DIABOLIC DEEDS: TRANSGRESSION AND CORPOREALITY IN THE HISTOIRES TRAGIQUES

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For Mr. B, Mama, Junior, and Elisabeth

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INTRODUCTION

My dissertation focuses on the representations and treatment of the human body in the *Histoires tragiques*, a literary genre published largely between 1559 and 1648. *Histoires tragiques* are collections of stories of Italian origin that are a mixture of *fait divers*, anecdotes, and novellas. The tales cover many types of transgressive behavior and were written with a moralizing intent. They are rife with bloodshed, death, demons, demonic possession, murder, and violence. I analyze the confluence of the exterior influences of scientific advances and church instabilities with the representation of the bodily manifestations of transgression found within the tales.

This dissertation examines the reasons for the proliferation of demonic possession and witchcraft accusations because of political, religious, and economic factors. I also look at the results of sins as actualized on the human body and follow Michel Foucault's theories on punishment, torture, and confinement to illustrate the locus of control unified in church and state, that while threatened by divisive factors, is mirrored and promoted in the *Histoires tragiques*. I investigate the nature of ecstatic religious experience against the backdrop of the *Histoires tragiques* and the masochistic apparatus found in its quest that appears to parallel Christian spirituality. I also explore the early modern beliefs about the human body, death, and the corpse as illustrated in the tales.

Despite their popularity as best sellers in the seventeenth century, the *Histoires tragiques* have been marginalized in French literary studies. Although the genre is important enough to be given a brief mention in most anthologies of literary history, few

authors have delved more deeply into researching these works. In terms of research, the *Histoires tragiques* have been marginalized and neglected. Maurice Lever, writes of this neglect in his *Le roman français au XVIIe siècle*,

> Il est regrettable que les historiens de l'âge baroque n'aient pas accordé à ces histoires l'attention qu'elles méritaient, et que des rapprochements n'aient pas été tentes avec la tragédie française de la même époque, à laquelle Jean Rousset a consacré une étude intitulée le *Théâtre de la cruauté*.[1]

Not only have historians of the Baroque neglected the *Histoires tragiques*, but literary critics and authors have also disregarded the stories in general until recently. Another useful point of literary reference for the placement of the *Histoires tragiques* in literary history is Henri Coulet's *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution* as he recognizes and points out the influence of the *Histoires tragiques* on other French literary genres. There is but a short list of works devoted uniquely to the *Histoires tragiques*, notably by authors such as Richard Carr, Anne Vaucher Gravili, and Sergio Poli. A more recent work that links the *Histoires tragiques* to the fantastique genre is Marianne Closson's *L'imaginaire Demoniaque en France (1550-1650)*.

In this dissertation, I will show that the *Histoires tragiques* are important elements in the French literary continuum by focusing on the versions written by Pierre Boaistuau, François de Rosset and Jean-Pierre Camus. Within the framework of these authors, I will look at the tales covering demonic possession, demonic pacts, bodily mutilation, and corpses that appear against the backdrop of early modern medical discoveries and decades of violence stemming from the religious wars. I will look at

[1] Maurice Lever, *Le roman français au XVIIe siècle*, (Paris: PUF), 73.

changes that were taking place in the Catholic Church and medical world and how they influenced the early modern view of the body, illustrating these views through an examination of the various ways in which the body is treated in the *Histoires tragiques*. Given the scientific allure of the body as unchartered territory and the religious view of the body as a sacred vessel, it is essential to understanding the time. Of course, ever since Christ became incarnate, the body of Christ has been one of the central tenets of Christianity. The body of man, by extension, must therefore remain a significant focus and becomes the text for interpretation in the *Histoires tragiques*.

In the Beginning

As dissections and Vesalius's publication in 1534 of *De Fabrica Corporis Humani* are literally opening the human body to discovery, France is on the brink of some of the most violent years in its history. Vesalius is sentenced to death in 1564 under the Inquisition for performing dissections. His execution serves as another example of the Church's push to control knowledge and maintain control over acceptable use of the body. Interdictions regarding the human body, be it living or dead have always been a means of wielding power and authority by the Church. With the rise of primarily Protestant countries, the power of the Catholic Church over dissections is effectively checked. New and exciting medical, scientific, and mechanical developments create foundational changes in these fields coupled with challenges to the monarchy and ecclesiastical establishment that result in profound uncertainty in many individuals. From this uncertainty will arise a taste for the tragic, as well as demons.

The devil figures as a principal player in many of the tales I examine, because he

was a prominent figure in the early modern period. The rise of demonic possession and witch-hunts during this time inspired detailed literary accounts as well as many serious manuals cataloguing such activities. Authors such as Pierre de Lancre, Jean Bodin, Heinrich Kramer, Joseph Sprenger, and Nicolas Remy all produced explanatory guides about the evil inherent in females and how diabolic interactions actually took place. I also look at Johann Weyer's controversial refutation of the exorcism manuals and witchcraft guides. I use these original sources to explain the prevailing thoughts and why actions against witches and demons were thought necessary during the period. Of course, most of these works are misogynistic and appear incredible to the modern reader, but they were extremely influential and served to excuse much of the brutal treatment that resulted from exorcisms or executions. Sébastien Michaelis writes a first hand account of his role as exorcist in the case of Madeleine Demandols and in prosecuting Gaufridy. I use his version to inform the study of Rosset's version of this event.

Demonic possession and witchcraft were taken quite seriously at the time. As Walter Stephens points out in his work called *Demon Lovers*, while referring to the particular brand of European witchcraft in the early modern period that

> "Witchcraft in this period differed from witchcraft in other cultures – including the culture of European intellectuals and churchmen before 1400 – in its twofold emphasis on *maleficia* and demonolatry. *Maleficia*, or acts of harmful magic, are the basis for any definition of witchcraft around the world; but demonolatry, the intentional worship and subservience to demons, is peculiar to early-modern European witchcraft."[2]

[2] Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers,* (Chicago: UCP, 2002), 13.

It also made convictions of witchcraft easier since it was interpreted as a form of heresy.

Because the *Histoires tragiques* are a literary source that combines actual events with fiction, they will provide new discoveries about the period that will go far beyond the purely scientific. The works illustrate the "grandes secousses" explained by Jean Mesnard in *La culture du XVIIe siècle*, in which he writes about the conflict between autonomy of faith and autonomy of science.[3] I will look at the tensions inherent in new discoveries, while showing the effect of shifting understanding as illustrated in the *Histoires tragiques*. Furthermore, since there is not much existing research on this rich body of work, my dissertation will help to show that the *Histoires tragiques* do indeed merit a closer look.

The stories of the *Histoires tragiques*, intended to horrify, are written in a manner that decries the age in which they were written, while simultaneously warning the reader not to fall prey to such behavior. However, the cautionary tales do much more than inform. The tales, are often violent and always shocking, are actually quite titillating. They combine repugnance with fascination and in so doing, mesmerize the reader. The elements of shock, gore, and violence may also contribute to the critical neglect of the *Histoires tragiques*. As Lever also notes, "Ce qui frappe, à la lecture de ces textes, ce n'est pas tant le nombre des assassinats ou des duels, que le paroxysme de cruauté, poussée a l'extrême limite du concevable."[4] Indeed, these stories are also the forerunners of horror and the treatment of the human body is always at the core.

This dissertation will examine many of the agendas that drove the "Demon-mania" and look at the ways that the *Histoires tragiques* reflect and often reinforce

[3] Jean Mesnard, *La Culture du XVIIe siècle: enquêtes et syntheses*, (Paris: PUF, 1992).
[4] Lever, "*Le roman français,*" 71.

predominant theories at the time. Although certain critics see the *Histoires tragiques* as entirely misogynistic, I will analyze tales both by Rosset and by Camus that are sympathetic to the female characters. I will also look at tales in which the females are seen as the embodiment of evil. There are tales of transgression where the devil is not present as an actual character, but overall there is a struggle between good and evil. For the authors of the *Histoires tragiques*, the result is always left to divine judgment.

Overview and History of the Genre

The *Histoires tragiques* genre originated in Italy. The Italian version, *Novelle* by Matteo Bandello and published in 1554 was translated in part by Pierre Boaistuau and François de Belleforest in 1559. Matteo Bandello was a Dominican friar whom Henri II named Bishop of Agen who published the first three volumes of his *Novelle* in 1554. The volumes were a group of tales from his time, set in sixteenth-century Italy, written, "to inspire laughter as well as fear, wonderment as well as pity."[5] Therefore, the Italian versions had both comedy and tragedy. René Pruvost wrote of the *Novelle*, summarizing the topics from the comic to the gruesome contrast, described the tragic portion writing:

> At other times his tales are tragical and ghastly, and seem to proceed from a radically pessimistic view of human character and destiny. Passion knows no bounds, stops at nothing for its gratification, heaps murders upon murders and ruins upon ruins, and love is hardly anything more than a purely physical appetite.[6]

Surprisingly, Boaistuau was one of the first to criticize the unpolished expression of the

[5] Richard Carr, *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques: A Study of Narrative Form and Tragic Vision*, (Chapel Hill: UNCP, 1979), 23.
[6] René Pruvost, *Matteo Bandello and Elizabethan Fiction*, (Paris: Champion, 1937), 104.

Novelle, according to Carr who states "Yet certain of the tales had a dramatic power that appealed to him and he could not resist offering a revised and refined version to French readers."[7] While the source of the material is from Bandello, when Boaistuau composed the six stories in his collection, he did much more than merely translates the material, as he chose only the tales with tragic themes. Carr also notes:

> Ignoring Bandello's comic inspiration, Boaistuau published early in 1559 six of the tales in a volume entitled Histoires tragiques. More than a mere translation of the Italian original, Boaistuau allows himself complete freedom with his source, changing details when he feels it necessary, adding and deleting passages whenever required by his understanding of the story.[8]

Therefore, Boaistuau's version was influential in introducing the genre in France and in the theme and composition of the tales themselves. What became a popular genre spanning over a century of new versions of *Histoires tragiques* relates directly to Boaistuau's initial choice of content when working on his volume. The work was a huge success, but Boaistuau passed the project on to another author according to Carr:

> Despite the immediate success of the *Histoires tragiques* – five separate printings in 1559 alone, including a special edition published in October of that year and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth—Boaistuau had no intention of continuing the work and entrusted the completion of the project to François de Belleforest. Boaistuau left the world of fiction to resume his observation of the wonders of nature.[9]

Boaistuau can be credited with the early success of these stories and emphasis on the

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Carr, "*Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques,*" 24-5.
[9] Carr, "*Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques,*" 24-5.

psychological aspects of the popular tales. Carr also credits him with creating a "psychological drama that slowly but methodically examines various responses to the single affliction common to all men: passion."[10] This statement sums up the basic premise of the genre. While the tales continue to evolve and develop, the core remains the same. Rosset and Camus also continue the tradition of writing stories based upon the suffering resulting from passion.

After Boaistuau bequeathed him with the project, Belleforest published *La continuation des Histoires tragiques*, a collection of twelve stories, in 1559. There are also other authors who published versions of *Histoires tragiques* in between Belleforest and Rosset, namely Jacques Yver, Vérité Habanc, et Bénigne Poissenot, but my study primarily examines the work of Rosset and Camus, because of the themes I have chosen to examine. I include Boaistuau to show the origins of the genre. I summarize briefly a few of the precursors to the genre and I look at the later works that contain the story lines from the *Histoires tragiques* to demonstrate their influence and situate the works as a part of the literary timeline.

Rosset published his first collection of *Histoires tragiques de nostre temps* in 1614. The work was wildly successful and was reedited six times in four years, in Paris, Lyon, Rouen, and Geneva. Rosset added additional tales and produced his final version in 1619. Rosset's version had at least thirty-five editions printed by the end of the century, which is a record number for the time.[11] There were many posthumous editions and stories added written by other authors, including stories of the Marquise de Ganges

[10] Ibid.
[11] Printing information from Anne Vaucher Gravili, introduction to *Histoires mémorables et tragiques de ce temps*, by François de Rosset (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994), 5-13.

and La Brinvilliers in the 1679 edition. There were also translations of the stories in Dutch (1623), nine German (from 1624 on), and one in English that appeared around 1650. Aside from being a seventeenth century "best-seller" and the numerous editions that were printed, Rosset's stories furnished the story lines for many authors who followed in later centuries. The *Histoires tragiques* are credited with providing plots for the likes of such authors as Barbey D'Aurevilly, Sade, Jean Potocki, Charles Nodier, and Stendhal, according to Anne Vaucher Gravili in her foreword to the 1994 edition.[12] Henri Coulet also names Rosset as a "précurseur de Prévost, de Sade, de Lewis, de Maturin." The story of Thibaud the Jacquière is an example of one of Rosset's stories that is rewritten by Nodier and Potocki. Coulet states, "entre Rosset et Sade il y a un chaînon assuré : la collection des *Causes Célèbres*."[13] Rosset has made important contributions not just in writing such widely published stories, but also by providing inspiration to well-known authors who wrote much later. While he began as a poet and moved on to translation, his career as a writer took off with the *Histoires Tragiques*.

Rosset could have been little more than an obscure translator. Gravili describes his importance in literary history:

> […] il est cependant un trait d'union indispensable entre les littératures italienne, espagnole, portugaise, et la littérature française pour ses traductions du Roland furieux d'Arioste, du Roland l'amoureux de Matteo Boiardo et des ouvrages les plus importantes de Cervantes : Les Nouvelles exemplaires, la deuxième partie du Don Quichotte et Les Travaux de Persiles et Sigismonde, ainsi que d'un

[12]Ibid.
[13] Henri Coulet, *Idées sur le roman: textes critiques sur le roman français XIIe-XVIIe siècle*, (Paris: Larousse, 1992),156.

certain nombre d'ouvrages moraux et religieux espagnols et portugais.[14]

Therefore, beyond penning his popular *Histoires tragiques* and providing inspiration to other authors, Rosset is an important link to many other European literary traditions. He provides a literary connection to the Italian works first brought to French readers by Boaistuau. He also provides France access to Cervantes, as well as Spanish and Portuguese religious writings. Rosset served as a literary intersection for the diffusion of ideas in the early seventeenth century.

There is not much information available about his life.[15] Rosset was born in 1570, probably into a noble family in Uzès or Avignon. At a young age, he frequented the cultivated areas of Avignon and became a part of an entourage including Paulino Bernadino, "dataire" to the Pope, Charles de Conti, vice-legate to the Pope, and Emmanuel de Crussol, duke of Uzès. He wrote his first verses in 1585, which were later published in 1615. He published his own version of *Les Quinze joies de mariage, extraites d'un vieil exemplaire écrit à la main* in 1595. In 1604, he established himself in Paris and looked for protectors. He spent time with the poets du Perron, Malherbe, Desportes, Bertaut, and Coeffetetau. He published another volume of verses called *Les XII beautés de Phyllis et autres œuvres poétiques* in 1604 and *Nouveau Recueil des plus beaux vers de ce temps* in 1609. He translated pious works from Latin and Spanish between 1610 and 1612. Then in 1612, he composed a ballet theatre piece for the Regent Marie de Médicis that was performed at Place Royale. He also published a collection of letters he wrote with Malherbe and Desportes called *Lettres amoureuses et morales des beaux esprits de ce temps*. He also translated spiritual works written in Spanish by Père

[14] Gravili, introduction to *Les Histoires mémorables et tragiques de ce temps*, 7-8.
[13] Ibid.

Louis de Pont during this time. In 1614, Rosset's first edition of *Histoires tragiques de notre temps* was published. This edition is considered a "lost edition" as there are no longer any copies in existence. The second edition of *Histoires tragiques* was published the following year. In the same year, he completed more translations then left Paris for several months in 1616. In 1617, Rosset published *Histoire des amans volages de ce temps*. In 1619, he published the *Seconde partie des Histoires tragiques de notre temps* with « Privilège du Roy » and dedicated to monseigneur le duc de Condé. Sometime between August and November of the same year, Rosset died. However, there were at least twenty-two editions and additions to the *Histoires tragiques* after Rosset's death up until 1758.[16]

Aside from Rosset's versions being reprinted, there were other authors contributing to the *Histoires tragiques* genre, notably Jean-Pierre Camus, bishop of Belley, who was born November 3, 1584 and died April 26, 1652. Camus, who proclaimed himself as "avoir marché après les pas de François de Rosset et de François de Belleforest," takes on the task of creating three more volumes of histoires tragiques : *L'Amphithéâtre sanglant où sont représentées plusieurs actions tragiques de nostre siècle* (1630), *Les Spectacles d'horreur où se descouvrent plusieurs tragiques effets de notre siècle* (1630), and *Les Rencontres funestes ou fortunes infortunees de nostre temps* (1644). Camus wrote stories focusing on tragic reality. His stories range from extraordinary accidents, murders, violence, and vengeance to religious hypocrisy. He continued the labor of Belleforest and Rosset, rewriting some of the same stories and adding an abundance of new ones. Coulet notes of one of Camus's tales based upon

[16] Ibid.

religion "Car le cloître, l'amour et la mort, qui seront si souvent associés dans la littérature 'sombre' au XVIIIe siècle le sont déjà dans ces *histoires tragiques* du XVIIe."[17] Just as the *Histoires tragiques* provide an important link between the literature of preceding centuries and later centuries, they are also precursors to many genres of literature such as the "fantastique" and horror.

Camus was known as a zealous and virtuous bishop, and in his introduction to *L'Amphithéâtre sanglant*, Stéphan Ferrari cites Perrault's entry on Camus in *Les Hommes illustres* as an example:

> Ce fut un véritable Evêque de quelque côté qu'on le regarde, soit pour sa science, particulièrement dans les matières Ecclésiastiques, soit pour son zèle à instruire et à convertir les âmes, donnant tout le temps que la conduite de son Diocèse lui pouvait laisser, ou à composer des livres pour l'édification des fidèles, ou à prêcher avec une ardeur et une charité qui attirait et touchait tout le monde. Son zèle s'alluma particulièrement contre la fainéantise et la morale relâchée de quelques Moines de son temps ; et il ne cessa de déclamer contre eux, et de vive voix, et par des livres presque sans nombre.[18]

Camus was a disciple of François de Sales, and as a bishop and public figure, more is known of his life than is known about Rosset. It is important to note that since Camus remarks that he follows Rosset's example, Rosset's influence is underscored and cannot be denied. Even though more has been written about Camus, Ferrari notes the neglect of critical interest in Camus's *Histoires tragiques* and blames, in part, the general attitude

[17] Coulet, *Idées sur le roman: textes critiques sur le roman français XIIe-XVIIe siècle,* 159.
[18] Ch. Perrault, Les Hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle. Avec leurs portraits au naturel, (Paris: Dezaillier, 1696), 9. Cited by Stéphan Ferrari in his introduction to Jean-Pierre Camus's *L'amphithéâtre sanglant*, (Paris: Champion, 2001), 7-8.

towards baroque literature. Ferrari writes that Camus remained obscured by the shadow of François de Sales and that "ses livres pâtissent de la réputation d'ennui, d'obscurité, et de mauvais gout qui entache en fait à l'époque toute la littérature baroque, la critique camusienne ne s'est véritablement éveillée qu'au XX^{e} siècle, où un grand nombre de travaux ont vu le jour."[19] Ferrari also states that after such lengthy neglect it is celebratory that Camus has at last escaped literary purgatory, but that it is still surprising that he does not have more critical editions published.[20] The neglect of these authors and the lasting impact they produced in French literature is one of the most compelling reasons for this dissertation.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I will examine the "actual" cases of demonic possession as recorded by the clergy and others involved in the cases themselves and compare the literary version offered by Rosset in the *Histoires Tragiques*. Rosset retells the story of Gaufridy, a priest executed for sorcery who was responsible for the possession of Madeleine Demandols and other nuns. I will show how the preoccupation with the devil and his consequent appearance in literature reflects the concerns emanating from the early modern period. The possession of human flesh by demonic forces affords an opportunity to examine why this period had reports of so many cases. The treatment of those who were possessed and/or had sexual relations with the devil is carefully analyzed in the selected tales. As witchcraft is an integral part of the demonic realm, beliefs and theories about sorcery are studied as well. I explain the important claims

[19] Ferrari footnotes his statement with a reference to a complete list of works, J. Descrains, Jean-Pierre Camus (1584-1652) et ses «Diversités» (1609-1618) ou la culture d'un évêque humaniste, (Paris: Nizet, 1985).
[20] Stephan Ferrari, ed., *L'Amphitheatre sanglant où sont representees plusieurs actions tragiques de nostre siecle*, (Paris: Cottereau, 1630), 13.

proposed by the *Malleus Maleficarum* and *Demon-Mania* that are crucial to understanding the witch craze. I will look at the ways in which people believed demonic interaction could take place, the exorcisms, and the agendas behind the cases of possession. Ultimately, the possessed and even the devil himself become pawns in a much larger game for the crucial control of French religion and by extension the monarchy. The *Histoires tragiques* reflect the serious consequences of this massive campaign against Satan and his minions.

Chapter Two addresses the issue of demonic copulation. Much was written about how sex with the devil is possible. From the time of Saint Augustine, people have been intrigued by incubus and succubus demons.

Aquinas proposes that angels and devils can assume bodies.[21] The authors of witch manuals who further deduced that demons could also sire children readily accept this assumption. This chapter will look at two very different cases of demonic sex. One tale involves a cloistered young widow who has intercourse with the devil in the form of a small pig. The other tale, later rewritten by other authors, will demonstrate how Satan reanimates a corpse in order to seduce a night watchman and friends. Rosset's treatment of these two tales and the conclusions that can be drawn from a close reading of them provide an interesting social commentary, as well as plant the seed for the fantastique literary genre.

Chapter Three uses the medical context and discovery during the early modern period as the lens through which to look at the concept of bodily mutilation in the *Histoires tragiques*. The relationship between a body and its parts will bear examination,

[21] For more on demonic corporeality see Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers*, (Chicago: UCP, 2002).

as well as the relation between body and spirit in literary sources. The notion of martyrdom and sacrifice will be developed with a look at self-mutilation. The medical and religious beliefs regarding the body will be called into play via a study of several tales. I will analyze a story by Boaistuau about a virtuous girl who is wronged and seeks revenge by cutting up the man who pretended to marry her and compare it to one of Rosset's tales that has a similar outcome. I will look at Camus's story of the self-mutilation of a young man who wanted to preserve his chastity, and the issues raised by such an act. I will also look at the pathetic figure of a mother who kills her own son in order to have sexual relations with his son's "friend." The insights drawn from the stories provide ways of looking at a period greatly characterized by fragmentation.

Chapter Four will again look at the body in another state – that of decay. The rotting corpse signifies the grotesque esthetic while at the same time evoking the abject state. I will look at the use of the corpse and death the tales to transmit admonitions to the reader, as well as reflect beliefs about the body/spirit connection. I will look at madness and punishment during the early modern period as well. I will compare two of Camus's tales emphasizing the need for penitence. I will conclude the chapter with Rosset's version of the story of the Concinis' ascent in the court of Marie de Medici and subsequent executions.

In the conclusion, I will synthesize what the Histoires tragiques have to offer in studies of French literature. This dissertation is unique in that it examines some of the early modern period's specific concerns about the church, state, and medical discovery through the narratives of the *Histoires tragiques*. It also shows the evolution of the *Histoires tragiques* genre and its contributions to French literature, thus proving the

importance of these works and their far-reaching effect. The richness of the baroque and the important insights provided into the early modern period are clearly inscribed in the *Histoires tragiques* if one merely takes the opportunity to peruse their pages.

CHAPTER ONE-DEMON SEED: THE RISE OF EXORCISM IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Enter the devil: A Historical Perspective

During the early modern period in France, as religious wars shook the nation and the Catholic Church was no longer the sole Christian stronghold, there was a proliferation in cases of demonic possession. The conflict over elements intrinsic to Catholic faith, such as transubstantiation, and other aspects of worship left the Catholic Church struggling to defend itself against what it considered heresy. "France alone of all the Western European states suffered the experience of extended civil war as a result of the Reformation […] Its violence and its legacy left a profound mark on French men and women of every religious confession."[22] The Reformation was responsible for many changes to religious life, such as the stricter rules governing cloistered women and practices that were acceptable.[23] Many women, who had been rather independent in the convent, rebelled at the rules imposed. Women who were possessed assumed a new status, and although their treatment was gender-biased, these women still played an important role in the church and battle of good versus evil. The religious strife of the Reformation lent itself to using demonic possession as propaganda between Protestant and Huguenot camps, and in turn, that propaganda contributed to the wave of possession that swept through France. Furthermore, the ways in which the possessed were treated

[22] Mack P. Holt, *Renaissance and Reformation France 1500-1648,* series The Short Oxford History of France, Gen. ed. William Doyle,(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.
[23] For more on rebellious behavior among religious order, see Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism*, (Chicago & London: UCP, 2007).

and represented by the Catholic Church were crucial in maintaining their religious stronghold. The cases became a part of the overall power struggle and reform measures within the Church as well as vying for credibility against the Protestants. The prominence of the devil in the early modern period is also reflected in the *Histoires tragiques*. It is useful at this point to examine the devil's importance.

The devil

The devil was, of course, a familiar figure in Christianity from its inception, but his status changed somewhat during the Protestant Reformation. The uncertainty, a product of the religious wars, created conditions that were perfect for the devil's propagation. As Michel Carmona writes in *Les Diables de Loudun*:

> Comment expliquer que luttant contre le paganisme, le christianisme des premiers siècles ait farouchement refusé de croire aux manifestations démoniaques, alors que l'Église définitivement victorieuse des idolâtres décèle la main du Diable dans tout ce qui bouge, qui vit et qui vibre, dans le moindre sursaut qui trouble l'ordre du monde en son temps? Étrange aventure qui fait de l'époque 1500-1650 le grand siècle des sorciers.[24]

Why indeed? One of the reasons was because there was no longer just one Church. The rift between Protestants and Catholics was much deeper than doctrine or practice. The Huguenots in France had much more at stake than just the right to worship freely. They were proposing a change in a belief system that bound France together politically as well. It was important for the political and social structure of France for church and state to

[24] Michel Carmona, *Les diables de Loudun: Sorcellerie et politique sous Richelieu*, (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 17.

maintain a united front. The cases of possession were an outward declaration of the evil inherent in France brought by those who would dare to question Catholicism and thus questioned the sovereignty of the king.

In The *Wars of Religion in France*, James Westfall Thompson explained that the causes of the Huguenot movement were as much, if not more, political, and economic than religious. Thompson outlined the problems, inherent in such reform, in the following passage:

> Abstractly considered, the religious Huguenots were not very dangerous to the state as long as they confined their activity to the discussion of doctrine. This could not easily be done, however, nor did the opponents of the church so desire; for the church was a social and political fabric, as well as spiritual institution, and to challenge or deny its sovereignty meant also to invalidate its social and political claims, so that the whole structure was compromised. Thus the issue of religion raised by the Huguenots merged imperceptibly into that of the political Huguenots, who not only wanted to alter the foundations of belief, but to change the institutional order of things, and who used the religious opposition as a means to attack the crown.[25]

Therefore, the religious threat posed a threat to the absolutism of the monarchy and the Huguenots found that the conditions of general dissatisfaction among many of the nobles created conditions that were ripe for an uprising and resulted in a long series of civil wars.[26] Protestants therefore launched criticism against the Catholic Church with an

[25] James Westfall Thompson, *The French Wars of Religion*, ed. J.H.M. Salmon, (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1967), 1.
[26] see Thompson, *The French Wars of Religion*.

overall questioning of doctrine. This criticism was problematic, as Barbara Diefendorf explains, "We cannot understand the French Catholic reaction to religious schism unless we can comprehend that, for the sixteenth-century Parisian, religious unity—personally felt and publicly displayed—was not just an ideal, but a vital condition for individual and collective salvation. Society was perceived as an organic whole, "one bread, and one body."[27] This body and coincidentally this bread are one area that was called into question, as one of the basic tenets of Catholic faith is transubstantiation.

Transubstantiation is the belief that during communion, at the moment of the priest blessing the bread and wine, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ. The partaking of the Eucharist and the body and blood of Christ himself is the very basis of Catholic Christianity. However, Calvin viewed it as a moment when Christ joined worshippers and renewed their faith. "Though Christ was not substantially or corporeally present in the sacrament, as Catholics believed, Calvin nevertheless insisted that he was still 'truly' present in spirit, in the 'internal substance' of the sacrament that transcended flesh, bread, and wine."[28] The idea of the fleshly Christ is key to understanding the focus on the body throughout the *Histoires tragiques* and the necessity for transgressions of the carnal nature. Christ endured painful corporeal suffering and then died slowly on a crucifix to save man from his sin. He offered his own body as a sacrifice and repeatedly offers that sacrifice through the Eucharistic host. Consequently, when the Reformation calls into doubt the belief of the real presence of Christ through transubstantiation, the foundation of Catholicism is called into question.

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[27] Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), 38.
[28] Philip Benedict and Virginia Reinburg, "Religion and the Sacred," *Renaissance and Reformation France*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 143.

As Susan Ferber explains in *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*:

> This central Catholic doctrine holds that the body of Christ is miraculously made present in the hands of the priest at the moment of consecration in the Mass. For French Calvinists – later known as Huguenots – this doctrine was the index of both the ceremonialism and materialism of Catholic tradition, and evidence of a misplaced reliance on an overweening Catholic priesthood as dispensers of papist magic.[29]

The Protestants called into question the "magic" aspects of Catholicism. The Catholics were outraged by such an affront and that other aspects of Catholicism were under attack. The Protestants also had conflicting beliefs about other religious tenets such as "believing that human beings were redeemed by God's saving grace, freely given without the need for any human collaboration in the form of good works" unlike the Catholics.[30] They did not agree with most Catholic rituals and even went so far as to create a simplified calendar removing all saints' days. They also did not believe in purgatory and had very simplified funeral rites compared to Catholics. The Protestants had a very strong sense of church discipline and the proliferation of Reformed churches unsettled devout Catholics. The Catholics needed to assert their authority and needed their own reform. One way in which they were able to assert their authority was through the numerous cases of possession that began to occur during the early modern period.

Therefore, as the occurrence of demonic possessions multiplies, the way in which the possessed were treated was a chance for the Catholic Church to reestablish its credibility. Church exorcisms provided a very striking manner for the Church to

[29] Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France,* (NY: Routledge, 2004), 5.
[30] Benedict and Reinburg, "Religion and the Sacred," 142.

demonstrate publicly its power over the devil. The Church had much at stake in its battle against Satan. Ferber explains "There was a triple metaphor of purification at work in these cases: ridding the country of Huguenots, the Church of its internal enemies and the possessed of her demons."[31]

Nonetheless, the rites of exorcism have been in a nebulous area since the fourth century meeting of the Council of Carthage in 398. The Council warned exorcists in its seventh canon not to make up their own rites, rather to receive instruction from the Bishop. The Bishop is to give the exorcist the book containing the formulae of exorcism and the formulae are committed to memory.[32] The reason that exorcism commands attention is deeply rooted in the New Testament, as the first of all the wonders in St. Mark is the casting out of the devil from a demoniac, the "man with an unclean spirit" in the synagogue at Capernaum. The very fact that he "commands the unclean spirits and they obey him" is what gives him immediate authority and causes his fame to subsequently spread throughout the region.[33] It is the basis of his credibility; therefore, if Jesus establishes himself by casting out demons, it is only logical that being able to do so would strengthen the Church's authority as well.

This chapter examines the links between the stories of possession featured in the *Histoires tragiques* and the reasons for the preoccupation with the trend of possession sweeping through France during this period. The popularity of these tales underscores the prevalence of demonic possession, as well as the fascination with such transgressive behaviors. The narratives provide the reader with insight into the uneasiness perpetuated

[31] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 65.
[32] newadvent.org/cathen/05711a.htm
[33] Mark 1:21-28 (New King James Version)

by the Catholic and Huguenot conflict and serve as a way of examining the traces of actual historical events through literature. As Mitchell Greenberg affirms in *Baroque Bodies*, "To ignore that culture's profound anchoring in religion would be to commit an egregious anachronism. No work of the century can be easily divorced from the religious fervor that, in one way or the other, had a profound impact on its artistic, literary, and intellectual accomplishments."[34] In order to demonstrate the importance of the trend of demonic possession playing out on the female body in the early modern period, this dissertation will examine some of the more high profile cases and prevailing theories on possession and demons.

The focus on the body and the bodily manifestations experienced by the possessed is the core of this analysis because of the essential relation to Christian belief. The body of Christ is essential, as already mentioned, in the Eucharist, for worship and belief. The whole idea of Christ and his corporeal suffering, the image of the crucifix and his risen body are all key components to the Catholic Church and while the soul seeks redemption, it is through the human body. One cannot achieve salvation, according to the basic tenets of the church, without casting aside the desires of the flesh. Since the tales aim to promote the religious values of the church, they underscore the dangers of undisciplined bodies. However, even beyond the religious message, we are guided in our examination of these stories by Michel Foucault's notion of a "docile bodies," as well as the body poised for the scientific discovery of this time. For Foucault, the forces that influence history are all the institutions that act as "an apparatus intended to render individuals

[34] Mitchell Greenberg, *Baroque Bodies,* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 161.

docile and useful, by means of precise work upon their bodies."[35] The turbulence of the early modern period is reflected in all of its aspects in a corporeal way in this collection of stories.

Famous Demoniacs

One of the most public cases of demonic possession is that of Nicole Obry. Nicole's story lays the groundwork for what becomes a high stakes struggle between the Catholic Church and the Huguenots played out via exorcisms. Nicole was a sixteen year-old recently married girl in the village of Laon who fell ill while praying in church. She thought the dead spirit of her grandfather possessed her, but since Catholic dogma declared it heretical to maintain that the dead could enter bodies of the living, the priests decided that she was possessed by the devil. The priests decided to exorcise the devil and presented Nicole with the Eucharist host. The Eucharist did not occupy a traditional place in exorcisms, as Daniel Walker points out, since it is not mentioned in the *Thesaurus Exorcismorum* of 1608.[36] Usually holy water, relics, and other religious objects were used. The use of the Eucharistic host to expel demons is particular to Obry's case. She had a violent physical reaction to the host according to eyewitnesses, and was turned deaf, mute, and blind by Satan so that she could not ingest it.[37] For the Catholic priests, the fact that she had such a reaction confirmed the real presence of Christ in the host, which was one of the areas in which Protestants had questioned the church. It simultaneously confirmed the real presence of Satan in Nicole's body. The

[35] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* Trans. Alan Sheridan, (NY: Vintage Books, 1977).
[36] D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: possession and excorcism in France and England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries,* (London: Scolar Press, 1981), 23.
[37] For more on Obry see Jean Boulaese and Guillaume Postel, *De summopere et Le Miracle de Laon*, Ed. Irena Backus, (Genève: Droz, 1995).

reaction thus proved very important in the ongoing struggle between the Catholics and Huguenots because the Catholics perceived it as proof of the truth found in their dogma and as proof against Huguenot beliefs. The exorcisms continued for two months and were widely publicized. A stage was even built and according to Jean Boulaese, as many as 150,000 people witnessed one of Nicole's exorcisms. On February 8, 1566, Beelzebub left her body reportedly to head back to Geneva, and the day was observed as "Le Miracle de Laon" up until the time of the French Revolution.[38]

For the Catholic Church, the influential case of Nicole Obry serves to demonstrate the fact that Huguenots were inspired by the devil, as Beelzebub stated repeatedly throughout her exorcisms. The fact that her exorcism served as the inception of a holiday and the publicity it received clearly demonstrate the importance of the "victory" for the Catholic Church. The case shows just how important prevailing over possession was to the church at this time. It is no wonder then that her story inspired what would become a veritable wave of possessions throughout France in the early modern period, as well as literary accounts like those in the *Histoires tragiques*. William Monter has called the period "the golden age of the demoniac."[39] It is believed that Obry served as the model for another widely publicized demoniac also featured in this chapter, Marthe Brossier.[40] The use of exorcism went beyond propaganda linking the Huguenots to the devil. Exorcisms were also an opportunity to demonstrate the church's power over Satan. The ability to cast out demons, as demonstrated by Jesus in the Gospels, was a power that

[38] Ibid, 6.
[39] William Monter, *Witchcraft in France and Switerland: The Borderlands during the Refomation*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 60.
[40] Silver and Walker both point out the similarities in the cases and the fact that Brossier read an account of the Miracle of Laon.

came from God, as stated in Luke.[41] Every time a priest could successfully cast out demons, he could demonstrate the righteousness of his religion.

The Catholic faith also lent itself particularly well to the curious struggle of exorcism. The patriarchal structure of the Church, along with its successive attempts to rein in women of the church from the thirteenth century on, left women very little space in which to express themselves.[42] Since women had no platform upon which to express their religious ardor, they either satisfied the need through various forms of self-deprivation, mortification or starvation leading to ecstatic experience or through a different sort of selflessness – demonic possession. Indeed, Caroline Walker Bynum asserts that by 1500 "the model of the female saint, expressed both in popular veneration and in official canonizations, was in many ways the mirror image of society's notion of the witch."[43] She explains that both the saint and the witch were thought to be possessed – one by God and one by Satan, that they were thought to be able to read minds, and fly through the air. She points out that "Moreover, each bore mysterious wounds, whether stigmata or the marks of incubi, on her body."[44] Both the saint and the possessed also underwent a great deal of physical pain. Each also received an elevated status and notoriety that would have not otherwise been possible. The possessed woman received an extraordinary amount of attention, not just from the curiosity-seekers, but also from those

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[41] KJV, Luke 9:41-43: "While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God."[41]

[42] Carolyn Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food To Medieval Women*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987), Ch.1, ¶ 20, notes "Thus from the thirteenth century on, we find religious women losing roles that paralleled or aped male clerical leadership but gaining both the possibility of shaping their own religious experiences in lay communities and a clear alternative- the prophetic alternative- to the male role based on the power of office. "

[43] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* Ch.1, ¶ 22.

[44] Ibid.

in positions of power within and outside the church. Whether the devil's or her own the possessed woman was given a voice she did not have before. As asserted by Moshe Sluhovsky, "Possession occurs among people, first and foremost women, who are denied agency and a public voice."[45] Diefendorf, referring to the case of Nicole Obry echoes the idea proposing, "The case also supports the theory that spirit possession allowed women to engage in the theological discourse from which they were normally excluded because of their sex."[46]

Another factor affecting the increase in possession at this time was the fact that the incidents were popularized in written text. As Sluhovsky also points out, "Equally important were the inventions of the moving press and of sensational journalism, both creatures of the last years of the fifteenth century (that)… created a new style of writing about possession.[47] The sensational journalism that consequently appeared in pamphlets and booklets were printed for a very wide audience and were usually used to report God's triumph over the devil and therefore Protestants. They were dramatic accounts that were propagandistic, but also served to account for the actuality of the events. It was from these types of accounts that the storylines of many of the *Histoires tragique*s were developed.

Exorcism

The Church, while perhaps benefitting from the publicity, still faced problems inherent in the exorcisms themselves. Exorcism was permitted but still lay in a rather

[45] Moshe Sluhovsky, "The Devil in the Convent," The *American Historical Review,* Vol.107, No. 5 (December, 2002): 5.
[46] Barbara Diefendorf, "Gender and the Family," *Renaissance and Reformation France*, ed.Mack. P Holt, (Oxford: Oxford UP), 114.
[47] Sluhovsky, "The Devil," 22.

grey area in terms of practice. It was not one of the official church sacraments; therefore the instances were dealt with on a case-by-case basis according to the opinions of the Church agents involved. As Ferber points out, exorcism did become a type of "'super-sacrament' because its appeal (was) enhanced by the (at least notional) uncertainty of the outcome." [48] The outcome of the exorcism was believed to be unpredictable in other words. It was definitely not a ritual that could be uniformly practiced and the general beliefs about the devil complicated matters. By definition, the devil is a liar, and therefore nothing he transmitted via the possessed person could be trusted.[49] The devil could also make people who were possessed appear not to be possessed. Because of the great number of variables involved in dealing with demons and those who were possessed, there was much uncertainty. Therefore, certain guidelines were used to determine if an individual was indeed possessed. The individual was often interrogated in foreign languages or shown "fake" holy objects to see if she recoiled as if they were authentic.[50] Another means of determining demonic presence was to look for the devil's mark, which was usually an area of the body that was found to be insensitive to pain when pricked by a needle.[51]

There were many ways to exorcize the demons once they were determined to have taken possession of an individual's body. Prior to the sixteenth century, exorcisms themselves were largely unregulated and could have many different components such as using holy water and reading from Scripture along with invocations of saints or laying hands over afflicted parts. Some used fumigation, blessed oils, or herbs, in addition to a

[48] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 68.
[49] John 8:43-45.(NKJV)
[50] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 42-4.
[51] Ibid.

widely varying amount of physical contact or even beatings.[52] Exorcism manuals were published at the end of sixteenth century, such as the work of the Italian Franciscan exorcist Girolamo Manghi, *Flagellum Daemonum*. His manual, published in Latin, was used in France as well.[53] Around this time [the late sixteenth century] the church began a systematic approach to preventing lay healers from practicing exorcism.[54] The Roman Rite of 1614, intended to restrict exorcism, included only twenty-nine benedictions, but dioceses as well as individual clerics added their own as needed.[55] The church was trying to prevent lay people from engaging in superstitious and potentially demonic collaborations while thinking that they were performing a healing ritual.

Witches vs. The Possessed

While much attention was given to the acceptable methods of expelling demons, there were still those who were not convinced of the possibility of demon possession. Physician Johan Weyer published his skeptical ideas on the topic in *De Praestigiis Daemonum et Incantationibus ac Venificiis* in 1563 and *De Lamiis Liber* in 1577. Weyer viewed women who thought they were possessed as victims of their own fantasies. Although Weyer's view was not popular at the time, Freud read his works and found his treatise on demons "one of the ten most significant books" he had read.[56] Weyer was also the first to propose that the women who believed they were victims of possession

[52] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not,* 36.
[53] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 39.
[54] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not,* 70.
[55] Ferber and Sluhovsky both point out the consequences of this act.
[56] See Susan K. Silver, "Demonic Possession and Poetic Exorcism in Early Modern France," *Neophilologus*, 89 (2005), 24. Silver states that "Freud's interest in structural similarities between the analyst/patient, inquisitor/exorcist and witch/demoniac relationships are now well known. Foucault also relates that "forms of power exercised through the Inquisition, including the interrogations and surveillances, are still recognizable in the psychiatric set-up of today." Interview "Sorcery and Madness" 1989, 108.

were actually mentally ill.[57] Weyer even outlined steps for treatment of the women, and thought that those who believed themselves possessed needed medical help, not intervention from Church or State. Weyer's writings serve as more evidence that the notion of possession by the devil was indeed a large enough problem at the time that he felt it necessary to make an appeal to reason.

Modern scholars, who have studied mass possessions in convents, like Weyer, propose that mental disorders, mainly hysteria, were the catalysts for these possessions.[58] Weyer also "maintained that the Bible, if correctly understood, undermined and destroyed all the arguments for witch hunting."[59] Other factors have been suggested, such as the political tensions of the time, but they confirm Weyer's suspicion that the women were primarily victims of mental illness. Sluhovsky notes that "Both Certeau and Mandrou also agree that the events marked a Foucaultian discursive transition from one system of thought to another: from theological to rational, or from Middle Ages to the Enlightenment."[60] It was also during this time of prolific possession that the devil was active via witches as well. Diefendorf states "The era of demonic possession was also the era of the 'great witch craze'."[61] There were many women who were found to be witches who were burned at the stake and some accused of witchcraft were believed to be directly responsible for sending the devil to possess others. Diefendorf describes them as mostly

[57] John Martin, *"*Four hundred Years Later: An Appreciation of Johann Weyer*", Books at Iowa* 59, (Nov. 1993): 3-13.
[58] For more on this, see Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVIIe siècle*, (Paris**:** Plon, 1968) and Michel de Certeau, *La possession de Loudun*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).
[59] Banjamin G. Kohl and H.C. Erik Midelfort, ed., *On Witchcraft, An Abridged Translation of Johann Weyer's De praestigiis dæmonum*, (Asheville, NC: Penguin Press), xxvii.
[60] "Mandrou and Certeau developed the paradigm of current historical thinking about the mass possession at Loudun and similar cases." Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit* 240. For Foucault, a discursive transition occurred when one period's system of thought shifted to a new order that resulted in historical change.
[61] Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross,* 115.

"elderly and poor" as opposed to the possessed nuns who were typically "young and from middle-class families" and furthermore "typically aging peasant women, often widows who had fallen on hard times and were believed to be harboring old grudges that, impotent to enact other forms of revenge, they avenged through evil spells and demonic malevolence."[62] What the women accused of witchcraft had in common with the possessed women was an inability to act because of their sex and marginalized status in the setting in which they found themselves. Women accused as witches were subject to vastly different consequences than those possessed.

Jean Bodin, a sixteenth century lawyer, philosopher, and political theorist, had very definite views on the subject of witchcraft. In 1580, Bodin published the *Démonomie des sorciers*.[63] He had also published the *Six Livres de la République* that is regarded as a great work of the economic theory of mercantilism.[64] Many modern scholars have had difficulty reconciling the fact that Bodin the scholar also wrote the *Démonomanie*. One idea that is proposed by Gunnar Heinsohn and Otto Steiger in their article "Birth Control: The Political-Economic Rationale behind Jean Bodin's *Démonomanie*" is that the work is in keeping with his economic theory, which centered on creating wealth by controlling the influx of precious metals and increasing population.[65] France's population had fallen to about 17.5 million by the middle of the sixteenth century, which was considerably less than its level of approximately 19 million

[62] Ibid.
[63] See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Dec 2006, for a detailed look at Bodin's life.
[64] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
[65] Gunnar Heinsohn and Otto Steiger, "Birth Control: The political-Economic Rationale behind Bodin's Démonomanie," *History of Political Economy* 31.3, (1999): 423-448.

before the great plague began in 1348.[66] Heinsohn and Steiger maintain that Bodin's opposition to witchcraft was "identical to his opposition to contraceptive plants and abortifacient drugs. Artificial birth control—he was convinced—deprived the state of the manpower required to regain economic prosperity."[67] The authors also state:

> In order to understand Bodin, we must explicate the ideas of political and economic authorities promoting the annihilation of women. We know that as early as 1360, shortly after the great plague, secular and clerical aristocrats began to execute so called wise women, often midwives, in their villages.[68]

Heinsohn and Steiger explain that the "war on midwives gained momentum up until the time the "Witch-Bull" of 1484 coordinated the crusade for the entire Catholic world" simply because the "witch-hunters wanted to eradicate those with expertise in birth control without losing too many women of childbearing age."[69] The authors make the argument for their theory as they point out the *Malleus Maleficarum* stated it was written "in relation to the duty of human nature and procreation"[70] and that Kramer and Sprenger wrote about the seven ways that witches hinder procreation. The *Malleus* does list the various ways in which midwives perform abortions, prevent women from conceiving by witchcraft, and offer newborns to the devil.[71] Midwives were also singled out as "surpassing all others in wickedness."[72]

Heinsohn and Steiger cite some passages from Bodin, also showing that Bodin's

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[66] Heinsohn and Steiger, *"*Birth Control*,"* 423.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid, 441.
[69] Heinsohn and Steiger, *"*Birth Control*,"* 423.
[70] Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Montague Summers, (NY: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 29.
[71] Ibid, 66.
[72] Ibid, 41.

stance was clearly based on punishing those who hindered procreation. Bodin's work considered abortion, infanticide, and contraception all equally punishable forms of witchcraft. Diefendorf states that infanticide was the crime for which women were most often executed between the mid-sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries.[73] The court took infanticide very seriously, especially after the 1557 edict of Henry II that made it much easier to convict women of this crime. Bodin considered contraception as criminal as well and in regards to contraception, wrote the following:

> Since whosoever practices the [magical] art, he unequivocally violates the divine laws of God and of nature: this is because he obstructs the purpose of the marriage which was constituted by God. This leads subsequently to either divorce or to childlessness, and this undeniably constitutes a sacrilege or a desecration of the sacred act. In addition, he cannot deny becoming a killer. A person, therefore, who obstructs the conception or birth of children, must be considered just as much a murderer as the person who cuts another's throat.[74]

Bodin's link between contraception and witchcraft is clear and the way in which it should be treated is made quite clear. Pope Sixtus V confirmed Bodin's judgment when he wrote the bull in 1588 that said those who by poisons, potions, and maleficia induced sterility in women or impeded by cursed medicines their conceiving or bearing should be condemned with the most severe punishments.[75]

The idea proposed by Heinsohn and Steiger that the witch-hunt was a justifiable means of increasing the population is an interesting argument and is well documented.

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[73] Diefendorf, *"Beneath the Cross,"* 116.
[74] Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, (Toronto: Victoria UP, 1995), 212.
[75] Heinsohn and Steger, "Birth Control," 441.

While the increase in witch-hunting and possession during the early modern period cannot be readily attributed to a single factor, the argument they make about the witch-hunt does fits logically into the possession and exorcism explosion. Particularly interesting is the idea that the goal was to keep alive the women of childbearing age and extinguish the witches who were naturally older women. As Silver also attests, "Older women on the other hand were more likely to be perceived as Satan's servants and accused of *malefica*, or causing harm by witchcraft."[76] Silver points to the fact that Nicole Obry and Marthe Brossier, whose well-known case of possession followed Obry's, both claimed to be "bewitched" by older women. Obry said she was the victim of a gypsy. Brossier launched claims against her neighbor Ann Chevreau, who was sentenced to prison while Brossier was on display, traveling around France.[77]

The treatment of the older women as witches and sentencing them prison or to be burned at the stake is consistent with Heinsohn and Steiger's theory. Nothing was lost by ridding society of someone incapable of giving birth and who might even help others terminate pregnancies. The young girls who were believed to have demons in their bodies were treated better than the alleged witches most likely because they could still have children. However there seems to be even more at stake and a combination of factors and changes over time all worked together to create the wave of witch-related and demonic activity in the early modern period. Bodin's theory of a push to repopulate does not account for the later increase in demonic possessions reported, but it is in keeping

[76] Susan Silver, "Demonic Possession," 29. See also definition of maleficium in Noonan, J.T, Jr., *Contraception: A History of its Treatments by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1986).
[77] Silver, "Demonic Possession," 29.

with the apparently disposable midwives and supposed witches.[78]

It would seem there were numerous factors involved in this complicated and far-reaching situation. The struggle for power between the Catholic and Protestant Churches and the nobility's interests added to the mix accounts for much of the activity surrounding witch-hunts and demonic possession. The need for some women to find expression in a public and/or religious forum is another. There were, of course, the post-Tridentine reform measures taken in convents that paralleled outbreaks of possession.[79] The movement toward absolutism is yet another influence. The sweeping nature of the phenomenon and variety of cases leaves it difficult to pinpoint a single cause, as there were many contributing factors. The possessions also took on some curious twists, as those who were possessed were believed to have the ability to foretell the future or communicate with spirits. People seemed to think that they would be able to find some answers to some difficult questions via the possessed.

These beliefs led to a defining feature of the "possession vogue" in France during the early modern period in that the possessed became oracles or fortunetellers of sorts. In the case of Marthe Brossier, who was from the village of Romorantin in the Loire valley, possession became a career.[80] After her family declared she was possessed and had her exorcised by the town priest, they subsequently paraded through many towns on the way to Paris, publicly displaying Marthe. She told fortunes and was exorcised publicly. She became the center of much debate and dispute among clergy members and members of

[78] For more information on treatment of witches, see Brian P. Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, (NY: Pearson Longman, 2006).
[77] The reform initiated by the Council of Trent proved difficult to implement and many convents rebelled against the strict regulations they were not accustomed to following. For more on this, see Sluhovsky.
[80] See also Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers,* and Silver, "Demonic Possession," for more on Brossier.

the medical community who were trying to either confirm or refute the veracity of her possession. Anne Chevreau, sent to prison for "bewitching Marthe" claimed that Marthe had no other recourse than to pose as possessed, as she was unable to marry for economic reasons.[81] Marthe was ultimately banished from Paris, but continued touring other towns with clergy and family members, who tried unsuccessfully to make it to Rome to see the Pope. The king did not want Marthe to do so as he saw it as potentially alienating the Papacy.[82] Her story illustrates the use of the possessed as pawns in a much larger struggle for authority in France. Ferber describes her position as follows:

> In any event, Marthe Brossier was clearly seen by both camps as a vehicle through which contestations could be pursued. But it seems that she, too, was used as a buffer, her very lack of status permitting a more indirect conflict between male elites who thereby, in a sense, attenuated conflict as well as furthering it.[83]

Marthe was the medium through which men jockeyed for position in the dispute over the reality of demonic possession. She became a pawn in a political and religious battle far larger than a simple case of possession because of the involvement of church, government, and physicians. Marthe's case took on a much greater significance because of the attention focused on it. From one point of view, a very public and successful exorcism could point towards a new purification and unification of France. On the other

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[81] See Anita Walker and Edmund Dickerman,"A Woman Under the Influence: A Case of Alleged Possession in Sixteenth-Century France," in Levack*, Articles on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology*, V. 9, 183-201.

[80] Ferber states that the king appealed to Cardinal d'Ossat who contacted Fr. Jacques Sirmond, a Jesuit arranging lodgings for the Brossier party. Ossat suggested that helping the Brossiers might hurt the Jesuits' chances of being permitted back into the regions of the Parlement of Paris.

[83] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 59.

side, many did not want a Catholic unification of the country and did not want to give any extra authority to the church. Of course some rational individuals were merely concerned with disproving the possibility of demonic possession.

Disputes on possession continued to rage, much like the witchcraft dispute between Weyer and Bodin. As Robert Mandrou noted, Brossier's case was exceptional for several reasons.[84] Mandrou stated the most important component was in the "formule même de la possession: Marthe Brossier renouvelle le cas de Nicole Obry, Jeanne Féry, Perrine Sauceron puisqu'elle est possédée, mais non sorcière jurée; elle n'a pas pactisé avec Satan … elle se pose simplement en victime …"[85]

Mandrou's observation reiterates the fact that young women were victims of possession and needed to be healed, while older women were deemed witches and punished, often with death. Other accounts of Marthe Brossier suggest she had read the story of Nicole Obry and taken cues on how to perform.[86] Marthe spoke in her belly, as did Obry, and denounced Huguenots. According to Silver, "Perhaps more than Nicole Obry, Brossier demonstrated an acute awareness of the social tensions aroused by her case. She seems to have passed her predecessor in her sense of theater and sharp wit."[87] Debate raged as to whether or not Marthe's performance was authentic.

In the case of Marthe's possession, priests like Pierre de Bérulle and many of the doctors who were involved maintained that Brossier was indeed possessed. Bérulle, who later became a French Cardinal, was very influential in the conversion of Huguenots and

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[84] Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et Sorciers en France au XVIÎ Siècle*, (Librairie Plon, 1968),163.
[85] Mandrou, *" Magistrats",*163.
[86] "Brossier was familiar with the details of Nicole Obry's exorcism, having read print accounts of it, so that many of the traits of her demonic possession mirrored those of her predecessor at Laon." Silver, *"*Demonic Possession*,"* 26.
[87] Ibid.

highly esteemed in the Catholic Church.[88] Berulle, who wrote under the pseudonym Leon d'Alexis, compared demonic possession to the Incarnation and explained, "In one it is God, in the other it is a demon, reclothed by human nature."[89] Berulle attacked physicians for mistaking external symptoms as signs of illness rather than possession. A prominent physician, Dr. Michel Marescot, set out to prove that Brossier was a fraud, although he believed in the devil. Marescot had been ordered by Henri IV to investigate Brossier's claims. On May 24, 1599, the Parlement of Paris received his report that Marthe's alleged possession was "nothing supernatural, a large element of fraud, a small element of disease."[90] The disputes over the reality of such claims continued as more cases of possession arose involving not just individuals, but groups in convents.

Sluhovsky proposes one theory about the group possessions, or possessions in convents. He maintains that the majority of the cases within the confines of a convent were because of a backlash against imposed reforms in the orders. There were also more cases of possession amongst the newer orders such as the Ursulines[91]. The movement toward enclosure of the convents came about after the Council of Trent.[92] The movement caused tensions and fights within the houses. Sluhovsky contends that, "by becoming possessed, some nuns could express their opposition to reform and to the introduction of

[88] see the Catholic Encyclopedia for more on Bérulle.
[89] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not,* 199.
[90] Walker, *Unclean Spirits,*15.
[91] Sluhovsky, *Believe Not,* 244.
[92] "The early Italian Ursulines were unenclosed women who lived in their own homes without the usual religious vows, while engaging in an active apostolate among the poor and the sick, but by the 1580's, thanks to the efforts of both Carlo Borromeo and the papacy, they had been compelled to accept bith a form of community and full religious vows, as Trent had required. With the active support of the male congregation of the Doctrinaires, a small group of women came together in papal Avignon in 1592 and, after a few years of uncertainty, they adopted the Borromean-papal format of a congregation with vows." By 1612 (with the papal bull) they were enclosed. Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France 1580-1730,* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2009).

a more rigorous regimen."[93] At the same time, possessions gave the convents elevated status, just as it gave some of the possessed women. The fact that the devil singled out a particular convent showed that he viewed their work as a threat. He had to try to eradicate such virtue.

Burned at the Stake: The Actual Trial of Gaufridy

One such convent case occurred in Aix-en-Provence that inspired one of the Rosset tales. In 1609, Madeleine Demandolx de la Palud, who was an Ursuline in Aix, was thought to be possessed and exorcisms took place secretly that revealed that a priest was responsible for her demonic possession. The priest, named Louis Gaufridy, was from Marseilles, and was a spiritual advisor to Madeleine's family[94]. Others nuns were possessed, but Louise Capeau and Madeleine Demandols were the two who figured prominently in his case and who also accused Gaufridy. After Fr. Romillon, the director of the convent, was unable to exorcise the demons, the Dominican Sébastian Michaelis was called in. Ferber describes Michaelis as a "Svengali whose experience in witch trials and Dominican eye for public display appear to have led him to see the polemical possibilities of turning exorcism into a witch-hunt."[95] Another expert in witchcraft, Fr. Domptius, assisted Michaelis.

Gaufridy had a great deal of support throughout the proceedings from fellow clergy members, but the more Michaelis discovered during the exorcisms of Madeleine and Louise, the more determined he became to serve justice. The women were taken to

[93] Ibid, 246.
[94] Information on Madeleine, Gaufridy, and Louise from Carmona, *Les Diables de Loudun,* and Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers.*
[95] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 72.

Sainte-Baume for their exorcisms. Louise Capeau's demon, "Verrine" spoke at length on many Church doctrines and in the third week of exorcisms, accused Madeleine Demandols of witchcraft and possession. She (through Verrine) claimed that Gaufridy had seduced Madeleine and deserved to be burned alive. In later testimony, Demandols also claimed that her devils would not depart until Gaufridy was dead or converted.[96] As the exorcisms of Demandols grew more violent, authorities became divided as to how to direct the case.[97] Michaelis made it his mission to prosecute Gaufridy and compiled a dossier with all of the proof of the truth of Madeleine's claims with a list of the twenty-four demons by whom she was possessed. Guillaume du Vair, who would be named "Chancelier de France" in 1616, had Gaufridy incarcerated after attending an exorcism of Madeleine.[98] Gaufridy subsequently confessed to making a pact with the devil in order to seduce young women and have the respect of the well-to-do of his village. The memory of his first encounter with the devil, described by Carmona in *Les Diables de Loudun* follows:

> Gaufridy avoue s'être donné au Diable treize ou quatorze ans plus tôt. C'était au mois de mai se souvient-il. Le Diable lui apparut, fort correctement vêtu à la façon bourgeoise. D'abord effrayé, Gaufridy se sentit bientôt rassuré par la conversation du Démon, qui lui dit se nommer Lucifer. Le curé des Accoules affirme que deux pensées lui vinrent alors : l'une qu'il voudrait bien « être en

[96] Sebastian Michaelis, *Histoire admirable de la possession et conversion d'une penitente,Seduite par un magicien, la faisant Sorciere & Princesse des Sorciers au pays de Provence, conduite à la S. Baume pour y estre exorcize l'an M. DC. X. au mois de Novembre, soubs l'authorité du R. P. F. Sebastien Michaelis… Ensemble la Pneumalgie ou discours du susdit P. Michaelis*, (Paris: Charles Chastellain, 1613), 365.
[97] Mandrou cites Pierre de l'Estoile "Il y a beaucoup de disputes parmi les catholiques de Marseille… ", 203.
[98] Carmona, *Les Diables de Loudun*, 40.

> réputation parmi le monde, et singulièrement des gens de bien ; l'autre était la présence en lui d'une affection désordonnée de jouir de quelques filles ».[99]

Thus Gaufridy became the "Prêtre souffleur de Marseille" and later confessed to having breathed on at least one thousand girls and women. Madeleine Demandols testified against Gaufridy, giving accounts of his activities at the sabbat. She offered the following information about what she had witnessed:

> […] including devil worship, sexual orgies, the feeding of the Host to dogs and the eating of young children. And, most importantly for the aims of the prosecutors, she attested that Louis Gaufridy had performed the Mass at the sabbat. So it came about that representatives of Parlement tested Gaufridy for witches' marks. When they found them, he asserted that he had been marked without his consent, and asked the court 'whether the Divell had power to mark a Christian without his consent.[100]

Gaufridy's assertion that he was unwillingly marked sparked debate about the possibility of receiving the devil's mark without consent, but Michaelis thought the presence of a mark proof enough to burn him at the stake.[101] Gaufridy later confessed all to his fellow Capuchins, including the fact that he had allowed the mark. He confessed to willingly giving himself to the devil. He confirmed his confession with the Parlement, but then retracted it later. The verdict was given and Gaufridy was burned at the stake on April 30, 1611. In the days that followed his execution, the devils left many of the other nuns who had also been possessed. The devils Grésil and Sonneillon left Louise Capeau,

[99] Ibid, 41.
[100] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 81.
[101] Ferber explains that the incident and debates it triggered prompted physician to the king, Jacques Fontaine, to write a treatise about it entitled *Discours des marques des sorciers*, (Ibid, 81).

leaving only Verrine behind. Madeleine Demandols had been in a trancelike state for several days before the execution, and was not only revived, but also freed of three demons. Only Beelzebub was left, but nonetheless Madeleine was imprisoned for life for witchcraft.

The Gaufridy trial is one in which a male priest, albeit secular, is burned at the stake.[102] The execution of Gaufridy served as a spectacular example of the "cult of possession" through which the Church, the exorcists, and judicial system had much to gain. The Church made a very public example of its inner purging as well as a forceful showing of its authoritative power. As Guy Bechtel writes in *Sorcellerie et Possession* "En effet, cette affaire […] peut encore fournir des lumières sur un phénomène infiniment plus vaste et infiniment plus complexe : les rapports éternels de l'Individu et du Pouvoir."[103] The possession affected many members of the convent besides the key players in the trial and caused much debate among various clergy members regarding the role and method of exorcism. The judicial system's harsh punishment proved that no one was above the law. Because of the religious and demonic mix paired with controversy about the previously esteemed priest, the story created quite a buzz, or as later criticized by M. Desmini "Cette affaire qui fit grand bruit dans le royaume a acquit à notre Parlement la réputation de croire aux sorcières."[104] Mandrou notes that the site where Madeleine suffered became a tourist draw for visitors to Aix.[105] Besides inspiring much talk, publications and even a couplet, the event also inspired Rosset to include the drama

[102] A secular priest is one who does not live according to a rule of a religious order, society, or congregation of priests.
[103] Guy Bechtel, *Sorcellerie et possession,* (Paris: Grasset, 1972), 29.
[104] Mandrou, *Magistrats,* 207.
[105] Ibid, 208.

of Gaufridy, or Gaufridy as he spells it, in his *Histoires tragiques*. His "Histoire III - *De l'horrible et épouvantable sorcellerie de Louis Gaufridy, prêtre de Marseille*" provides a riveting account of the seduction of Madeleine and the death of Gaufridy.[106] The literary extension of the event demonstrates the importance of Gaufridy's trial by immortalizing the event in short story form. Since a firsthand account written by Michaelis had been published, there was clearly enough public interest in the story to support a fictional version of the possession in Aix. Rosset was from this area and knew of the story, as he mentions, "J'ai honte de publier tant d'horreur à la posterité et de diffamer une province si proche du lieu de ma naissance, honteuse d'avoir produit ces prodiges."[107]

Gaufridy: the Rosset Version

Rosset begins the story, following an oft-used formula in his versions of the *Histoires tragiques*, by denouncing the times in which he lives. Since this particular story deals with possession, he makes a correlation to the fact that his times seem more rife with demonic possession than any other times. He opens the tale with the following lines:

> Si jamais l'ennemi commun du genre humain a donné du scandale au monde, si jamais il a fait paraître, par ses horribles impiétés et par ses abominables séductions, la malice de sa nature et la tyrannie qu'il exerce sur ceux qui en sont possédés, j'estime qu'il a fait en ce siècle où nous vivons plus qu'en tout autre.[108]

Although Rosset has a tendency to stress the debauchery of his day and emphasize that

[106] For simpicity's sake I retain the original spelling of Gaufridy, as well as Madeleine throughout the dissertation, although Rosset changed the spelling in the *Histoires tragiques.*
[107] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 102-3.
[108] Ibid, 103.

humanity has never been in a worse state, he may actually be correct about more possession taking place than in other periods.[109] He generally sets the stage for each story by first emphasizing the corruption of values and actions qui "font dresser les cheveux." He then tries to establish the veracity of his account. In the case of Gaufridy, the tale is based on actual recorded events and he mentions the sources for his story as "la vérité des actes et selon les mémoires que des témoins irréprochables en ont faits."[110] He insists on the superlative of the horrific event he is about to describe, and then moves directly to the narration. He tells the story using the same basic facts attributed to the case and in some instances, tells the story almost exactly as it appeared in the Michaelis version. Rosset does add his own touches to the story to render it more dramatic and to paint a more shameful portrait of Gaufridy, whom he describes as "un des plus grands et plus infâmes instruments que l'Enfer ait jamais produit."[111]

Rosset skillfully weaves the facts together with his embellishment adding to the story and detracting nothing from the "true" accounts. He tells the story of how Gaufridy received the book of magic, found among other books left to him by a dead uncle, which corresponds to the testimony of the trial. Gaufridy conjures up Satan and makes a deal with him in order to become the most honored and esteemed priest in Provence, to live thirty-four years with no illness nor anything to sully his reputation, and to be loved and have the pleasure of all the women he chooses by breathing on them. What is ironic about the "prêtre souffleur" as Ferber points out is that his seduction of women by breathing upon them is "an ironic inversion of a traditional form of exorcism in which the

[109] Michel Carmona, *Les Diables de Loudun, Sorcellerie et politique sous Richelieu*, (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 17.
[110] Rosset, *Les histoires mémorables,* 103.
[111] Ibid.

breath of an exorcist heals the possessed."[112] Rosset adds one interesting change in making Gaufridy the devil's dupe *par excellence*. He is not only convinced to give his body, his soul, and his actions to Satan, but even more ironically signs a contract with a term he thought to be thirty-four years, but was actually fourteen years. The small details Rosset adds truly change the dimension of the story. Critic Henri Coulet denounces Rosset's style in the following passage, but begrudgingly admits he does have ability as a writer:

> Rosset n'est pas un artiste : il n'atteint qu'exceptionnellement à l'éloquence vraie ; le seul moyen auquel il ait recours pour animer ses récits est le présent de narration ; il n'use de la mythologie et des images comme d'ornements rhétoriques ; il énonce les faits les plus déconcertants dans le style le plus plat. Mais il sait créer une atmosphère; il croit au surnaturel, aux blessures qui saignent en présence du meurtrier, aux succubes, aux démons qui transforment en criminel un honnête homme en lui soufflant une décision atroce et laissent des marques indolores sur le corps des filles possédées. Il ne peut pas expliquer, mais il ne fait que mieux deviner par leurs effets les forces mystérieuses qui se déchaînent dans le fond des âmes, la part de l'inhumain dans l'homme.[113]

Rosset's skill lies exactly in the expression of that area of the soul, the inhuman side that is compelling, yet so very frightening. He demonstrates this skill throughout the course of his text, expressing the incomprehensibly horrific transgressive behaviors that comprise most of the tales. He goes further with the details of the devil's change, to the pact and shows how Gaufridy's avarice doubly punishes him. He literally becomes the

[112] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 81.
[113] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, 156.

bouc of the *bouc* and not only loses his body and soul to Satan, but is again punished by losing the esteem for which he yearned and having the flesh of his lustful body publicly burned. Thus, the Church and the devil humiliate Gaufridy on both ends of the spectrum. This small change in the story serves to intensify its repercussions.

Rosset also excels in describing the Gaufridy's debauchery from his lust for Madeleine to his participation in the Sabbaths. Rosset tells of how Gaufridy's reputation led him to Madeleine, via her father le Sieur de la Palud, "un gentilhomme provençal," and how he began to seduce the ten year-old girl. Rosset emphasizes the hypocrisy of Gaufridy by giving the particulars of his methods and showing how he violates Madeleine's trust by leading her to the Sabbath and offering her as a sacrifice to "Belzébuth." Rosset also maintains a narrative presence throughout with frequent judgments, interjections, and insertions. He prefaces the incident of Madeleine's first Sabbath with Gaufridy's guile and writes that although the priest pretended to go see Madeleine's father, it actually was "pour exécuter ce qu'il avait entrepris en la sorte que je vais le réciter."[114] The use of his power as a man of the cloth to defile the innocence of the young Madeleine is already crime enough. However, in the following passage describing the actual rituals used at the "sabbat" Rosset renders Gaufridy yet more monstrous:

> Ayant un jour trouvé Madeleine toute seule et après avoir joui d'elle, il la sollicita de venir avec lui dans une caverne proche de cette métairie où il promettait de lui faire voir de grandes merveilles. Cette jeune fille le crut et tous deux étant arrivés dans l'antre, ils y trouvèrent un grand nombre de femmes qui dansaient à l'entour

[114] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 107.

d'un grand bouc assis. Un tel spectacle effraya de premier abord Madeleine, mais Gaufridy lui donna courage, en lui disant que ceux qu'elle voyait étaient de leurs amis, qu'il ne fallait pas qu'elle eût peur, au contraire, qu'il fallait que désormais elle fût de la bande, lui promettant de recevoir le plus grand honneur qui lui put jamais arriver.[115]

Rosset's description of the event is carefully crafted. The author first shows the abusive side of Gaufridy, with his plan ready to take advantage of Madeleine for himself. Gaufridy is a lascivious priest who violates the innocence of a young girl.[116]

Next, showing more scheming and complete disregard for anything sacred, Gaufridy lures her into the cave, a space of duality. As is often the case in early modern literature, the cave is the location of sorcery, demons, and illicit activities. In contrast, it serves also as a religious space of penitence and veneration, as in the grotto at Sainte-Baume where Michaelis and Domptius will perform the exorcisms of Madeleine and Louise.[117] Rosset gives cues, but just enough to keep the reader going. Just as Gaufridy is luring Madeleine into the cavern, Rosset is using the element of suspense to pull the reader in along with her, as something unknown and frightening must lie within. Rosset sets up a moment of apprehension. Madeleine is frightened. Gaufridy not only comforts her, but reassures her she is about to have the greatest honor she could ever receive. The idea of the priest convincing the naïve and innocent young girl that she is approaching

[115] Rosset, "*Les Histoires mémorables,"* 107

[116] The fact that Gaufridy began his seduction of Madeleine when she was a child calls to mind a pedophile priest and also contributes to Madeleine's psychological state. One paper calls the very nature of possession into question on these grounds, based upon a different case. See Anita M. Walker and Edmund H. Dickerman, "Magdeleine Des Aymards : demonism or child abuse in early modern France*?", Psychohistory Review* 24, no. 3(1996): 239-264.

[117] The grotto was made famous by the penitence of Marie-Madeleine of Judea and pilgrimages are still made on her Saint's day, July 22. Bechtel, *Sorcellerie et possession,* 60.

great honor in the depths of this cave is repelling.[118] She is unsure, and Rosset uses her uncertainty to engage the reader. Rosset hints, however, with the Madeleine's ambivalence that no great honor awaits. He provides a pause in the narrative to allow for speculation.

As Coulet points out, Rosset does have a gift for drawing the reader to that dark cavern where the unspeakable is not only possible, but fascinating. It is with these suspenseful types of passages that the difference between reading a factual account of the story and reading Rosset's tale becomes quite marked. Instead of simply giving a sequential report of what happened, Rosset artfully draws upon the pleasure of reading a version that is deliberately and sequentially revealed in a manner of literary seduction. Rosset presents Madeleine as a sympathetic character, a victim, of an older man's unbridled play for power. The picture he paints is one that is vividly disgusting, but with an element of anticipation that makes finding out what will happen mandatory. It is as if he is drawing in the reader simultaneously as Gaufridy pulls Madeleine further into her abyss:

> Avec ces paroles il la mène vers le bouc, qui était Belzébuth, et la lui présente. L'exécrable démon la prend et la marque comme les autres sorciers, et puis s'accouple avec elle et la viole. Ce fait, les sorciers et sorcières, qui s'étaient assemblés à l'entour, jettent un grand cri de réjouissance et puis, d'un consentement, la déclarent princesse de la synagogue, de même que Gaufridy en était le prince. Quand elle et Gaufridy s'en retournent, il lui commande de ne dire

[118] In the early modern period, the cave is typically associated with magic and attempts to communicate with demons, as in Sorel's *Françion* and Corneille's *Médée*. Interestingly, the word grotesque also has its origins there, coming from the word grotta.

> rien de ce qu'elle avait vu ni à son père, ni à sa mère, ni à aucun autre. Depuis il ne se tenait assemblée nocturne que les diables ne l'y transportassent, là où elle était reconnue pour maitresse des autres sorcières et connue charnellement par le bouc.[119]

Rosset employs economy of style when it is time to reveal the shocking details of what happens to Madeleine. He very succinctly states that the demon marks her, which is very important during the actual trial,[120] "s'accouple avec elle et la viole."[121] The horror of such activity makes it unnecessary for the author to elaborate. All of the elements of disgust are present in this episode from the beginning with Gaufridy and developing to a more heightened sensation of disgust with the cave, the dancers, and the goat demon. Rosset does not need to embellish the facts when they carry such a weight of shock value.

Interestingly, Rosset's narration also reiterates the psychological composition that lured Gaufridy into his pact with the devil. His desire for self-importance and the esteem of the nobility are what led him to Satan. His fatal flaw is mirrored again in his dealings with Belzébuth. In the description of the Sabbath, his desire to be held in high regard, achieved by offering Madeleine as his sacrificial lamb, is clear. His readiness to give her over to Belzébuth shows just how eager he is to be someone important in any setting. The devil rewards Gaufridy for his work and thereafter, he and Madeleine become Prince and Princess of all Sabbaths. Rosset shows the trickery of the devil. The devil can cleverly infiltrate a soul by using its weakness. Despite his suspenseful account of the event, Rosset is trying to teach a lesson and does not lose sight of this goal. Rosset shows

[119] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 107.
[120] The presence of the Devil's mark is one of the deciding factors of culpability for sorcerers and witches alike. The Devil's mark on Gaufridy is seen as compelling evidence against him in the trial.
[121] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 107.

that just one of the seven deadly sins, the sin of pride, will surely lead to one's downfall. Pride is the catalyst that sparks a whole series of transgressions. The carnal manifestation of Gaufridy's sin via the innocent body of Madeleine is the key element of disgust intensified by the addition of bestiality. It is a disturbing image, but as Rosset knows, it is also fascinating. The perverse nature of the Sabbath mesmerizes.

Rosset finishes his account of the Sabbath as he began it. He insists once more on the truth of the story as well as the possibility of Sabbaths and defends his position:

> Je sais qu'il y aura plusieurs qui riront de cette histoire, encore que la vérité en apparaisse par le témoignage de tant de gens de bien et par l'arrêt d'un si célèbre Parlement, prononcé de la bouche de l'un des plus illustres hommes de notre siècle.[122]

He gives logical reasons as to why this account is believable and points out that the very origins lie in classic examples in the cults of Cybèle and Cérès, and cites other sorcerers such as Orpheus and Tiresias. He states that there are many examples of carnal visits from a succubus or incubus in Antiquity. He cites examples from the book of Evangels that states demons exist and that Jesus was commanded to cast out these demons. He concludes that justice will come and that the wicked, along with their «bouc détestable, sale et puant» will be exterminated from Earth to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The insistence of the narrator, who recounts a seemingly unbelievable scenario, is not new. Examples can be found such as those in Pliny's *Natural History,* written in the latter part of the first century, where amidst the cornucopia of monsters and improbable

[122] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 129.

beings, oft repeated in travel literature of the sixteenth century, the insistence upon the truth is always found.[123] In matters of exorcism, the truth is also the crux of a debate that raged among members of the clergy. In the case of the actual Gaufridy trial with Madeleine's testimony, the truth is critical, because her demons testify during questioning. The testimony of demons raises a big question in the judicial realm of such testimony because of the widely held ecclesiastical view of the devil as the "Father of Lies." The belief is founded upon the gospel of St. John (8:44) which reads as follows:

> Ye are of (your) father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.[124]

Therefore, the exorcist's interrogation of demons of the possessed was a practice that was discouraged by the Catholic Church. For Michaelis, it was important to find a solution in order to use Madeleine's testimony to convict Gaufridy. He changes his earlier views on the topic and gives arguments as to why the testimony in this case should be accepted. Ferber explains this change in policy as a reflection of the historical stance of the Catholic Church and more importantly as a "barometer of the times" exhibiting the sense of urgency within the reforming Church to promote its purity and authenticity against threats from the devil.[125] The commissioners finally agreed that her testimony under the devil's influence would be acceptable, provided she was given an opportunity to confirm or refute it after Madeleine was herself again. Again, this logic provided a bit of a

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[123]See, for example, Lynn Ramey, "Monstrous Alterity in Early Modern Travel Accounts," *Esprit Créateur*, 48.1 (2008): 81-95.
[124] For more on this debate, see Walker, *Unclean Spirits,* 11-12.
[125] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 78.

loophole, because it was left to the exorcists to determine if it was indeed the devil who was speaking.

The Marks of the devil

Other important determining factors in the case were the enactment of the Sabbath and the devil's marks. Bechtel offers the following definition of the Sabbath:

> Assemblée des sorciers, généralement tenue un mercredi ou un vendredi. On y adore le grand bouc noir, on s'y repaît de chair de petits enfants, on y danse dos contre dos, etc. L'orgie se termine souvent de façon licencieuse. On discute pour savoir s'il s'est tenu d'authentiques sabbats ou s'il s'agit seulement de séquences oniriques dans la vie des sorciers.[126]

Rosset's obviously takes poetic license in his account of the Sabbath, but an important feature of all accounts is human flesh. In the testimony from Gaufridy found in Mandrou, some of the rituals include eating the flesh of small children and the participants polluting their own bodies. In *Les Diables de Loudun*, Carmona lists the ways the Sabbath is performed as an inversion of regular mass. Since the focus of a mass is to partake of the body of Christ, it is only logical that the black mass focuses on the flesh. During the black mass, the host is fed to dogs and bread is used in its place. Human blood replaces the wine and reverse baptisms are performed. Everyone leaves in the name of Satan.

The devil's marks, which are a source of contention[127] during Gaufridy's trial, are

[126] Bechtel, *Sorcellerie et possession,* 273.
[127] The devil's marks are a source of contention during the trial because Jaques Fontaine, a doctor assigned to the case maintained that the marks do exist and cannot be made without the consent of

yet another way in which diabolical rites focus on the flesh. There was some debate and question as to whether or not such marks are permanent, but they were generally believed to remain once one is marked. Carmona relates Gaufridy's testimony as follows:

> Désormais, Madeleine accompagne Gaufridy au sabbat. Tous deux sont marqués par le Diable qui utilise à cette fin son petit doigt. Madeleine est marquée à la tête, au cœur, au ventre aux cuisses, aux jambes, aux pieds, et en plusieurs autres parties de son corps. Elle a aussi une aiguille dans la cuisse, qu'elle n'en sent point. Gaufridy a assisté à l'opération et a remarque que, lorsque l'aiguille est entrée, on aurait cru voir percer du parchemin. Là où le Diable touche, la chair demeure un peu enfoncée. Les sectateurs du Diable, même quand ils reviennent a Dieu conservent les marques indélébiles que leur a infligées le Démon.[128]

The fact that Gaufridy and Madeleine were both marked by the devil, with or without consent, rests uncontested in all accounts. Physicians confirmed their findings that were presented as evidence in trial. Once one is marked, the mark remains. In Mandrou's work *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII^e siècle*, the Magistrate from Aix writes a letter attesting to the anomalies of the case, in which he mentions "the disparition des marques" on Madeleine, certified by the examining physicians.[129]

The authorities working on the case decided that this could be attributed to more of the devil's trickery, and there is no way to prove what happened. Again, as in Michaelis's rationalization for admitting Madeleine's testimony when *she* was speaking and not Beelzebub, in matters of the devil and his deceit, an argument can always be

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the person marked in his Discours des marques, 1611, while Gaufridy insisted he did not consent to them. Michaelis insisted they were proof enough to condemn Gaufridy.

[128] Michel Carmona, *Les Diables de Loudun,* 42.

[129] R. Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers,* 205.

crafted to suit the desired end.

Despite the disappearance of Madeleine's marks, the devil's practice of marking the body and how to examine a body for his marks were routine features in accounts of demonic possession. Finding the devil's marks on Gaufridy was, after all, the proof needed for his accusation in the Aix trials. Ferber likens the mark to the signature on a diabolic pact, "legible on one's body."[130] The practice of legible marks to indicate culpability was not unique to sorcery trials in the early modern period. The marking of bodies was also used by the penal system that found the marking of bodies to legibly display their crimes an effective means of punishment. A link between criminals and those who trafficked with the devil can be seen in the marking of the body because it marginalized the recipients and took away ownership of the body itself. Once marked, the body is a sovereign entity, belonging to a greater power, be it a king or a demon. In the same way an animal is branded to show it belongs to someone, the human body is marked to show it is now property of someone else. In her essay "Textual performance: Imprinting the Criminal Body," Katherine Dauge-Roth states:

> As all forms of spectacular corporeal punishment, the branding of the criminal body dramatized the always potentially violent power of the state over all members of the social body. A performative gesture that publicly reclaimed the deviant body for the King, the impression of the *fleur de lys* marked the convict as the monarch's possession. Placed into circulation, the branded body participated in an economy of publicity and reproduction of the sign of sovereign power. But the mark also condemned its bearer to a life of suspicion and unemployability,

[130] Ferber, *"Demonic Possession,"* 81.

and thus to a permanent criminal existence.[131]

Likewise, the demonic marks, which were not believed to disappear, condemned the bearer to lives of suspicion or death. The marks placed the women who were tricked by Gaufridy in a precarious position even after the demons had departed. They would always be known for their relations with the devil. Whether the marks were real or not, the memories were indelible.

Michaelis also writes of the case in a publication titled *Histoire admirable de la possession et conversion d'une pénitente séduite par un magicien, la faisant sorcière et princesse au pays de provence, conduite a la Sainte-Baume pour y estre exorcisée l'an 1610, au mois de novembre…* Anne de Vaucher-Gravili notes Rosset must have read this account, because his rendition of Madeleine's exorcism conforms so precisely to that of Michaelis. Rosset explains how Gaufridy tried to keep Madeleine out of the convent and sent the demons Belzébuth, Léviathan, Asmodée, Barbérith, and Astaroth who are all categorized as demons of the first hierarchy by Michaelis in his book. According to Michaelis, Belzébuth is the demon of arrogance, although he is also known as "Lord of the flies" and presides over Sabbaths. Michaelis has Leviathan listed as attacking Christian religious beliefs and Asmodée or Asmodeus, is known as the demon of lust. Barbérith or Berith, is demon of murdering or blasphemy, and Astaroth, demon of laziness and vanity. After stating the names of all the demons sent to Madeleine, Rosset interjects, "Déplorable condition de ceux qui servent à de tels maîtres!"[132] in order to reestablish his presence and recall that the tale is for instructive purposes. When Rosset

[131] Katherine Dauge-Roth, "Textual Performance: Imprinting the Criminal Body," *Intersections: Actes du 35e congrès annuel de la North American Society for French Literature, Dartmouth College, 8-10 mai 2003*, ed.Faith E. Beasley and Kathleen Wine (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2005), 128.
[132] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 110.

describes the frightful antics of Gaufridy, he in turn appeals to the sensibilities of the reader to confirm that whatever transpires is truly evil and unthinkable.

Nevertheless, Rosset wants the reader to think about this intriguing case of possession and so that he or she will be compelled to read further. The ability to engage the reader is what accounts for the success of Rosset's work. Rosset delivers a tale that does not disappoint, here remaining true to the Michaelis version.[133] He depicts the exorcism of Magdelaine in the following excerpt:

> Et un jour, qui était le 18 janvier mil six cent onze, comme les religieux l'exhortaient de confesser ses péchés et publier devant tous les forfaits horribles et exécrables qui se commettent à la synagogue, Belzébuth la menaça de l'étrangler si elle les récitait. De sorte qu'à mesure qu'elle voulut ouvrir la bouche, ce prince infernal la prit par le gosier et serra si étroitement qu'il lui fait rouler les yeux et perdre la parole. Les assistants croyant qu'elle en mourait, se mirent à lui faire le signe de la croix sur son gosier et à réciter le commencement de l'Evangile de saint Jean, *In principium erat Verbum*.[134]

This scene, taken from the annals written by Michaelis, is riveting for many reasons. In the scene is the presence of the men of the cloth, Madeleine herself, and Belzébuth creates a three-fold conflict. The battle of good versus evil is being waged through the female body as intermediary, who at this moment ironically becomes voiceless. As Silver notes, "The demoniac's voice produces her, creating its own text and counter text by requiring exorcists and doctors to interpret it and assign it a name."[135] Thus although

[133] see Michealis, *Histoire Admirable*, « Actes du Mardi, Dix-huitième Janvier, » 22.
[134] Ibid, 114.
[135] Silver, "Demonic Possession," 27-28.

the possessed is acting out in a way that finally gives her a voice, that voice is still subject to male interpretation.

It also becomes apparent at this point that Madeleine is the very real victim of serious crimes that have put her life at stake. Victory over Belzébuth is necessary for the Church's reputation. It is a high-stakes game for all involved and Rosset makes that clear in the retelling, as Madeleine lies hovering on the brink of death. More than the possible death of a young woman is being played out in this scene. The battle of good versus evil is uncertain. Perhaps the most striking quality of this scene and so many others in Rosset is the visual effect he gives the narration. The contrast of Belzébuth and the clergy, combined with the central focus of the asphyxiated limp body of Madeleine provides a startlingly believable image of the event. Rosset brings the exorcism to life and perpetuates a timeworn struggle.

Rosset also brings the vision of Madeleine and the helplessness of her state to the forefront of the story once again. Just as he focused on her innocence in the compelling scene of her first Sabbath and the smoothness with which Gaufridy convinced her to participate, he demonstrates her captivity in this scene of exorcism, but this time at the hands of Father Michaelis. Sarah Ferber describes it in this way:

> The exorcist became in this way the sole arbiter of the success of his own performances. The fact is especially poignant, as it highlights the doubly captive place of the possessed: both legally suspect, and captive to her role as a devil, inexorably dependent on the exorcist to arbitrate on where her identity ended, and where that of the devil began.[136]

[136] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 79.

It appears that Madeleine is more than doubly captive. She is captive to all figures involved in the case, including Gaufridy, Michaelis, the multiple demons who inhabit her body, the convent, the Church, the legal system, and the general public who followed her case with great interest. She will always remain in a captive state, as Belzébuth never leaves her completely, nor does the association with the devil.

The portrayal of the corruption of Madeleine is further emphasized when she begins to speak again. What emanates from her mouth is a reflection of her demon-polluted interior and an illustration of festering flesh that will be repeated in various forms throughout the different versions of the *Histoires Tragiques*. The element of carnal decay, reinforced through smelly, rotting or viscous substances is a recurring feature of the tales. In "Histoire III," Père Fournez discovers a slimy, disgusting mass in Magdelaine's mouth as described in the following passage:

> Il arriva donc que, comme on la pressait de nommer les complices des sabbats où elle avait assisté et qu'elle ouvrait la bouche, le Père Fournez, dominicain, mit la main devant sa bouche et le charme tomba sur le tablier de Madeleine, au grand étonnement des assistants, mais bien plus encore, lorsque Père Michaelis prit ce charme avec un couteau. C'était une matière crasse et gluante, ressemblant à de la poix et à du miel entremêlés et brouillés ensemble.[137]

Fournez's expulsion of this disgusting substance demonstrates the transformation taking place in Madeleine's body as a result of the demon's occupation. The slimy mass is, both to those present and the reader, material evidence of the penetration of the demon and his ability to corrupt, literally rotting Madeleine from within. Rosset writes that when the

[137] The substance is described as "une matière gluante comme du miel avec de la poix" in the Michaelis version. *Histoire admirable*, Deuxième partie, 23. Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 114.

onlookers and assistants saw this slimy mass, they were convinced that the situation was very real. This moment clearly serves as emphasis on the gravity and horror of the scene laid out before all. It is when the news of "cette horrible aventure" spreads around "tous les lieux de l'environ" that Gaufridy is accused.[138]

The importance of the slimy mass in the story as a pivotal point in the tale cannot be overemphasized. This moment captures a clear representation of early modern views that reflect beliefs regarding not only Satan, but the human body as well. The general uncertainty about what lay within the body and the endless possibilities of release of malefic substances from the female body are underlined in this scene. The body was unknown territory in many ways. The fact that the substance fell from Madeleine's mouth points to the importance of this orifice in Gaufridy's case. Her mouth and more specifically her tongue are the sources of her testimony. Her bodily contortions contribute to the drama, but words are what will provide documented proof. The importance of the mouth's status is also found in Gaufridy, with its capacity to bewitch by the very breath that emanates from this significant body part. Breathe coming out of the mouth and words formed by the tongue are the origin of all diabolic activity, as well as the end. The mouth gives rise to words.

Words, Mouths, and Testimony

The importance of the spoken, and moreover, written word carries great weight in the early modern period and can be found throughout all accounts of demonic possession whether actual testimony or fictionalized versions. As Armando Maggi notes,"It was

[138] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 114.

only by turning invisible demons into visible (linguistic) signs that demons could be eradicated."[139] The fact that the signifier is more important than the signified shows the power of the word here. The importance of the word is further emphasized as the assistants to the exorcism cite "*In principium erat Verbum."*[140] The passage from John carries great weight, as it takes us back to the origins of Christianity, and the specific point of beginning for John, the Word that he goes on to identify as God. The scripture goes on to add (John 1:14) that the word became flesh. The interpretation of this text is still a subject of contention among scholars and priests. The concept of "logos" itself has been the cornerstone of philosophic thought dating back to Aristotle and continuing through centuries into our own. The importance of the Word to our story lies not only in the biblical associations, but also in the duality of the spoken/written word, and how those words perform within the framework of the tale itself.

In the beginning of Gaufridy's story, the discovery of a spell book signals the first interaction with demons. He conjures Satan by reading the spell and Satan speaks directly to him, asking Gaufridy what he wants. This testimony to the power of the written word is further emphasized throughout the story with a contract signed by Gaufridy and Satan's ruse in this contractual, and therefore binding, agreement. The words of Gaufridy's accusers, Madeleine and Louise, come from the possessing demons who must speak via the mouths of the girls. Are the words to be trusted? If not, they still have written proof found in the devil's markings on the bodies of Madeleine, Louise, and Gaufridy. The shift to the preference given to the written word is demonstrated here.

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[139] Armando Maggi, *Satan's Rhetoric: A Study of Renaissance Demonology*, (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2001), cited by Sluhovsky, 65-6.
[140] John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word".

While the spoken word comes from the mouth, it is an orifice not to be trusted. As can be seen with Madeleine, the mouth can produce more than words, or can be silenced by demons.

The tongue is the organ to be least trusted because of its potential to disrupt. It can disrupt not only through the spoken word, but also through its very existence. Carla Mazzio points out its precarious nature in her essay "Sins of the Tongue":

> As the one organ that can move in and out of the body, its symbolic position in a range of discourses lies on the threshold between the framed and unframed, between the space of the self and the space of the other. […] The notion of the organ as "*in itself*" boundless and paradoxical was of course not new to the early modern period, echoing as it did the Epistle of James, where the tongue is imagined as a horrifying mix of physiology and allegory.[141]

In addition to its uncertain position in human anatomy, the tongue is extremely important in cases of demonic possession as well. Not only is it an organ that has the ability to be in or out of the body, it also forms words and allows communication with the demons who also are inside or outside of the victim. Because of its very nature, as the Epistle of James states, "it defilith the whole body" and in addition "is set on fire by hell."[142] In the tale of Gaufridy, beyond the usual instability represented by the tongue, the devil can further shift the space occupied by the tongue and mouth. Under the devil's influence, the mouth's ordinary ability to disgust and delight can be taken to another level of intensity. The mouth and tongue, under the devil's auspices, produce filth, lies and putrid

[141] Carla Mazzio, "Sins of the Tongue," *The Body in Parts* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 55-6.
[142] James 3:6. And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defilith the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell.

stench. When this orifice produces more than a mere verbal warning, it is time to take notice.

The mouth can serve to disgust by consumption as well as production. In Satan's hands, his minions are encouraged to fill their mouths with blasphemous matter, such as blood or the flesh of children. As can be remarked in the following passage, the testimony is one of readable proof (marks on the flesh) as well as spoken word (Madeleine's admission):

> Après toutes les formes et procédures qui se font suivant les canons de l'Eglise, le bon Père Michaëlis, avec certains autres bons religieux tant de l'ordre des Frères prêcheurs que celui des capucins, ayant reconnu la vérité du fait qui leur était clairement témoigné par les marques diaboliques que Madeleine portait imprimées sur son corps, et ayant ouï comme les démons avaient étés contraints de manifester les horribles méchancetés de Gaufridy qui feront peur à ceux qui les liront, comme d'avoir inventé, ainsi que nous avons dit ci-dessus, de dire la messe au sabbat, de consacrer véritablement et puis offrir le sacrifice a Lucifer, manger de la chair des petits enfants, ainsi que Madeleine assura être véritable, qu'il aurait incité une femme de Marseille d'étouffer une sienne fille âgée de deux ans, nommé Marguerite, parce que ce malheureux et détestable forgeron d'enfer avait envie de manger de sa chair.[143]

The mother's murder and subsequent satanic sacrificing of her child is difficult to reconcile in this excerpt. Again, the eating of flesh has long been held to be taboo in Western civilization. The one exception to the taboo is the Christian sacrament of

[143] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 118.

Communion, which theoretically demands it. Although the flesh that is eaten is produced, according to Christian belief, through transubstantiation, eating of the flesh is still called for. The flesh is created from bread to become the body of Christ. Ironically, all Demonic activity during the Sabbath is designed to be an inversion of Christian rite, therefore another form of flesh is still being consumed. In the ceremony, there is no bread turning into flesh, merely flesh. Consuming flesh, however, inscribes an element of sameness that maintains a closer link to Christian Sacrament than the other demonic activity. In the sacrament of Holy Communion, partakers are being asked to do what would otherwise be unthinkable. In the *Anatomy of Disgust*, William Ian Miller explains:

> If the doctrine of transubstantiation compelled Christians to eat a Jew and drink his blood then Christians repaid the favor by imagining that Jews were doing the same to Christians. The doctrine also puts each communicant in the self-befouling condition of the leper in Eadmer's story of Anshelm. One must ingest holy contaminants—blood and flesh—to be cured and saved. One must eat that which no one would eat in his right mind, or right state of health. The materialism of this doctrine is remarkable in its implicit admission of the doubtfulness of purely spiritual cures.[144]

The taboo and disgust associated with cannibalism is thus overcome in one of Christianity's basic tenets. In order to receive Communion, one is asked to set aside all the disgust that would normally accompany such an act, and eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ. Belief in transubstantiation assured that the body and blood were truly that of Christ at the moment of ingestion. The act could not be justified by belief that it

[144] William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP 1997), 156.

was just symbolic. The true believer consumes what is literally believed to be the body and blood of Christ. The very paradox ensures true belief, for without it one would not be able to overcome the disgust factor. Yet the horror of the mother killing her own offspring, indeed her very own flesh and blood, because she wanted to offer her as a sacrifice for the Sabbath is beyond any possible comprehension and falls squarely into the realm of taboo and the unthinkable, which is why the tale conveys such a strong message. The culpability of such a mother is difficult to question. The fact that the devil's mark is later found upon the mother's foot attests to his presence.

A Tragic End

The most malicious of all of the characters in the tale is Gaufridy, and he ultimately serves as Rosset's supreme instructional example. Gaufridy is so very corrupt that Rosset writes that he is even worse than the demons themselves. Of course, he is worse, because he is not what he seems and therein lays the problem. He is a priest, in a position of power, authority, and trustworthiness, and should not be a tool of Satan. Instead, he is what needs to be feared most and is a direct reflection of the uncertainty of the Counter-Reformation. The Church is not infallible and while Rosset's lesson is meant to be instructional, it cannot help criticize. Yet Rosset's criticism is not pointed directly at the Church, rather he laments what man has become:

> O ciel, se peut-il ouïr ni imaginer rien de plus exécrable! En quel siècle maudit et abominable avons-nous pris naissance que nous y voyons de tels monstres ? Les péchés de Sodome et de Gomorrhe et de Babylone sont-ils comparables à ces blasphèmes et impiétés ? Je frémis moi-même d'horreur, écrivant cette histoire,

ma main en frisonne toute, et à peine peut-elle empêcher que la plume ne lui échappe.[145]

Decrying the times in which he lived are an essential part of Rosset's storytelling that is usually done in an overtly dramatic and hyperbolic fashion. He addresses the Heavens and wonders if one could ever hear or imagine anything more despicable. He notes that people like Gaufridy are indeed monsters, as he is well aware of the interest in monsters at the time. One need look no further to find real monsters than in the likes of this blasphemous priest. In his customary hyperbolic style, he makes reference to classic examples of sinful cities and compares the Biblical proportions to the current levels of sin found in his times. Then he reverts to a personal level, exaggerating about his difficulty in even holding onto his pen to write such a horribly shocking story. Throughout the *Histoires tragiques*, and at regular intervals in each tale, Rosset repeats this formula. It is his way of reinforcing that the stories he tells are intended to educate and warn the reader, but the suspenseful manner in which he unravels the action in the *Histoires tragiques* suggests pleasure in the "frisson" and makes the educational goal seem a bit questionable.

Robert Muchembled explains why such shivery pleasure is the real reason for the popularity of Rosset's stories in his book *Une histoire du diable*:

> L'intérêt du public n'est pas concentré sur la fin exemplaire du coupable, car on pouvait fréquemment l'observer de près sur la place publique ou en lire les détails dans les traités proprement moraux. Il s'attache essentiellement à un voyage sur les ailes du rêve permettant de regarder des choses défendues, de frissonner, puis de rejoindre sans problème de conscience l'univers des bienpensants. Goûter le

[145]Miller, *The Anatomy, 127.*
[145] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 127.

> fruit défendu, en quelque sorte, sans en subir les conséquences ! Une dimension nouvelle venait de s'ouvrir dans la culture européenne, avec cette expédition onirique en littérature tragique qui préparait l'étape suivante, celle du refoulement des pulsions morbides.[146]

So while the tales did reinforce the law, Divine and judicial, they were more of an early form of escapist literature. As Muchembled points out, the pleasure in reading Rosset's tales was to experience that which could and should not be experienced otherwise without dire consequences. An example of what happened to those who succumbed to base instincts was always right around the corner, either on the public square or in a moral treatise. What was unique to the *Histoire tragiques* is that from the comfort of home, one could peek into forbidden worlds and explore deviant behavior without committing any sin. In a Freudian sense, one could indulge the death drive, finding pleasure in what should be disturbing, while at the same time heaving a sigh of superiority, knowing that actually performing such acts was reprehensible. This sensation is one that inspires the fantastic literature that will later borrow many themes from Rosset's work.

The "abominable magician" makes a perfect candidate for a glimpse into the netherworld of demons. Mandrou describes Rosset's depiction of events in Gaufridy's story as "texte grandiloquent sans nuance." [147] Despite Mandrou's summary of Rosset's story, he manages to captivate an audience with his tale of atrocities, and does nuance his scenes well. Marianne Closson proposes that part of Rosset's success was because he

[146] Robert Muchembled, *Une histoire du diable XIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000),170-71.
[147] Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers,* 207.

was well aware of his contemporaries' taste for violence.[148] When he is recounting the events, such as the Sabbath or exorcism scenes, his writing is mesmerizing. It is only when he is delivering the moral judgment of the story or characters that his style tends to become grand eloquent. Once the action is resolved and he comments on the horrifying behavior inherent to each of the tales, he writes in a more overblown manner.

At the end of Gaufridy's tale, Rosset denounces him harshly, again making his narrative presence and assertive vision known. He writes of Gaufridy's end in the following passage:

> C'est la fin tragique de ce malheureux prêtre qui, pour un plaisir temporel et une fumée d'honneur, renonça à son Créateur et à la part de Paradis qui lui était ouvert, aux sacrements de l'Eglise. Si j'eusse voulu écrire toutes ses méchancetés, il eût fallu remplir tout un gros volume et non une simple narration. Je sais qu'il y en aura plusieurs qui riront de cette histoire, encore que la vérité en apparaisse par le témoignage de tant de gens de bien et par l'arrêt d'un si célèbre Parlement, prononce par la bouche de l'un de plus illustres hommes de notre siècle.[149]

The tragedy of Gaufridy's story is again emphasized and Rosset uses his brutal execution as a means to inculcate his message that if only Gaufridy had not turned his back on the Creator, he could have entered Paradise. He is stressing that the doors are open to all, except those who lose that privilege by giving in to their vices. The transgressions of

[148] "Rosset a su ainsi flatter le gout pour la violence de ses contemporains en leur offrant un véritable catalogue de toutes les transgressions." Marianne Closson, *L'imaginaire demoniaque en France (1550-1650)* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2002), 297.
[149] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 129.

Gaufridy are so many that Rosset cannot write about them all.[150] Rosset is also quick to point out that while some may not believe this tale; the truth is self-evident due to the testimony of well respected citizens and, of course, the judge.[151] The moralizing emphasis is an important component in each of the stories Rosset writes in his *Histoires tragiques*, as well as a general rejection of the contemporary moral standards as he sees them. These two components are the backdrop against which the violent and disturbing transgressions take place. Although each tale is different, they all follow a similar system that generally results in a strong moralizing finale. Because of the inherently religious nature of Gaufridy's story, Rosset is heavy-handed in his commentary on the matter at the end of "Histoire III." He usually berates the transgressor(s), but in the story of Gaufridy he moralizes at great length. Rosset also wants to rationalize the fact that the story is true and that demons are very real. He devotes two pages at the end of the tale to provide arguments extending beyond the fact that highly esteemed people and judges were witnesses.

Rosset argues that those who do not believe are generally atheists or heretics, because Christ teaches us in the Evangels that there are devils and that the Acts of Apostles mention Simon the magician. He states that the Old Testament is brimming with examples of God's orders to get rid of sorcerers, gives the example of the witch of Endor in Samuel, and says there are others he has no need of mentioning. Rosset uses

[150]« Si j'eusse voulu écrire toutes ses méchancetés, il eût fallu remplir tout un gros volume et non une simple narration. », Ibid.

[151]For more on truth claims and objectivity, see Peter Dear's article from *Social Studies of Science*, "From Truth to Disinterestedness in the Seventeenth Century" for an in-depth examination of the topic. Dear writes "Just as the testimony of a historical source could be evaluated as reliable because its character and style proclaimed its author to be disinterested, so here: belief attends a lack of good reason for doubting." 627.

this opportunity to switch from simple justification to include condemnation as he attacks once more the current moral values:

> Or, quoique les libertins de ce misérable siècle tournent en risée de ce qu'on dit des sorciers, des marques qu'ils portent sur leur corps et des hommages qu'il rendent à Satan, nous ne laisserons pas de croire ce qui est de la vérité, puisque même les témoignages des païens confirment ce que nous voyons arriver tous les jours.[152]

Rosset suggests that one look back to Antiquity for more evidence if the teachings of the Bible and current testimony of demonic activity, in addition to the devil's marks found on bodies, are not sufficient. Rosset then reinforces his arsenal of proof by referring to ancient Egyptians and Syrians and focuses on the way in which they marked their bodies. There was a great deal of emphasis placed upon the marking of the body by the devil in the actual Gaufridy case and in Rosset's tale of Gaufridy. Rosset mentions it one last time at the end of the tale, but linked it to practices of ancient infidels. Clearly, the marks are significant to Rosset and again show the emphasis on the corporeal throughout the collection.

After giving more examples of sorcery throughout the ages, Rosset terminates the narrative with a juxtaposition of the hideous traitorous souls united with the devil and our Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ. He states that those who traffic with demons will be exterminated from the Earth, "à la confusion de leur bouc detestable, sale et puant" and to the glory of "Notre-Seigneur et Rédempteur Jésus-Christ."[153] The portrayal of the devil's emblem as a lowly dirty and stinking goat reinforces the contrast with the purity of Jesus

[152] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 130.
[153] Ibid, 132.

Christ. Rosset promises the eventual extinction of all evil associated with the devil, again sending a warning of the dangers inherent in Satan. The man who yields to such base desires will be punished. Gaufridy's miserable end shows the fate awaiting such impure souls and Rosset's self-stated mission is to warn others of the dangers of sinful behavior.

Rosset goes beyond utilitarian educational writing in telling Gaufridy's story. It is a fascinating tale of demonic possession based upon an actual case. It is more interesting than reading an actual account such as the Michaelis version, even though most of Rosset's story relies heavily upon Michaelis. Rosset is able to skim through the roughly five hundred-page account penned by Michaelis and pick out the most salient and the most intriguing features of the case. He embellishes and recreates the tale while honing it down to a mere thirty pages. The condensed version provides the important facts while maintaining suspense and interest because of its concise retelling. Rosset makes it so interesting, in fact, that the reason he moralizes at such great length is to ensure that he is telling the story strictly for that purpose. Although the titillating aspects of the transgressions are what made the book a best seller, Rosset feels the burden of delivering a lesson.

Rosset's version is an important piece in the puzzle when looking at the phenomenon of demonic possession in the early modern period. While theories abound as to the reasons for the increase in demonic possession from Marthe Brossier (1599) until Madeleine Bavent (1647), the effects of the increase were far-reaching. Given the evolution of the cases of possession and the way they were handled, it is extremely difficult to pinpoint one reason behind the proliferation of the trend. One point that becomes clear in looking at the cases is that the Catholic Church used the cases as much

as they were able in order to show power over the devil and therefore their superiority to the Huguenots. Managing the cases and the exorcisms became difficult and the judicial system as well as medical professionals entered the arena. The complications and ramifications of the possessions were myriad. The importance of the Rosset versions of demonic possession is that they are a form of print records of the events that show the preoccupation with such matters at a basic level. They also show the literary continuum of such stories and have a place in the history of the devil in literature. The possibility of demonic possession and exorcism was a reality for the seventeenth century reader.[154] It was not a remote, unlikely, or random imaginary event. "Histoire III" is a mirror of the times and the public consciousness.

Gaufridy's story shows the interest in and preoccupation with possession in a way that history does not. "Histoire III" shows the link between actual events and literature, as well as its attempt to influence the reading public. It is interesting in that the exorcisms can now be looked upon as Catholic propaganda and, because the retelling of the story of Gaufridy immortalizes such propaganda. It also gives a glimpse into a time where superstitions were cultivated to maintain control by those in power. The story of Gaufridy reveals the full effect of the Reformation and the ways in which people reacted to the horror found in the wars of religion. It is a romanticized version of a true story. Although we generally scoff at the idea of demonic possession, it was very real to many in the seventeenth century. Whether or not a possession occurred, the events in Gaufridy's story did occur with lethal consequences. Rosset emphasizes Gaufridy's

[154] "Accepting the notion of spirit possession as a matter of course, both common people and elites found it entirely credible that an individual could invoke the devil's powers for the working of harm." Barbara Diefendorf, "Gender and the Family," 115.

terrible fate and issues a warning against such behavior.

Just in case Gaufridy's execution at the end of *"*Histoire III*"* does not send a clear enough message, Rosset writes more stories about what possibilities await other sinners. Madeleine was the victim of Gaufridy first and then offered to Beelzebub. At the end of the tale, she is reduced to a barefoot beggar searching for God's deliverance. Gaufridy is burned at the stake. No good end comes to sinners. Rosset further admonishes against contact with Satan in the story of a girl named Mélisse that I will analyze in the next chapter. Rosset will illustrate what can happen when good parental intentions are led astray by Satan's handiwork. The case of Mélisse is a case of possession, but the particulars of the case are completely different from Madeleine's. Nonetheless, the end of both stories is the same. Divine justice leaves no sin unpunished.

CHAPTER TWO-DEMON LOVE

Demons in the Flesh

Sex with Satan has shock value and Rosset effectively uses one of the ultimate forms of transgression to reinforce his overarching theme that no sin escapes divine justice. At the same time, in order for such a notion to even be considered believable, it is critical to point out that the political and religious instabilities at the time must inform our thinking. If demonic possessions were believable enough to engage Catholic authorities and spawn trials and even executions, then sex with the devil was also plausible at the time. As Walter Stephens explains "The writings here demonstrate that witchcraft theorists and other early-modern intellectuals inherited two frightful anxieties from Aquinas: they feared the power of human imagination and they dreaded that the concept of nature sufficed to account for the world around us."[155] Demons and angels were both spirits without bodies, so if demons could take on human form, the spirit world was accounted for. If not, there was no visible proof that anything other than natural causes was the driving force behind life itself. Stephens further states that believing that bodily human interaction with demons were actually possible seemed to be a way to assuage these fears. Even so, Rosset is determined to make each of the tales seem not only plausible, but also very real.

In the *Histoires tragiques*, the devil takes on many forms in order to seduce his victims, strengthening the warning that he is indeed everywhere. He can be found in the form of a beautiful woman or a small pig. Sometimes he is content merely to fornicate

[155] Stephens, *Demon Lovers,* 86.

and on other occasions he will completely possesses a body.[156] The devil can and will go anywhere he pleases. He even penetrates convents to battle his greatest foes, showing that truly no one is safe. He is simply waiting for an opportunity to work his way into any weak soul.

An important feature in the tales analyzed in this chapter will be more than just a relationship with God's retribution for deviant behavior. The link between diabolical transgression and the flesh is further emphasized and depicted in an excessively grotesque manner. The melding of human and demon flesh is the ultimate sexual juxtaposition. Geoffrey Harpham, whose work deals with the grotesque esthetic, states "[…] we could say that, although the grotesque is more comfortable in hell than in heaven, its true home is the space between, in which perfectly formed shapes metamorphose into demons. This mid-region is dynamic and unpredictable, a scene of transformation or metamorphosis."[157] It is within this space that Rosset places the reader of these tales. Rosset's stories treat the downfalls suffered by those who dabble in demonic activity, but one of their greatest contributions is as seedlings for the fantastique genre, which will blossom in the nineteenth century.[158]

In the story of Gaufridy, the devil preys on innocent young women as well as the corrupt priest who ushers him into their realm. In another of Rosset's stories, "Histoire XX – *Des horribles excès commis par une jeune religieuse à l'instigation du diable*," the Devil enters a convent and tricks a young girl into carnal relations without any

[156] Aquinas wrote "the Holy Spirit can act from inside, but the devil suggests from outside, either to the senses or to the imagination…as for the body, the devil can inhabit a man substantially, as in possessed people."
[157] Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Aurora, CO: Princeton UP, 2006), 10.
[158] P.G. Castex, *Le Conte fantastique en France, de Nodier à Maupassant*, (Paris, 1951).

intermediary aid. The story hinges on a deal with the devil, so it has some similarities to Gaufridy's; however the other circumstances differ greatly from the preceding tale of Gaufridy. Setting the story in a remote location is an oft-used technique in the *Histoires tragiques*, especially for tales portraying prominent individuals.[159] All of the characters are given pseudonyms. In other stories that feature the nobility, the names and countries are changed. In this case, the story for "Histoire XX" is taken from a "plaquette"[160] as Vaucher Gravili notes "A l'origine de ce récit, un fait divers dont il existe une plaquette."[161] Rosset sets the tale in Méroé, an island in the country of Troglodites, located on the Nile. Although it is far away, "Ceux qui y font leur demeure sont tous chrétiens et fort dévots."[162] There is an insistence upon the strong Catholic religious beliefs of the people of the region in "Histoire XX," but the church itself does not play a very important role in this tale, because there is no exorcism. The references to the church center around the fact that Mélisse is sent to a convent, but there is very little other involvement with the church.

Besides the locale, the situation described in "Histoire XX" is different from that of Gaufridy, in that there is almost no mention of male priests and there is no attempt to exorcise Mélisse, although the nuns suspect her to be possessed. Instead of a bodily possession, the devil gives her powers in exchange for sexual favors. The actual exorcisms were a large part of the tale of Gaufridy, which is only logical, given that Rosset used much of Fr. Michaelis's testimony to construct his version of the events.

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[159] For example in "Histoire I,"a tale about an Italian, Concino Concini, who was assassinated by order of Louis XIII, takes place in "la Perse" to represent France.
[160] The definition of plaquette from the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, Sixth ed, 1845, is « un petit volume relié, qui a fort peu d'épaisseur relativement à son format. »
[161] Rosset, "*Les Histoires mémorables,"* 428.
[162] Ibid, 429.

With "Histoire XX," the focus is on the actions of the young girl and her interactions with the devil himself in order to fulfill her desires for intelligence as well as physical pleasure. The absence of an exorcism with attendees in the story and the circumstances of the relations with the devil make this tale a very different, yet equally compelling story.

Diabolic Seduction

"Histoire XX" tells the story of Mélisse, a young widow who is forced by her family to enter a convent following the sudden death of her husband. Rosset stresses to mothers and fathers that entering a convent or monastery is not something to force children into.[163] He emphasizes the importance of a calling to serve God that is not to be taken lightly.[164] Mélisse has no desire to live in the convent, or to partake of a religious lifestyle. Rosset clearly places the blame on the parents, mentioning her age three times at the beginning of the narration and repeatedly referring to her as "jeune veuve." He explains that the parents are at fault, because it is important to be sure one is strong enough to resist temptation and to be fully committed to the cloistered life before entering an order.[165] The convent was often seen as the only option for "extra" daughters and

[163] Sharon Kettering states "There was a great burst of enthusiasm for the religious life during the early seventeenth century, especially among women, who swarmed into convents inspired by the lives of the saints and mystics and concern for their own salvation." This popularity contributes to Rosset's concern that convents were not for everyone, merely those who felt the "calling." Sharon Kettering, *French Society 1589-1715* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001), p. 100-101.
[164] It is also important to note, as does Closson, that at this time,"Les recommandations pour ne pas forcer la vocation des enfants sont un veritable lieu commundans les textes de l'epoque, et tout particulierement parmi certains homes de'Eglise, tel J.-P. Camus." 219.
[165] As Sluhovsky notes, "They (nuns) were repeatedly warned that the female body was more vulnerable to seduction by the devil than the male body; and that the female mind was too feeble to distinguish between fantasy and reality." 253.

sending one there came at a steep price in the form of a dowry.[166] The efforts taken to place her in the convent were, therefore, steps taken with consideration. Since Mélisse was forced into the convent against her will, a disastrous result was to be expected.

Rosset first describes her after his admonitions to parents, placing emphasis on her great beauty, in the following lines:

> L'aînée, que l'on appelait Mélisse, fut douée d'une si grande beauté qu'elle ravissait les yeux de tous ceux qui la regardaient. La nature l'avait rendue accomplie de tant de dons extérieurs qu'à peine ayant atteint l'âge de douze ans, elle était recherchée en mariage d'une infinité de gentilshommes issus des meilleures maisons de la contrée.[167]

The first remarks about this young girl concern her age and exterior, not her nature or character. These two factors are important in Rosset's account because he wants to establish her identity as young, which implies a certain level of naïveté and irresponsibility, and extremely beautiful on the outside, which gives no insight into her interior. These two elements, youth and beauty, are key to the tragic action of the story. Rosset is writing the story to warn parents that they cannot choose a religious vocation for a child because it is a calling. The emphasis on her beauty is important because her true desire is to be seen as intelligent, and the other nuns chastise her vanity. Just as Gaufridy made a pact with the devil to fulfill his aspirations of greatness, Mélisse makes a pact to speak, sing, and read better than any of sisters at the convent.[168]

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[166] Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France 1580-1730*, (New Haven and London: Yale UP), 148-149.
[167] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 429.
[168] This "Faustian" agreement could possibly be inspired by Cenodoxus, a German miracle play by Jacob Bidermann written before 1600 and generally regarded as inspiration for Goethe's Faust. For

While the treatment of the female characters differs in the tales of Madeleine's and Mélisse's possession, the role of Satan is the central focus. In "Histoire XX," Mélisse seems to have more in common with the character of Gaufridy, and is unwittingly seduced by the devil because of ambition. She starts out innocent, as does Madeleine, but the difference is that she wants to benefit from the relationship. Madeleine simply does what Gaufridy tells her and does not have any ulterior motive. She is portrayed as a guileless victim who is convinced by Gaufridy that she would receive the greatest honor ever from Belzebuth, "qui la prend et la marque comme les autres sorciers, et puis s'accouple avec elle et la viole."[169] This description contrasts sharply with that of Mélisse, who is fueled by desire. She did already have a life on her own for a brief time with her husband. Even though Rosset places blame on Mélisse's parents, who force upon her "une vie si contraire à son désir"[170] she is already indulging in lustful fantasies before Satan takes notice.[171] Rosset uses the opportunity to warn the reader as well in describing how Mélisse's impure thoughts invited the devil into her life:

> Le diable, qui est toujours en aguet et qui, comme un lion rugissant, nous environne de tous côtés pour nous dévorer, la voyant encline aux désirs charnels, lui accroit cette ardeur de telle sorte qu'au lieu de prier Dieu, elle n'a que d'autre pensée qu'a l'amour. Et comme cette passion continue et elle exerce plusieurs pollutions sur son corps, tantôt en dormant, tantôt en veillant, Satan lui apparait un jour, comme elle était retirée toute seule dans sa chambre pour mieux

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more on Cenodoxus see Bidermann's *Ludi Theatrales Sacri or Cenodoxus* edited and translated by D.G. Dyer; joint translator Cecily Longrigg, (Austin, Texas : Texas UP, 1974).

[169] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 107.

[170] Ibid, 431.

[171] Closson writes of the frustrations encountered by the young girls sent to convents because of familial interests, just as was Melisse, 219.

entretenir ses plaisirs impudiques.[172]

Rosset continues with his effort to demonstrate how the devil is always lying in wait for those who stray from the righteous path. The manifestation of carnal desire is usually a central feature of each of the tales that results in a tragic end, and is associated with the devil's temptations. Unlike the violation of Madeleine, it is interesting to note that Mélisse is described by Rosset as an unwittingly willing participant. She demonstrates the widely-held belief that contributed in large part to the witch-hunt outlined by Kramer and Sprenger in the *Malleus Maleficarum* that "(witchcraft comes from) carnal lust which in women is unsatiable."[173] The *Malleus* also states that "three general vices appear to have special dominion over wicked women, namely infidelity, ambition, and lust."[174] Rosset seems to draw directly upon many of the ideas presented in the *Malleus* on diabolic activity, probably to render his story more credible, as he repeatedly insists upon its veracity. The story is a textbook example of the paradoxical portrait of the woman portrayed as dangerous because of her weakness. As Margaret Denike notes, "If for every male witch there were 50 female witches, as Bodin held, it was not because of women's propensity to illness but because far more women than men suffer from 'bestial cupidity,' and so are much more likely to lust after demons[...]."[175] As Anna Rosner notes, "Pornography and demonological literature often intersect with one another; both fixate on orifices, female sexuality, and sado-eroticism."[176] She proposes that the texts

[172] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 431.
[173] Kramer and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarium*, 47.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Margaret Denike, "The Devil's Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate", *Hypatia*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Feminist Philosophy and the Problem of Evil (Winter, 2003): 34.
[176] Anna Rosner, "The Witch Who Is Not One: The Fragmented Body in Early Modern Demonological Tracts," *Exemplaria*, Vol.21 No.4 (Winter, 2009): 372.

suggest "the sado-erotic aspects of diabolical coupling" rather than merely assuaging man's fears about the devil.[177] De Lancre, Remy, and Bodin all write in detail about the devil's genitalia, as well as the painful act of copulation with him. Rosset will in turn demonstrate this extreme weakness with Mélisse, as she has sex with the devil in animal form.

Satan appears one day as lustful Mélisse is engaged in her solitary activities of "polluting herself" and he is disguised as an angel of light. The use of light to deceive his victims is another interesting element that occurred in Satan's encounter with Gaufridy as he appeared the second time with a great light around him "pour mieux attraper son homme."[178] Whereas light is usually associated with goodness and Christianity in biblical texts, Satan uses it in order to deceive.[179] He also looks like a man when he first visits Mélisse and is dressed all in white. He uses the imagery of purity for his presentation, lures his prey first with his appearance, and then seals the deal with promises. Once he has "trapped" a person, his form is variable and the grotesque seems less repellent to the contaminated souls in the stories. Mélisse and Gaufridy do not seem to mind how the demons appear once the pact has been made. The freshly indoctrinated followers focus on their new powers and themselves as their reason crumbles, providing more warnings for the reader about dealing with the devil.

Mélisse makes a pact with the devil to become the most knowledgeable and well spoken of all the sisters, as well as to sing better than any other does. Her wish is

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[177] Ibid.
[178] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 105.
[179] Acts 26:18, "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is me." (KJV)

granted. Mélisse is delighted by her newfound intelligence and at first, the nuns think it must be a divine miracle.[180] Their surprise gives way to suspicion as they begin to notice her vanity and interest in love stories, rather than religious literature.[181] Confrontations with the sisters at the convent lead to her anger and revenge by setting fire to the building with assistance from Satan. When Mélisse is then sent to another convent, she has three of the sisters killed by her demon lover. When she is sent home, her disheartened parents try to keep strict watch over her, as the nuns have warned of Mélisse's demonic interaction.[182] As a safeguard, her parents have several young women sleep with her; she chases them away, but they can hear something going on.

What they hear is "une voix mal articulée," that they presume to be supernatural speaking to her at night. It is interesting to note that the voice is described as "mal articulée," as there is a section in the *Malleus* that treats the question of whether or not the devil can speak, so this was obviously something people had questioned at the time. The argument in the *Malleus* states that a voice is required, so therefore must come out of a living body and that body must understand what the voice is saying. The conclusion as proposed in the *Malleus* is as follows:

> But since they have understanding, and when they wish to express their meaning, then, by some disturbance of the air included in their assumed body, not of air

[180] The parallel here between discerning divine experience is striking as Sluhovsky states " A woman who claimed a divine experience was much more likely to be found to be possessed by demons, deceived by Satan, or simulating her possession or her sanctity." 8.

[181] It is interesting to note that in the story Melisse is reading les Amadis de Gaule (1508), a novel from Spain about a knight's heroic and sensuous adventures that was highly successful in France, which enables him to denounce the novel's worth in a subtle way, as the more devout sisters instantly confiscate the book.

[182] While the nuns obviously would fear for their own safety, they also had economic forces driving their decisions. Sluhovsky states "Notions of fame due to collective honor of a religious community guaranteed spiritual and social conformity, and hence steady income from wealthy patrons. A nun who behaved in an inappropriate or suspect manner put the whole community at risk." 258.

> breathed in and out as in the case of men, they produce, not voices, but sounds which have some likeness to voices, and send them articulately through the outside air to the ears of the hearer.[183]

Therefore, if the devil assumed an animal's body, he could produce sounds that could be understood, yet would have the quality of a human voice. Since the devil is occupying the body of a small pig in his visits to Mélisse, it would be perfectly logical to hear "une voix mal articulée" and Rosset needs for his tale to be believable in order to be effective.[184] The fact that it is misarticulated makes it seem more fitting for the demon in pig form and gives it a more "otherworldly" quality.

Although Rosset is trying to follow a logical format concerning diabolical activity, he develops a scene that seems quite unlikely. But Rosset stresses that his role is merely to relate the events and hope to help others avoid such tragedy. He explains his purpose in telling the story as, "j'ai entrepris de la donner au public afin que, par le Malheur de l'autrui, l'on apprenne à fuir ce qui peut faire tomber aux dangers évidents qui en procèdent."[185] Indeed, it is clear from the tale itself that Rosset is more than a mere cataloguer of stories, although he repeatedly states that he is merely serving as a messenger to warn others. He adds his own commentary and interjections to his embellished descriptions of the events and creates suspense. It is precisely the mix of credible and incredible factors, combined with the descriptive elements, which define the story as a precursor to the fantastique. "Histoire XX" relies even more strongly on the

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[183] Kramer and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarium*, 110.
[184] Sluhovsky notes "As more attention was being paid to possessions and the need to discern them, new theological and epistemological explanations of the relations between the divine and the demonic, the supernatural and the natural, and the trustworthiness of men's and women's judgment were being elaborated." 7.
[185] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 429.

repulsion and attraction factor than the story of Gaufridy. In this tale, not only is Mélisse having sexual relations with the devil, she also transgresses acceptable behavior by killing. The killing surpasses the boundaries of conceivable transgression as Mélisse murders her own mother. Rosset includes a graphic scene during which she is interrupted while having sex with the devil, which further underscores the grotesque union of human and animal flesh. The scene is unsettling and shows again the preoccupation with the possibility of demonic, monstrous, and beastly coupling.[186]

After having been alerted by the young women about the voices they heard coming from Mélisse's room at night, the parents decide to investigate. They go to her room, open the door, and the sight that awaits them is horrifying on many levels. Rosset's description of the moment simultaneously shocks and condemns: "Mais, ô cas hideux et épouvantable ! Ils aperçurent à l'instant un petit pourceau qui se vautrait sur le ventre de cette exécrable fille."[187] Not only is Mélisse having sex with the devil, but he is also in the form of a contemptible and repulsive animal. Their daughter is guilty of an offense that goes beyond sin against nature and they see it with their own eyes. Again, Rosset's strength in use of visual imagery delivers a powerful picture that summons the emotions of horror, shock, disgust, and despair all in very short order.

This scene displays Rosset's skill in writing with an ability to stage a highly descriptive unfolding of events while at the same time evoking a very strong emotional sequence corresponding to the depiction. Rosset employs the concept of bestiality in order to make one take notice and his verb choice of "se vautrer" – to wallow- only

[186] For a more in-depth look at the problem of demonic copulation examining writings on the subject see Stephens' *Demon Lovers* chapter "Sexy Devils: How They Got Bodies," 58-86.
[187] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 434.

amplifies the register of horror.[188] The animal is a contemptuous creature, a pig.[189] Rosset then adds another layer of meaning to the act when the animal involved is depicted as still even more repulsive because he is the devil incarnate. The sin is compounded by the presence of the acme of evil, and the author uses the excess to create a scene that is simultaneously fascinating and disgusting. The entire scenario is completely outside the normal range of possibilities. It is strange, yet captivating in that it almost begs for some sort of order or reason to be imposed in order to rectify the sense of confusion it establishes.

Rosset realizes that describing such an act begs further explanation, which he in turn circumvents by writing "Mon intention n'est pas ici d'écrire si cette vision était véritable ou illusoire."[190] He claims that he has already addressed the veracity of his accounts elsewhere in his work, and he has. His basic argument rests in the fact that Satan is capable of making people think they see whatever he wishes, whether or not it truly exists. The gist of his argument is that where the devil is an agent, anything is possible.[191] After his remarks addressing the possibility of such an occurrence, Rosset moves back to Mélisse's bedroom, where her father is trying to chase the pig that disappears. The fact that the pig disappears is even more upsetting to all as it confirms the diabolical presence. Diabolical presence and subsequent disappearance is another

[188] Sodomy and bestiality were also crimes punishable by death. See M. Lever, *Les Buchers de Sodome. Histoire des "infames"* (Paris: Fayard, 1985). There are also many Bible verses that condemn it, such as Leviticus 18:23, "And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion."(KJV)
[189] Pigs are cited as unclean animals in Leviticus 11:7, the basis of the Judaic law prohibiting its consumption and traditionally represent negative characteristics such as sloth, gluttony, and laziness.
[190] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 435.
[191] See Sluhovsky and Stephens for more on the widely-held beliefs about the devil's innate abilities for deceit, trickery, and illusion.

facet of the activities outlined in the *Malleus Maleficarum*: "And when they have taken up a weapon and tried to run them through, the devil has suddenly disappeared, making himself invisible."[192] Again mirroring this idea as set forth in the *Malleus*, Rosset reinforces the credibility of this tale by conforming to the known authorities on this topic.

When Mélisse's mother realizes the ramifications of this nightmarish vision, she begins to denounce her daughter's behavior. Her monologue provides yet another opportunity for Rosset to reinforce his warnings to would-be transgressors. She reiterates all of Mélisse's shortcomings in the following lamentation:

> […] O bon Dieu! Est-ce ici l'instruction que je t'ai donnée en ta tendre jeunesse, que tu aies accointance avec l'ennemi de notre salut ? Quand tu fis profession et que tu t'enfermas dans un cloître, ne renonças-tu point au monde, au diable et à la chair ? Et n'épousas-tu pas celui qui répandit son sang précieux en l'arbre de la Croix pour nous racheter de la mort éternelle ? Et maintenant, rompant tes vœux et faussant la foi que tu dois à ton Epoux, tu prends accointance avec le prince de ténèbres ! Sera-t-il dit que mon ventre ait portée une sorcière ? Ah ! plutôt que la mort termine mes jours, avant que j'oie parler d'un tel scandale! Recommande-toi à ton Dieu, misérable que tu es![193]

The words spoken by Mélisse's mother serve several important functions. They allow her shock to be recorded, as well as her disappointment. They also provide a means for Rosset to retrace the steps to becoming a good nun and outline the basic Christian views on salvation. These words also use examples that correspond to more of the questions addressed in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, with which Rosset reinforces the true claims of

[192] Kramer and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarium,*114.
[193] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 435.

this story using parallel examples. The question is raised in the Malleus as to "whether only those who were begotten in this way are so visited by devils."[194] When the mother asks « Sera-t-il dit que mon ventre ait portée une sorcière?» she is disturbed not just by the thought of others thinking she gave birth to a witch.[195] She is also questioning herself as to whether she could have produced a witch and if so could it have happened from association with devils. The Malleus states:

> Therefore to return to the question whether witches had their origins in these abominations, we shall say that they originated from some pestilent mutual association with devils, as is clear from our first knowledge of them. But no one can affirm with certainty that they did not increase and multiply by means of these foul practices, although devils commit this deed for the sake not of pleasure but of corruption.[196]

There is sufficient reason to question the mother's virtue and therefore further upset her. Her reputation is now also at stake. The mother's words also reflect what Rosset states at the outset as the crux of the problem – the fact that Mélisse did not wish to dedicate herself to God by entering the convent. When the mother questions her about professing her faith, entering the convent and taking her vows, her questions seem ironic. The parents made the decision for Mélisse and she insisted upon their cruelty in so doing. As Rosset points out, such a commitment takes a calling that Mélisse did not feel. Her questions are merely a projection of what she presumed would happen. Finally, her

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[194] Kramer and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarium,* 111.
[195] For more on beliefs regarding demon births, see Stephens, *Demon Lover,* for an explanation on how profoundly Aquinas influenced theories on witchcraft by affirming that demons could sire fully real children, 63-69.
[196] Kramer and Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarium,* 112.

words provide foreshadowing to her actual murder. In fact, she will not live to hear people speaking of her family scandal, because her wish will be realized, in yet another ironic twist.

Mélisse's reality is presented in her response to her mother, reaffirming her naiveté and ignorance. Her childlike behavior, portrayed with mockery and scornful laughter serves to emphasize her immaturity. She points out that it has been said that Socrates had a demon who advised him.[197] She also proposes that "her" demon is a good one in the following extract:

> Je ne sais pas pourquoi vous faites un si grand bruit pour une chose si commune. Et que diriez –vous si j'étais de ces femmes, dont le nombre est infini, qui font hommage en la partie plus sale d'un bouc puant et infect ? Non, non ! Satan n'a point de pouvoir sur moi. L'esprit qui me visite toutes les nuits est un bon démon qui me conseille de ce que je dois faire. Si vous l'irritez, vous ressentirez bientôt son ire et sa vengeance.[198]

She is saying that she believes Satan has no power over her, because she is not one of the infinite numbers of women who fornicate with Satan in the form of a goat. Rosset's irony is apparent not only in the way Mélisse is so clearly duped by the devil, but also in how the devil is heard through the vehicle of Mélisse. There are definitely two voices at work. One voice is the childlike innocent voice of Mélisse who thinks that she is merely

[197] In Plato's Apology of Socrates, Plato states that Socrates had a "daimonion" who warned him against mistakes, but who did *not* tell him what to do. (emphasis mine) His "demon" inspired many other authors.
[198] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 436.

receiving visits and advice from a good demon.[199] The other is the more worldly voice of Satan, using Socrates as an example (probably unknown to Mélisse), and even gloating a little. When Mélisse refers to the women, who give themselves to Satan as "an infinite number" it sounds as if the devil is boasting. The devil also warns of the potential for harm if he is irritated. Her parents choose not to heed this warning, but instead warn her that they will simply lock her up and she will die miserably if she continues to live this way. Their disregard for the devil's power leads her parents to make a poor choice.

Mélisse's behavior deteriorates further in the sequence of events that follow. In another horrific scene, Rosset again presents a visual and seemingly cinematic account of Mélisse stabbing her mother. He describes the chilling act in a manner befitting his desire to shock and provide a clear warning about the dangers of cloistering a child against her will. Rosset's account is as follows:

> C'était environ les onze heures de la nuit, lorsque les ténèbres amènent partout le silence, que cette fureur infernale se leva du lit où elle couchait, et sortant de sa chambre, entra dans celle de sa mère qui dormait d'un paisible sommeil dans sa chaste couche. Le plus jeune de ses fils, de l'âge de cinq à six ans, était à ses côtés. La parricide, avec un grand et large couteau, s'approche du lit et donne si promptement dans la gorge de celle qui lui avait donné naissance qu'à peine la pauvre dame put jeter un cri. Une damoiselle d'âge couchait tout auprès qui, ayant sauté du lit accourut promptement, et trouvant sa maitresse qui versait une

[199] As Closson remarks, "La ruse satanique consiste alors a plagier de facon sacrilege le modele christique et les reperes disparaiissant" so Melisse has no basis upon which to discern that her demon is not "un bon demon." 231.

source de sang, ouvrit la fenêtre de sa chambre et se mit à crier au secours.[200] Violent and gory as the description may be, it gives a very detailed picture of the murder, beginning with the silence of the night. The stillness of the night settling over the house can be felt until suddenly, the "fureur infernale" gets up from the bed where she was sleeping and enters her mother's room. The description lends itself readily to a film scenario. Mother and child are peacefully sleeping and Mélisse slips in wielding a big, wide knife and, without the slightest hesitation, slits her throat. She fatally stabs the woman who, as Rosset reminds us, gave birth to her.[201] To complete the visual imagery, Rosset adds that she was bleeding not just a little, rather "une source de sang." The sequence has all the makings of a gruesome horror film. A calm night with everyone sleeping peacefully and the evil lurking in the house awakens. With an innocent young boys sleeping next to her, the figure of Mélisse appears by the bed with a knife, stabbing her very own mother and leaving her spewing blood. While the pig scene is disgusting, stabbing and killing one's own mother is unimaginable. Rosset's story truly covers two of the most shocking transgressions in the collection.

The descriptions of bestiality, matricide, and suspenseful narration beg the question of entertainment opposed to edification. Rosset stresses that they are cautionary tales, but they are ripe with much more. They do reflect the beliefs and preoccupations of their time, but they also hint of genres to follow. The demonic tales both inform and

[200] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 437.

[201] As William Holcomb notes, "Matricide, or the killing of one's mother, has always been considered one of the most abhorred crimes. It violates basic religious and societal principles of respecting and honoring one's mother. Freud (1928/1945) referred to matricide as the "primal crime of society as well as the individual," 3. "He describes matricidal impulses as the major source of guilt in man. The presence of the matricidal theme in prominent myths, legends, and literature underscores man's deep fear of destructive impulses toward the mother."

entertain with their mix of horror and the fantastique. As Closson explains « la présence du surnaturel diabolique dans de très nombreux textes littéraires invite a s'interroger sur la *séduction* exercée par cet imaginaire effrayant sur les lecteurs… on éprouve du *plaisir* a lire de tels récits… » [202] Closson points out that this use of the supernatural requires one to ask if this conscious that will become a "manna" for writers is not already recognized by these authors. Rosset's style definitely answers "yes" and this response combined with the subject manner does indeed contribute to the literary works that follow in later periods.

The murder sets this particular case of demonic interaction apart. In the story of Goffredy, the possessed women were portrayed more as victims of the possession and the actual exorcisms were examined. Murders and sacrificing of children by others are alluded to, but not committed by Madeleine. The solitary nature of Mélisse's situation sets it apart as well. Although her introduction to the devil begins within the walls of a religious establishment, she is his lone recruit. None of the sisters are possessed, nor does Mélisse attend any sabbats.[203] The only interaction is with her "bon demon." It is at his instigation that she commits the "plus horrible méchanceté qu'on puisse imaginer" by murdering her mother. In Gaufridy's story, there was more interaction between humans and the devil and he sent specific demons to the women.

One feature that is repeated in both of the stories is the fact that there is a convent in each setting. The more interesting fact to note in Mélisse's story is that all of the key scenes take place in a bedroom, whether at home or the convent. Satan first visits

[202] Closson, *L'Imaginaire demoniaque,* 311.
[203] In many of the cases of possessions, such as those of Loudun in 1632, Aix in 1611 with Madeleine Demanolx and other nuns of the Ursuline order, Soissons in 1582, there were multiple cases of possession within the same order.

Mélisse in her bedroom at the convent and then later visits her bedroom at her parents' house. Mélisse then moves from her bedroom to that of her mother to commit her greatest transgression. In the end, Mélisse dies enclosed by four walls, reminiscent of a Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques* in which a wife is being punished for adultery. The Boaistuau tale is obviously significant as a precursor to the Rosset collection and is important to note because many of the themes and the manner in which transgressive female behavior is punished remain the same. In the Boaistuau story, the woman's punishment is to die enclosed in the four walls in which she committed adultery with the rotting corpse of her lover.

In the tale of Mélisse, she is able to undergo a miraculous conversion at the end. In this particular case, an exorcism is not attempted. Instead, Mélisse's father solicits help from all the "plus saints religieux" whom he called from everywhere. Serving as example of the compassionate Christian, Mélisse's father is described by Rosset as full of regret, yet able to rise above the situation in this passage:

> Oh ! quel regret avait ce bon seigneur de père, ressentant avec la perte de sa chère épouse celle qu'il voyait de l'âme de cette misérable qui s'en allait être la proie de Satan ! Cette juste douleur, digne d'un bon père et d'un bon chrétien, le forçait à dilayer le châtiment qu'elle méritait pour la ranger au train de salut. Il n'épargnait pas de rechercher tous les jours les plus saints religieux qu'il appelait de tous côtés pour cet effet. Celui qui eut tant de grâces de Dieu que de faire confesser à cette exécrable l'horreur de son crime, fut un de ces bons archimandrites qui se tiennent en la Thébaïde, mais toutefois avec beaucoup de peine.[204]

[204] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 439-40.

In these lines, Rosset reinforces his previous reference to Mélisse's father as resembling Job. The Seigneur d'Abila has had his wife taken from him and has been threatened with the same fate by Mélisse, yet he perseveres in his quest to rid his daughter of her diabolical influence. Rosset uses the example of the father to demonstrate his mission to pen stories with an educational purpose. He uses Mélisse's sin and repentance as a lesson in Christian salvation through the enduring faith of her Job-like father. Rosset had previously criticized the father along with his wife, for placing Mélisse in the convent at all. He has a chance for redemption. In addition to illustrating the virtues of Christian faith through the father and religious visitors, Rosset does not miss the opportunity to highlight Mélisse's numerous transgressions as she finally opens up and confesses, listing them one more time.

Since Mélisse is so moved by the saintly words of the religious man speaking to her, she experiences a complete break with Satan. The fact that the priests in the other tale of demonic possession work so steadfastly to exorcise demons from Madeleine and others, with limited success makes this transformation seem even more impressive.[205] Rosset explains that because the words were delivered with such zeal and were guided by God's spirit that they even evoked tears from this miserable girl. She immediately begins to chastise herself and renounces Satan. She renounces Satan by exclaiming "Arrière de moi, Satan!" [206] Although there is a reference to Jesus, Rosset does not try to make her into a saint. He focuses on her transgressions more than her miraculous cure. When the priest asks her if she would like to confess privately to him, she states that she wishes to

[205] See "Histoire III" as Father Domps arrives the 27 November and the priests are still exorcising demons until the end of April when Gaufridy is burned alive.
[206] "Arrière de moi, Satan!" comes from Matthew 4:10 when Satan was tempting Jesus in the desert.

confess before God and man, which she does:

> S'étant confessée, elle dit tout haut devant tous comme, depuis l'âge de quinze ans, le diable avait abusé de son corps charnellement sous diverses et horribles formes, et particulièrement sous la figure d'un petit pourceau ; que parce que les religieuses du couvent où l'on l'avait mise la reprenaient de sa vanité, il l'aurait induite à bruler le monastère ; que ce mauvais esprit l'incitait à la vengeance, lui promettant qu'elle sortirait de religion pour vivre au monde selon ses plaisirs ; qu'ensuite elle aurait fait mourir les religieuses dont nous avons parle ci-dessus et depuis, fâchée des remontrances que sa mère lui faisait tous les jours, elle lui aurait coupé la gorge ; qu'elle était délibérée d'en faire autant à son père et à son frère ainé.[207]

Her confession serves as a brief review of the story and stresses the horrific nature of her sins as well. By acknowledging her wrongdoing, Mélisse also shows that though she was a victim, she is taking her share of culpability. She did make a deal with the devil. Mélisse meets a harsh end as her just punishment, rather than any type of forgiveness.

Mélisse states she was abused by the devil, who appeared incarnate in a number of forms, but most often that of a small pig. She is familiar with the "bouc puant et infect" as he is repeatedly described in many of the *Histoires tragiques*, but that was not her "bon demon." The choice of a small pig seems appropriate, as the pig is an animal often viewed with disdain. While the devil has taken on the form of many animals, he is

[207] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 441.

usually portrayed as one with horns, a tail, or wings.[208] Many woodcuts and illustrations depict the devil with birdlike features as well.[209] The choice of a pig in this narrative could be because of its cloven hooves or because of another biblical reference found in Mark V: 11-15 telling the story of a possessed man and the Gadarene swine. In this particular passage in the Bible, Jesus cast out the demons from "Legion" and there was a great herd of swine feeding. The following passage from the Book of Mark tells of the incident:

> And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand ;) and were choked in the sea. (KJV)

The reference to the possessed man, swine, and subsequent exorcism by Jesus makes this passage a likely source for Rosset's "pourceau," whether purposeful or suggested from memory of the passage. The passage also reinforces the all-important power inherent in Jesus and to cast out demons. This was referenced before as the justification and importance of exorcism. The reference also provides a basis that would make Mélisse's reform seem more plausible.

A Curious End

After confessing to her vanity and rebellion against her sisters at the convent, the brutal murder of her mother, and her desire to kill her father and brother, she begs for

[208] J. B. Russell states that the devil was usually portrayed as having horns, a tail or wings and was most often depicted as a serpent, goat or dog. J. B. Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1984), 23.
[209] For more on this, see *Demon Lovers* and *Wonders and Marvels*.

pardon from God and all those whom she has offended. Rosset's description of the reaction among the witnesses is that her confession "faisait dresser les cheveux," an oft-used commentary in his *Histoires tragiques*.[210] In summarizing all the transgressions, Rosset also reinforces the notion of his version of divine justice. Mélisse has fully confessed all sins and begged for forgiveness and mercy from God, but her fate is yet to be determined. Her slate is not wiped clean, but punishment is certain. Mélisse is locked up immediately following her confession and the description provides possible reasons for her death:

> […] on l'enferma entre les quatre murailles ou elle était auparavant et, quelques jours après, on la trouva expirée, les bras en croix. On ne sait point assurément le genre de sa mort. Les uns croient que ce fut de la grande douleur et du ressentiment qu'elle avait de ses abominables péchés. Les autres pensent que ce fut par faute d'aliments ordinaires, dont elle n'avait pas à suffisance, ou bien qu'on la priva de vie par poison ou par odeurs d'artifice. Quelques-uns croient qu'on la suffoqua par un licol.[211]

At the end of the tale, Mélisse is physically confined to the bedroom where she has been previously held captive. As pointed out, the important events of the story all seem to have origins in the bedroom. There is no certain knowledge of cause of death, merely speculation. Leaving her demise open-ended in this way lends credibility to the story. Just as in everyday life, people are always willing to provide explanations not based upon any actual knowledge. One can imagine the whispering and rumors that would have been

[210] Rosset uses the expression "faire dresser les cheveux" throughout the volume of his version of Histoires tragiques.
[211] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 442.

generated by Mélisse's unfortunately short life. What truly happened is not important to Rosset. He does seem to sympathize with her, despite the horrific nature of her actions. She does confess to a priest before her death, which is an unusual event in the deaths of most of the characters in the *Histoires tragiques*. Her arms crossed in death seem to indicate she received salvation.

Rosset states that the importance of the story is bound in the lesson it perpetuates through the example of this unhappy young girl. Rosset urges his readers to take note of the tragedy stating "qui doit server d'exemple à ceux et à celles qui épousent un cloître, avant qu'éprouver s'ils sont assez forts pour résister au prince de ce monde et pour surmonter les tentations de la chair."[212] While the tale is posited as a cautionary tale of entering a convent without the necessary devotion, Rosset seems apologetic and ready to chastise her parents for their poor decisions. He seems to be saying they should have better protected her.

The end of Mélisse's tale differs greatly from that of Gaufridy's. In "Histoire XX," Rosset keeps the ending simple and does not greatly embellish or admonish from a personal aside as he often does. He makes the plea for firm dedication to the cloth, if that is the chosen path, but does not launch into any sort of diatribe or historical discourse. At the end of "Histoire III," Rosset first denounces Gaufridy and then devotes the last pages of this tale explaining why the story should be believable, as examined in chapter one. The sweeping list of examples from the Bible to ancient civilizations is a sharp stylistic contrast to his description of Mélisse's demise. Rosset states she dies several days after being locked up and should serve as an example.

[212] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 442.

Mélisse's confinement at the end of Rosset's story shows a continuing thread throughout the various incarnations of the *Histoires tragiques*. Confinement is a ready technique for dealing with unruly females.[213] Mélisse's captivity is reminiscent of Boaistuau's "Quatriesme Histoire" in which the cheating wife is confined in the bedroom where her sins were perpetrated. The wife's punishment is swift and savage. When her husband finds her with her lover, he makes sure her amorous companion dies. The husband ensures the death is even more painful for his wife, as it is her hand holding the noose that strangles her lover. The "*licol*" theory of Mélisse's death echoes his fate, as some say she was strangled by one. After burning the contents of the room, the husband has his wife boarded up in the room with the corpse of her companion and "autant de paille qu'il en faudroit pour coucher deux chiens." She is then enclosed with his remains:

> Et dès lors il feit murailler toutes les fenestres et la porte mesme tellement qu'il estoit impossible d'en sortir, et feist seulement laisser un petit pertuis ouvert par lequel on leur donnoit du pain et de l'eau, donnant la charge de cecy à son Chastellain. Et demeura ceste pauvre malheureuse en la misericorde de ceste obscure prison, n'ayant autre compagnie que celle d'un corps mort. Et après avoir demeuré quelque temps en ceste puanteur sans air ou consolation, vaincue de douleur et d'extreme martyre, rendit l'ame à Dieu.[214]

The punishment described above from the Boasituau tale is indeed one of the harshest sentences meted out in all of the *Histoires tragiques* and certainly most difficult to

[213] The confinement in theses tales is also interesting as a historical reflection of Foucault's view on the seventeenth century's "great confinement" as he calls it in *The History of Madness* during the period when the government took over various already existing structures, many of which had been religious houses, and established institutions to house the poor and the mad, such as the Hôpital Général.

[214] Boaistuau, *Histoires tragiques,* 134.

imagine. Her husband wanted her to rot with the body that had "putrefied" hers. The punishment does seem rather severe when compared with Mélisse's. The lady in Boaisituau's story was unfaithful, while Mélisse was responsible for the death of her own mother and several other nuns, inspired by her relations with the devil. Mélisse, like the unfaithful wife, is described as "malheureuse." Like the wife, she dies in confinement, but her end is a mystery. The fact that both women die to serve as examples falls into the scheme of the world that Boaistuau and Rosset set out as the model. As Richard Carr states about Boaisituau:

> A défaut de cette orientation divine, l'amour est synonyme de maladie; c'est un « méchant venin », un cancer qui n'apporte que la souffrance et la mort à tous ceux qu'il afflige. Tel est le fond de la vision tragique de Boaistuau : ses histoires déplorent la faiblesse de l'homme si indifférent aux lois divines qu'il se laisse dominer par une passion égoïste et criminelle. C'est la suprême folie que de refuser un bonheur assuré pour se laisser précipiter dans une mort certaine.[215]

These lines mirror Rosset's previously cited criticism of Gaufridy who renounced the Creator for "un plaisir temporal et une fumée d'honneur." Rosset and Boaistuau both treat the consequences of impulsive behavior with an iron fist. The formula is simple and those who deviate from the will of God will suffer punishment.[216] Whether the sin is murder or adultery, there is no escape from justice and both authors send the same message, although the stories are written differently. The authors strive to establish order out of what they perceive to be chaotic times and therefore must show that unbridled

[215]Carr, *Pierre Boaistuau's*, LV.
[216] For more on the formulaic approach found in the Histoires tragiques, see Sergio Poli, *Histoire(s) tragique(s). Anthologie/Typoloogie d'un genre littéraire* (Paris: Schena-Nizet, 1991).

passion of any type has no place in the divine order of the world. Passion is the common link that humankind shares, but when it spirals out of control it becomes the primary force of destruction. Passion turned into folly is the common thread that runs throughout all of the French versions of the *Histoires tragiques*.[217]

The theme of captivity reoccurs throughout the *Histoire tragiques* in different situations. The confinement of Mélisse closely resembles that of the unfaithful wife. Mélisse's situation in general mimics the "doubly captive space" occupied by the possessed, as stated by Ferber, and the notion of her confinement is reinforced by the importance of the bedroom as a locus in her story.[218] As Rosset points out in the beginning of the story, Mélisse never had a chance because of the incarceration assigned to her by her parents. Her efforts to assert herself only led back to the place where she began. Katherine Crawford notes, "Women were always part of the disciplinary structure, keeping an eye out for bodily transgressions and policing women who did not conform to expectations."[219] This is exemplified through the figure of Mélisse's mother who assigns other girls to sleep with and keep an eye on Mélisse at night, as well as her fellow sisters at the convent. She was a threat to order, and therefore must be kept securely in her place. The story reflects the early modern period's need for surveillance and control of women in general and furthermore shows the additional tension caused by reform in the convent. Just as religious women were excluded from preaching, administering sacraments, or discerning spirits, other women also had their share of

[217] In his «Avis au lecteur» Rosset associates love with ambition by indicating that both are «les principaux acteurs de la scène.» 35.
[218] Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 79.
[219] Katherine Crawford, "Privilege, Possibility, and Perversion: Rethinking the Study of Early Modern Sexuality," *The Journal of Modern History,* Vol.78, No. 2 (June, 2006): 416.

restrictions, such as the edicts repeatedly issued between the mid-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to reinforce parental control over marriage. Another interesting edict in 1557 made infanticide a *crimen exeptum*, or special case, so that a woman could be convicted if she concealed her pregnancy and the child died for any reason. She was automatically presumed guilty of murder and put to death, so that between 1565 and 1690, there were 625 women put to death for this crime.[220]

Of course, their fragility was not the only reason women were deemed more likely to succumb to the devil. It was easy to view women as weaker physically. It was the very nature of women and their bodies' ability to change and produce life that makes them equally mysterious and suspect.[221] Females are viewed as more prone to demonic invasion because of their inferior ability to resist as Muchembled asserts in *Sorcières, Justice, et Société*, "Or, la femme affirment les textes de l'époque, doit a la « fragilité de son sexe » d'être plus facilement dupée et séduite que les hommes par le Prince de Ténèbres."[222] The suspicious nature of women makes it possible for them to dupe men, as well. As we have already witnessed in the tale of Gaufridy, men can also be victims of Satan, but the majority of his prey is female. Usually, as noted by Margaret Denike, "the terror that "evil" incites belongs not to *man* whose anatomical proximity to the "body of Christ"–as Kramer and Sprenger argued–"has so far preserved the male sex from such a

[220] Alfred Soman, "Anatomy of an Infanticide Trial: The Case of Marie-Jean Bartonnet (1742)," ed. Michael Wolfe, *Changing Identities in Early Modern France* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997), 252.
[221] James Farr notes in his essay "The Pure and Disciplined Body" that "Women at that time largely were denied formal access to power and were usually portrayed as 'unruly' in the patriarchal prescriptive literature of the period. The moralistic literature of the epoch of the Catholic Reformation focused singular attention on women, and the binary and unequal relation between male and female was assumed as the only possible—and proper—one." p.392.
[222] Muchembled, *Sorcières: justice et société aux 16e et 17e siècles* (Paris: Editions Imago, 1987), 13.

great crime" as witchcraft and find him free of sin and full of glory."[223] The idea of the male as anatomically akin to Christ explains much of the gender bias found in the church itself. His carnal nature has been emphasized in the notion of transubstantiation and physical suffering, but less as the physical paradigm itself. The popular notion of the female body as an inferior, defective version of the male body that prevailed throughout the early modern period would support the belief that women were predisposed to moral weakness as well.[224] This falls in line with what Charlotte Wells terms "the dichotomous world view that typified early modern thinking."[225]

Devilish Copulation

In "Histoire X," Rosset describes the havoc wreaked by the devil in female form. He creates a female monster during a time when monstrous counterparts were found in abundance in all kinds of publications during the same period. In their book *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, Daston and Parks remark,

> The multiplicity and lability of the meanings that early modern writers assigned to monsters is reflected in the wide variety of texts in which they appeared: from broadsides to Latin medical treatises to a whole new genre of books devoted entirely to the pleasures of reading about natural wonders. Despite their differences, these works shared certain features in their presentation of monsters.[226]

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[223] Denike, "The Devil's Insatiable Sex," 38.
[224] Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).
[225] Charlotte Wells, "Leeches on the Body Politic: Xenophobia and Witchcraft in Early Modern French Political Thought," *French Historical Studies*, Vol.22, No. 3 (Summer, 1999): 352.
[226] Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York: Zone, 2001), 190.

One of the features enumerated by Daston and Parks is the insistence on truth and reliability, which meant giving specific names, times, and places in the accounts of monsters. Rosset uses a similar narrative technique by always giving names, places, and very specific information about the individuals in the *Histoires tragiques*, although the names are usually changed. The detailed material becomes more important in the stories where he anticipates skepticism, as we have seen, and he provides thorough explanations in those cases as to the reality of the account.

Rosset usually does not open the tale with the reasons the tale is and should be accepted as truthful. He most often begins by renouncing the terrible times in which he lived. However, in "Histoire X," Rosset opens the story in an unusual manner. He starts the tale by stating that he does not understand why there are people who cannot be persuaded that there are such things as demonic apparitions and concluded that they are atheists or epicureans who do not want to believe that there are good or bad spirits. He then posits the following argument:

> Mais nous qui sommes enseignés en une meilleure école et qui savons, par le témoignage que les Saintes Ecritures en rendent, que les bons et les mauvais anges apparaissent aux hommes selon qu'il plaît à Dieu, nous dirons que tels esprits se peuvent former un corps. […] Et les mauvais anges ou démons, comme élémentaires et abaissés jusqu'à la terre, prennent des corps composés de ce que plus ils désirent. Tantôt ils s'en forment d'une vapeur terrestre congelée par la froidure de l'air, et maintenant de feu, ou d'air et de feu tout ensemble, mais le plus souvent, des vapeurs froide et humides qui ne durent qu'autant qu'il leur plaît et qui se résolvent aussitôt en leur élément. Quelquefois aussi, ils se

> mettent dans les charognes des morts qu'ils font mouvoir et marcher leur influant pour un temps une espèce de propriété et d'agilité. Les exemples sont si évidents et en si grand nombre que qui les voudrait nier nierait la clarté du jour.[227]

Rosset's explanation is very detailed and logical. He tells exactly how spirits can assume a bodily form and all of the possibilities therein. It is striking not only in that he strays from his usual opening formula, but also he gives a lesson on good and bad angels[228] and terrestrial vapors. He is very preoccupied with establishing a base of credibility before he even begins the tale itself. Rosset strives to cover all potential questions a skeptic could pose in preparing to tell a story that seems impossible. Once he clarifies the possibility of demons transforming a corpse, he is ready to launch his narrative.

"Histoire X" tells the tale of a lieutenant, who is a night watchman called La Jaquière. La Jaquière has a weakness, however, for prostitutes. Rosset first describes him in the following passage:

> Suivant le devoir de sa charge, il allait la nuit par la ville pour empêcher les meurtres, voleries et autres insolences et méchancetés qui ne sont que trop en usage aux bonnes villes. Mais avec cela, il se dispensait lui-même quelquefois à visiter les garces, quand il en savait quelque belle, si bien qu'il était grandement blâmé de ce vice.[229]

So in addition to keeping the streets free of crime, La Jaquière is known for taking time out from his guard to frequent brothels. He already has a reputation for giving in to

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[227] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,'* 252.
[228] The concept of "good and bad angels" is addressed in the Bible (Toby and Job, respectively), but also in the play Dr. Faustus, by Christopher Marlowe, first published in 1604, in which Faustus makes a pact with the devil mirrored by that of Goffredy's Pact in HT III. Clearly Rosset drew upon the Faustian plot for some of his inspiration for the tales of Gaufridy as well as Mélisse.
[229] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 253.

carnal desires, and if a demon is looking for a way to tempt him, it will logically involve a sexual act. After Rosset's introduction, explaining the watchman's preferred vice, La Jaquière makes the following boast to his friends late one night as they are heading home:

> Je ne sais mes amis, se dit-il, de quelle viande j'ai mangé. Tant y a que je me sens si échauffé que, si maintenant je rencontrais le diable, il n'échapperait jamais de mes mains que premièrement je n'en eusse fait à mon volonté.[230]

Not only does this statement foretell what will soon happen in the tale, it suggests that an imminent meeting with the devil will take place. La Jaquière is taunting the devil. The reference to the "viande" he has eaten reinforces the carnal element prevalent in the story.[231] After La Jaquière's remark, Rosset interjects, "O jugement incomparable de Dieu!" Rosset uses such interjections to evoke a religious message while at the same time presenting egregious behavior. As he references God's judgment, the author concurrently hints that whatever is about to take place will be intriguing.

As soon as the words escape the watchman's mouth, he sees a beautiful woman walking hurriedly accompanied by a footman carrying a lantern. La Jaquière is surprised to see such a well-dressed and lovely woman out so late and approaches her. He takes her arm and insists on escorting her home with some of his men in order to defend her from any danger. On the way to her home, they discuss her abusive husband and La Jaquière vows to protect and help her any way he can. The more they talk, the stronger his desire for her becomes. When they arrive at her home, he enters with her and begins to beg for her favors, promising her all sorts of services and that he would never tell

[230] Ibid.
[231] Thomas Aquinas explains in the Summa theologiae "The goal of fasting is to bridle lust (which is particularly excited by meat), to make satisfaction for sin, and to help the mind rise from earth to heaven."

anyone of their tryst. She finally says that if he will remember his promises, she will sleep with him. However, after seducing her, La Jaquière is not finished with his requests. He asks for another favor:

> Vous devez savoir mademoiselle, repart la Jaquière, que je suis venu céans en compagnie de deux des plus grands amis que j'aie au monde. Nous n'avons rien de propre, tout est commun parmi nous. Si je ne leur faisais part de ma bonne fortune, par aventure cela serait cause de rompre le lien d'amitié qui nous étreint si fermement, et par même moyen, ils pourraient publier nos amours. Je vous supplie donc que la même courtoisie que vous m'ayez octroyée ne leur soit point refusée. Jamais nous n'oublierons une telle faveur et vous pourrez vous vanter désormais d'avoir trois hommes à votre commandement qui ne sont qu'un et qui ne respireront que votre obéissance.[232]

The watchman's speech is deplorable in many ways. First, as soon as he received what he claimed to want most in the world, he has another request. Second, his argument is feeble and shows his utter disregard and lack of esteem for the woman. Third, what respectable woman could boast about having three men at her command? Such a claim would be the same as to "publier" their relations, as he promised not to do. The irony of his speech is that he is actually proclaiming his obedience to Satan, while he presumes himself to be wily and convincing. This is a new twist on the Faustian promise made by Gaufridy and Mélisse.

The lady responds that she cannot believe his request and the fact that he would ask her to abandon herself to so many people. She has not ever imagined being with

[232] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 257.

anyone other than her husband. She begs him, "Je vous prie, ne me parlez plus de ces choses, autrement, je me donnerais la mort en ma propre main." They continue in their dalliance and La Jaquière begins to implore her once more. The discourse continues until he finally wears down her resolve and she agrees to his request. One by one, his friends have their turns with her and afterwards they all sit around and praise every part of her body.[233] She finally asks them with who they think they have been. The men, basking in their conquest, are taken aback. They do not understand.

The woman finally says that they are mistaken and if they knew who she was, they certainly would not have been talking the way they had been. She tells them that she wants to appear to them as she truly is and show them who she is. Rosset describes the chilling moment:

> Ce disant, elle retrousse sa robe et sa cotte et leur fait voir la plus horrible, le plus vilaine, la plus puante et la plus infecte charogne du monde. Et au même instant, il se fait comme un coup de tonnerre. Nos hommes tombent à terre comme morts. La maison disparaît et il n'en reste que les masures d'un vieux logis découvert, plein de fumier et d'ordure. Ils demeurent plus de deux heures étendus comme des pourceaux dans le bourbier, sans reprendre leurs esprits.[234]

The men were instantly transported from their gloating to the most horrific sight they had ever witnessed. The beautiful and sensual young woman morphed into the most horrible, nasty, stinky, and revolting decaying carcass ever seen. The realization that the rotting

[233] Anna Rosner explains "In this accumulation of metaphors, the female body loses its totality, a strategy which contrasts physical beauty and the truth of the concealed diabolical body, or l'être et le paraitre." "The Prostitute in Pieces in the histoire tragique: François de Rosset's 'Histoire X' (1614) and Jean-Pierre Camus's 'La Sanglante chastete' (1630)", Papers *on French Seventeenth Century Literature*, 34.67 (Jan. 2007):301.

[234] Rosset, "*Les Histoires mémorables,"* 259.

cadaver was what they had been having sex with is too much for the men to process. They simply pass out and fall to the ground, while the house disappears along with the cadaver, again showing the elements of the fantastic. The men are stretched out like piglets in the mire, another pig reference in conjunction with the devil. They lie there in stench amidst the rubble for more than two hours.

The very description of the rotting flesh is pivotal in Rosset's creation of a female monster. The striking aspect of the story is her monstrous description and her ability to morph into a different form. In the other diabolic tales of the *Histoires tragiques* there are not any changes in form that suddenly take place. In the cases of demonic possession, the devil may appear in different forms, but he maintains the form in which he appears at that particular time. Here he possesses a corpse and brings it back to life, creating a beautiful woman who becomes a horrifying monster. Her very ability to change forms and become the most disgusting creature imaginable make this tale so terrifying, turning it into a durable piece of literary history.[235]

The same fear of shape changing and the threat presented by the woman's body is an issue at the heart of this tale. Anna Rosner writes of this tale:

> Her genitals are assimilated with vice, perversion and apocalyptic human destruction: one is reminded of the sixteenth-century contreblason which reads "Par toy, le con, plusieurs gens sont tues" (Blasons anatomiques du corps feminin 125) The diabolical female body thus provokes chaos, or a destabilization of all order; the description of the corpse is imbued with great theatricality as the

[235] This story is rewritten by Jan Potocki, *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, prés. par Roger Caillois, (Paris: Gallimard, 1958) as well as Charles Nodier *Etudes sur le seizième siècle et sur quelques auteurs rares ou singuliers du dix-septième* (Bassac: Plein Chant, 2005).

victims with whom the creature has copulated fall almost immediately to their deaths while thunder booms in the night sky.[236]

The female figure in this story is much more frightening and imposing than even the image of the devil in the form of a "pourceau" or a "bouc." The other apparitions are human or angel, but never a mix of female beauty becoming rotting flesh. As Rosner points out, the female body has the power to destabilize order. That power incites extreme fear and the hybrid corpse of this particular woman is horrific. Or, in the words of Maurice Lever, "D'une palette aux éclats sombres et sauvages, Rosset fait surgir une galerie de monstres dans des mises en scène de Grand-Guignol."[237] The female monster described by Rosset in "Histoire X" is the monster *par excellence*. There are female monsters that are a grotesque fusion of human bodies and animal bodies, but this monster is even more terrifying as a combination of human and cadaver.

This monster is female, half-human, and half-corpse. She threatens every aspect of life. She is a creature that is alive yet dead at the same time, copulating and putrefying at the same time. Closson remarks that "S'il est une particularité de la dimension macabre du baroque, c'est qu'elle exhibe le corps humain de la façon plus atroce qui soit, visant a créer un effet d'horreur."[238] The female body produces life, yet in this instance, she is also taking life away from the men who were foolish enough to meld flesh with her. She not only embodies all masculine phobias at the time about hidden and potentially dangerous body parts, but also exacerbates the fear as her private parts are actually rotting. After their second round of sex, La Jaquière and this creature are

[236] Anna Rosner, "The Prostitute in Pieces," 302.
[237] It is interesting to note that Lever makes this reference to Grand Guignol and again reiterates that the story as a precursor to the "fantastique" as well as horror genres.
[238] Marriane Closson, *L'Imaginaire démoniaque,* 405.

described as lying entertwined "ayant achevé cette belle œuvre, ils sont collés bouche à bouche l'un avec l'autre." They are as close to one as two people can be and La Jaquière has no idea of the hidden danger lurking. Her deceptive beauty literally kills.

Death in this case is essential to hammer home the message of divine justice Rosset always delivers. The tale also perfectly combines the grotesque esthetic of contrasts that provide a space of metamorphosis or transformation. Rosner states this concept as follows:

> The death of the male victims is necessary in order to respect the literary codes of the histoire tragique, which punishes vice, rewards virtue, and consequently re-establishes order, reinforcing the ever-present link between female sexuality and death. It is important to note here that the prostitute, half-human, half corpse, is an excellent example of the grotesque fusion of the human and other-worldly, or the "estranged world," as Wolfgang Kayser has called it.[239]

The woman's grotesque body is necessary as well to punish the men in the story. She is a fusion of human and the "estranged world," but also the devil incarnate, or the devil taking on an earthly decaying body. She is the personification of the male's worst fears and she is evil come to life.

Despite the fact, she is the human incarnation of evil in this story, I do not agree with Rosner's description of the woman as a prostitute. Rosset did mention that La Jaquière was drawn to dalliances with prostitutes, but the descriptions given of her do not indicate that her role is that of a prostitute in the story. Rosner's basis is explained in a footnote:

[239] Rosner, "The Prostitute in Pieces," 302.

> This beautiful woman, walking at night with only a laquais, at first feigns the "damsel in distress" to seduce her prey, citing an abusive husband. She must then be persuaded to offer her body to La Jaquière, the story's hero, but after some coaxing, she agrees to fornicate with him in exchange for "protection" solidifying the sex "exchange" involved in prostitution, and subsequently, she agrees to sleep with his friends.[240]

She does agree to sleep with La Jaquière who promises her protection and favors, but the exchange involved in prostitution is not exemplified here. She only agrees to sleep with the friends after La Jaquière mentions that he promised not to speak of their relations, but there was always the possibility or threat that the others would talk about it unless she provide the same favors for them. There is nothing in the story to categorize her as a prostitute and doing so does not enhance the tale. It is unimportant to the story. Rosset's concern in the story descriptions is to provide a worldly version of hell through which the men would be punished for the sexual manipulation of a woman.

Rosset uses the backdrop of manure and filth in the rubble amidst which the victims find themselves to heighten the sensation that they part of a sickening netherworld. The tale emphasizes repulsion of the sense of smell as well as sight. They are likened to swine stretched out in mire, reinforcing the demonic and revolting circumstances. The only reason they are even discovered in the filthy mess is because a man with a lantern stopped by "pour y décharger son ventre" to add to the fecal references. The place was only worthy of waste. In fact, one of the men had already died of fear on the spot.

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[240] Rosner, "The Prostitute in Pieces," n6, 304.

The man who discovered them took them to his house "tous souillés d'ordures." He buried the man who already died. The two remaining men, barely alive and covered in refuse, ask for a confessor. La Jaquière died the next day and the other man lived a few days more, and thus was able to recount the events to everyone. Before long, everyone in France had heard about it, according to the narrative. In fact, like many of the *Histoires tragiques*, the story is likely based on a fait divers from 1613 entitled *Discours merveilleux et véritable d'un capitaine de la ville de Lyon que Sathan a enlevé dans sa chambre depuis peu de temps,* so the story had been circulated. Rosset, however, feels the need to spend more time at its conclusion carefully illustrating how such a tale could actually be true. He began the story by listing the logical reasons for which the story could be true and at the end will again provide logical argumentation to support its credibility. After concluding the narrative, Rosset writes that those who deny the apparition of spirits really did not know what to say about the story. Rosset is quick to point out that the Catholic Christians would notice God's fairness in judgment. However, the author is not telling the story in order to blame anyone, he says. He merely hopes that anyone who sins will have God's assistance if they fall prey to vice.

Truth and Consequences

Rosset, as always, is insistent on the edifying aspects of "Histoire X," but he is also eager to continue explaining how the story could be realistically possible. He states that all that remains at the end is to say whether the men had sex with a real body or a supernatural one. He supplies the following commentary:

Pour moi, je crois fermement que c'était le corps mort de quelque belle femme

> que Satan avait pris en quelque sépulcre et qu'il faisait mouvoir. Et si l'on me dit qu'il n'y a pas d'apparence que le diable veuille emprunter une charogne parce qu'on le découvrirait aisément par sa puanteur, je réponds que, puisque le malin esprit a pouvoir de donner mouvement à ce qui n'en a point, il a bien aussi la puissance de lui donner telle odeur et telle couleur qu'il voudra. Joint qu'il peut tromper nos sens et s'insinuer dans eux pour nous faire prendre une chose pour une autre.[241]

Rosset elucidates in logical steps what he believes must have taken place. If Satan can reanimate a corpse, then he can transform the corpse however he wishes. He can provide the illusion that it was a beautiful living woman with no odor of rotting flesh about her at all. Satan is the master "trompeur" and ready to trick anyone he can. So, following Rosset's theory, the story is rendered even more disgusting. If Satan were providing an illusion to the three men, then the woman was already a stinking rotting corpse with whom they actually had sexual intercourse. The beliefs about the devil's ability to perform allusions were rampant in the early modern period.[242]

Rosset continues to prove his point by citing many well-known cases from history in which demons were able to reanimate corpses. He cites the case of a demon, Baltazo, who took over the body of a hanged man in Laon as well as ancient Greek and Roman sources. He finishes by writing that these testimonies should be sufficient evidence to refute the atheists and epicureans who deny such apparitions, and again the story he has just told should serve as witness. Just as the opening of the story deviated from Rosset's

[241] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 260.
[242] Paré's *Des Monstres et prodiges*, as well as the *Malleus* give detailed explanations as to how the devil uses illusions to trick man.

usual formula, the end followed suit. He does not end with a moral message, just the above paraphrased emphasis on the veracity of his story. Although Rosset stresses that the story is a lesson against vices, it seems he places more emphasis on the tale's credibility.

The aspect of the tale that is most striking is clearly the half-decaying body of the unruly female. When that body is revealed, it truly terrifies. There is no way to create order out of the combination of a beautiful woman with the decay. Because decay is an irreversible process, it remains unsettling. The impulse of all of the authors of the *Histoires tragiques* is to convert chaos into order and put all of the pieces into God's plan for divine order of the universe. Rosset meets and exceeds that goal in "Histoire X." All participants experience a living nightmare and are punished with swift deaths. Nevertheless, just as with the two other demonic tales, the devil is in the details. It is Rosset's skill in telling the tales of possession in a suspenseful manner combined with the almost cinematic effects, which compel and repulse simultaneously that make the stories resonate. With "Histoire X" Rosset moves more toward the fantastic, combined with terror, as this supernatural tale takes the imagery to the level of true horror. It is so terrifying that Rosset becomes obsessed with making the story seem believable. The story in this case becomes larger than its intended message and it is evident with his introduction and conclusion that Rosset is struggling to rectify the imbalance. The story stands on its own. As Vaucher Gravili notes:

> Cette histoire de Thibaud de la Jacquière, Chevalier du Guet, s'accouplant avec le Diable qui lui apparaît sous le corps d'une belle femme est une démonstration très réussie sur le plan de la narration de sa théorie des mauvais anges. La dimension

> tout à fait fantastique de ce récit inspirera d'ailleurs Charles Nodier qui en fera un conte intitule Les aventures de Thibaud de la Jacquière, dans *Contes*[…][243]

"Histoire X" is so captivating that Nodier, as well as Jan Potocki in *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*, borrow the story line and write their own versions. As Vaucher Gravili points out, it is the fantastic dimension of the story that bestows interest.[244] The "bad angels" lesson is very well demonstrated, but is nonetheless eclipsed by the fascinating climax of the tale.

Both the story of Mélisse and the story of the Jacquière are precursors to the *fantastique* genre, and the suspenseful manner in which they are written allow them to reflect the preoccupations and religious dogma of their times, as well as unveil a fascination for deviant behavior that belies their instructional intent as stated by Rosset. Henri Coulet writes that according to Castex, *Diable Amoureux* (1772) is the precursor of the conte fantastique.[245] However, Tzvetan Todorov states that the "livre qui inaugure magistralement l'époque du récit fantastique" is *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* by Jan Potocki.[246] Potocki's story varies only slightly from that of Rosset; therefore Rosset's version definitely merits consideration as a precursor to the *fantastique*. Todorov also gives three conditions that must be met for a story to be considered part of the genre:

> D'abord, il faut que le texte oblige le lecteur à considérer le monde des personnages comme un monde de personnes vivantes et à hésiter entre une explication naturelle et une explication surnaturelle des événements évoqués.

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[243] Vaucher Gravili, *Loi et transgression,* 43.
[244] She states at the introduction to the tale, « La dimension fantastique de ce récit n'échappe pas aux amateurs de sujets diaboliques du siècle suivant qui le réécrivent en le dépouillant de tout apparat édifiant et en font un divertissement pour l'esprit. » *Les Histoires* mémorables, 251.
[245] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*, 468.
[246] Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 31.

> Ensuite, cette hésitation peut être ressentie également par un personnage ; ainsi le rôle de lecteur est pour ainsi dire confié à un personnage et dans le même temps l'hésitation se trouve représentée, elle devient un des thèmes de l'œuvre ; dans le cas d'une lecture naïve, le lecteur réel s'identifie avec le personnage. Enfin il importe que le lecteur adopte une certain attitude à l'égard du texte : il refusera aussi bien l'interprétation allégorique que l'interprétation « poétique ».[247]

Both "Histoire XX" and "Histoire X" generally fulfill the requirements set forth by Todorov, although it is difficult to pinpoint the reaction of the readership. The hesitation described is a key component in Rosset's work and explains why he is so insistent on the truthfulness of his account in order to create a sense of hesitation. Without any sort of *possibility* of the supernatural events in each of the stories, there would be an immediate rejection of the story as completely implausible. Therefore Rosset does due diligence to ensure that consideration of the ideas set forth leads to the hesitation described thus places these stories squarely into the realm of the fantastique. The fact that Potocki and Nodier retell "Histoire X" underscores the legacy of Rosset's work.

Rosset's success in writing the two tales is that while he presents them as instructional, and takes credibility very seriously, he is in fact writing stories captivating enough to inspire other authors and spawn literary genres, such as the fantastique. His real triumph here seems to be a covert criticism of the societal mechanisms set up to ensure safety. La Jaquière is the night watchman, therefore his job is to ensure safety and maintain order in the city. Instead, he wreaks havoc. His reprehensible behavior would have resulted in the sexual abuse of a woman had she actually been one. He and his

[247] Ibid, 37-38.

friends are literally scared to death. Mélisse enters a convent, which should have been a safe haven for a young widow, yet she has carnal relations with the devil and then kills her own mother. The stories have an undercurrent that deeply questions French society and institutions as a whole. The future of a nation that cannot protect its own seems uncertain.

The works also serve to emphasize the beliefs about the devil as being very real at the time, the use of the Huguenot scapegoat to plant the demon seed, and the misogynistic views of females and their bodies that prevailed during this time. The religious upheaval has also been devastating to France. Rosset wants a stable united country and divine justice reinforces the king's divine rule on earth. Rosset has an educational goal, as he so frequently points out, in order to report the evil that can befall those who stray from God's path. He is doing his part to reinforce a stable, morally focused state. However, the resulting stories yield much more than instruction. They actually become literary works that are fascinating to read because of their often unsettling subjects.

CHAPTER THREE-BODIES IN PARTS AND PIECES

Medical Mutilation: mutilation and vengeance

The *Histoires tragiques* feature several narratives concerning bodily mutilation, a reflection of the influence of the anatomists' work on the translators/authors of the *Histoires tragiques*. During the early modern period, certain discoveries about the body and the universe were taking place that shook the stability of all preconceived notions of parts of the whole. The Copernican revolution and anatomical discoveries resulting from dissecting the body changed the general views about how man functioned as well as the order of the universe.[248] The controversy sparked by Descartes, with his proposal of the separation of mind and body, encompassed the domains of academia, religion, philosophy, ethics, and salon culture, and left other writers grappling with the "mind/body problem" ever after.[249] The Reformation and Counter-Reformation weakened the central authority of the church that had previously served as arbiter of new knowledge. The Catholic Church contributed to the medieval notion of the parts of the body to represent the whole, cultivated by veneration of body parts[250] of various saints and the corporeal suffering of Christ for human sins, which is one of the core ideas of the Christian system of belief. During the early modern period, as the Catholic Church

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[248] In the Introduction to Hillman and Mazzio's *The Body in Parts*, they assert "It is not difficult to list the elements that contributed to (and were given impetus by) this pervasive sense of fragmentation: the more "atomistic and individualistic" society associated with the advent of print technology and the end of feudalism; the schisms in the church; the Copernican revolution, which shook notions of microcosmic-macrocosmic correspondence and symmetry; or the rise of anatomy and its corresponding "culture of dissection." xiii.

[249] Bernadette Höffer, *Psychosomatic Disorders in Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (Surrey: Ashgate Books, 2009), 13-27.

[250] See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*,(New York: Zone Books, 1991).

sought to reinforce itself as an authoritative entity, another very critical and central idea in the Catholic Church pertaining to the body of Christ recreated by the priest via transubstantiation during mass was being dismissed. The Protestants dismissed this central idea as "papist magic," as we have seen in the section on possession and exorcism.[251] As also seen in the cases of exorcism, medical thought and church doctrine did not agree. The physician was limited by God's will and it was during the early modern period that physicians tried to separate medicine as scientific, as opposed to a spiritual system, although religious questions persisted.[252] Mary Lindemann proposes, "Science in our modern understanding did not exist in the early modern world."[253] She further explains that it would be better to speak in terms of *natural philosophy*, because there was still an acceptance of occult ways of knowing that seems contradictory to scientific methods.[254]

The *Histoires tragiques* mirror the concern with the body during the early modern period, and the connection between body, mind, and science that was an uncomfortable uncertainty for many.[255] The corporal aspect of the stories and the fact that there is always a cardinal sin committed in the *Histoires tragiques*, generally incited by some form of unbridled love or passion, leads to the treatment of the body itself in the tales. There are several stories that feature the violent mutilation of the body, yet in a manner akin to dissection. Different body parts are severed in a methodical manner. Since

[251] For more on the notion of "papist magic", see Ferber, *Demonic Possession,* 5.
[252] See chapter "Monstrous Medicine" by Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe,* ed. Laura Knoppers and Joan Landes, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004), 143-47.
[253] Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2010), 85.
[254] Ibid, 86.
[255] see Roy Porter, *Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1996), 84 for more on the differentiation of medicine from faith and/or spirit, soul.

Vesalius's *De Fabrica Corporis Humani* was published in 1534, knowledge of anatomists and the dissections being performed became more widespread. When Pierre Boaistuau first brought the tragic tales of Bandello's *Novelle* to France in 1559, such knowledge was already part of the general consciousness and certainly reflected in some of the literary works of the time. Jonathan Sawday writes of the "anatomical renaissance" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries asserting that the crowds at the anatomy demonstrations were not just medical students; rather they were the "fashionable elite, members of the court, wealthy merchants, senior administrators, even princes themselves."[256] There is a dimension of dissection to be found in Boaistuau's "Cinquiesme histoire" and in one of the stories by Rosset, who published his some fifty-six years later as "Histoire XIV- *De la cruelle vengeance excercée par une demoiselle sur la personne du meurtrier de celui qu'elle aimait."* The two stories are different in many ways at the outset, but the gory scene in each when the main character dismembers the object of her vengeance remains largely the same. Both women have been wronged and their thirst for revenge prompts them to literally dissect the perpetrators of their unhappy circumstances.

There is also a Biblical basis for bodily mutilation found in the book of Matthew. It is involving self-mutilation as a means of avoiding sin, but William Ian Miller points out that it goes beyond mere excision. The passage is as follows: "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one

[256] Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), 41-42.

of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."[257] Miller maintains that if Jesus had stopped with the mere removal of the offending appendage, the severing would be punitive. Instead, it goes beyond that to a form of payment, of insurance to protect against your whole body going to hell.[258] Miller explains that there are multitudes of provisions in the Bible and elsewhere in history that figure humans, as well as human parts, as "means of payment for debt."[259] The idea correlates with punishment as extracting payment or retribution for the crime committed. There is an intrinsic value in revenge and its purpose is to extract a payment.

To move beyond the mere frightfulness of the violence in looking at the stories, it is helpful to consider an explanation by Philippe Ariès, who proposes that the "almost fashionable success of anatomy cannot be attributed solely to scientific curiosity" but instead proposes that "it corresponds to an attraction to certain ill-defined things at the outer limits of life and death, sexuality and pain."[260] It all relates to the ties that bind the collection of *Histoires tragiques* as a whole. There is a certain fascination found in those outer limits that attracts, even though the act itself, be it deviant sexual behavior, black masses, or mutilating a body, is inherently disgusting at the same time. It is this quality of outer limits that make the *Histoires tragiques* influential in literary history, although they have been given scant credit for their contributions. Boaistuau was instrumental in the chain of authors as the the tales were brought to France.

Although little is known of Boaistuau's early years, after time spent studying law in Avignon and Valence around 1543, he took a trip to Rome where he "discovered what

[257] Matthew 5:29-30, KJV.
[258] Miller, *Eye for an Eye,* 33-34.
[259] Ibid, 32-33.
[260] Philipe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 369.

would be his lifelong passion," according to Richard Carr, who also states, "there he spent his time in the company of two doctors who awakened in him an interest in natural science and the wonders of nature."[261] Carr also explains that in an effort to comprehend the mysteries of man, Boaistuau's "empirical mind sought answers in the dissecting room."[262] Boaistuau was also able to travel to Germany and Italy prior to working on the *Histoires tragiques*, published in 1559. Boaistuau's experience and knowledge in the area of dissection is displayed in his "Cinquiesme histoire" and explains the gruesome details that abound. For a scientific mind like Boaistuau's, the story was a chance to share anatomical knowledge, as well as present the psychological aspect that fascinated him most.[263] Nancy Virtue ignores the scientific quests that were clearly an important part of Boaistuau's life and sees the publication of the *Histoires tragiques* to be a backlash to the humiliation he suffered as a result of editing Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*.[264] Virtue proposes that this backlash motivates a version of the *Histoires tragiques* showing a "male vision of power, one which is reflected in the text's repeated references to various forms of public, physical chastisement, especially dismemberment and decapitation."[265] While those elements have a strong presence in the *Histoires tragiques*, Virtue illustrates her argument with tales other than that of Violente and Didaco. Humiliation seems an unlikely motivation to publish, and if it were, all the tales would reflect a misogynistic view. They do not. In the end of the tale about Violente, she is punished, but it is Didaco, the male figure, who is mercilessly dismembered. As

[261] Carr, *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques,* 21.
[262] Ibid, 22.
[263] Ibid, 25.
[264] Boaistuau's 1558 edition was entitled *Histoires des amans fortunez.*
[265] Nancy Virtue, "Translation as Violation: A Reading of Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires tragiques," *Renaissance and Reformation*, XXII, 3 (1998): 40.

Virtue does admit, René Sturel states that Boaistuau's goal was less moralistic than aesthetic, "il semble...avoir cherché surtout à plaire à son lecteur."[266]

In order to set the stage for the mutilation, Boaistuau does preface his account with examples of women from the Bible who have dominated men, starting with Eve. He does not jump directly to the most violent, but builds the tension by using examples of other female domination. Boaistuau finishes the preface by writing:

> Bref, il ne se trouve rien si difficile, ardu, et penible où sa malice ne penetre lors qu'elle la veut desployer. Comme vous pourrez juger par la lecture de ceste histoire, où les affections d'une femme cruelle sont si bien exprimées que vous ne serez moins espouvantez de les entendre qu'elle estoit hardie et asseurée à les executer.[267]

As the foreword advises, the famed wrath of women can be witnessed in many stories, which Boaistuau is about to share with the reader. Boaistuau warns of the horror and mentions, almost as if he is surprised, the capability and strength of the woman in executing her plan. Since he has just finished citing so many examples and reiterating how nothing can stop a female's malice, her fortitude should not surprise. However, in this particular tale, touted as one of the most violent of Boaistuau's collection, the brutality of Violente is overwhelming.[268]

Boaistuau opens the scene by explaining that Valence, the setting of this narrative, had long been held to be a city exemplary for its morals and faith. The young knight, Didaco, is described as being part of an illustrious family and being renowned throughout

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[266] René Sturel, "Bandello en France au XVIe siècle," *Bulletin Italien*, XVIII, (1918): 6.
[267] Boaistuau, *Histoires Tragiques,* 138.
[268] Carr, *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques,* 116.

the city. He is smitten by a young bourgeois, who is beneath him. He is unable to stop thinking about her and is tormented by thoughts of her. She is described as pure, chaste, and virtuous. She refuses his advances and does not succumb to his attempts to win her over. He finally decides to marry her since there is no other recourse, but does so in the presence of her mother, brothers, and a priest. It turns out that the two were never officially married and the services were just a sham. Didaco marries another young woman from one of the grandest families in the region with great pomp and circumstance. When Violente and family discover that they have been deceived, they are aggrieved and have no way to prove anything.

Violente truly despairs and initially begins to mutilate herself. Boaistuau describes her rage in the following passage :

> Dequoy Violente passionnée outre mesure, pressée d'ire et de fureur, se retira à sa chambre toute seule où elle commença à faire une cruelle guerre à sa face et à ses cheveux ; puis comme forcenée et hors de soy, disoit : « Ah ! ah ! quantes peines et travaux, quels desmesurez tourmens ouffre maintenant ma pauvre ame affligée, sans avoir consolation de creature vivante ! quelle dure et cruelle penitence pour chose non offensée ! ah fortune ennemie de mon heur, tu m'as si eslongnée de tout remede que je n'ay seulement moyen de faire entendre mon desastre à personne qui me peust venger, qui seroit un tel confort à mon esprit qu'il partiroit plus content de ce miserable monde.[269]

Boaistuau shows the reader a young woman who has always held her virtue dear, who

[269] Boaistuau, *Histoires Tragiques,* 150.

lived by the rules, and now finds herself with nothing.[270] She is beyond despair and starts to disfigure herself. She has no remedy for her situation; no one who can help her, but her desire for vengeance is already present. She mentions her frustration with finding "personne qui peust me venger," although she is certain there is no one who will help her. That thought becomes the tiny seed out of which a much loftier plan will grow as shame turns to rage. However, in this moment of despair and lamentation, she is in danger of harming herself, therefore her family intervenes and places her under the watch of a faithful slave, Janique. She confides in Janique that she has no other goal other than the vengeance due her. She is sorry Didaco has only one life to give.[271] Violente has nothing left to hope for, except the title of "vile et abominable putain," so feels that she has nothing to lose.[272] She offers Janique a sum of "douze cens escuz" and the rings Didaco gave her in exchange for her help. Violente warns that if Janique doesn't want to provide assistance, she will exact justice all by herself. It is Janique, in fact, who provides not only assistance, but who also constructs the plan by which they will exact the revenge. They lure Didaco to visit Violente and after he falls asleep, they bind him with a cord so that he will not be able to defend himself against Violente's attack:

> […] et ne arda gueres Violente qu'elle ne saisit de l'un de ces grands couteaux et, s'estant doulcement eslevée, elle tastoit avecques la main le lieu le plus propre pour lui faire un fourreau de la chair de son ennemy. Et toute saisie d'ire, de rage

[270] As Barbara Diefendorf explains in *"*Gender and the Family*,"* there is an idea "that virtue was an inherited quality" and this was "central to emphasis on good breeding, or lineage that pervades sixteenth- and seventeenth-century demands for laws that would increase parental control over marriage." 104. A girl robbed of her virtue, as was Violente, would clearly be without hope.
[271] It is interesting to note that in the actual theaters of anatomy, criminals' bodies were used, so that a criminal could be doubly punished, while providing a valuable service to the public through science. See Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 54-65.
[272] For more on treatment of prostitutes, see Sharon Ketttering, *French Society, 1589-1715* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001).

> et de furie, enflammée comme une Medée, luy darda la poincte de telle force contre la gorge qu'elle la persa de part en part ; et le pauvre malheureux, pensant resister à son mal et faire quelque effort contre son adverse et triste fortune, fut estonné qu'il se sentit encore rechargé de nouveau, mesme si intrinqué en la corde qu'il ne pouvoit mouvoir ny pied ny main ; et par l'excessive violence du mal, le pouvoir de parler et de crier luy fut osté, de sorte qu'apres avoir receu dix ou douze coups mortels, l'un apres l'autre, sa pauvre ame martyre feist le departement d'avec son triste corps.

Violente uses one of the knives she had Janique purchase to commit the murder.The two women have cunningly planned out the murder to the last detail. When she picks up the knife, she is overcome with such fury that she thrusts the knife into his throat with such force she cuts right through it. Boaistuau likens her to Medée, synonymous to a furious sorceress, as her wrath fills her with almost superhuman strength.[273] Unlike Medée, Violente does not possess any supernatural powers. She has already taken any possible resistance into account with deliberate and careful planning. Her thirst for justice and her ire are enough to give her the force she needs to not only slice open Didaco's throat, but also to keep on cutting, as she brutally stabs him ten to twelve more times. Like Medée, she is clearly outside the law at this point and her rage has turned her into something other. The pious and humble creature is replaced by a fury capable of inhuman acts.

Not satisfied with merely killing Didaco and repeatedly stabbing him, Violente seems to draw more strength with each thrust of her knife. She continues to avenge

[273] Boaistuau chose one of the ultimate classic tales of female vengeance to represent the full depth of Violente's rage. The characters are both below the station in life of their lovers who wish to marry women above them in status.

herself and Richard Carr states "The frenzy of her hatred produces the most detailed scene of horror in the *Histoires tragiques*."[274] Violente continues to inflict her punishment upon the now dead body of Didaco. She performs her own version of a dissection, opposite in intent to that of the anatomists. As Jonathan Sawday explains of the early modern anatomists' work on the criminal body:

> In asserting, as forcefully as possible, the dignity of a body which, perhaps moments before, had been an object of penal display, the anatomist has asserted his own dignity and the dignity of his science. A final paradox has become apparent. Rather than simply demonstrating his power over and above the criminal body, the anatomist was perversely subject to the ontological status of the body. Only if he could reclaim for it, on its behalf, its full divine significance, could his own investigations be carried forward.[275]

The exchange between the anatomist and the criminal body is the reverse of the exchange that takes place between Didaco and Violente, as she seeks to remove any dignity from the man who took hers. While his faux marriage was indeed criminal, Violente has concurrently taken on the role of judge, executor, and anatomist. She is mutilating Didaco's dead body as a form of continued punishment, because simply killing him was not enough. She vengefully dissects his body, piece by piece, commenting on the offenses each part has committed:

> Et lors ne pouvant encores repaistre son cueur felon ny esteindre l'eschauffé courroux qui bouillonnoit en son cueur, elle luy tira les yeux avec la pointe du cousteau hors de la teste, s'escriant contre eux avec une voix hideuse comme s'ils

[274] Carr, *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques,* 116.
[275] Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned*, 84.

eussent eu quelque sentiment de vie : « Ah ! trahistres yeux, messagers de la plus trahistresse ame qui resida oncques en cors d'homme mortel, sortez dosormais de vos sieges honteux, car la sources de vos feinctes larmes est maintenant tarie et seichée ».[276]

Violente's rage is still boiling in her heart, and since that rage can no longer feed solely on the fact that Didaco's heart is no longer beating, she moves on to the next most injurious part of his anatomy: the eyes. She mercilessly extracts his eyes from his head with the aid of her knife and condemns them for all the crimes they committed against her. She is removing them from their "shameful seats" or sockets, so that they cannot betray again. The language and imagery of Violente's speech is what is noteworthy here, as her commentary becomes akin to a contreblason.

As cited from Rosner in the story of La Jaquière, the way in which the half rotting corpse is reminiscent of a sixteenth century contreblason, the violent dismemberment of Didaco has much the same effect.[277] It goes beyond the contreblason in that it is a melding of disdainful language and physical action, or contreblason coming alive via the private anatomy theatre of the bedroom. However, the sex roles are reversed in Violente's situation, so she does not begin with the breast, as did Marot.[278] Violente provides blame and takes action against the parts previously elevated by her love. With her new form of contreblason, she berates each part as she physically separates it from the corpse. In her article "Members Only" Nancy J. Vickers writes: "Although Marot's

[276] Boaistuau, *Histoires Tragiques,* 162.
[277] The contre-blason referenced echoed a destabilization of all order.
[278] Marot's original blason, "Blason du Tetin" was the poem that initiated the poetic "contest." Nancy Vickers, "Members Only" in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Hillman and Mazzio, (NY and London: Routledge, 1997), 9.

proposal for the writing of counter blazon (a genre of staged virtuoso critique) and de la Hueterie's realization of it (a critique of a genre and, by extension, of its inventor) are clearly distinguished in kind, they are both informed by a similar logic of bifurcation, of placing or displacing blame onto the otherwise elevated body (or body part)."[279] In Violente's fragmentation of the Didaco's body, one finds the same logic of bifurcation combined with the act of severing the offensive part. She moves along from the traitorous eyes, to the source of more lies, the tongue:

> Puis, ayant mis fin au martyre insensible des yeux, continuant sa rage, elle s'attaqua à la langue, et l'ayant avec ses mains sanglantes tirée hors de sa bouche, et la regardent d'un œil meurtrier, luy dist en la trenchant : « Ah ! langue abominable et parjure, combien de mensonges as-tu basty avant que tu peusses faire cette breche mortelle à mon honneur, duquel me sentent maintenant par ton moyen privée, je m'achemine franchement à la mort, à laquelle tu m'ouvres à present le chemin. »[280]

The tongue is a perjurer, having borne false witness at the sham marriage ceremony and lied repeatedly to Violente, as well as the woman he actually married. It is the source of her misery and caused the loss of her honor. Because of the harm caused by this terrible tongue, Violente is consciously anticipating her own death. What she says shows that she is clearly cognizant of the fact that killing Didaco will lead to her own execution. She is not just driven by blind rage. She knows there will be consequences for her actions, but it does not matter. Violente is seeking satisfaction any way she can experience it, as well as the most intimate knowledge of Didaco. Like the anatomist, she is also seeking

[279] Vickers, "Members Only," 13.
[280] Boaistuau, *Histoires Tragiques,*163.

knowledge of what is truly inside this man whom she thought she knew. The anatomist, as well, as the skeptic, seeks visual knowledge about the other's interior.[281]

The way in which her own body parts are referenced in the above cited passage also foreshadows her fate. She, too, will be executed. The contrast between the mention of her parts and his is striking. She pulls the tongue out with her bloody hands and studies it with the murderous gaze emanating from her still intact eyes. The attention given to his tongue with her hands and her eyes seem to create a dimensional effect where everything becomes focused on the one part she is examining. It is as if the references to her body parts refract upon his and highlight the singularity of the tongue. Just she refers to his dishonest eyes with their false tears as if they were entities of their own, the tongue is responsible for the crimes it perpetrated. The blood of Didaco on Violente's hands is a reminder of her own current crime and a mixing of body and fluid that reiterates their previous intimacy.

Her discourse on each part also reflects the belief that each part had its own "spirit" as explained by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio in the introduction to *The Body in Parts*:

> Influential natural philosophers like Paracelsus and Van Helmont went so far as to argue that parts were individuated not only lexically and physiologically but also ontologically: to the isolated organs belonged what were termed *idea singularum partium*—so that , for instance, there existed an *idea ocularis* in the eye, or an *idea sanguinis* in the heart—imparting integrity and spiritual significance to each

[281] For more on this idea proposed see David Hillman, "Visceral Knowledge," in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe,* Hillman and Mazzio, ed., (NY and London: Routledge, 1997),

part of the body.[282]

When she reprimands the tongue for its lies, it is not just as the tongue then. The tongue was the provider of the spoken word, and therefore the lies and betrayal, emanating from not just the person, Didaco, but the spirit characteristic to the tongue itself. His tongue must pay for its lack of integrity.

She moves on to the part most representative of love, and the part in her own body that has been boiling; the heart. She slices open his stomach with the knife, sticks her hands into his body and rips out his heart, giving it several blows with her knife, as described in this extremely gory approach by Boaistuau:

> …(insatiable en sa cruaté) elle feit avec le couteau une violente ouverture à l'estomach ; et lançant ses cruelles mains dessus le cueur du chevalier, l'arracha de son lieu, et luy ayant donné plusieurs coups, disoit : « Ah ! cueur dimantin, sous l'enclume duquel ont esté forgées les infortunées trames de mes cruels destins, que ne te pouvois-je aussi bien voir au descouvert le passé, comme je fais ores, pour me garder de ton enorme trahison et abominable desloyauté ? »

Although the way she cuts open the stomach is described as violent, sticking her own hands inside the dead body is the ultimate act of violence. It is the supreme intrusion of Didaco's corpse. She is violating his body in retaliation. She rips out his heart and treats it again as a separate unit by striking it a few times with the knife. Ripping the heart out with her hands is not sufficient punishment and she reinforces the violence by stabbing it more. She blames it for having been hidden, and mourns the fact that she could not see it

[282] Hillman and Mazzio, introduction to *The Body in Parts,* xviii.

as it really was.[283] Again, like the other parts she removed before it, her gaze is upon it, focusing literally and figuratively on the heart now in her actual grasp. She wishes she could have discovered her cruel destiny, already woven into that treacherous heart. She accuses the heart of its disloyalty and enormous betrayal. The heart, which she fully possessed at one time, is hers again to treat as it treated her.

Indeed, it is the serious contemplation of each part severed and the eloquence with which she rebukes each part that make this passage readable. Otherwise the sheer violence would simply overwhelm. She is full of rage, yet at the same time has some very lucid reflections interspersed with Medea-like moments. There is a calculated angle to the dismemberment. Certain thoughtfulness brings more to the narrative than blood and gore. The acceptance of what she anticipates her own fate to be is also noteworthy, because it provides an elevation of her character. What she is doing clearly transgresses acceptable behavior and even falls under the category of the unthinkable, yet she sees no other alternative. To live with a tarnished reputation is not an option because she is steadfast in her honor. She takes matters into her own hands quite literally, because she cannot conceive of any other way to deal with the cruel hand fate has dealt her. She seems less than human as she slices Didaco apart and Boaistuau likens her to a hungry lion with her prey. She is hungry for vengeance and her version of vengeance exceeds the mere taking of a life.

After virtually tearing the body to shreds with the knife, she is then satisfied that it is a corpse. Up until this part, she had not regarded the totality of the body. While each

[283] The heart was also seen as the center for moral consciousness, of unwritten law, and encounters with God. For more on this, see Scott M. Stevens, "Sacred Heart and Secular Brain," in *The Body in Parts*.

piece could be read as a synecdoche, each piece in her hand represented the traitorous whole from which it had been taken. And while Violente had carefully observed and verbally eviscerated each part, she had not yet recognized the corpse as such until she had nearly destroyed it. When she has finally finished cutting, stabbing, chastising, and ripping Didaco's body apart, it is at that precise moment when she addresses him as a cadaver:

> Et l'ayant ainsi dechiré par tout avec une infinité de coups, elle s'escria : « O chairogne infaicte, qui as autrefois esté organe de la plus infidel et desloyale ame qui oncques descendit du ciel ! or es-tu maintenant payée de desserte condigne à tes merites ».[284]

She recognizes his status as a dead body, but uses even more insulting language calling him infected carrion. The brutally carved up body was once host to the most disloyal and unfaithful soul to ever come down from the heavens, and she reiterates this fact, moving back now from the parts to the whole to the soul. It is as if she is now assembling order out of chaos in a Lacanian murderous mutilation mirror stage where she realizes that the pieces of the whole did once constitute a body that housed a traitorous soul and now that she has taken it apart, she feels that order has been reestablished. She even states that she feels "si allégée de mon mal que, vienne la mort quand elle voudra[…]"[285]

She feels almost avenged, but still has to complete the punishment for Didaco. As he humiliated her, she feels obliged to return the favor. It is important to her that his corpse be seen. Going back to the ocular focus and the way that she scrutinized each part, she wants others to have the full visual effect of Didaco dismemberment. It is a

[284] Boaistuau, *Histoires Tragiques,* 163.
[285] Ibid.

complete reversal of the theater of anatomy. The anatomist recognizes the corpse first, then carefully removes the parts of the whole in front of the audience of observers. Violente recognizes the corpse last and then wants it to be publicly viewed by the audience.[286] She even states that in order for vengeance to be manifested, his body must be seen by everyone.

Finding an audience proves simple. She and Janique throw his body and the parts out of the window onto the pavement below and soon everyone in the city had heard the news. However, because of his dismemberment and the resulting disfiguration, no one could identify the corpse. Violente listened to the comments and confusion beneath her window, descended to announce that she was a witness, and discovered the murder. The judges were summoned and then she made the following statement:

> Celuy que vous voyez mort icy est le chevalier Didaco. Et parce que plusieurs ont interest à sa mort (comme son beau-pere, sa femme, et ses autres parents) vous les ferez (s'il vous plaist) appeller, a fin qu'en leur presence j'en dye ce que j'en sçay.

Violente is keeping everyone in suspense until she has the presence all of Didaco's relations. She is carrying her plot of revenge through to the end. At the same time, Boaistuau is keeping the reader in suspense, because although her death is assured, exactly what she will publicize is uncertain. It is a necessary component of her revenge as Miller concludes "Revenge was seldom, if ever, a two-party affair; it was invariably played before an audience, and much of the satisfaction one took in one's own revenge was "caught," like a disease, or like laughter, from the response you observed in others to

[286] For more on the need for punishment to be seen, and Foucault's ideas on this topic, see chapter 4.

your actions.[287] She is waiting for the reaction.

Once everyone has assembled and there are so many people present that there is barely room for the judges, she is ready for the culmination of her plan:

> Et lors Violente, en presence de tous, sans s'emouvoir aucunement et sans autre indice de passion, leur conta en premier lieu les chastes amours de Didaco et d'elle, lesquels il avoit continuez quatorze ou quinze moys sans en recevoir aucun fruict, deduisant apres comme (vaincu d'amour) il l'avoit espousée clandestinement à sa maison et solennisé les nopces par un prestre incogneu, adjoustant encores comme ils avoient vescu un an en mesnage ensemble sans qu'elle luy eust jamais donné occasion de se mescontenter. Puis leur mist devant les yeux son second mariage avec la fille de tel qui estoit present, adjoustant pour conclusion que, puis que l'autre luy avoit faict perdre l'honneur, elle avoit cherché le moyen de lui faire perdre la vie.[288]

Violente calmly gives all the pertinent details of the relationship and confesses to murder. She explains everything clearly and demonstrates that she had no alternative. He took away her honor, so she took his life. Her honor was her life and it has already been revoked. The speech she makes is not because she wants the judges and the community to spare her life. She wants them to understand that her honor was taken from her. She was duped by Didaco, who was not the honorable knight they all thought him to be. Her speech is the only way for her side of the story to be heard and the final step to righting the situation. Her honor is gone and she cannot get it back, but would like to be accorded the integrity she deserves.

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[287] Miller, *Eye for an Eye,* 151.
[288] Boaistuau, *Histoires Tragiques,* 165-66.

She emphasizes that she does not expect her life to be spared, and on the contrary, will take her own life if necessary. When she finishes her speech, the crowd was astonished and many moved to tears. Violente is locked up and investigation of the murder reveals she was telling the truth. She is decapitated not only because it was not her place to decide Didaco's fate, but also because of the excessive cruelty used on the corpse. It is a notable end because justice is served according to the *Histoires tragiques* formula, and Violente is fairly treated, based on the crime committed. It is unique in that Boaistuau presents her as a rather sympathetic character, despite her astonishing cruelty. Because she adheres to her code of honor, and does not resist her fate, she becomes a tragic heroine of sorts. None of the other female characters in the tales are presented with sympathy, Boaistuau, at the beginning of the tale, recalls all the biblical cruelties instigated by women starting with Eve and basically showing the evilness of females. In the other *Histoires tragiques*, such as the tales examined by Virtue, women transgressors are usually harshly punished and do not evoke any pity on the part of the author. Boaistuau ultimately (and surprisingly) creates a sympathetic character in Violente, therefore I disagree with Virtue who writes "despite Boaistuau's attempt to otherwise undermine the narratorial voice in the *Histoires tragiques* by removing almost all narratorial interventions from the stories themselves and by omitting the framestory, he nonetheless manages, to cast a tone of misogyny over the work as a whole."[289]

Feminine Rage Distortion

The dismemberment of Didaco's body in the story of Violente is quite similar to

[289] Virtue, "Translation as Violation," 45.

the dismemberment that occurs in Rosset's "Histoire XIV, *De la cruelle vengeance exercée par une demoiselle sur la personne du meurtrier de celui qu'elle aimait*." In fact, Rosset was probably inspired by the theme of feminine vengeance in Boaistuau's tale, as Vaucher Gravili reports in her introduction to the story. Even with his cautionary remarks and anecdotes at the beginning, Boaistuau creates a heroine. Rosset, Vaucher Gravili states, creates in his main character Fleurie "une héroïne digne des grandes dames de l'Antiquité."[290] Rosset's Fleurie is also duped and loses the man she loves, but her situation is different from that of Violente. The vengeance and rage remain the same.

There is a continuation of the theme that Boaistuau began, and although the tragic tale of Violente is so exceedingly violent, it is an important link in the chain of stories that began in Italy and not only made their way to France, but successfully produced other versions. They both reflect the changes taking place in bodily consciousness and knowledge. While we know that Boaistuau was captivated by the study of science and spent time viewing dissections, it is unknown if Rosset did as well. He manages nonetheless to create a scene of vivisection in his tale that surpasses Boaistuau's violence.

In Rosset's "Histoire XIV," two people made for one another fall madly in love. Lucimador, an accomplished young nobleman who has just returned from Italy, is smitten by his love for Fleurie, an equally outstanding and beautiful young lady. Lucimador is so taken with Fleurie that he sings her praises wherever he goes and lets it be known exactly how he feels. He unwittingly praises her to one of his comrades also just returning from Italy, who is so intrigued by her description that he decides he must have her. The friend, Clorizande, decides that the only way to separate the two, who will soon be wed, is to kill

[290] Carr compares Boaistuau's works to Seneca's tragedies and in a parallel reference, Vaucher Gravili references Rosset's "heroine." see Carr, *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques,* 117-37.

Lucimador. Clorizande has his valet murder Lucimador in a cunning plot designed to cast suspicion away from him. His plan is executed, but Clorizande is fearful of being discovered and tries to pay a lackey to kill his valet, the murderer. The plan fails and eventually Fleurie discovers that Clorizande is responsible for Lucimador's murder.

Rosset describes how when she makes this discovery, she is so transported by her rage that her looks even become distorted. He goes into detail about the physical changes in her appearance, which is interesting given the attention she will in turn give to each part of Clorizande when she is cutting him apart. Rosset comments on how her beautiful features are distorted by her anger:

> Qui eût vu alors Fleurie, on l'eût jugée comme une personne qui est transportée de fureur et de rage. Ses beaux yeux, où la douceur de l'amour soulait faire sa résidence, sont maintenant deux astres qui préparent une mauvaise influence à Clorizande. Ses joues, auparavant teintes de lys et de roses vermeilles, sont rouges comme un Montgibel. Elle est l'heure même toute forcenée, plonger mille fois une dague dans le sein traitre si puis après, reprenant un peu ses esprits égarés, elle ne délibérait d'en faire un plus rigoureux châtiment.[291]

Fleurie is *transported* by rage. Rage is what transforms all of the female protagonists in the stories involving dismemberment. The use of the word "transported" is critical to the sympathetic reception Rosset intends for Fleurie. The women in these tales, like Violente and Fleurie, are empowered by their rage and thirst for vengeance. Their rage allows them to become something other. The women abandon themselves, and become so powerful and determined to exact retribution that they turn into very frightening and

[291] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 332.

monstrous creatures. Fleurie is so angry that even her beautiful eyes change as well as her cheeks.[292] Her natural beauty is changed by her raw emotion. She steps outside of herself and, in a state of frenzy, becomes capable of a multitude of violent atrocities. Rosset foreshadows the atrocities by mentioning that Fleurie will plunge a dagger into Clorizande's traitorous breast one thousand times and then decide that he needs a more rigorous punishment. At this point, the reader knows a very violent scene with copious stabbing will take place, followed by still more violence. A capacity for such violence has been established.

Another quality these female characters share is their ability to, in spite of their rage, coldly calculate a plan to achieve the justice they desire. Fleurie realizes that punishing Clorizande requires more than her blind rage. She allows Clorizande to court her, so that she can put her plan into action. Clorizande, unwittingly believing that he is replacing Lucimador, is elated by the success of his own plan. When Fleurie proposes that Clorizande come meet with her one night to discuss their nuptials, he is overjoyed. He kisses "mille fois les mains qui le feront cruellement mourir."[293] Rosset continues with his foreshadowing in this line and focuses on Fleurie's hands, the two parts of her body that are showered with one thousand kisses, in a sharp contrast to the one thousand knife stabs and more they will soon cruelly deliver as they slice Clorizande to pieces.[294]

When Clorizande arrives, he is moved by Fleurie's beauty as she invites him

[292] It is interesting to note the dualism at work here in Rosset's description of beauty and violence and how monstrous behavior negates beauty. For more on the idea of beuty as "God-given" and early modern ideas regarding beauty see Georges Vigarello, *Histoire de la beauté: Le corps et l'art d'embellir de la Renaissance à nos jours* (Seuil: Paris 2004).
[293] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 334.
[294] Miller explains that the hands are "protectors and assertors of our jurisdictional bubble" because "hands work as offenders and defenders." 136-137.

inside. As soon as he enters, beauty turns to rage and she yells at him:

> « O traitre ! s'écria alors Fleurie, c'est à ce coup que tu recevras le châtiment de l'assassinat que tu as commis en la personne de Lucidamor ! Ce qui me fâche est que je ne te peux donner qu'une mort, car mille ne seraient pas suffisantes pour expier ton crime. »[295]

Her words echo those spoken by Violente "car je suis si resolue en la haine de Didaco qu'il ne me peut satisfaire par une seule vie."[296] The problem for both Violente and Fleurie is that their fury is so great that taking one life away does not seem like adequate punishment for the men who wronged them. Since taking one life is not enough to end their frustration, they just keep cutting, hoping to assuage themselves. They punish the offenders piece by piece.

Fleurie's treatment of Clorizande's mimics Violente's castigation of Didaco. The valet, Maubrun, assists her while Violente was assisted by her servant Janique. She dismembers Clorizande in a manner quite similar to the manner in which Violente severed many of Didaco's parts. However, Fleurie removes even more parts and does not comment on each one. The greatest, and certainly most shocking, difference in the two scenes is that Fleurie dismembers Clorizande *before* killing him. The dismemberment of a dead body was already horrifying. The torturous dismemberment of a living person is inconceivable.[297] The detail Rosset provides makes this scene much more difficult to process. The eyes are first removed, as they were in Boaistuau's version. After

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[295] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 335.
[296] Boaistuau, *Histoires Tragiques,* 151.
[297] Even Stephen Hales, "the most daring physiological experimentalist of the early eighteenth century," faced criticism for his vivisection experiments on frogs and horses. See Roy Porter, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine,* 164.

scratching up his face, Fleurie starts to cut him apart:

> Fleurie tire un petit couteau dont elle lui perce les yeux, et puis les lui tire hors de la tête. Elle lui coupe le nez, les oreilles, et assisté du valet lui arrache les dents, les ongles et lui sépare les doigts l'un après l'autre. Le malheureux se démène et tache de se désempêtrer, mais il s'étreint plus fort. Enfin, après qu'elle a exercé mille sortes de cruautés sur ce misérable corps, elle lui jette des charbons ardents dans le sein et proféré toutes les paroles injurieuses que la rage apprend à ceux qui ont perdu l'humanité, elle prend un grand couteau, lui ouvre l'estomac et lui arrache le cœur qu'elle jette dans le feu qu'elle avait auparavant fait allumer dans cette salle.[298]

Fleurie pierces his eyes with a knife and pulls them out of his head while he is alive. Rosset designs a tale even more gruesome than Boaistuau's story. Fleurie is performing a vivisection that is overwhelmingly vicious, as she is driven to avenge. She also continues with her torture and dismembers Clorizande in ways that were not even conceived of in Boaistuau's *Histoires tragiques*. In addition to cutting off his nose and ears, she pulls out his teeth (with assistance), removes his nails and cuts off his fingers one by one. It is already a stomach-turning description and then Rosset reminds us that he is still alive by mentioning that he struggled and tried to get away. To imagine all of these acts being performed on a live body is difficult. It would be a total bloodbath. Fleurie is not finished.

After she has performed "one thousand" more atrocities on the body, she throws hot coals on his chest. Only then does she begin to denounce him. Violente chastised

[298] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 336.

each part of the whole, but Fleurie waits until this point to say anything. Rosset does not tell us exactly what she said; only that she uttered all injurious words inspired by her rage. He leaves the words, not the visual, to the imagination. Fleurie then slices open his stomach, rips out his heart, and throws it in the fire. As in Violente did with Janique, Fleurie gives money to Maubrun, but then she writes out an explanation of what happened. Her hand-written note is unlike the public spectacle in Violente's tale, but its purpose is the same. Fleurie also wants the crimes committed by Clorizande to become public knowledge in order to complete her vengeance.[299] She makes a speech to Lucimador stating that his vengeance has been served and that she will soon join him, then drinks poison.

Rosset's transition after she drinks the poison is notable. One paragraph before, Fleurie was crazy with rage, and cutting Clorizande into pieces. After she accomplishes his mutilation, she drinks the poison and Rosset immediately begins referencing her beautiful eyes. After completing her task, she is transformed back into herself. It is the same as Violente when she says she feels "si allegée de mon mal que, vienne la mort quand elle voudra..." Fleurie also accepts her post-vengeance fate, although hers is self-inflicted. However, the description Rosset provides after she drinks the poison contrasts sharply with the wrathful creature who carved up a living man:

> La violence et la quantité de breuvage s'étant bientôt emparées de son cœur, elle commence à fermer ces beaux yeux où l'Amour cachait ses traits et ses flammes, et avec un soupir qu'elle tire, son âme s'envole hors de ce beau corps, miracle de

[299] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* and D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits.*

la nature.[300]

A moment before she had lost all humanity and now Rosset describes her beautiful eyes and body. The beauty of her body, that he calls "a miracle of nature," stands out against the hideous and bloody refuses she left behind in the adjacent room. Rosset is trying to present a more sympathetic view of Fleurie, but after the sheer gore of the preceding scene, the transition seems very awkward. She sighs and her spirit flies out of her beautiful body. These lines imply that a purity of spirit exists , even though her method of avenging Lucidamour's murder was shockingly cruel and violent. Nevertheless, Fleurie is given a pass on her crime and Rosset states that everyone assigns guilt to Clorizande and is sad about Lucidamor and Fleurie. She is put among the ranks of "ces genereuses dames tant celebres dans les histoires des Anciens."[301] She is put in the same sepulcher as Lucidamor with the following epitaph:

CI-GISENT DEUX AMANTS DONT LE CRUEL DESTIN
TRANCHA LES PLUS BEAUX JOURS AU POINT DE LEUR MATIN.
L'UN MOURUT PAR LA MAIN DE SA JALOUSE ENVIE,
L'AMANTE DESOLEE AYANT VENGE SA MORT
SE PRIVE PUIS APRES ELLE-MEME DE VIE
POUR SE MONTRER QU'ILS N'AVAIENT TOUS DEUX
QU'UN MEME SORT.[302]

Rosset manages to create an even bloodier and violent dismemberment in his story than Boaistuau, but also wants to maintain sympathy for Fleurie. He places her

[300] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 336.
[301] Ibid, 337.
[302] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 337.

among the ancient heroines and she achieves a legendary status.[303] She was not punished by execution, as was Violente, but instead decided to take her own life. The epitaph insists on cruel destiny more than the actual crimes. The story shows that evil was punished in that Clorizande was killed, but the unusually cruel mutilation of Clorizande is left unpunished by legal measures. Fleurie bypassed the judgment step and killed herself. Because the issues of her excessive cruelty and her taking of the law into her own hands are not really discussed, she is able to be promoted to heroine. The category of destiny also serves to tie up any loose ends as Vaucher Gravili writes:

> Il n'est pas rare, d'ailleurs, de rencontrer, sous la plume de ces écrivains qui se réclament de l'orthodoxie la plus rigoureuse, des termes comme *fortune*, *sort*, *astre*, et *destin* pour désigner tout ce qui reste dans le domaine de l'inexplicable : il s'agit là, certes, de clichés littéraires et culturels qui viennent de loin et qui ébranlent jamais cette foi totale dans la Loi suprême qu'on ne peut enfreindre sans encourir toutes les rigueurs d'une juste punition. Du reste, a une époque toute proche de celle qui nous intéresse, Guillaume du Vair ramène cette notion de *destin* ou de *fortune* dans le sillon de la plus stricte doctrine chrétienne, en la définissant une prescience de Dieu que les hommes ignorent.[304]

Therefore, it would be more normal than it seems to the present day reader to refer to destiny for a writer trying to educate about divine Christian justice. Destiny then was not necessarily seen as an opposing force or at odds with Christian doctrine. So while it seems logical that by doing God's will, one would be rewarded, it is not always the case

[303] Vaucher Gravili, in *Loi et transgression,* notes that "Fleurie, qui, pourtant, a exercé sa vengeance dans un moment de furie frénétique, obtient de Rosset la plus grande comprehension, et prend place, elle aussi, parmi les généreuses Dames de l'Antiquité. 39.
[304] Ibid, 56.

in the *Histoires tragiques*. Transgressors are always punished, but sometimes the transgression is provoked by a cruel fate. Sometimes the innocent must suffer as well, and even the most pure of heart may endure dreadful trials to earn their just rewards.

Self-mutilation and Suicide

In Boaistuau's story, Violente dismembered the dead body of Didaco to seek revenge for his betrayal and subsequent loss of her honor. In Rosset's story about Fleurie, she dismembers the living body of Clorizande because he had her soul mate killed in hopes of marrying her instead. One of the tales goes beyond body dismemberment, in that it describes the self-mutilation of a young man.

In Camus's story entitled "La Sanglante Chastete," an innocent boy makes the ultimate sacrifice by mutilating his own body in order to avoid carnal sin. In a move that demonstrates his true piety, he takes his own life, illustrating, as put by Bette Talvacchia "the extreme distrust of physical pleasure" that she states "has always informed one current within the Catholic church's teaching on sexual matters."[305] Self-denial was a necessary technique for avoiding any of the seven deadly sins. Bodily mortification is the most extreme form of self-sacrifice practiced in various forms and at various levels by early Christians and medieval saints. Karmen MacKendrick points out that feats of starvation and sleep-deprivation are common in hagiographic literature, where they illustrate the saints' spiritual strength against worldly pleasure and notes that at least in some cases the saintliness of such activity was in doubt as it was thought to be a

[305] Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999), 117.

diabolical trick.[306] She also points out that in what she terms the "counterpleasure" found in self-mutilation or self-destruction, there is a tremendous and irrational *expenditure*, an expenditure of onself, as Bataille writes, "mystical and ecstatic states can't do without certain extremes against the self."[307] Though the devout Christians, mystics, and saints experienced ecstatic states, it was not without a great deal of effort. Such a state only results from extreme physical deprivation or discomfort. As MacKendrick notes, it is relatively difficult to grasp the movement of ascetic pleasure, because asceticism is explicitly opposed to both pleasure and desire.[308] As we have seen throughout the *Histoires tragiques*, the corporeal aspect of Christianity is the central force driving so many resulting behaviors. As Geoffrey Harpham observed, "discipline of the essential self is always defined as a quest for the goal that cannot and must not be reached" because such a goal would end as it did with Christ.[309] Stopping short of this goal, which would result in death, sometimes proved difficult for the ascetic practitioners, whose desire for violence against the self actually resulted in a very risky yet paradoxically pleasurable state. "The role of pain in asceticism is to create the ecstatic state."[310] In Camus's story, we will see the saintly actions of a young man whose only desire is to be one with the divine. His desire crosses the boundaries of suffering to lead him to death by his own hand.

Camus opens the story by referencing the suicides of Cato and Cleopatra, driven

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[306]Karmen MacKendrick, *Counterpleasures* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 75.
[307] Georges Bataille, *Visions of excess: selected writings 1927-1939,* trans. by Allan Stoekel, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr, (Minneapolis: Minneapolis UP, 1985),119.
[308] MacKendrick, *Counterpleasures,* 77.
[309] Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1987).
[310] MacKendrick, *Counterpleasures,* 84.

by vanity and the suicide of Lucretia, motivated by her rape and desire for vengeance. As pointed out by Stéphan Ferrari, editor of *L'Amphithéâtre sanglant*, Camus often recalls legendary figures in order to rank his own characters as among them in history and "conférer un statut supérieur à son sujet."[311] Ferrari also states that the juxtaposition with the pagan world of a story about a young man who wishes to belong to God also permits Camus to vary the points of view on the problem of suicide by showing that; in this case, it was because the protagonist wanted to give himself entirely to God. By presenting the suicide in this light, he hoped to curtail any negative commentary associated with suicide. Camus states that it was love of chastity that caused the death of one of the most virtuous adolescents of his time. However, as Mac Kendrick argues, it is "this violent seduction of sacrifice" that forms the heart of the ascetic paradox—sacrifice constituting the sacred, humility out of arrogance, life out of death, affirmation out of denial.[312] She further explains that such sacrifice is "subversive precisely in its conformity to religious demands."[313] It is a way of rechanneling what is at the heart a very strong impulse of desire in a perverse manner that is rendered acceptable as an offering to God. Camus seems to condone and even hold up as an example this case of suicide. He states that he is inclined "plustôt a la louange qu'au blame" and that he saw in this action "une Chasteté sans exemple." Just as self-sacrifice conforms to religious ideals, the suicide here conforms to Christ's sacrifice in the way it is presented by Camus. Thierry Pech analyzes it in the following manner:

Cette histoire est traitée un peu à la manière d'un cas de conscience, c'est- à-dire

[311] Stephan Ferrari ed., *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,*193.
[312] MacKendrick, *Counterpleasures,* 86.
[313] Ibid.

> d'un fait particulier qui met en difficulté les règles générales de la morale et qui suppose la consultation d'un casuiste expérimenté. Ici, la voix d'autorité tient ce rôle: elle tranche, mais non sans laisser quelque place au jugement contraire. De tels extraits laissent affleurer un dialogisme qui révèle même chez un chirurgien aussi rigoureux que Camus le désir de faire réfléchir son lecteur, d'exercer son jugement et sa raison, et non seulement la volonté de convaincre et d'assener.[314]

Therefore, the suicide, condemned by the Church as the immediate and irreparable loss of the soul, could be seen as an exception because of the situation. Although, Pech states it is left to the reader to judge and wrestle with the problem, Camus clearly presents Cadrat as an outstanding example of moral fortitude.

The tragic young hero, Cadrat,[315] was born into a vice-filled setting on an albeit-beautiful Mediterranean island. His father was a debaucherous womanizer and not a Christian. His mother was dead and his sisters were sent to a convent. Amazingly full of innate virtue, mistaken by the father as sheer stupidity, Cadrat managed to live a very pious life amidst the sinful conditions in which he found himself. Camus goes as far as to liken Cadrat to Lot, the only righteous man to be found in a city of sinners. As Camus describes the situation "C'était en somme un saint enfant d'un père débauché."[316]

When his father discovered his desire to follow a religious career, he decided to put a stop to that path, as Cadrat was his only chance to carry on the family name and lineage. The father locked him up "jusqu'à ce qu'il eût passé cette fantaisie" and tried to

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[314] T. Pech, *Conter le Crime. Le récit criminel et les histoires tragiques de Pierre Boaistuau à Jean-Pierre Camus (1559-1644)* (Paris: Champion, 1994).
[315] Saint Quadrat or Quadratus, was an early Christian martyr who endured various tortures to finally die of starvation and Cadrat is obviously a deriviative of the same name, showing again Camus's sympathetic attitude towards the protagonist.
[316] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 194.

feed him delicious meats, but Cadrat austerely refused anything, instead "affligeant son corps de jeûnes et autres austérités." He fasted and deprived his body as a representation of his dedication to his strength of spirit, and Camus again uses language stressing the self-deprivation "chatiant son chaste corps pour le reduire en servitude" to show the level of self-sacrifice of which Cadrat is capable. In effect, the father is providing the perfect setting for Cadrat's embrace of ascetic practice. In order to resist temptation, one needs first to be tempted. Bynum states "As Christ supposedly said to Margaret of Cortona: 'In this life, Christians cannot be perfect unless they restrain their appetites from vices, for without abstinence from food and drink the war of the flesh will never end; and they feel and suffer most from the rebellion of the flesh who refuse this saving remedy.'"[317] Cadrat believes his resolve to be pure and will only be strengthened by resisting food and drink.

However, when Sylvestre, the father, realized that Cadrat would not give in to lures of food, he must try another approach in his plan to carnally break his son's will. He decided to find a woman who would provide another sort of enticement of the flesh for his chaste son. Camus describes with contempt the vile woman who agrees to the plan and emphasizes the sharp contrast to Cadrat's purity:

> Il lui fut aisé de persuader son intention à une femme perdue; car ces malheureuses louves sont toujours prêtes à la curée, et souffrent une faim canine de chair humaine. Quant il ne lui eût point proposé d'autre récompense, le brutal aiguillon de la volupté était assez puissant pour la porter à la jouissance de Cadrat, dont la jeunesse et la beauté étaient un morceau friand pour un semblable

[317] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* Intro, ¶3.

gouffre.[318]

The woman is described as a she-wolf, a term repeatedly used throughout several of the different versions of the *Histoires tragiques* to describe abominable women. In this particular instance, Cadrat's father is, of course, unwilling to even pay for her services and it simply does not matter because she has a "canine-like hunger" for flesh. This woman is all animal and exactly the opposite of Cadrat, so intent to focus on his spirituality that he is willing to starve himself and only wants to move beyond the flesh. She provides the perfect contrast for Cadrat's stoicism. As he has already displayed an inclination towards martyrdom, and has shown that he is willing to die, Cadrat's decision should not come as a great surprise. Nonetheless, his actions seem rather extreme.

When the woman enters his bed naked and begins to seduce him, he resists. Camus likens him to the almost invincible mythological giant, Anteus in his resistance to the very experienced and determined woman he describes as "une femme de Putiphar."[319] She was pursuing him all about the room, as the door and window were barred, and he could not escape. Cadrat picked up a penknife from the table and showed it to the "maudite vipère" who feared harm. Cadrat assured her that was not his intention :

> Ne crains point, lui dit-il, méchante furie, que je te blesse : la charité me le défend, encore que la justice me permît de te châtier d'un traitement bien rude. Mais la chasteté que je désire conserver inviolable et que tu as pensé perdre en moi me commande d'être impitoyable à moi-même, et de maltraiter avec ce fer ce

[318] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 198-99.
[319] See Genesis 39. Joseph is sold as a slave to Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of the Pharaoh, whose wife attempts to seduce Joseph. He refuses her and she accuses him of rape, so he is thrown in prison.

corps qui a pu plaire à tes yeux.[320]

Here it is interesting to note the parallel with some of the female ascetics. St. Margaret was dismayed that "her hard mortifications were not destroying her natural beauty as rapidly as she wished and Eustochia of Messina burned her face at the oven "to counter her natural beauty."[321] Cadrat, like the female saints, does not wish to be objectified by his beauty. He does not want to be pleasing to the eye or subject to its lustful gaze. He only desires divine ecstasy and an escape from the earthly flesh that, like the room in which he is trapped, is a prison. As soon as he uttered his statement about his chastity, he literally began to rip his own body to shreds. The other instances of bodily mutilation that have been examined were all written in a shocking fashion, but in this case the reader is witnessing someone tearing his own body apart via the printed word. The description by Camus is riveting and terrifying at the same time.

After warning the woman that he will use the knife to disfigure the body she found pleasing, Cadrat begins his task with determination. Camus describes the way Cadrat slices himself in the following passage:

> Cela dit, plein d'un zèle extraordinaire, il commence à se faire des incisions sur les bras, les cuisses, les jambes, et l'estomac de telle sorte que vous eussiez dit qu'il découpait du taffetas ou du satin, et qu'il était insensible à la cruelle douleur que lui devaient causer les taillades qu'il se faisait. Le sang commença à en ruisseler avec telle abondance que le plancher de la chambre en fut tout arrosé, et lui aussitôt, se sentant faible de cette perte, tomba évanoui et nagea dans son

[320] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 197-198.
[321] Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985).

sang.[322]

The whole scene takes on an even deeper dimension of transgression with the description of Cadrat's wounds. In this passage, not only is he cutting himself all over, he is doing so with ease. The imagery used by Camus in the scene is particularly vivid. He starts with Cadrat making "incisions" which call to mind a medical approach, as well as naming the various parts of the anatomy he cuts. This imagery gives the impression of the initial severity of the wounds he inflicts upon himself and the gravity of these acts. To further draw in the reader and expand the horror of the scene that is played out by Cadrat, Camus then uses the images of fabric being shredded to show how wildly he is cutting himself. Camus gives the impression that he is slicing everywhere so quickly that it takes a moment for the blood to start coming out. Then when the blood does begin to flow, it is not a trickle but a veritable stream that covers the entire floor and he is "swimming" in it.

The scene, which is certainly disturbing, possesses many of the characteristics of the ascetic experiences of saints, with which Camus was certainly familiar as he often used them as examples in his sermons and the fact that he was a devout disciple, as well as friend, of François de Sales.[323] Cadrat is indeed feminized, whether intentionally or not, during the course of the story. He is likened to Anteus when first resisting the predatory woman, but then he quickly becomes the prey as she attempts to force herself upon him. Much of the physical suffering recorded in the lives of the saints was feminine as it was an acceptable way to engage in what would otherwise be subversive behavior. They often begged to suffer more as a way of escaping their sin. The bodily mortification, wearing cords under their clothing, and starving, showed self-discipline

[322] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 198.
[323] Stephan Ferrari ed., in introduction to *L'Amphitheatre sanglant.*

and devotion that was admirable. As Caroline Walker Bynum writes " … women moved to God not merely by abandoning their flawed physicality but also by becoming the suffering and feeding humanity of the body on the cross, the food on the altar."[324] Bynum also notes that "women's devotion was more characterized by penitential asceticism, particularly self-inflicted suffering."[325] In Camus's story, it seems as if Cadrat surpasses the saintly suffering, and goes directly to the ecstatic. Camus remarks that Cadrat was "insensible" to the cruel pain as he cut, but starts to feel feeble from the loss of blood. The two key elements to his self-mutilation, flesh and blood, also serve to conjure up the image of the ultimate martyr in the Catholic tradition, Jesus Christ. As Bataille puts it, "The success of Christianity must be explained by the value of the theme of the Son of God's ignominious crucifixion, which carries human dread to a representation of loss and limitless degradation."[326] The loss of his life at his own hand is a recreation of the crucifixion and as close as Cadrat can be to Christ. The story of self-sacrifice combines all the Christian elements Camus needs in order to craft an edifying tale in which Cadrat degrades his body until he ultimately loses his life.

The story is important because it echoes the ascetic tradition and serves as a defense of such practices. The tragic and violent suffering of our hero is the perfect display of love of God, rising above the vile scenario set into place by an evil father. Even though the Church does not condone suicide, it is glorified in this narrative as Camus renders it a noble means of keeping chastity intact. Cadrat becomes Christ-like in his ardor for serving God. He becomes a martyr and induces Sylvestre to convert and

[324] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* Ch. 1, ¶28.
[325] Ibid, Ch.1, ¶36.
[326] Bataille, *Visions of excess: selected writings 1927-1939,* 264.

renounce his sinful lifestyle. In this way, there is redemption of sorts, as Camus writes, "Ainsi le sang du père ayant fait naître le fils en la terre, celui du fils a fait renaître le père à la grâce et l'a peut-être élevé dans le ciel."[327] Therefore, while Sylvestre caused the self-sacrifice made by Cadrat, it ultimately ended his wanton ways and saved his soul for eternity as well. The story is at once a reflection of Camus's religious zeal and eagerness to instruct, as well as a dark and graphic account that preserves the intriguing, as well as thought-provoking, element of the *Histoires tragique*s.

Motherly Mutilation

All of the tales involving mutilation are undeniably gory. Given the propensity of the early modern period for examining fragments, it should not be surprising that fragmentation of the body often appears in literary sources as well. The sins against one's own flesh and blood, however, remain the most alarming throughout the *Histoires tragiques*. In Rosset's "Histoire XXII – *Des barbaries étranges et inouïes d'une mère denaturée"* some of the most unimaginable behavior takes place as a mother poisons her own daughter and cruelly kills her own son in order to have sexual relations with his friend. Not only does she kill him, she also mutilates his body. Rosset returns to references to antiquity in opening his tale:

> En quelle Scythie a-t-on jamais commis un crime si horrible que celui que je veux décrire ? Quelle louve, quel tigre, quel dragon et quelle bête plus farouche et plus cruelle de l'Hyrcanie pourra jamais être comparée a la plus cruelle et plus exécrable fureur qui fournit cette matière ? O siècle barbare ! O siècle cruel et

[327] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 199.

> infâme ! O siècle dernier et le plus abominable des autres ! Le soleil ne répand-il pas aujourd'hui ses rayons à grand regret, puisque tu es tout plein de Médées, d'Atrées et de Thyestes ? Voici un exemple sans exemple, et qui cependant n'est pas moins véritable que difficile à croire.[328]

Rosset is not referring to the great heroes of ancient times in this passage. He is citing examples of the most vicious and notorious killers in Greek tragedy.[329] He uses "louve," one of his oft-used descriptors for an unsympathetic female transgressor (also favored by Camus), and a host of other pejorative animal and monster names for his introduction to this tale. He denounces his century following the usual format of the genre, believing that no century could be worse than the one in which the author finds himself. He also announces that he is about to tell an unparalleled story that is difficult to believe. There is not even an adequate example to represent Gabrine.

The drama of the story unfolds when a young man about to be appointed as a court justice, Falente, wants to take his best friend, Tanacre to visit his mother and sister. Rosset calls the mother Gabrine and explains that it is after Aristio's Gabrine in *Roland furieux*, because she is as atrocious as her namesake. He describes Gabrine in the following lines:

> Cette vieille croupière, qui ne devait désormais que manier des patenôtres, devint tellement embrasée de ce jeune homme que jamais le feu ne s'éprit si bien à l'amorce comme cette carcasse s'alluma en son amour. […] Si elle n'eût été si

[328] Rossset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 462-463.
[329] Medea kills her husband's lover and own children, while Atreus invites his brother Thyeste to a banquet where he served Thyeste's childrens' flesh to him, as Thyeste had seduced his wife. The saying "Un dessin si funeste, S'il n'est digne d'Atree, est digne de Thyeste" later becomes a well-known expression after Poe features it in "The Purloined Letter." It is from Crebillon's play (1707).

vieille et si laide, il n'eût pas fait de difficulté de se conformer à ses vœux.[330] Rosset insists strongly upon her age and ugliness. He refers to her as a carcass, but nonetheless, a carcass burning with love. He paints the picture of someone so old and unattractive that the prospect of amorous feelings springing forth from her used up old body seems absurd. She is depicted as a living corpse. She encompasses all of the feminine potential for danger and disorder, yet housed in an ugly, old carcass.

While Gabrine is not referred to as a witch, she possesses all the qualities usually associated with witches and evil. As Margaret Denike writes on the subject of the vilification of women throughout history, and during the witch-hunts in particular, "Strategically deployed through images of seduction, temptation, sacrifice, and conspiratorial pacts with the Devil himself, 'evil' is inscribed with themes of sexual abjection, and is cathected to, and incarnated as, the 'weaker sex.'"[331] Denike argues that women throughout history have suffered as a result of the patriarchal nature of Christianity, but especially during the early modern period. She writes, "These claims (by Kramer, Sprenger , and others) capture the spirit of the deeply misogynist campaigns launched by the church and state during man's 'renaissance' which relied on the demonization of female sexuality, and which specifically and ruthlessly aimed to bring a brutal, punitive and regulative machine to bear directly on women."[332] The punishment that she writes about is generally focused against women who are infirm, elderly or otherwise marginalized by society.

Gabrine is not described as a witch, but since she possesses all of the

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[330] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 465.
[331] Margaret Denike, "The Devil's Insatiable Sex: A Genealogy of Evil Incarnate," *Hypatia*, Vol.18, No. 1 (Winter, 2003): 17.
[332] Denike, "The Devil's Insatiable Sex," 12.

characteristics of one, she serves as a literary example of the ostracized evil female. Charles Zika writes,

> Witches are not simply perceived as enacting the most terrible deeds imaginable against individuals; they are also represented as transgressing the most deeply-felt social codes and taboos by appropriating for themselves the sword of justice, the right of power over life and limb held by duly constituted authority, and thereby are shown to invert and threaten the very foundations of social order.[333]

This reads as a character description of Gabrine. In his description of her, Rosset is definitely painting a picture of woman as evil incarnate, and his version is all the more abject because of her corpse-like body. He also makes a sexual analogy that castigates her in multiple ways. He says she should not be manipulating anything other than her "patenotres" or saying prayers on her rosary. He is first censuring her by again implying that she is too old to be involved in sexual manipulations, and then suggesting that a religious activity would be more appropriate and better suited to someone her age. It is for Rosset, an uncharacteristically vulgar dichotomy of prayer and sexual activity with offensive overtones.

He adds that Gabrine is so ardent in her desire for Tanacre, were she not so old and ugly, he might have been tempted. Rosset also refers to her as a "singe habillé en femme" and says that she has a "feu déréglé qui brûlait au-dedans de ses moelles," further insisting on the hideousness of her body (singe) and the dissolute fire burning

[333] Charles Zika, "Cannibalism and Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Reading the Visual Images," *History Workshop Journal*, No. 44 (Autumn, 1997): 86-87.

from the very core of her bones (moelles).[334] It inspires an image of a grotesquely inappropriate figure whose entire being elicits disgust. She is ugly on the outside and warped on the inside. Rosset creates a frightful image of a lustful cadaver, as potentially dangerous as the cadaver brought back to life in "Histoire X." Rosset also describes her as "cette exécrable femme" and "le nid de tous les abominable vices du monde," expanding the reach of her wickedness from the particular to the source of all vices in the world. Here her vice is reminiscent of the Fall, to which all evil is attributed, and which was the fault of a female.[335]

Not only full of vice, but also full of passion, Gabrine tells Tanacre of her desire. Here the desire is also perverse, as in so many of the tales, yet in a new way. It is aberrant in its total inappropriateness, because Tanacre is young enough to be her son. It becomes exceedingly more perverse as she reveals what she is willing to sacrifice in order to achieve her goal. As Tanacre will not yield to her, she becomes so full of rage that she is ready to kill herself, but she does not. This is the first reference to her capacity for violence. Then her twisted mental capacity is made clear when she thinks of a plan by which she can fulfill her desire. She tells Tanacre that she suffers from the love she has for him and that there is no reason that she cannot provide him with future happiness by giving him all that she possesses. Tanacre explains that there are many things standing in the way of her plan, such as the following impediments:

[334] The "feu déréglé" that Rosset describes echoes the notion proposed by Kramer and Sprenger that "carnal lust (which)in women is insatiable." 47.

[335] For more see Denike, "The Devil's,"who asserts, "The sexualized demonology born of the doctrine of the Fall, and elaborated through Christian asceticism, speaks of a deep ambivalence toward femininity and female sexuality. It ensures that, on the one hand, woman was to remain the weaker, feeble, other sex– an embodied passivity, prone to deception and seduction, and that, on the other hand, she represented a destructive force and malevolent power; in consorting with the devil, woman became dangerous enough to pose a perpetual threat to the world, and especially to man." 23-24.

> Imaginez-vous que les obligations que j'ai à monsieur votre fils sont si grandes, et l'estime que je fais de l'amitié qu'il m'a si souvent témoignée et qu'il me fait paraître tous les jours, que jamais je ne consentirai à chose qui lui puisse donner du déplaisir. Et quelle plus grande douleur saurait-il recevoir que lorsqu'il verrait un homme qui lui est redevable, ne se contenter pas de coucher avec celle qui lui a donné naissance, mais encore jouir du bien que naturellement vous ne lui pouvez ôter ! Je vous prie donc (de) bannir cette fantaisie de votre âme, et pesant mes raisons, ne tâcher pas à m'induire à commettre un si détestable péché d'ingratitude.[336]

Tanacre's response is important for many reasons. His response first underlines all the reasons that indicate why their relationship would be wrong. He is stating it for her, to remind her that just from her son's standpoint, it is wrong for more than one reason. Tanacre's speech also provides a way of reviewing the wrong for the reader. The reasons are clearly and logically stated. The reminder that he would be sleeping with the woman who gave birth to his best friend and, by the way, taking his entire inheritance are the strongest arguments he presents. The most ironic statement he makes is that he would never do anything to cause displeasure for his highly esteemed friend, when in fact he does have a price and will go as far as assisting in his murder. He begs Gabrine to banish her fantasy and weigh his reasons for not wanting to commit such a detestable sin. She continues to wear him down. Rosset sums it up, saying that for brevity's sake he will skip all the details:

> Enfin, pour ne passer les bornes de mes discours ordinaires, et de peur de ne faire

[336] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 466-67.

un gros volume au lieu d'un simple récit, je vous dis que Tanacre et la maudite Gabrine se résolurent à l'exécution des plus abominables méchancetés dont on eût ouï parler de longtemps.[337]

The "maudite" Gabrine finally convinces Tanacre of the benefits of succumbing to her passion. As Rosset states, her twisted plan is one of the most horrific that could be concocted. Of the abundant horrific acts found throughout the *Histoires tragiques*, many are gruesome and premeditated. The other tales, we have examined bodily mutilation have shared a theme of retaliation or reaction. Gabrine is the first to concoct such a scenario because of her lust for a young man. The other acts of mutilation were also portrayed in a more sympathetic manner by the authors, and Rosset paints a very negative portrait of Gabrine from the first description until the end of the narrative. She is an unnatural mother and is to be feared.[338]

She devises a plan to drug her daughter so that Tanacre can have sex with her and at the same time, she will poison her son.[339] Then Tanacre is to hurry to Calais, poison his wife, and come back to marry her daughter. In the eight days preceding their nuptials, he will sleep with Gabrine every night to satisfy her "violent passion." She will also give all her possessions to Tanacre. After outlining the scheduled course of events, Rosset interjects:

O justice du ciel! Où est votre foudre? Est-il possible que vous supportiez de si

[337] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 468.
[338] Infanticide was a crime witches were often accused of committing, and although Gabrine's children are grown, it is another way in which her actions mimic those of a witch. For more on this see Bodin.
[339] Poisoning was another activity often associated with witchcraft. For example, Zika states "Human bodies are clearly central to all the bloody rituals of witchcraft; but whether they are used in banquets, in salves, powders or potions, whether they enable witches to travel through the air, to poison victims, produce infertility, destroy crops or otherwise perpetrate evil, is of secondary interest." 86.

exécrables impiétés qui se commettent sur la terre ? Je m'étonne que ces barbaries étranges ne vous font exterminer la race des mortels pour en former de nouveaux d'une matière plus noble et plus pure.[340]

Although justice is always served in the formula of the *Histoires tragiques*, Rosset is concerned with more than merely reinforcing the fact that the plan is evil, as are its orchestrators. He has a theological aside. How can such a thing even happen and why does God permit such atrocities? Rosset is musing about the possibility of the end of the human race, a preoccupation that continues to occupy the minds of people today. As he has no answer, he returns to exposing the evil of vice that befalls us. Rosset hopes to keep others from falling prey to such themselves.

When it is time to set the plan in motion, the day, which Rosset, in another aside, refers to as "la funeste et sanglante journée qui doit donner commencement à tant de crimes," Gabrine, gets her poisons ready. She has a fatal one prepared for her son and another to render her daughter unconscious. When her daughter looks like the drugs have taken effect, Gabrine takes her to her room and lets Tanacre in.[341] Rosset's commentary on his heinous actions with a helpless victim is summed up succinctly with "il jouit d'une statue de marbre et d'une chose qui n'a point de sentiment." The summation is perfect and adds to the disgust of such an act. It is abominable that Gabrine would drug her daughter in the first place to offer her up to the man she wants so desperately. She

[340] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 468.

[341] Zika notes that in the sixteenth century the images of children in witchcraft scenes are featured as "offspring" or "cupid-like putti" and that later they "become the objects of witches' violence: they are presented and sacrificed to Stan; they are dismembered…" He explains "In many ways this attack on children by the female witch parallels the change from the rounded, voluptuous, sexually alert and seductive witch to the post-menopausal, evil mother with her sagging and dried up breasts, who denies nourishment and care and gives way to murderous infanticide." 97-99.

sacrifices her daughter's honor and free will for a few days with a man young enough to be her son. The fact that he would have sex with what might as well be a marble statue is simply reprehensible. It adds another dimension to the range of crimes Tanacre is willing to commit. Although Rosset turns him into a more sympathetic personage at the end, he seems like a reprehensible character for the bulk of the tale. Sex with a drugged and lifeless victim is only half the plan. There are murders to commit.

The Overkill

Meanwhile the poison is taking effect on Falante, who thinks he has eaten some bad meat. Since Falante wants to call a doctor, Gabrine fears her plan is on the brink of destruction and decides that Tanacre must slit his throat. Tanacre stabs him in the chest, but he does not immediately die, which only enrages Gabrine further:

> L'exécrable et dénaturée mère, sentant que son fils n'était pas encore mort et qu'il se démenait dans le lit, s'approche, et levant le poignard qui était à terre, dit à Tanacre ces paroles : « Que tu es d'un lâche et d'un faible courage ! La nature nous a fait un grand tort à tous deux. Je devais être un homme et toi une femme. » Ce disant, elle se rue sur son pauvre fils demi-mort et lui donne cent coups de poignard.

The passage is shocking and her cruelty is surprising. It was surprising enough when she hatched her odious plan and made it clear that she was willing to sacrifice her children for her own ends. The fact that she is not only able to murder her own son, but is able to stab him one hundred times is truly sickening. The irony is that she is berating Tanacre for being cowardly and trying to make it into a gender issue. Being male or female has

nothing to do with it. She is stabbing her own flesh and blood. As with the other cases of bodily mutilation we have examined, the first blows are just the beginning. Here, Gabrine has just begun:

> Non contente de cela, elle le jette à terre, et puis, au grand étonnement de Tanacre, qui s'était renversé sur son lit, n'ayant pas le pouvoir de regarder une telle cruauté, elle prend une hache et coupe les jambes et les bras de ce misérable corps, dont [elle] défigure encore tout le visage avec la pointe du poignard.[342]

She has dismembered and disfigured her own son for no apparent reason. She could have simply killed him in order to carry out her plan. Killing him would have been shocking enough. Instead, Gabrine cut off his arms and legs with an axe and disfigured him with a knife. As previously remarked, she did this to the body of her son. In the other tales, mutilation was the result of some sort of wrongdoing and inspired by vengeance. Still shocking, in each case, the mutilation also had its own particularities that created its own unique horror. In Gabrine's story, the shock results from her motivation and her willingness to kill her own son. Her dismemberment is not as thorough as some of the others, but there is no apparent motivation behind it. It is just a demented act, performed by a heartless mother, which likens her to a witch.

Rosset comments on her cruelty and again inserts himself into the narrative in his call to the sensibilities of his readers:

> O vous qui lirez cette tragédie ! Eh bien ! Avez-vous ouï parler de pareille inhumanité ? La fable de Médée est-elle comparable à cette histoire non moins remplie de vérité que d'horreur ? La plainte que j'ai faite au commencement de

[342] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 471.

> ce récit n'est-elle pas juste ? N'est-elle pas raisonnable ? O ciel ! Que nous présagent ces aventures exécrables si elles ne sont les avant-coureurs du jour dernier, où toutes les choses doivent retourner en leur néant ?

He underlines the inhumanity of her act and reminds the reader that he had already warned of the unbelievable horror to be found in this tale. He again wonders if these atrocities herald the end of life on earth. He draws a parallel between the ghastliness of the story and the apocalyptic precursors spoken of in the Bible. Surely, the end must be near if a mother is willing to butcher her own son. Rosset's injections serve several purposes in the tales. He is trying to edify the reader, so like any good teacher, he reviews the acts and the fact that the transgressions are unacceptable in the eyes of God. Rosset also likes to make his presence felt. As the tales usually involve such horrifying elements, his interjections also serve to remind the reader, albeit less convincingly, that the stories are to instruct and inform. The author is a mere scribe, as Rosset says, and his purpose is to warn of the dangers inherent in such behavior. Yet, he does entertain and provide the reader with tales that are fascinating as well. He uses his interjections to defend what he is telling, and at times to verify the truth of the story. He frequently uses them to denounce his times and of course, to denounce the transgressors. His subject, Gabrine, has more atrocities in store for the reader and he recounts more of the acts of the "exécrable furie" after his remarks.

Rosset's frequent use of words like *exécrable*, *misérable*, *maudite*, and his enumeration of violent acts, combined with baroque contrasts are all part of Rosset's hyperbolic strategy according to Vaucher Gravili. She proposes:

> Tous ces exemples font partie à n'en pas douter, d'une stratégie persuasive

> retournée en apologétique : la visualisation et l' hyperbolisation de certains phénomènes parmi les plus atroces et les plus sanguinaires du vécu ont pour l'effet de discipliner le réel vers un meilleur ordonnancement.[343]

As we have seen, Rosset does write in a hyperbolic fashion and each story in the collection tells of the worst and most miserable humans to live on the earth. The visualization in many of the tales is overwhelming and he does use these techniques to try to enforce order and stress the importance of adhering to God's law. However, what Vaucher Gravili fails to mention is that Rosset also has the goal of entertaining, and although he does not openly state his goal as such, it is one of the reasons the tales were so wildly popular. As for technique, hyperbole reigns and a formulaic system does provide a certain stability in the collection, although the topics vary greatly. With the most execrable woman in "Histoire XXII," punishment on a grand scale is certain. She uselessly tries to avoid being caught.

Gabrine carefully cleans up her crime scene with boiling water and bags up the pieces of her son's body as a petrified Tanacre watches in horror. She saddles up a horse herself, gives Tanacre a purse of gold, and sends him on to Calais to kill his own wife. At this point, Tanacre begins to curse the day he was born, and throws the bag with the pieces of Falante's corpse into a field just outside of town. Falante's valet, Richard comes back to town with all of his master's papers, and after being coldly received by Gabrine, who claimed no knowledge of her son's whereabouts, sees the villagers crowded around something. He is able to identity his mater's body and the wheels of justice are set into motion, but Tanacre is still missing. But divine judgment always

[343] Vaucher Gravili, *Loi et transgression,* 77.

triumphs, as Rosset reminds us in the line "Mais oyez, je vous prie, un trait remarquable du jugement céleste."[344]

The law catches up with Tanacre and he is brought before the magistrate. He admits his wrongdoing and prays to God to forgive him. He pleads with the judge and hopes for mercy. He tells the judge the whole story and Gabrine is put into prison as well. She refuses to confess no matter how she is tortured. Tanacre also begs her just to tell the truth, but to no avail. She is sentenced to the following punishment:

> […] elle sera traînée sur une claie et menée au devant d'une église publique, lieu accoutumé à tels actes, où elle aura le poing droit coupé. Après, que l'on la traînera sur la place où elle doit recevoir le dernier supplice et que là, on la piquera avec des aiguillons tout le corps, et puis, avec des tenailles ardentes on lui arracha les mamelles, et qu'enfin, elle aura la tête tranchée et son corps sera jeté au feu, ars et consumé, et ses cendres jetées au vent.

This was a reasonable punishment at the time for a woman who viciously murdered and mutilated her son. The right hand was typically severed for any type of parricide. The rest of her torture and subsequent beheading is quite similar to the punishment for witches. Even justifiably vengeful women like Violente, are executed for acts of violence as horrific as murder and dismemberment.

During her torture and execution, Gabrine is unique in that she never repents. Instead of describing her as Medea, Rosset conjures up an image that points to Medusa. He describes her hideous face and then goes into more detail about individual features:

> Ses cheveux ressemblaient à des serpents entrelacés; ses deux yeux rouges

[344] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 476.

> comme du feu jetaient des regards capables de donner la mort à ceux qu'elle regardait, et son visage ressemblait encore à un magot que l'on a vêtu en quelque robe et qui rechigne contre celui qui lui a craché dessus. Au lieu d'invoquer le nom de Dieu durant la rigueur de ses supplices, je pense qu'elle maugréait, qu'elle blasphémait et qu'elle appelait l'adversaire des hommes.[345] (480)

It is notable that Rosset shifts from describing her as Medea to Medusa. Although he does not name Medusa, representing Gabrine's hair as serpents and a gaze that could kill are Medusa's defining characteristics. And although Medea invokes fear, Medusa is even more frightful. In their introduction to *The Body in Parts*, Hillman and Mazzio write at length about Remmelin's Medusa in the *Catoptrum Microcosmicum*, an anatomical atlas published in 1613.[346] In the image, full of a seeming disarray of body parts, Medusa's head is placed over the location of the female sexual organs. The authors note the correlations to Freud, who links Medusa to castration anxiety and Lacan who calls her head "[t]his something, which properly speaking is unnamable, the back of this throat, the complex unlocatable form, which also makes it the primitive object *par excellence*, the abyss of the feminine organ from which all life emerges, this gulf of the mouth, in which everything is swallowed up."[347] Rosset likens Gabrine to Medusa, because she can also be seen as that which threatens all order. She is a mother from whom life emerged, but rather than instinctively preserving that offspring, she chose to destroy it because of an impulse that Rosset implies should have been forgotten to her because of her age. She is a threat to natural and divine order, therefore especially dangerous. She has no

[345] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables*, 480.
[346] Hillman and Mazzio, *The Body in Parts,* xv-xvii.
[347] Ibid, xvi.

conscience and does not repent during her torture.

Rosset also likens her to a dressed up ape, and he had previously described her as a monkey dressed like a woman. He is calling attention to her outward ugliness, as well as her subhuman behavior. She is portrayed as truly repulsive. He also implies that she appealed to Satan, "the adversary of man," rather than God while dying. None of the other characters about to be executed has begged Satan to help them. He ends the tale by again musing that such a strange thing happening in that century must be a harbinger of the apocalypse. In the end of the other *Histoires tragiques*, whenever characters are put to death, they are usually remorseful if given the opportunity. If someone is calling on the devil instead, then there is not much hope for humanity, according to Rosset.

There were three different types of bodily mutilation performed in the four tales examined in this chapter: the gratuitous mutilation by Gabrine, the mutilation for revenge by Violente and Fleurie, and the self-mutilation of Cadrat. Although the figure of Gabrine was depicted as subhuman and spiritually a complete loss, Boaistuau and Rosset portrayed Violente and Fleurie as transgressors that are more sympathetic. The two were victims, whereas Gabrine was the perpetrator in her murderous activity. Although both Fleurie and Violente were seeking justice for the wrongs done them, they both had to die for their wrongs for divine justice to be served. The death of Cadrat raised him to martyrdom and saved his father from eternal damnation.

Both Camus and Rosset firmly state that the eyes of God are everywhere and his justice will be served. Vaucher Gravili remarks on the similar viewpoints of both authors "Ce qui nous frappe, dans ces affirmations axiomatiques qui jalonnent la narration de Camus, c'est cette vision d'un dieu de vengeance dont l'œil implacable surveille et épie

les créatures: la figuration de ce dieu caché, toujours à l'affût, est présente également chez Rosset sous la forme d'un gouffre insondable dont il faut accepter avec résignation la profondeur ténébreuse."[348] One of the messages found in the *Histoires tragiques* is that although the result may be incomprehensible to us, God is always there to administer final justice.

The next chapter will look at justice, madness, and the treatment of corpses in more of the *Histoires tragiques*. Of course, all of the tales in the *Histoires tragiques* necessarily feature corpses, but the next chapter will show the importance of penance in the Catholic Church and the corpse as a spiritual mirror as well as a state of utter abjection in tales from Camus and Boaistuau. The corpses themselves figure prominently in different ways and allow us to examine early modern concepts of the nature of the corpse and punishment.

[348] Vaucher Gravili, *Loi et transgression,* 58.

CHAPTER FOUR- THE CORPSE

Whether one follows the righteous path the *Histoires tragiques* promote or transgresses, the certainty of death and a resulting corpse is a specter no one escapes. As the *Histoires tragigues* are rife with transgressions, there are always corpses left behind. The ways that corpses are treated also inform the examination of early modern notions of the body in its final state. Throughout the tales, the body is violated by Satan, decayed, self-mutilated, and cut into pieces. The lifeless body is the logical point at which to conclude. Of course, the tales all feature death, however this chapter focuses on the tales in which the corpse or an impenitent is central to the story. I will look at the abject rotting corpse as a reflection of its inner spirit, the corpse through the lens of madness using Roy Porter and Michel Foucault's influential works on the subject, and the treatment of corpses of those who threatened the body politic of France.

A Church Burial?

As religion is at the heart of these works, the corporeal echoes of Christ reverberate through the tales. The importance of the Eucharist has been established as central to worship and as the most significant sacrament, serving as a constant reminder of the body of Christ. Regular penance is important, as well, in case one died.[349] The final rite was extreme unction, during which "the dying or gravely ill person was prepared for death, confessed sins and received absolution, and was anointed with blessed

[349] "According to the Church, only a sin forgiven by a priest (acting in god's place, with God's guidance) would be removed from a person's moral account." Benedict and Reinburg, *Religion and the Sacred,*123.

oil."[350] Most of the dying in the *Histoires tragiques* did not have the luxury of receiving extreme unction as they suffered death usually as a result of their transgressions, so their ends were often brutal and without warning. Although the bodies of those featured in the *Histoires tragiques* were not likely to receive salvation, the care given corpses was also an important feature of Christianity.

The corpse was to be buried in sacred ground, and ideally remained intact. The body needed to be as well preserved as possible to await the return of Christ.[351] In the seventeenth century, the longstanding tradition of burial within the church building was changing. There was a push to move the burials to a sacred area in a cemetery adjacent to the church. Most parishioners met this idea with great resistance, especially the well to do who wanted to lie with their ancestors.[352] Not until the eighteenth century did significant reform take place regarding burial; "The stench arising from beneath church floors (especially in hot weather) and the juices oozing into the earth greatly troubled eighteenth-century sanitarians."[353] The need to move burials to the cemetery became a matter of public health at that point. The burial in the story we will examine begins in church.

In Camus's tale *"Le puant concubinaire,"* he tells the story of a man who lived in sin with a deceitful woman. Camus condemns the main characters at the end of the opening paragraph, explaining, "Vous l'allez voir en cette Histoire que je mets avec raison entre les tragiques, puisque par la misère du corps nous pouvons conjecturer la

[350] Benedict and Reinburg, *Religion and the Sacred,* 123.
[351] For more on this notion, see Stephen N. Joffe, *Andreas Vesalius: The Making, the Madman, the Myth* (Forestville, CA: Vesta Publishing, 2009).
[352] For more on this, see Bergin, *Church, Society*, 214-15.
[353] Lindemann, *Medicine and Society,* 223.

ruine éternelle de l'âme."[354] Camus sets up his lesson that corporal transgressions do indeed ruin one's soul for eternity and provides several biblical examples to emphasize the gravity of such sin. Camus also states he is not disclosing the name of the town where the story takes place, so as not to scandalize the town and its people. The person in question, whom he calls Epaphrodite, is the principal at the local school. Epaphrodite was a scholar and excellent professor, but a very bad example to his young charges. Camus presents him as drinking in excess and in addition:

> […] car s'il buvait bien il mangeait encore mieux, si bien que son corps était un sac de viande et de breuvage. Outre cela, il était adonné au jeu. Mais ce qui le perdit, ce furent les femmes. Toute sa sagesse et sa science furent dévorées dans cet abîme qui avait autrefois englouti les David, les Salomon, et les Samson.[355]

His major vice was women, and he had lived in a state of "concubinage" for thirty years. The story reproaches not only the lifestyle of cohabitation, but also chastises the characters for not seeking penance, another important step to eternal life.[356] Penance was a key element in the spiritual jurisdiction the Church claimed over Christians and their salvation." Since parishioners could not know when they were going to die, the church encouraged regular confession as an important practice for those who sought God's kingdom. Camus takes a strong stance against the very clear choice to ignore the Christian way as he describes Epaphrodite's fate.

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[354] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 238.
[355] Ibid, 239.
[356] Carr, in *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques*, writes of this story and one other "Cette démarche est particulièrement sensible dans la succession des récits "Puant concubinaire" et de "La tardive repentance": s'intéressant chacun au même thème, cher aux sermonnaires, de l'impénitence finale, tous deux rapportent une histoire de concubinage, mais l'un chez les catholiques, l'autre chez les protestants." 89.

Epaphrodite is obsessed with the young woman with whom he has lived for the past seven or eight years, according to Camus who does not even give her a proper name. Instead, he refers to her with derogatory terms, such as "viper" or "sly one." She manages to convince Epaphrodite to leave her all of his worldly possessions, whilst impeding his final rites and he dies "sur le sein de cette perdue."[357] Epaphrodite dies guilty of so many transgressions and so corrupt that his corpse begins to rot immediately.

The automatic putrefaction mirrors his rotten soul. The stench of his remains is so overwhelming, that the house is uninhabitable and no one wants to get near the body to move it. When it is finally placed in a coffin, "la putréfaction perce le bois et se fait sentir partout."[358] Then they could scarcely find anyone to carry the coffin to the church for burial. Once it was buried six feet under ground, it infected the church with such a terrible odor that they had to dig it up and bury it in the cemetery. Before long, no one could even walk by the cemetery to get to church because of the odor. They finally ended up throwing it in the river, which resulted in a large quantity of dead and rotting fish. This story is rendered even more surprising set against the importance of burial rituals during this time.[359] The fact that the body was eventually disposed of in such a disrespectful fashion emphasizes the worthlessness of Epaphrodite.

Camus then denounces the man's sins, warning that this man was so impure that such vice "ruine le corps, l'âme, les biens, l'honneur et la réputation de celui qui s'attache."[360] The idea that the impurity of one's soul could manifest itself in the

[357] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 242.
[358] Ibid, 243.
[359] For more on customs and practices and church attempts to regulate them, see Bergin, *Church, Society,* 275.
[360] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 243.

putrefaction of one's flesh after death expresses the ultimate rejection. For Camus, who invokes the words of Paul to explain that the adulterous, impious, and fornicators will never see God's Kingdom. The warning is part of what Carr calls "Les excès de la représentation des châtiments dans l'histoire tragique Camusienne révèlent ainsi la nécessaire inadéquation de toute mise en forme sensible du divin."[361] This story tells of a punishment that is continued even post-mortem. The reeking cadaver is doubly punished: a corpse that starts to consume itself from within. As Muchembled also explains, there is an underlying diabolic link:

> La notion de puanteur renvoie au règne satanique. Il est donc normal que la nature créée par Dieu vomisse littéralement ce cadavre, successivement chassée de l'église où sa qualité de notable lui assurait une dernière demeure, du cimetière des gens plus ordinaires, du champ des paysans, de la rivière. La nature le rejette, air, terre, eau qu'il empeste ou corrompt.[362]

This cadaver, indeed a cesspool, cannot help but call to mind the abject of which Julia Kristeva writes: "The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death-infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us."[363] Epaphrodite's corpse is a perfect expression of abjection. He and his soul are seen as outside of God, and the fact that the corpse is seemingly consuming itself through accelerated decay simply adds to its abject state. It cannot even be disposed of in any orthodox way

[361] Carr, *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires Tragiques,* 146.
[362] Muchembled, *Une histoire du diable,* 183.
[363] Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror*, Trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 4.

because of its pervasively foul odor. His corpse is nothing but waste. It looms over the reader as the threat of complete annihilation, should one fall prey to the same sins.

Repentance and Hypocrisy

Just in case the message that repentance is necessary for salvation was not completely clear, Camus includes the tale of "*La tardive repentance"* that seemingly has the purpose of reinforcing the previous tale of Epaphrodite. Camus often writes tales in pairs, based on the same theme. It would appear that the story of a Catholic member of the Order of Mendicants fits as a reinforcement for "*Le puant concubinaire*," as Camus begins the narrative with a warning, that it is another tale of co-habitation masked as under the guise of marriage, that demonstrates how true are the words of a prophet: "Tous ceux qui délaissant Dieu sont délaissés de lui; ceux qui s'écartent de ses voies sont écrits en la terre, mais leurs nom sont effaces au livre de vie."[364] Camus reinforces his message that the most tragic loss is that of eternal life. There is no possibility of redemption if one dies in a state of mortal sin. Just as Epaphrodite's corpse managed to reduce itself to nothing, Camus echoes the idea in saying that one can be completely *erased* from the book of life.

Nonetheless, the story goes beyond teaching because what Camus does not state is that he was a fervent enemy of the Order of Mendicants. In fact, Richelieu said of Camus that "his acrimony against the mendicant orders was the only flaw in his character" and also because of his "well-known antipathy" of the order, he was accused

[364] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 244. In the footnote to this citation, Ferrari notes that this is not an exact Biblical passage, rather a patchwork of ideas from the books of Malachi, Exodus, and Daniel.

of joining a Jansenist plot against the Church.[365] In the story, Camus uses the character of Valfroi as the vehicle for his message that the yielding to the flesh can strip one's soul of its chance for eternal life. He also slyly admonishes his character, the Protestant faith, and his intellect throughout the story, as he is Camus's paradigm of a mendicant monk.

Camus states that he will call the monk in the story Valfroi and describes him as already resistant to the discipline of cloistered life, although he was of an unreformed order. He had already demonstrated too much familiarity with the ladies instead of giving spiritual guidance, therefore he was sent to a city infected with heresy, where he was expected to prove himself. He is tricked by a girl, whom Camus does name this time as Ruth, who convinces him to renounce everything for her hand in marriage.[366] Ruth was groomed to orchestrate the plan conceived by her fellow Huguenots in order to trap Valfroi. In addition to the moral teachings in this tale, Camus uses it to criticize the Huguenots as well as the Order of Mendicants. Much in the way the Huguenots are denounced as bringing in the demon seed in the other *Histoires tragiques*, here Camus denounces them for their evil ploy to bring ruin to a Catholic monk. His acerbic description of the result demonstrates his disdain: "en somme, pour ne gâter point le papier de la description de ces ordures, elle l'amène à ce point que pour l'épouser, il promet de quitter Dieu, sa Religion, et son Ordre."[367] Camus also writes "Ils firent de grands trophées de la conquête" although he notes the Catholics were already scandalized by Valfroi's bad habits before the conversion.[368] Camus's scorn of the Mendicants also

[365] Catholic Encyclopedia at www.newadvent.org.
[366] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant* refers to her as "cette Ruth" to differentiate her from the Biblical Ruth, a Moabitess who converted to Judaism, whereas this Ruth is a Huguenot.
[367] Ibid, 247.
[368] Ibid, 248.

underscores his observation.

Camus then likens Ruth to Judith bringing confusion into Nebuchadnezzar's house, as Judith was known as a powerful and ruthless seductress.[369] He describes Valfroi as torn by his conscience:

> Il demeura quinze ou seize ans cette misérable vie, prêchant continuellement contre sa conscience et contre les sentiments véritables de son âme, ainsi qu'il avoua plusieurs fois, mais en secret, à quelques Religieux qui par rencontre conférèrent avec lui: aussi prêchait-il le moins qu'il pouvait des Controverses, et ne traitant que des choses morales qu'il trouvait toutes digérées dans les sermons des Prédicateurs Catholiques.[370]

It is important to note that Camus is accomplishing several goals in this statement. He is showing that the Catholic way is the right way, and that even the lust for his own beautiful Huguenot wife cannot overcome Valfroi's *soul.* He is also denouncing the wrongdoings of the Huguenots in orchestrating the evil ploy of a false conversion. He is showing that Valfroi's will is to the truth and that means to be Catholic. On a more semiotic level, Camus is emphasizing the body/soul thread of the stories through use of the word "digérées" to refer to truths gleaned from Catholic sermons. He seems to be saying that true morals are digested from Catholic teachings, and in digestion become a part of the body–a body that will not belie its soul.

Valfroi cannot commit to the Catholic Church. Despite the powerful connections of the Abbot who plans to rescue Valfroi from this situation, seeing that "Il n'y avait que

[369] The story of Judith beheading Holofernes (Nebuchadnezzar's general) is found in the Biblical Apocrypha. She seduced him and beheaded him, saving the Jews of Bethulia.
[370] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 248.

les liens de la chair et du sang qui le retenait: car il avait quatre enfants, trois males et une femelle, de cette Ruth, cause de sa chute."[371] Camus emphasizes that the only ties he has holding him back are those of the flesh (Ruth's) and blood (his children) that do not compare to his calling, soul, and relationship with God. He has been living falsely and in sin because of his hypocrisy, which is why Camus terms this also a tale of "concubinage."

The Abbot continues to press Valfroi about returning to the Catholic Church and even offers to let him into his Order, but Valfroi delays making the declaration. In the meantime, he gets ill with a very high fever and the doctors predict his imminent death. The Abbot hears of his condition and immediately comes with another priest to save his soul, but Valfroi puts them off, saying "Messieurs, vous êtes venus trop tard. *Nescio vos*."[372] Then the Huguenot Minister comes and poses several questions about whether he has spoken to the Priests, or whether he wants to die as a Huguenot. Valfroi gives the same response each time saying, "Nescio vos." The Abbot comes back for another try, but Valfroi merely repeats with the same refrain each time. Nescio vos, or I do not know you, is the response the bridegroom gives to the virgins who arrive late to the wedding banquet in Matthew 25. He admonishes their late arrival by adding, "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."[373] Valfroi is repeating the words that exclude the virgins from the marriage that symbolizes a union with Christ, thus condemning himself. He, too, is a late arrival, and completely unprepared for his hour of death. Camus is also saying that those who do not practice

[371] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 248.
[372] Ibid, 249. "Nescio vos" means "I do not know you."
[373] Matthew 25:13, NKJV

what the Church tells them will also be too late to save their souls for eternal life. He is obviously indicting Huguenot beliefs, and by further extension the Mendicant Order.

The character of Valfroi becomes reminiscent of the possessed in that the priests and ministers are all battling over this body that will not provide answers to the questions they are asking. They are the inquisitors and Valfroi keeps repeating the same phrase, yielding no results. He then falls into a sort of frenzy and says and does what are described as "les plus grandes folies qui puissant tomber dans l'imagination."[374] He is, as were the possessed, outside himself. He then returns to his "Nescio vos" while alternately laughing, singing, beating his hands, or smiling. He is also like the possessed in that it is at first difficult to ascertain whether he is in a state of exaltation, madness or possession. He becomes a ridiculous figure, again showing Camus's thinly veiled dislike of Mendicants. He dies in this way, and while the Catholics refuse to bury his corpse, the Huguenots bury him under a tree in a garden in hopes that he might cause more fruit after death than he did in life, which serves as the only positive note in this tale.

Camus does not focus on the dead body as much as in the previous tale, however both stories have the same ending: perpetual loss of life here and everlasting. Camus also states that one might not see this tale as tragic enough to be among those featured in his *Amphithéâtre Sanglant*, but that truly there is nothing more tragic than the eternal loss of a soul. The treatment of the corpse is interesting in the fact that there is the optimistic idea that it might serve some beneficial purpose and that death does engender life. The corpse of Epaphrodite only brought more death by killing the fish in the river.

Camus also states that there is nothing more lugubrious than "second death,"

[374] Camus, *L'Amphitheatre sanglant,* 250.

which calls to mind the theological conundrum of the church's insistence on material continuity to which gave rise to the theory of form identity.[375] As Bynum explains,

> When the human being dies, therefore, one cannot say that its body or its matter waits to be reassembled, for *its* body or matter does not exist at all. When the human being is resurrected, the body that is matter to its form (which is also its form of bodiliness because it is its only form) will by definition be its body. The cadaver that exists after we die, like the body that exists before, is second matter—formed matter—but the cadaver is informed not by the form of the soul but by the form of the corpse.[376]

Therefore, Camus is referring to the fact that there will be no resurrection for Valfroi's body, because of the death of his soul, his second death, and no need for a second body. For Camus this tragic end calls for tears of blood.

Madness – Demonic or Divine?

The story also raises the question of madness in the early modern period, since to the sensibilities of the modern reader Valfroi seems to have simply gone mad. If Valfroi was mad, he was not making a conscious decision about choosing to repent with either affiliation. Madness is complex and in the early modern period was seen as either divine or demonic. Roy Porter writes "In Christian divinity, the Holy Ghost and the Devil battled for possession of the individual soul. The marks of such "psychomancy" might include anguish, despair, and other symptoms of disturbance of the mind. The Church also entertained a madness which was holy, patterned upon the 'madness of the cross'

[375] For more on this see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption,* 259.
[376] Ibid.

(the scandal of Christ crucified) and exhibited in the ecstatic revelations of saints and mystics."[377] Porter adds that it was more likely to be seen as diabolic than divine. This is the thin line, which we have seen, between divine ecstasy and demonic possession and the labeling that occurred determined the outcome. As noted in the Rosset story about Mélisse, at first the nuns thought her newfound intelligence was a holy miracle, but their suspicions quickly turned to the devil. As Sluhovsky argues, "Catholic possession, obviously, was not a stable category. Rather, it was a linguistic construct that was used to attribute meaning to physical and spiritual phenomena."[378] He does note that we cannot reduce the trend of possession by simply terming it mental illness, because that would leave out many other variables that were unique in each case. It is clear, however, that determining possession could be highly subjective. However, once one was diagnosed as possessed, exorcism naturally followed.

The very definition of madness was changing in the early modern period. Foucault traces its evolution in his *History of Madness* explains that in the sixteenth century, there was a shift in the way madness was perceived and that it was eclipsed by reason.[379] In the Middle Ages, madness or folly was one of the vices. Foucault explains that madness came to be seen as contrary to reason and "Classicism felt a sense of shame before all that was inhuman that was quite unknown in the Renaissance."[380] He proposes that the age of classicism values reason above all else and madness does not fit anywhere, except as unreason. Confinement hid this unreason. He explains that in the seventeenth

[377] Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, (New York: Oxford UP, 2002), Intro, ¶25.
[378] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not,* 2.
[379] Michel Foucault, *History of Madness,* Trans. Jonathan Murphy and ed. Jean Khalfa, (London and NY: Routledge, 2006).
[380] Ibid, 141.

century houses of confinement were established where the mad were housed alongside the poor and the criminal.[381] Madness loses its dualism and later becomes subject to philosophical and medical analysis.

Madness informs our examination of the early modern period because it is obviously understood differently today, as so many mental illness and disorders are now attributed to chemical imbalances. Porter states "Madness thus donned many disguises and acted out a bewildering multiplicity of parts in early modern times: moral and medical, negative and positive, religious and secular."[382] The relationship between madness and its reception is important in analyzing the literature of the time as well as looking at representations of the body manifesting its symptoms. Hofer states, "Mental health and bodily health are never separable in their works."[383] In the *Histoires tragiques,* the body reveals the inner workings of mind and soul. As we have seen with the notion of the rotten corpse exposing the equally foul soul it housed and Valfroi's frenzied fit repeating the same two words, the body becomes textual. It becomes a vehicle for Rosset and Camus to disclose what lurks inside through its actions, transgressions, and afflictions. It then further serves as a pedagogical vessel that gives a raw corporeal message as the reader witnesses the punishments endured during death.

Spectacular Torture

Punishment figures into each of the tales. For Camus, as he attests, a punishment must be public:

Il n'y a point de doute que l'exemple, soit lu, soit représentée, a un grand

[381] Foucault, *History of Madness,*45-6.
[382] Porter, *Madness,* Ch. 4, ¶12.
[383] Hofer, *Psychosomatic disorders,* 4.

> ascendant de persuasion sur les esprits. Et c'est la raison principale qu'on punit en public et à la vue de tout le monde les criminels que l'on condamne au supplice, afin que leur punition serve de frein aux méchants et donne une sainte horreur des crimes qu'ils ont commis et qui ont attiré de tels châtiments sur leurs têtes.[384]

The literary text serves to perpetuate the real, physical, and very painful punishment that is most effective when viewed by others. Punishment is a spectacle if it is to be meaningful. As Foucault states:

> Only the light in which confession and punishment are enacted can make up for the darkness in which evil were born. There was a cycle of accomplishment of evil, which necessarily involved public manifestation and avowal before reaching the completion that eradicated it.[385]

The penal code followed a certain logic and sequence in order to be effective. The shame of confession was but one-step in a sequence of events designed to completely eradicate the crime committed. The next step was torture, also systematically administered depending upon the crime. In addition to death, there were the lesser sentences of banishment, public exhibition, pillory, branding, and flogging. Foucault explains "It was not only in the great solemn executions, but also in this additional form of punishment, that torture revealed the significant part it played in penality: every penalty of a certain seriousness had to involve an element of torture, of *supplice*."[386] Supplice guarantees a

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[384] Camus, "*L'Amphitheatre sanglant,"* 180.
[385] Foucault, "*History of Madness,"* 140.
[386] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (NY: Second Vintage Books, 1995), 33. Foucault includes Jacourt's definition of "supplice" from his *Encyclopédie*

permanent record of some sort by either scars or marks left on the body or complete mutilation in a spectacular arena.

Closson notes that the literature of the baroque period is also naturally going to "faire du supplicié une figure importante de sa scène imaginaire: sur l'échafaud – terme qui désigne aussi les tréteaux du théâtre – le corps violenté, mutilé, éclaté sera exposé aux regards."[387] Being exposed to the collective public eye is why Camus points out that reading a story representing these violent punishments helps to make them more effective as well. The suffering of the criminal body must be not be forgotten or the lesson is not complete. As Foucault adds, "the production of pain is regulated."[388]

This "production of pain" is indeed quite systematic and correlates therefore with the crime committed. If the sentence is death, the way in which the condemned one died also depended upon the heinous nature of the crime. There are various levels of pain that could be inflicted and the methods and duration of death rituals were precisely calculated for each crime. In addition, as we have seen in the *Histoires tragiques*, sometimes the torture does not cease as soon as the recipient dies. Foucault proposes that

> The very excess of violence employed is one of the elements of its glory: the fact that the guilty man should moan and cry out under the blows is not a shameful side-effect, it is the very ceremonial of justice being expressed in all its force. Hence no doubt those tortures that take place even after death: corpses burnt, ashes thrown to the winds, bodies dragged on hurdles and exhibited at the

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article – "Corporal punishment, painful to a more or less horrible degree. It is an inexplicable phenomenon that the extension of man's imagination creates out of the barbarous and the cruel."

[387] Closson, *L'Imaginaire demoniaque,* 405.

[388] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 34.

roadside. Justice pursues the body beyond all possible pain.[389]

The type of spectral punishment that continues even after death often plays into the violence represented in the *Histoires tragiques*. The tales of dismemberment vividly portrayed this kind of torture as bodies are cut into pieces long after the heart itself has stopped beating. It is this notion of achieving justice via physical punishments that prevailed in the early modern period.[390] In tales by Rosset and Camus, sometimes characters take justice into their own hands. No matter how brutal the fate suffered in any of the stories, Rosset and Camus remind us that divine justice always triumphs. In Rosset's "Histoire I – *Des enchantements et sortilèges de Dragontine, de sa fortune prodigieuse et de sa fin malheureuse*" there are two such deaths that serve as very public examples of brutal and bloody justice. The deaths are crafted after actual historical events to further emphasize the didactic nature of the anecdote.

Foreign Interference

In "Histoire I" Rosset relates the story of Concino Concini, an Italian politician who had a stellar career as a minister of Louis XIII, becoming Marshal of France in 1613. His wife, Leonora Galigaï, had a great deal of influence over Marie de Medici and was her foster sister. Leonora was very devoted to her husband and responsible for Concini's good fortune, as she convinces Marie to grant him titles and territories. Because she had such great influence over the Queen, it was believed that Leonora used sorcery. After a rapid rise in rank, her husband was assassinated, and she was tried as a witch, decapitated

[389] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 34.
[390] For more on how the penal system changed from inflicting corporal punishment to creating institutions which ultimately render the soul "the prison of the body" see *Discipline and Punish*.

and burned at the stake.[391] Rosset retells the true story to warn against the dangers of greed, ambition, and arrogance.

The tale of Dragontine, which happens to be the first in the collection of *Histoires tragiques* published in 1619, is an excellent narrative to examine as it features witchcraft and death by assassination, as well as on the scaffold.[392] It is written employing pseudonyms such as Filotime for Concini, Dragontine for his wife, Leonora, and Parthénie for Marie de Medici. The setting is primarily the city of Suse, representing Paris and Persia, representing France. Rosset opens the story as he often does with hyperbolic criticisms of man's weakness:

> O misérable condition du sort des mortels, comparable à la feuille des arbres ou aux plus belles fleurs qui ne vivent qu'un matin et qui meurent en naissant! Que ne devenons-nous sage par tant d'exemples que l'Antiquité nous produit et que ne tachons-nous de borner nos ambitions ![393]

He marvels at the fact that man continues to repeat the same mistakes that date back to antiquity, and Rosset sprinkles the story with similar denouncements throughout.

Rosset explains Dragontine's relation to the queen and mentions that her husband introduces her to Fatuel (Philippe d'Aquin) who teaches her how to conjure demons.[394] Rosset remarks "Elle s'adonna si bien à la science noire qu'en peu de temps elle y surpassa son maître même."[395] She has a ring that she puts in her mouth and whatever

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[391] For more on her relationship with the Queen, see Julia Pardoe, *The Life of Marie de Medicis-Vol. 2,* (A Public Domain Book, 1890).
[392] It did not appear in the editions of 1614 and 1615. For more on this, see Vaucher Gravili's "Bibliographie Sommaire" in the preface to *Les Histoires mémorables.*
[393] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 38.
[394] Philippe D'Acquin is the doctor who took care of Leonora Concini.
[395] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 43.

she asks the queen for she obtains. Because of Dragontine's power and her husband's ambition, he works his way up to become a menace to the other nobility. Rosset's description of Dragontine as a witch is interesting as she really only practices her art to promote her husband's ambition. She has "enchanted" the queen to get what she wants in terms of her husband's promotion. Dragontine even warns Filotime about inciting jealousy and hatred amongst the court, but he disregards her advice. She does not use her magic to seek vengeance on anyone. Rosset contrasts the Queen's dignified and wise actions sharply with those of "cette sorcière" and says he even has a hard time naming her in the story because of all the destruction she caused.

Charlotte Wells write of the resistance that goes beyond the mere witch-hunt craze during Marie de Medici's regime. She proposes a popular hatred of Italians in general, and writes of this xenophobia, "Writers reserved particular hostility for those Italians who found positions in and around the royal court or in the structure of the government."[396] Filotime fits the description and is not tolerated because of his rapid ascent to power. Rosset writes of the couple's insolence, impudence, and ambition and how it grows every day. He alludes to Filotime's violent end and divine justice, "Mais le Ciel en avait réservé la punition a notre jeune sofi [Louis XIII] qui, ayant commencé d'éteindre comme Hercule les monstres au berceau, eut bientôt renversée ce colosse, ainsi que nous verrons en la suite de cette histoire."[397] The public and violent death of Filotime is foreshadowed here, and Rosset emphasizes the king as agent of divine justice on earth.

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[396] Charlotte Wells, "Leeches on the Body Politic: Xenophobia and Witchcraft in Early Modern French Political Thought," *French Historical Studies*, vol. 22, No.3 (Summer, 1999): 362.
[397] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 49.

The divine nature of the king is a theme throughout the *Histoires tragiques*, as the concept is the basis for the monarchy and body politic of France. The king takes care of earthly justice and it just so happens that in this story he is "Louis le Juste." The sentence is also representative of Rosset's use of aside to the reader, as well as his practice of using examples from classical antiquity or the Bible as analogies to characters. The fact that Louis is presented as Hercules is an exceedingly complimentary likeness, as Hercules was a demi-god known for his strength and heroism. Before Concini's death, Louis XIII was still relying on his mother to do most of the governing of France. It is after Concini's death that Marie loses her stronghold and Louis takes over. The Italian couple is likened to monsters that would attack an infant in his crib. The hatred of Italians extended beyond the pamphlet writers and authors who openly criticized them. They were also faulted with bringing demonic possession and witchcraft to France.[398]

Wells remarks "Italians were stigmatized not only as leeches on the French body politic, but also as witches."[399] The Concini couple embodies all aspects of evil that could be brought to France and it is no surprise that Dragontine was a sorceress, as Leonora, her namesake, was believed to be. Rosset portrays her precarious position as well:

> Elle n'ignorait pas que le peuple murmurait aussi contre elle, et qu'un jour, allant du Palais-Royal à son palais des faubourgs avec une suite digne d'une grande princesse, elle fut sifflée sur le pont que la grande Catherine fit jadis bâtir, et peu s'en fallut qu'une populace qui criait tout haut "A la sorcière!" ne l'arrachât de

[398] Wells, "Leeches on the Body," 364.
[399] Ibid, 363.

son carrosse et ne la jetât dans le fleuve.[400]

Here Rosset foreshadows the angry mob mentality that will take over when Filotime is assassinated, while at the same time noting Dragontine's uneasiness. She cannot ignore the whispers and knows that her husband has overstepped his bounds. Wells writes that some authors blamed foreigners for all French witchcraft and that, "It was easier for polemicists to cast the shadow of witchcraft on individuals, thereby creating stereotypes whose traits could then be imputed to all their compatriots. Leonora Galigaï, wife of the murdered Concini, was executed for witchcraft in 1617, for example."[401] She proposes that Catherine de Medici had already been cast as the model for the Italian witch. Leonora, or in our story Dragontine, had all the qualifications needed as she, too, was Italian and exerted too much influence over Marie de Medici.

Wells explains that one of the reasons Italians drew such ire was financial. "The standard scenario had the foreign "leeches" extracting all possible gain from their offices, sending the loot home, and then returning to enjoy their riches in their native lands while the people of France starved."[402] Filotime is accused in the story of superfluous spending of the kingdom's coffers and in fact has put together a dowry that in Rosset's words surpassed all belief. He never has a chance to offer it, as the prince of blood refuses to grant him an audience. Henri de Condé had already started a campaign to eliminate Concini, forming an alliance with those who wanted to rid the country of foreigners and those who hated Concini.[403] In his version, Rosset writes that the true princes of royal

[400] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 49-50. It is interesting to note that even though Rosset pretends the story takes place in Persia, he still refers to the Palais-Royal and Pont-Neuf.
[401] Wells, "Leeches on the Body," 364.
[402] Ibid, 362.
[403] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* note, 51.

blood are nothing against Dragontine's influence over the Queen and that Filotime must be killed.

Another author who came out strongly against foreign influence in France is Jean Bodin. In chapter one I commented on Bodin's *De la démonomanie des sorciers*, and subsequent theorists who proposed he wrote it as an attempt to prevent birth-control and infanticide. Bodin is hailed as the author of his political theory *Six livres de la République*, widely studied to this day. In his introduction to Demon-Mania, Jonathan Pearl writes "Generations of scholars have admired the *Commonwealth* [the English title of *Six Livres*] as the first modern study of the state and have often depicted Bodin as a modern man. But many of these scholars have been shocked and perplexed at the apparent contrast between the "modern," "rational" political Bodin, the "tolerant" religious Bodin, and the "intolerant" and "superstitious" Bodin of the *Demon-Mania*.[404] There really is no conflict between the two. It just seems incompatible to the modern reader that a scholar who could write so brilliantly about political theory felt a calling to take a stand against witches. As we have seen, belief in witchcraft was very real at the time. Bodin is concerned with the glory of God, a strong and harmonious government, and law. It is not inconsistent to want to see witches and sorcerers who pose a threat to a well-ordered state, extinguished.

Bodin also sympathized with the xenophobic current of thought that opposed foreigners who put a drain on France's finances. In the *Commonwealth*, Bodin writes of the economic problem of foreigners in France and suggests that they should not be able to declare bankruptcy in France. He writes, "Otherwise, the foreigners, to their advantage,

[404] Jonathan L. Pearl, introduction to *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, by Jean Bodin (Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995), 11.

could suck the blood and marrow of the subjects and then pay them off in slips of paper."[405]

Bodin's suggestion, while a bit strong with the blood and marrow imagery that corresponds to Well's theory, is very logical. In a time when witchcraft and demonic possession were viewed as real, it does not seem so out of character for Bodin to seek to a remedy to that problem, too. There is a link between the xenophobia and witch-hunts of the early modern period; therefore, it makes perfect sense that he would write of both. Italianate Savoy was believed by some to be the birthplace of witchcraft and Bodin claimed in the *Demon-Mania* that "Cases of people possessed and assailed by the Devil are encountered very often in Italy."[406] He also mentions that the dance Italian witches brought to France often causes abortion, which is not good for the state. Bodin's concern is to rid France of any threats to royal order. Those who are outsiders pose a threat. In order to prosper, France needed to remain one: one monarch given divine power by God, one religion, one people. The massive presence culturally and politically, of Italians beginning with the reign of Francis I and burgeoning under the Medici queens threatened the unity of the French state; purging the state of their parasitic presence seemed logical.

The uprisings in our story begin when the princes of blood plot Filotime's death and Dragontine finds out through her black magic. Rosset describes the atmosphere in Suse, a stand-in for Paris, as uneasy: "Tandis qu'on ne voit que sanglantes tragédies dans la grand ville de Suse, on dresse des partout des potences et des échafauds pour retenir en crainte le peuple."[407] Just to police the populace, scaffolds were erected everywhere.

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[405] Jean Bodin, *Six livres de la République*, Paris, 1583, (Darmstadt: Scientia Aaleen, 1961) 97.
[406] Bodin, *Demon-Mania,* 109.
[407] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 54.

This calls to mind Foucault's argument that the punishment must be seen, and in the way that the scaffolds were erected to incite fear supports his view of public execution: "Its aim is not so much to re-establish a balance as to bring into play, as its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength."[408] Rosset also writes of the torture of others who were hanged and labeled with signs that read, "Pour avoir témérairement jasé de l'Etat." He goes on to note the efficacy of such public execution, stating that the people witnessing these bloody actions would not dare to open their mouths after witnessing such a spectacle.[409] Meanwhile Filotime is fortifying his strongholds and preparing to take over the city.

Rosset reminds us, however, that death spares neither old nor young and that the ambitious couple loses their nine-year-old daughter. Dragontine is devastated, but Filotime does not grieve much, as he has plans to put into action. He is warned by the Queen to depart for Italy, but his arrogance prevents it. He believes he is destined to win. Louis XIII asks Vitry to kill him and he says he will do so "quoique la fortune étrange de Filotime, jointe au crédit que sa femme avait auprès de l'impératrice, lui donnât quelque appréhension."[410] Interestingly, even this valorous and courageous young duke is a bit apprehensive about carrying out this order. Rosset emphasizes the fear of Filotime's wife, the witch. Furthermore, the pair has a great deal of influence over the Queen who does wield considerable power at this point. The duke's fears echo the fears of the French nation at this time.

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[408] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 49.
[409] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 55.
[410] Ibid, 59.

The duke and his accomplice are so secretive that no one knows of their plan, except for Dragontine's demon, which keeps mum. "Le démon même de Dragontine, forcé par une plus grande intelligence, demeura muet puisqu'il n'as point de pouvoir que celui qu'il reçoit d'en haut."[411] This sentence reiterates a belief that Rosset has expressed in many of his tales that God allows devils to act and in this case, he uses the Scriptural interpretation to suggest that Filotime merited his death. He further deprecates Filotime by taking the opportunity to interject his reprobation. He says that Filotime served vainglory and speaks of the punishment of the corpse after death. This is the excess punishment Foucault mentions that is also reminiscent of "Le puant Concubinaire." Rosset predicts "our common mother," the earth, will reject Concini's cadaver just as the corpse in Camus's tale produced such a horrific stench it could not be disposed of properly. Rosset states that the other elements will abhor his rotting carcass as well and that Concini will go up in smoke. The punishment of the corpse in the *Histoires tragiques* is usually reserved for those characters that have no hope of salvation.

Concini's fate is actually worse than Rosset's prediction. Concini is executed, and Rosset makes a point of noting that he did not have the chance to ask God's pardon for his many sins before he died, which as we have seen in Camus's works results in eternal damnation. Concini's corpse is dragged by the feet through the streets and left in a pile of rubbish, yet another example of justice pursuing the body "beyond all possible pain."[412] The imagery of the body in the pile of rubbish also evokes the men awakening in a pile of excrement and waste in Rosset's story of La Jaquière. These tales depict the

[411] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 60. There is a footnote stating that according to Scripture, devils are creatures of God and only act by God's will. Chroniques II, XVIII, 20-21-22. Constant reference throughout the *Histoires tragiques*.
[412] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 34.

bodies of the transgressors in a state of utter abjection.

There Must Be Punishment

These corpses also emphasize the spectacular in the role of punishment. It is not enough to merely drag Filotime's body around Paris, pillage it, and leave it in a garbage heap. It is actually displayed there while the city rejoices. Rosset writes "Pendant que la ville de Suse [Paris] est remplie de feux de joie, le corps de l'ambitieux Filotime qui, auparavant d'être couvert de senteurs aromatiques, est étendu en un lieu puant et infect où il sert de *spectacle* à ceux qui veulent le voir."[413] The "spectacle" is the focus here, and in all punishments of the early modern age. The fact that Concini's body was dragged through the streets mimics the very spectacular murder and mutilation of Admiral Coligny over forty years prior, in 1572. Coligny was not only punished beyond death, but also before as a straw effigy of the admiral was mutilated and exposed in Paris in 1569.[414] Diefendorf explains,"This symbolic execution became reality on Saint Bartholomew's Day when the real corpse of Coligny, the first victim of the massacre, was dragged through the streets, mutilated, and eventually hung by its feet, [the head having been cut off] at Montfaucon."[415] While Concini's head was not cut off, he was subjected to a similar fate, which illustrates the grisly and torturous forms of punishment that people became accustomed to seeing during the struggles of the religious wars. Therefore, it is not surprising that Rosset would choose to retell Concini's story, a tale that echoes the brutality suffered by Coligny over four decades earlier. The stories reinforce the idea of a unified Catholic front and the necessity of removing any threats to

[413] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 65, emphasis mine.
[414] Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross,* 76.
[415] Ibid, 84.

the crown that was one with the church.

The other threat to the crown, Dragontine, also receives her sentence "pour expier ses horribles méchancetés, sera traînée dans une charrette à la place publique de Suse, là où elle aura la tête tranchée, et puis, son corps sera jeté au feu, et ses cendres au vent."[416] Rosset further comments that she was astonished she would be put to death, but that she surprised everyone with her resolution to her fate, since she was generally believed to be a "soft" woman who was very much given to pleasures of the flesh. She does have a chance to repent before God and the numerous spectators, but she will nonetheless suffer a brutal end. Rosset again emphasizes the theatric nature of punishment as he describes the people crowding the streets: "L'on ne vit jamais une si grande assemblée."[417] Dragontine was so notorious, the biggest crowd ever to watch an execution had gathered, underlining the importance of the event.

The execution is truly violent, and Dragontine in fact begs God not to spare her body now, but to have mercy on her soul saying "O Dieu […] accordez-moi tant de faveur que mon âme soit traitée plus doucement en l'autre monde, que mon corps ne reçoit maintenant de honte et d'infamie."[418] Indeed, her body does receive shame and infamy, as after her head is chopped off in one sole blow from the executioner and the rest of her corpse is burned, with the ashes being spread in the wind. It is again, the punishment after death, which is particularly interesting in the description of Dragontine's end. Rosset seems to sympathize with her as he describes the lack of compassion, even after her brave prayer, among the spectators, "Toutefois, quand il

[416] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 68.
[417] Ibid, 69.
[418] Ibid.

représenta la vie passée de cette exécrable, les sanglantes tragédies qu'elle avait excitées et tant de ruines qui ne se répareront de longtemps, quelques-uns des plus zèles a l'amour de leur patrie se jetèrent sur cette tête séparée du corps et en jouèrent longuement a la pelote…."[419] The murdered or executed bodies thus far witnessed in the *Histoires tragiques* have suffered horrifying and vicious ends, but the fact that zealous patriots essentially played ball with Dragontine's severed head is truly the strangest and most vicious treatment of a cadaver yet. It is the juxtaposition of the severed head and the gravity of a public execution with a game that renders the image particularly disturbing. Further adding to the disturbing imagery is the notion of the head being tossed about and the accompanying degradation that had to result.

The zealous patriots described here are an interesting detail in the story. They demonstrate the mob mentality that serves as justification for acts of violence. What is striking here is that while Rosset could have had no idea of the French Revolution, the scene sounds like a description of the brutality that marked the riots. It provides an eerie foreshadowing of the event and shows an awareness of the capacity for a group of zealots to commit bloodthirsty acts.

The importance of the execution to the story is that it accomplishes several results all in one. The execution rids France of a serious threat to the crown, as Dragontine had completely bewitched Marie de Medici. This killing also represented the end of Marie's influence over Louis, removing a foreign "leech" who was doubly threatening as she was believed to be a witch. Finally, the huge public spectacle of Dragontine's beheading and subsequent bodily destruction served as an example to all of France of justice being

[419] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 69.

meted out. It was an event that through Rosset's chronicles also became repeated with each reading of the story. The brutal deaths of both husband and wife further multiply the message, as there are two terrible deaths that continue to create a ripple effect throughout the people of France, who witness the events, hear of them, or subsequently read about them.

The execution is also essential in reiterating the sovereign power of Louis. As Foucault states, the fact that the criminal was an enemy of the sovereign,

> …made the public execution more than an act of justice; it was a manifestation of force; or rather it was justice as the physical, material and awesome force of the sovereign deployed there. The ceremony of the public torture and execution displayed for all to see the power relation that gave force to the law.[420]

The idea of divine law, or law as a uniform extension of the power of the monarch as invested by God, is reinforced in the executions, and again in the *Histoires tragiques*. Rosset extends the notion of divine law by emphasizing divine justice in the afterlife that will be meted out by the maker himself. The concept is underlined when Rosset expresses Dragontine's hope that the shame her body will suffer may somehow lessen the suffering of her soul in the other world, or afterlife. She accepts her body's fate in accordance with divine law.

Foucault further states "A body effaced, reduced to dust, and thrown to the winds, a body destroyed piece by piece by the infinite power of the sovereign constituted not only the ideal, but the real limit of punishment."[421] The sovereign is therefore shown to be invincible and vindicated with every blow. He has the power to efface a body. That is

[420] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 50.
[421] Ibid.

why the "very patriotic" saw fit to play ball with Dragontine's head. It was the ultimate humiliation of this woman who had threatened France's sovereign and therefore order. It still falls in the realm of excess, yet it is an excess that serves the throne. The sovereign has wielded his sword via the executioner in order to protect all of France. The threat of foreign intrusion, as well as the menace of sorcery was removed.

Rosset provides a summary of Dragontine's offenses at the end of the tale to give another warning about transgression and the retribution that follows. He remarks,

> C'est la fin tragique de Dragontine qui, après avoir si longtemps abusé des faveurs de la plus grande reine du monde par des voies illicites et damnables, reçut le juste salaire de ses maléfices. C'est le fruit du péché et la récompense des impies. Et maintenant, que l'on considère quel profit, elle et son mari, ont retiré de cette vaine gloire! Qu'est maintenant devenue cette puissance mondaine, ces richesses abondantes et ces délices charnelles ?[422]

Dragontine's payment for her sins is to be killed and her remains completely effaced. It is interesting to note, that as referenced in chapter three, Miller's outline of body parts being used as payment is clearly expressed in Rosset's lines. He writes of her "salary," "recompense," and "profit," showing the connection of punishment as a corporeal type of currency.[423] Dragontine must suffer physically for justice to be served and must pay for her crimes. Rosset emphasizes the absolute waste of effort in amoral ambition and illustrates very clearly that whatever earthly pleasures are ill gotten; they are no substitute for eternal damnation. It is the same message oft repeated by Rosset to ensure that there is a clear lesson that one must be careful not to jeopardize eternity for earthly pleasure.

[422] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 71.
[423] For more on this, see Miller, *Eye for an Eye,* 31-36.

While all of the stories discussed in this chapter deal with the different treatment of the corpses of the transgressors, both Rosset and Camus stress the importance of preparing one's soul for the afterlife. While the treatment of the various corpses varies, as did the level of punishments with crimes committed, the message is the same. Beyond whatever punishment the victims receive, both authors express an agreement, based on the teachings of the Catholic Church that one must very carefully prepare for the inevitable end through penance and confession. In stressing the importance of eternity, they manage to support the concept of the unity of one church and state to promote order and peace. Any outside teachings, such as those of the Huguenots, or outside influence such as foreign, pose a threat to France's moral fiber and cohesiveness.

Besides the religious message inherent in each of the stories and the monarchial overtones, the stories are important chronicles of the practices of the early modern period and the challenges raised by Huguenot conflicts. The theater of punishment is clearly illustrated and helps to show steps punishment takes along the historical path, as Foucault explains, "If torture was so strongly imbedded in legal practice, it was because it revealed truth and showed the operation of power."[424] In the early modern period, it was a reproduction in an earthly way of the power of God. The monarch was an agent given his power by God and he would exercise his power as he saw fit. This was but a hint at what could await the unrepentant transgressors.

The real interest these stories create is that they are so horrifying to read that they are almost impossible to put down. The macabre treatment of the corpses is somehow fascinating. As emphasized throughout this dissertation, it is the titillating quality of the

[424] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 55.

tales that also makes them extremely relevant for studies and the reason that they inspired so many retellings by other authors. They were also a novel way to deliver a message, as Muchembled asserts in writing of Camus "La conclusion, tellement évident, sur le péché qui détruit le corps et l'âme, avait probablement moins d'importance pour le public que le récit des faits, si vivant, si concret, qui parlait à beaucoup d'erreurs. Mieux qu'un pesant sermon, mieux qu'une feuille volante sur des prodiges identiques, l'histoire tragique mariait le réel à l'imaginaire du temps pour passionner des foules."[425] It was indeed an effective way to instruct against the dangers of sins because the stories are engaging. They allowed safe forays into the unthinkable, dark areas of man's imagination that are still at the heart of most successful literature.

[425] Muchembled, *Une histoire du diable,* 183-84.

CONCLUSION

The *Histoires Tragiques* make important contributions to French literature. Their place in the overall French literary continuum first struck me as I began researching this project when I read Henri Coulet's statement that Marie de France's *Lais* were the ancestors to the *Histoires tragiques*. The statement made me reflect upon the fact that while they are a strong component of the literary timeline from the Middle Ages up to present day, they remain relatively obscure. My dissertation has shown the vast amount of historical, religious, societal, and political wealth to be gleaned from their study, as well as the fact that they are fascinating reads.

The focus on the corporeal aspects of transgression has been the core of my analysis, because of the tripartite focus on Christ's body of suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. The Catholic agendas of the *Histoires tragiques* rely heavily upon the treatment of the body and bodily manifestation of sin. My study demonstrates the ways in which the authors inform us about demonic possession, Church propaganda, political agendas behind the possessions, and the notion of the spirit world in the early modern period. This dissertation provides a synthesis of different theories about the outbreak of possession and witchcraft during the early modern period and concludes that while Church reform, legal policies, religious propaganda, and xenophobic fears all contribute to the concurrent events, the cases and causes are so widespread that it would be impossible to attribute the phenomenon to a single cause. My work examines the "need" to believe in corporeal relations with the devil and the insecurities revealed by Rosset about the state of France during his lifetime. For example, although Rosset and Camus's

world vision allows no room for sinners, I show that these authors paradoxically sometimes sympathize with them.

My project studies Foucault's systematic review of punishment and the body as reflected in the Histoires tragiques, as well as his views on madness. The role of spectral punishment and punishment beyond death plays an important role in the tales by Boaistuau, Rosset, and Camus. The stories are a vivid reflection of the brutal and public system of punition during the early modern period. The body is the sovereign property of the nation and is controlled by that principle. In the *Histoires* tragiques there is a dual system of punition at work: the French system of justice to take care of its subjects, and then the divine system of justice that no one can escape. The threat of the doom that inevitably befalls sinners is a key component of these works.

What has been called the "age of synecdoche" results in a view of the body in pieces, which I have examined as well as the ascetic inclinations found in self-mutilation. My work focuses on the body and the corpse to inform this study of the *Histoires tragiques*. I have explored the fates of those consumed, often literally, by passion and shown that one of the main reasons for the success of the *Histoires tragiques* is that they are a safe way for the reader to indulge in horror and gore. Since they were moralizing tales, writing and reading them was justifiable. In conclusion, I would like to focus on the literary legacy of the *Histoires tragiques* in order to come full circle.

The *Histoires tragiques* are precursors to literary genres of such as the "fantastique" and horror. All of the defining elements are already present in the *Histoires tragiques,* although "les classiques avaient renie les extravagances de l'imagination

baroque et renferme tout le surnaturel dans la religion." [426] Coulet explains that on the "eve" of the Revolution, writers again became interested in extraordinary stories leading to a flourishing of the *fantastique* in the nineteenth century. What do the *Histoires tragiques* have in common with the *fantastique*? Tzvetan Todorov, in his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, writes that there are many different definitions of the fantastic. He gives several from noted scholars and concludes:

> […]mais la définition de Soloviov, James, etc. signalait en outre la possibilité de fournir deux explications de l'événement surnaturel et, par conséquent, le fait que *quelqu'un* dût choisir entre elles. Elle était donc plus suggestive, plus riche ; celle que nous avons donnée nous-même en est dérivée. Elle met de surcroît l'accent sur le caractère différentiel du fantastique (comme ligne de partage entre l'étrange et le merveilleux), au lieu d'en faire une substance (comme font Castex, Caillois, etc.). D'une manière plus générale, il faut dire qu'un genre se définit toujours par rapport aux genres qui lui sont voisins.[427]

The fact that the fantastique is difficult to define precisely by excluding other literary genres shows that the "neighboring" genres are similar, but not exactly the same as the *fantastique.* The *Histoires tragiques* already had many of the defining characteristics of the *fantastique*, as well as elements found in the "somber" literature of the eighteenth century. They can be looked upon as forerunners to the *fantastique*. The perfect example of the *fantastique* in the *Histoires tragiques* is the story of La Jacquière. The very tale used as an example by Todorov happens to be a later version of the same tale penned by Rosset. Rosset's story of La Jaquière spawned the later versions in *Manuscrit trouvé à*

[426] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution,* 467.
[427] Todorov, *Introduction à la,* 31.

Saragosse (1814) by Jan Potocki, Todorov's case study, and "Les Aventures de Thibaud de la Jaquière" found in Nodier's *Contes fantastiques* (1823).We will first examine some of the functions of the *fantastique* as set forth by Todorov and then compare the tales.

Functions of the Fantastique

Later on in his book, Todorov states that the presence of certain elements is not a means by which one can simply define the fantastique. It cannot be characterized by a certain style or composition. Todorov proposes the following way of looking at the genre:

> On pourrait cerner le problème d'une autre façon, en partant des *fonctions* qu'a le fantastique dans l'œuvre. Il convient de se demander : qu'apportent à une œuvre ses éléments fantastiques ? Une fois placé à ce point de vue fonctionnel, on peut aboutir à trois réponses. Premièrement, le fantastique produit un effet particulier sur le lecteur — peur, ou horreur, ou simplement curiosité —, que les autres genres ou formes littéraires ne peuvent provoquer. Deuxièmement, le fantastique sert la narration, entretient le suspense : la présence d'éléments fantastiques permet une organisation particulièrement serrée de l'intrique. Enfin, le fantastique a une fonction à première vue tautologique : il permet de décrire un univers fantastique, et cet univers n'as pas pour autant une réalité en dehors du langage ; la description et le décrit ne sont pas de nature différente.[428]

It will be useful to examine the stories in light of these functions. In looking at the story of Thibaud La Jaquière in Rosset's version, all of the effects outlined by Todorov (fear,

[428] Todorov, *Introduction à la,* 98.

horror, or simply curiosity) apply to the tale. From the moment the Jaquière spies the lady walking down the street, the reader knows something is afoot. Rosset began the story with the good/bad angel lesson and prefaced the meeting between the Jaquière and the mysterious woman with the Jaquière boasting that he didn't know what meat he had eaten, but that if he met the devil at that moment, "il n'échapperait jamais de mes mains que premièrement je n'en eusse fait à ma volonté."[429] Rosset follows this comment with his own interjection "O jugement incomparable de Dieu!" Then the "damoiselle" appears. There are already multiple elements working together to inspire curiosity and possibly fear or horror with the diabolic prospects foreshadowed by the Jaquière's proclamation.

As for the tight narration, the story of the Jacquière is told in less than ten pages. There are still very detailed descriptions, and the events leading up to the young woman turning into a half-rotten corpse nudge the reader along with suspense and demonic hints along the way. Once the climax is reached, Rosset still feels the need to verify the claims of the story. Even with his mini-prologue and final commentary, the story is amazingly suspenseful and tightly woven with many surprises, aside from the finale. Although the reader suspects the presence of demonic activity and knows something horrible is about to happen, when the seemingly beautiful woman lifts her skirt, what is underneath is so horrifying that it was previously unimaginable, which brings us to the third function, the tautological.

The scene of improbability is simply created using elements already familiar in language. The *fantastique* creates a world or situation that could not exist, yet all of the

[429] Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables,* 253.

words used and parts of the images are already part of our intellectual baggage. They are used in a different way to create something heretofore unimagined, yet they are imaginable with the reading as they are encoded in language. While we can understand a beautiful woman and have a visual image and understand a rotting corpse, perhaps not wanting a visual image, we may not have imagined the two as one or Satan reanimating a corpse for sexual purposes. Even though we each have a different picture in mind as to what characteristics Satan possesses, there is no doubt as to the inherent evil found within. Therefore, language is manipulated to concoct something other out of the ordinary. The home in which Thibaud and his friends found themselves did not exist the next day. It was a pile of stinking dung-filled rubble. The mutations of the story contribute to the beginnings of the *fantastique*.

Closson points out the link between the devil and the *fantastique*, as it is his presence in baroque literature that gives rise to the genre. She proposes that the dualism inherent in Christianity necessitates the devil's supernatural presence in order to account for a rupture in world order and chaotic menaces to divine order. She explains:

> C'est ainsi que petit à petit toutes les croyances relevant d'un surnaturel non chrétien vont basculer dans la sphère du fantastique demoniaque ; devenus signes d'une présence dans l'univers d'éléments étrangers à l'ordre divin, on leur trouvera un principe d'explication unique, qui est en soi assez paradoxal : en effet, en faire les manifestations de l'action du diable, ce maître du fantastique – autrement dit de l'illusion – c'est à la fois en nier la réalité et en confirmer l'existence puisque le diable agit ; nous avons pu voir combien la chasse aux sorcières est l'aboutissement de cette confusion, qui amène à ne plus distinguer la

réalite du rêve, le vrai du faux."[430]

She also notes that although the word "fantastique" was not used to designate a literary genre before 1830 that the elements of the genre came from the diabolic literature already written in works such as the *Histoires tragiques*. Todorov states that *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* is "un livre qui inaugure magistralement l'époque du récit fantastique." Todorov does not go into detail about the tenth day with the adventures of Thibaud la Jaquière, but this story is an important part of the tale as a whole because of the idea of reanimated corpses. The corpses of the two hanged bandits are the "revenants" of the story and corpses appear repeatedly throughout. In fact, it is the conglomeration of etraordinary events; Todorov attributes the creation of the fantastique within the narrative. The series of bizarre coincidences combine to create strangeness and an uneasy feel.

It is no coincidence that Rosset's story serves as the basis for the "Dixième Journée" in Potocki's work of interwoven tales. On the tenth day, the protagonist, Alphonse is among the bohemians and thinks he catches sight of his cousins. In an outburst akin to Rosset's interjections, he exclaims:

> Oh ! ciel ! me dis-je en moi-même, serait-il possible que ces deux êtres si aimables et si aimants ne fussent que des esprits lutins, accoutumés à se jouer des mortels en prenant toutes sortes de formes, des sorcières peut-être, ou, ce qu'il y aurait de plus exécrable, des vampires à qui le ciel aurait permis d'animer les corps hideux des pendus de la vallée?" Il me semblait bien que tout ceci pouvait

[430] Closson, *L'Imaginaire démoniaque,* 62.

s'expliquer naturellement, mais maintenant je ne sais plus qu'en croire.[431]

" Oh ! ciel !" could be lifted from many of Rosset's stories. The hypothesizing is another similarity, especially when explaining the supernatural. These lines are exactly the type to which Todorov is referring when he writes about coincidence and what could be explained naturally. Each of the events by themselves might be explainable, but as a whole series, the natural possibility becomes overruled. The fact that Alphonse states that he feels as if things could be explained naturally, but at that point, he just does not know anymore is the entry into the supernatural. It is precisely at that point of uncertainty, according to Todorov, that the fantastique intersects with reality.

While reflecting further on the aforementioned possibilities, Alphonse wanders into a library where he finds a book that opens on the pages of "Histoire de Thibaud de La Jacquière," which he reads. The version differs in some ways from Rosset's, but also has many common elements. The story does take place in Lyon, like Rosset's. Thibaud's circumstances are slightly different as he is son of a rich man who is provost of the city, and very involved with his church and charitable towards all. Potocki's Thibaud is described then as a rather spoiled and debaucherous ruffian, whereas Rosset's was merely a womanizer. Like Rosset's Thibaud, he makes a bold statement regarding the devil after drinking his wine, although Rosset's refers to meat. The statement in both tales is a sort of taunting remark to the devil. After Thibaud's pronouncement, Potocki uses the well-worn Rosset expression, "Ces affreuses paroles firent dresser les cheveux à la tête des convives" because they knew it is not wise to tempt the devil in such a

[431] Potocki, *Manuscrit trouvé,* 152.

manner.[432] The story differs here, because Thibaud, who is accompanied by two friends as in the Rosset version, makes a second pronouncement.

The second time he makes such a statement, even his friends are worried. They are frightened by his exclamation, since they are not "aussi grands pécheurs que lui." Thibaud proclaims: "Sacre mort du grand diable. Je lui baille mon sang et mon âme, que si la diablesse sa fille venait à passer, je la prierais d'amour tant je me sens échauffé par le vin.[433] Upon hearing these words, his friends warn him that invoking the devil's name is not wise, nor is inviting him when the devil is already at work harming people without invitation. Thibaud laughs it off and suddenly a veiled young woman appears followed by a small black man with a lantern. The story differs slightly here from that of Rosset. In Rosset's tale, the person carrying the lamp is referred to as "un laquais" and he does not drop the lamp as he does in this version. Thibaud does take the woman by the arm to escort her home, but in Potocki's version, the two friends leave him at the point when he says boldly "Adonc, vous voyez que celui que j'ai invoqué ne m'a pas fait attendre."[434] Again, Thibaud's brazen mockery of the devil is a precursor to his worst nightmare and ultimately his death.

The Rosset version does not feature as many bold comments by Thibaud. It is interesting to compare all of the changes, which surely must have taken place in order to create a story that had more fantastic elements. Some of the differences in Potocki are found in the fact that Thibaud repeatedly asks for what he receives and is alone (without his friends) with the young woman who has a name, Orlandine, that she will retain in

[432] Potocki, *Manuscrit trouvé,* 154.
[433] Ibid, 155.
[434] Ibid.

Nodier's version as well. In Rosset's version, a large part of the story has Thibaud convincing the woman to share herself with his two friends and then the scene after during which they compliment her extensively, only to see her for what she is. The climax of the story is what changes, and Rosset's version seems to have just as many elements of the fantastique at work. In Potocki's version, Orlandine actually turns into a clawed and hideous monster during the sex act. When he tries to invoke the name of Jesus, the monster who has identified itself as "Belzébuth," seizes his throat with its teeth to stop him before he can say anything. At the tale's conclusion, Potocki retains more of the elements from Rosset's version. Although a man attempting to relieve himself finds in the three friends, the rotten corpse had disappeared. In Potocki's story, Thibaud is discovered by peasants going to market in the rubble of a dilapidated house used as a dump. He is asleep on top of a half-rotten corpse. The peasants return him to his father and he is found dead with a crucifix in his hands after a visit from a mysterious hermit. In Rosset, one of the Jacquiere's friends was already dead when they were found and he and the other friend subsequently died within days of their discovery. In Rosset's version, there is no mysterious hermit, but he adds the usual moral lesson and then explains how the corpse could have been reanimated. He even refers to it as possibly being "un corps fantastique." By comparing this story to the other versions, it seems quite clear that they are rewrites of the same tale and Rosset's version has all of the necessary ingredients of a conte fantastique. Nodier's version follows Potocki's almost exactly, but it is not a story within a story.

In Potocki's version, after Alphonse reads the story of the Jacquière, he relates its effect on him. Again, the inclusion of this tale and its role as a pivotal reinforcement in

the primary story of *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* emphasizes Rosset's contributions to the fantastique genre as well as the evolution of French literature. Potocki describes Alphonse's ruminations in these lines:

> Là, je réfléchis sur tout ce qui m'était arrive, et j'en vins presque à croire que des démons avaient, pour me tromper, animé des corps de pendus et que j'étais un second La Jacquière. On sonna pour le dîner, le cabaliste ne s'y trouva point. Tout le monde me parut préoccupé, parce que je l'étais moi-même.[435]

The feelings experienced by Alphonse are the same feelings experienced by the reader. He was tormented by the story of La Jacquière, because it could be true. It is not likely, but it could happen and that is the moment of hesitation that Todorov says creates the "effet fantastique."[436] The effect of the hesitation in the story of Alphonse creates a doubling with the story within a story. The other effect about which Alphonse speaks is a preoccupation. After reading such a tale, where there is a sense of implausibility yet possibility, there is also typically a period of preoccupation. The reader is unnerved a bit and finds it necessary to weigh the choices. Again, the very fact that one feels the need to go over it again in the mind's eye demonstrates an effective work of fantastic literature. The placement of La Jacquière's tale underlines the significance of this work.

The Nodier version of the tale is a story in a collection of others entitled "Le cycle frénétique" found in *Contes*. Nodier keeps most of the details of the Potocki version, changing a few tiny details here and there. The names and events are all the same. An example of a difference is that instead of the monster's claws in his back, they are in his kidneys. Very little overall in the story is altered. It is not part of the larger narration as

[435] Potocki, *Manuscrit trouvé,* 163.
[436] Todorov, *Introduction à la,* 30.

it is in *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse.*

Many other authors use the *Histoires tragiques* as a basis for their own works. According to Coulet:

> C'est pourquoi la place de Rosset dans l'histoire du genre Romanesque est importante : c'est un précurseur de Prévost, de Sade, de Lewis, de Maturin, de tous ceux pour qui le roman a pour objet l'étrange et l'exceptionnel, plus significatifs de la nature profonde de l'âme et de ses secrets que le normal et le quotidien.[437]

Coulet also explains that there is a definite link between Rosset and Sade in the *Causes célèbres* and the story of the Marquise de Gange, which inspired Sade to write one of his last novels. Therefore, aside from the story of La Jaquière, there are many of the *Histoires tragiques* that have served as inspiration to other authors. As Coulet also states, Rosset's tales pushed authors to examine man's hidden nature and the types of horror that can be invoked from the dark side of human behavior. Literary history is clearly indebted to what may have appeared to be merely an interesting read of stories with little intrinsic value.

My dissertation fills a void in the existing research on the *Histoires tragiques* in that the body has not been studied as it relates specifically to the *Histoires tragiques*. The relationship of the body to the Catholic Church, demonic possession, and early modern violence in the *Histories tragiques* is an original contribution to studies of the early modern period. They serve as a link from literature of the Middle Ages to the literature of the nineteenth century and on. My project has grounded the *Histoires tragiques* as an

[437] Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution*,156.

important contribution to the evolution of French literature and is a part of the ongoing recuperation of neglected genres.

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