait destinée au malheur.' and joins Eléonore in her convent (t.3 p. 104).

*Charles et Marie* (1802)

The story is told by Charles Lenox, a young English man who just finished his studies at Oxford. There isn't any indication of time. His mother's death brought him to visit his father's property, where he becomes acquainted with Lord Seymour's family, composed of his weak wife, his daughters Sara, Eudoxie and the timid Marie. Charles falls in love with Marie admiring her filial devotion to her sick mother and her naïve innocence. His union to Marie is compromised by the tyrannical Lord Seymour, who would prefer to marry his eldest daughter first, and a story strategically told by Eudoxie to Charles to discourage him to marry her sister: she pretends Marie already formed a tacit union with the neighbour's son. Charles starts to doubt Marie's innocence. She is eventually cleared of all accusations, but Charles has a riding accident and stays in bed unconscious for a while. When he wakes up, he marries his beloved: 'je voulais vous dominer, votre douceur m'a soumis' (p. 285).

*Eugénie et Mathilde, ou Mémoires de la famille du comte de Revel* (1811)

The story is set during the end of the reign of Louis XVI, until 1795, on the Revel's estate outside Paris. M. de Revel has three daughters but wants a son to inherit his fortune, so he entrusts his eldest daughter Ernestine to his wife's mother, Madame de Couci; and puts Eugénie, the youngest, in the care of her aunt in a convent. Mathilde is the only daughter to be raised by her parents. The three daughters are educated very differently. Both Ernestine and Mathilde comply with arranged marriages organised by the Revels: the first marries M. de Sanzei, 50 years old, but rich; whereas the latter enjoys a marriage of love with her cousin Edmond. Ernestine takes her vows. As a result, the Revel's fortune will not be split into three but go to Edmond. The Revolution modifies this initial situation: Eugénie comes back to her family after convents are closed, Ernestine can no longer benefit from the social

advantages of her husband's position at court after the abolition of feudal dues, and Mathilde has to let Edmond join the émigré army in Brussels. The family has to flee after a denunciation; however M. de Sanzei, too old to travel, remains in France. They settle first in Brussels until the arrival of revolutionary armies in 1792, then in The Hague, Cuxhaven, and Kiel in the Netherlands. Their resources decrease rapidly, even though the daughters start to work. Ernestine makes the most of the insouciant community of émigrés in Brussels, before rebelling against her family, her marriage and returning to France. The Revels become friends with Ladislav Opalinsky, a wealthy Polish count also exiled from the troubles in his country. His love for Eugénie is the main dilemma of the novel: Eugénie is caught between her sacred vows, preventing her to marry Ladislav, and her desire to better the life conditions of her family by this advantageous union. Likewise, Mathilde is struggling to cope with the absence of Edmond, fighting against the revolutionary army in Vendée. His death overwhelms the whole family, already struggling to survive. Ernestine eventually dies from anxiety, and in an ultimate sacrifice to her family, confers Ladislav in marriage to Mathilde.

