



Buying the Story

Transaction and Narrative Value  
in Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola

Jonathan Paine

Wolfson College

Candidate Number: 342469

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



Buying the Story

Transaction and Narrative Value  
in Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola



## *Word Count*

Text excluding abstracts, notes, translations and bibliography	100,250
Notes and translations	14,198
Text including notes and translations, excluding bibliography and abstracts	114,448
Bibliography and abstracts	11,483
Total including notes, translations, bibliography and abstracts	125,931

## *Acknowledgements*

Returning to academia after a forty year career as an investment banker is an odd experience. ‘You’ll have to learn to concentrate’ said one banking colleague to me – and he was right: scholarly study requires a quite different intellectual approach.

So my first acknowledgement must go to Professor Dame Hermione Lee who, as President of Wolfson College, took me in and made me feel less like the duck out of water I certainly was. Julie Curtis, Professor of Russian Literature at Oxford University, also from Wolfson, and Tim Farrant, Professor of French Literature at Pembroke College, Oxford, my supervisors on, respectively, the Russian and French aspects of my work, have provided encouragement, inspiration and, above all, real engagement with the subject of this thesis as it began to emerge.

Through them I have developed a network of contacts and friends who have helped me to explore so many different aspects of the French and Russian literary, publishing and economic scene in the nineteenth century. Philip Ross Bullock, Professor of Russian Literature and Music at Oxford, and Diana Greenwald, a fellow graduate student, co-organised with me our first conference, entitled ‘Genius for Sale! Artistic Production and Economic Context in the Long Nineteenth Century’ and we have since continued to develop a new approach to the use of an economic perspective in aesthetic appreciation. Robin Feuer Miller, Edytha Macy Gross Professor of Humanities at Brandeis University, and William Mills Todd III, Harry Tuchman Levin Professor of Literature at Harvard University, both Dostoevsky scholars of world reknown, not only participated in the first conference but have since joined me on other conference podiums to develop the economic perspective. Robin, in addition, has followed the development of my Dostoevsky chapter from the start: her enthusiasm is contagious and her openness to positions far away from her own areas of focus is utterly refreshing.

Deborah Martinsen, Associate Dean of Alumni Education and Adjunct Associate Professor of Slavic at Columbia University, and Carol Apollonio, Professor of the Practice of Slavic and Eurasian Studies at Duke University, have welcomed me into the International Dostoevsky Society, for which I now act as Treasurer, and Deborah together with Olga Maiorova, Associate Professor at the University of Michigan, have also invited me to contribute my first academic publication, a chapter on 'Economics and the Press', to their 2016 edited volume '*Dostoevsky in Context*'.

Ann Jefferson, Professor of French Literature at Oxford, provided me with the best formulation of the topic of my thesis: 'the novel as a self-reflexive commentary on the conditions of its own production'. Helen Small, Professor of English Literature at Oxford, has provided invaluable guidance on recent developments in economic criticism in English literature. Jean-Yves Mollier, Alain Vaillant and Marie-Eve Thérenty, professors at, respectively, the Université de Versailles Saint Quentin, the Université Paris Ouest and the Université de Montpellier have been generous with their time and their interest in my work. André Derval, Directeur des Collections at the Institut pour la Mémoire de l'Édition Contemporaine, the repository of the Grasset and Fasquelle publishing archives, and Ronald Blunden, Senior Vice President, Corporate Communications, at Hachette, have helped me track down the extant records of the publication details of *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

My employer, Rothschild, has demonstrated an extraordinary tolerance of this curious employee who combined investment banking and academic scholarship, much to the despair of my long-suffering assistant, Kathryn Ohle, without whose assistance most of the finer points of word-processing would have escaped me. To all of these I owe my gratitude and appreciation.

Finally, my family has borne my part-time approach to family life over the past four years, as this project has taken ever deeper hold, with a level of support and encouragement which has kept me going. To them this thesis is dedicated, to my wife Julie, to my children Claire, Alex and Olivia, in gratitude and love.

July, 2016

## Table of Contents

<i>Buying the Story</i>	1
<i>Word Count</i>	4
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	5
<i>Table of Contents</i>	7
<i>Brief Abstract</i>	9
<i>Extended Abstract</i>	10
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	23
The role of economic criticism.....	25
The importance of the publishing context .....	45
Literature as transaction.....	50
Prospectus .....	57
Auction.....	59
Speculation .....	61
The notion of literary value .....	63
Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola.....	80
<i>Chapter II: Balzac</i>	89
‘Marchands de phrases’ .....	95
<i>La Torpille</i> : from real value to false prospectus.....	114
<i>Esther</i> : the false prospectus, production model.....	127
<i>Lucien</i> : deconstructing the false prospectus. ....	155
<i>Vautrin</i> – Vautrin or Vaut rien – who decides?.....	171
<i>Chapter III: Dostoevsky</i>	187
Reform, experiment and the novel.....	193
How to write a novel?.....	224
The novel as prospectus.....	236
Confession.....	244
Melodrama.....	250

---

Parable .....	258
Hagiography.....	272
The rejection of prospectus .....	283
Auction: the return of commercial value .....	288
Speculation .....	306
Conclusion .....	333
<i>Chapter IV: Zola</i> .....	337
The commercialisation of the book.....	338
The new economics of fiction.....	353
Zola as promoter of story and book.....	369
From promoter to managing director.....	378
<i>La Curée</i> – the narrative of business.....	393
The commercial value of sensation.....	395
The representation of commerce .....	406
<i>L'Argent</i> – the business of narrative .....	414
Growing the business .....	414
Manufacturing the story.....	423
The story of a crash, or the crash of the story? .....	440
<i>Chapter V: Conclusion</i> .....	453
<i>Appendix A</i> .....	462
Serialisation of <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i> .....	462
<i>Appendix B</i> .....	463
The 38 retellings of the murder .....	463
<i>Select Bibliography</i> .....	467
Primary Works.....	467
Newspapers and Periodicals .....	472
Secondary Works .....	472
Collective Works .....	472
Books and Articles.....	475

## Brief Abstract

Thesis title: Buying the Story. Transaction and Narrative Value in Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola  
Author: Jonathan Paine, Wolfson College  
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy  
Submitted: Trinity 2016

This thesis explores narrative as a self-reflexive commentary on the conditions of its own production. It argues that the need for narratives to perform economic functions, such as to provide an income for the author or to promote subscription to a host publication, affects how texts are written. It suggests that this approach is particularly suited to nineteenth-century prose fiction. It proposes a methodology for approaching this analysis based on treating the text as an exchange commodity in a transaction between author and reader whose economic function can be investigated and analysed.

The thesis illustrates the application of this approach to major works of three nineteenth-century authors, following the evolution of the book format in France from its subordination to the *roman-feuilleton* in the late 1830s to its revival as an economically independent format in the 1880s, and contrasting this to the situation in contemporary Russia.

A chapter on Balzac, which focusses on *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, shows how this work can be seen as both a mirror of the rapidly evolving world of publishing during the 1830s and 1840s and as an extended discussion on the constituents of narrative value. It demonstrates how Balzac first adopts, then rejects and parodies, literary devices developed for the rapidly commercialising world of the *roman-feuilleton*.

A chapter on Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, serialised in 1879-80, examines how an author could develop strategies to create literary and economic value within a contemporary readership which was far less developed than that in France. It demonstrates how important literary devices which Dostoevsky uses can be shown to have economic as well as aesthetic effect.

The thesis concludes by an analysis of Zola's role in the industrialisation of narrative, which mirrors the rise of the story itself as a key tool of commercialisation. It illustrates this by a discussion of *L'Argent* (1891) as an allegory of the rise of the story as big business.

The thesis promotes the relevance of economic criticism as an under-recognised critical discipline.

## *Extended Abstract*

Thesis title:           Buying the Story. Transaction and Narrative  
Value in Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola  
Author:                 Jonathan Paine, Wolfson College  
Degree:                 Doctor of Philosophy  
Submitted:             Trinity 2016

Stories nowadays have become big business, in a financial as well as a metaphorical sense. We describe narrative in terms we use of business deals: we buy a story just as easily as we buy milk from the corner store. The act of buying the story turns the credibility of the narrative into the creditworthiness of the author. Authors and readers join in a transaction to exchange narrative for attention. Authors develop strategies to create markets for their own works. In doing so they leave an imprint of this exchange in what they have written. Narrative has become just as much an economic commodity as a creative act.

But how do we judge the 'value' of texts? How can we relate economic to aesthetic value? What role does the reader, or the author's perception of the reader, play in establishing value? And how can the text itself provide clues to its own economic activity? That is the subject of this thesis. It explores narrative as a self-reflexive commentary on the conditions of its own production. It asks whether a detailed examination of the *récit* itself can provide evidence of how an author conceived of its value, constructed its value, manipulated its value? By focussing on the

text itself as an economic instrument, it seeks to develop a pragmatic, rather than theoretical, approach to an under-recognised area of literary analysis, that of economic criticism.

There is a clear need to understand how economic, sociological and cultural factors influence narrative itself. That they do so has long been asserted, as witness contemporary reflections from the nineteenth century on the influence of *la littérature industrielle*, in Sainte-Beuve's phrase, voiced variously by Shevirev in Russia or by Ruskin in England. Political economics explains and is explained by literary creation: György Lukács and Walter Benjamin reinterpret Balzac and Baudelaire in the light of urban commodity capitalism, while Marx uses Goethe's *Faust* to articulate his theories on the power of money. Serialised narratives, particularly where there is evidence of reader feedback, expose with especial clarity the dual role of narrative as commercial product and artistic creation. Their importance as a means of publication in the nineteenth century emphasises the relevance of an economic approach to texts from this period.

So far, however, 'economic' criticism has struggled to provide a satisfactory methodology for addressing the relationship between economics and narrative. Over the past two decades efforts have been made to group, if not to unify, various historical, sociological and economic threads into a more coherent critical point of view, notably in

Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen's 1999 collection of studies under the banner of *'The New Economic Criticism'*. But this has never really succeeded in creating a coherent movement with shared critical objectives out of an original collection of loosely related thematic approaches. This thesis explores a new angle by treating text as the object of a genuine transaction between author and reader in which the reader exchanges his or her time and attention against the prospect of textual gratification.

This allows texts to be categorised according to the way in which authors approach the transaction with the reader, based on three fundamental methods of 'value discovery', explored in the introductory chapter of the thesis. The *'prospectus'* approach reveals value through assertion by author, narrator or character, just as a prospectus typically advertises goods in relation to a value fixed by the offeror. All didactic and most sacred texts would typically belong to this category, as would any form of rhetoric which seeks to persuade, such as legal argument. The *'auction'* approach is, in many ways, the opposite. It recognises that in many circumstances authors have no way of knowing the value of their work other than through reader reception. The author thus offers his narrative via a process of value discovery, akin to an auction, which allows readers to establish the value of the narrative in competition amongst themselves. Much of nineteenth-century prose fiction falls into this category, not least because narratives published in a journalistic context –

most serialised novels of the century, for example - become auction texts by default through their participation in the sales strategy of the host publication. Finally, the 'speculative' approach recognises that neither author nor reader may be able to assign value to a given narrative on anything but a transient basis, and that values may fluctuate significantly at each repetition as the narrative travels through time. It relies on iteration, either in the hope that multiple valuations are, over time, more representative than any methodology relying on a single point, or simply in recognition of the inevitability of value change over time.

The relevance of this approach across borders and through time is illustrated by three core chapters which demonstrate its application to three major writers of the nineteenth century: Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola, in each case with a focus on a major work: Balzac's *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Brat'ya Karamazovy*) and Zola's *L'Argent*.

Most of Balzac's major works were written during a period, from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s, when prose fiction was migrating from book format to that of the serialised *roman-feuilleton* in the periodical. The period covers seminal changes in the French publishing market, in the demographics of the readership, in Balzac's own approach to prose fiction, and in his financial position. The second chapter, entitled 'Balzac:

Narrative as Business', shows how Balzac's own commercial experience is reflected in his narratives.

The interaction between fiction and format is traceable throughout his works, which depict a characteristic plethora of commercial transactions, affording an opportunity to study the relationship between the representation of transaction as a subject for fiction and the rapidly changing external realities of transacting with publishers and readers to sell his output. Balzac's own constant financial difficulties led to a well-evidenced concern for his own financial solvency throughout his writing career, which translates into an acute awareness of the economic value of narrative. His head-to-head rivalry in the early 1840s with Eugène Sue, possibly the most financially successful writer of his generation, allows a side-by-side contrast of very different approaches to creating literary value.

The chapter argues that *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* ('*Splendeurs*') is, in part, a commentary on these influences on its own creation. It is unique among Balzac novels in the span of its composition, which covers a twelve year period from 1835 to 1847. Even its publication history extends over nine years and comprises two parts in book format from different publishers, three as serialised *romans-feuilletons* in different journals, and one appearance in a compilation volume of collected works. The commercial history of *Splendeurs* is in

itself a mirror of the rapidly evolving world of publishing during the 1830s and 1840s.

The chapter shows how *Splendeurs* can be seen as an extended discussion on the constituents of narrative value. The novel tracks Balzac's own growing disenchantment with the need to write for money and acts as an increasingly savage parody of the hierarchy of literary value emerging from the newly commercialised press. Balzac's initial confidence in his ability to create narrative value on his own terms, as the new era of the *roman-feuilleton* begins, degenerates into an introspective disassembly of the constituents of value to find out why the machinery seems to have broken as he competes with Sue in the early 1840s, and from there moves to a cynical mis-reassembly, to find out if his readers will notice that they have been sold a false prospectus, as his creative career draws to a spectacular close in 1847.

Dostoevsky, by contrast, represents a different culture, a different literary market and an opportunity to test whether this approach applies to such a new environment. The third chapter, entitled 'Dostoevsky: Who Buys the Story?' argues that his major works all reflect real uncertainty about the nature of the readership for which he wrote, as well as about the economic and publishing context in which he lived. The economic ramifications of the Great Reforms across the 1860s and 1870s represented the greatest experiment with the structure of the Russian

economy in the entire nineteenth century. The outcome of that experiment was far from clear at the time of Dostoevsky's death. Over the last two decades of his life, Dostoevsky had witnessed a switchback series of policy initiatives, partial successes, defeats and relaunches. The Russian literary economy had followed suit as it copied developments in Western Europe. But whether or not either would prove capable of developing solutions suitable for the Russian context, with its different history and culture, remained unclear. Writing in the Russia of the 1860s and 1870s, Dostoevsky perforce addressed a relatively small and demographically narrow readership, since at the time the conditions for the development of a mass reading public did not exist in Russia. But an awareness of the possibility of a mass readership did exist, as for decades the Russian press had been keeping pace with French printing strategies designed for a far wider French readership. So Dostoevsky's literary technique blends Russian and French formats, content and genres in an attempt to create a literature which might have value both in the contemporary literary market and to a much larger readership in posterity. But since writing for this future audience could be based on nothing much more than speculation as to its tastes and culture, Dostoevsky developed strategies to hedge his bets.

*The Brothers Karamazov* (published in serial format in 1879-80, in book format in 1881) is Dostoevsky's final work and to an extent draws together themes from across the entire body of his work. The struggle to

find a mode of writing which had sufficient immediate commercial attraction to pay the bills, but which also dealt with serious philosophical issues in the hope that eternal truths would attract a perpetual readership, is played out in its text. *The Brothers Karamazov*, this chapter contends, is a novel about how to write a novel. It explicitly and repeatedly questions how recipients of narratives value what they receive, and forces the reader of the novel to participate in experiments designed to contrast the reader's experience with that of the in-story characters. It shows how the uncertainty over the identity of his target readership is visible in Dostoevsky's narrative technique, which mixes stylistic devices from contemporary journalism developed for the mass market with religious and philosophical text addressed to a narrow, educated audience. It suggests that Dostoevsky develops the device of iteration, which allows the same story to be retold many times in different genres to experiment with reader reception, into a key economic tool ensuring that his narrative appealed to as broad as possible a contemporary audience as well as to an emerging, but still future, mass readership.

The chapter on Zola, 'Zola Inc.: The Business of Narrative', documents the rise of big business and its impact on narrative. Unlike Dostoevsky, Zola was able to address a mass audience which he himself had helped to create. His novels, written contemporaneously with Dostoevsky's major works, describe a world in which mass culture and big

business affect all aspects of life, from department stores to mines. But the process which the novels describe also affects their own composition, as Zola combines the techniques of the populist press with a highly commercial approach to the business of writing which he had learned at the feet of one of its leading entrepreneurs, Louis Hachette. Naturalism migrates from literary theory to promotional platform to stylistic template, sanctioning the wholesale importation of journalistic devices. The effect is to release the book, as an independent commercial format, from a half-century long subordination to the newspaper serial, completing the cycle of which Balzac had recorded the beginning.

*L'Argent* (1891) is the eighteenth in the twenty-volume cycle of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, and also the second story about Aristide Saccard. *La Curée* (1872) tells the story of an earlier part of his life and is the second novel in the series. The two novels are linked by more than a hero. The twenty year gap between the two charts Zola's own rise from obscurity to fame and wealth as a writer. By tracking the techniques Zola uses to construct his output from the early days of *La Curée* to the maturity of *L'Argent*, the chapter illustrates how Zola's use of literary device is closely associated with external developments in the commercialisation of the novel in book format as well as with the rise of big business itself in the French economy. Zola's role in the industrialisation of narrative mirrors the rise of the story itself as a key tool of commercialisation – through advertisements, prospectuses, corporate presentations and public

relations – and its ever-growing dissociation from underlying reality. *L'Argent* tells the story of how Saccard develops his own prospectus which, like the schemes he proposes, depends for its value entirely on its credibility as narrative rather than on the economic viability of the projects it sells. Zola, too, is enamoured of his own virtuosity as a storyteller and begins to take liberties with his readers in just the same way that Saccard does with his shareholders, presaging the gradual attrition of his own value as a novelist as he moves beyond the cycle of *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

'Buying the Story' reminds us that it is possible to think of the novel in terms other than those of artistic appreciation. The modern world provides us with countless everyday examples of the importance of narrative, the power of the story, to everything from advertising to business, to politics, to literature. Over the past two centuries selling the story has evolved from a cottage industry to, arguably, the biggest business in the world. Understanding and manipulating narrative is now fundamental to countless trades and professions. This thesis is not an attempt to impose economics on literature. It is, simply, a demonstration of how narrative is inseparable from the creation of economic value.



## 'J'ai l'espoir de devenir riche à coups de romans'

Honoré de Balzac, letter to Laure Surville, August 1820  
*Correspondance*, ed. by Roger Pierrot and Hervé Yon,  
2 vols.,(Paris: Gallimard, 2006), vol. i, p. 70.

[Lady Carbury] had taken to the writing of a novel because [her publisher] had told her that upon the whole novels did better than anything else. She would have written a volume of sermons on the same encouragement, and have gone about the work exactly after the same fashion. The length of the novel had been her first question. It must be in three volumes, and each volume must have three hundred pages. But what fewest number of words might be supposed sufficient to fill a page? The money offered was too trifling to allow of very liberal measure on her part. She had to live, and if possible to write another novel, - and, as she hoped, on better terms, when this should be finished. [...]

Whether the work might have been better done she never asked herself. I do not think she prided herself much on the literary merit of the tale. But if she could bring the papers to praise it, if she could induce Mudie to circulate it, if she could manage that the air for a month should be so loaded with 'The Wheel of Fortune' as to make it necessary for the reading world to have read or to have said that it had read the book, - then she would pride herself very much upon her work'.

Trollope, Anthony, *The Way We Live Now* (1875), ed. by John Sutherland, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982, reissued 2008), vol. ii, pp. 364-66.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Narrative and Business

*'Contre quoi échanger le récit? Que 'vaut' le récit?'* asks Barthes in *S/Z*. He continues '...le récit est, par une astuce vertigineuse, la représentation du contrat qui le fonde: dans ces récits exemplaires, la narration est théorie (économique) de la narration: [...] on raconte pour obtenir en échangeant, et c'est cet échange qui est figuré dans le récit lui-même: le récit est à la fois produit et production, marchandise et commerce...'.<sup>1</sup>

Narrative, Barthes suggests, is an economic commodity in an exchange which contains a record of its own transactional agency. Stories nowadays have indeed become big business, in a financial as well as a metaphorical sense. We describe narrative in terms we use of business deals: we buy a story just as easily as we buy milk from the corner store.

---

<sup>1</sup> Barthes, Roland, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970), p. 81.

We sell a line, swap an anecdote, trade jokes. Publishers may set prices, but readers buy the stories: the process requires an exchange which implies at least temporary agreement on a value for literary output. Readers invest time in a text in the expectation of a return, and call the process 'taking an interest'. The act of buying the story turns the credibility of the narrative into the creditworthiness of the author. And authors respond, by following fashions or by challenging them, in order to create markets for their own works, and in doing so leave an imprint of the process in what they have written. Narrative is just as much an economic commodity as a creative act, and the issues Barthes raises are fundamental to any consideration of narrative as an economic activity.

Barthes is, however, better at asking questions than answering them. How do we judge the 'value' of texts? How can we relate economic to aesthetic value? What role does the reader, or the author's perception of the reader, play in establishing value? And how can the text itself provide clues to its own economic activity? That is the subject of this thesis. I explore narrative as a self-reflexive commentary on the conditions of its own production. I ask whether a detailed examination of the *récit* itself can provide evidence of how an author conceived of its value, constructed its value, manipulated its value? By focussing on the text itself as an economic instrument, I want to develop a pragmatic, rather than theoretical, approach to an under-recognised area of literary analysis, that of economic criticism.

## The role of economic criticism

Discussing the economic context of artistic production has never been easy. The very notion of commercial influence on art has been repeatedly denied, treated as relevant only to populist output, pigeonholed as belonging to a particular political viewpoint or regarded simply as an offshoot of biography. Even today, our growing appreciation of the value of historical context still hesitates to include the economic dimension fully. Attempts over the past thirty years to develop 'economic criticism' as a distinct point of view have largely foundered through attempts to impose a theoretical framework or through perceived political bias. More recently, and more in some literatures than in others, there has been a revival of interest in the role of economics in literary criticism, not from any theoretical standpoint but as a practical reflection of the need to understand how the commercialisation of artistic production affects the process of production itself.

Economic criticism has been far more extensively developed as a critical tool in some disciplines than in others.<sup>2</sup> In the field of English literature, analysis of the underlying economics of the publishing industry, the growth of literacy and the evolving tastes of the reading public began

---

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Helen Small, Professor of English Literature at Oxford University, for her guidance on recent developments in economic criticism in English literature. I have not extended my exploration to American literature, for reasons of space and time, but since a number of the major contributors to the current debate are scholars from US universities, there may be reason to suppose an equally active investigation of the field.

early with, for example, Richard Altick's investigation of mass readership in nineteenth-century England in *The English Common Reader*, first published in 1957.<sup>3</sup> This established the groundwork for a discussion of the role of economics in literature which focussed, in part, on how novels represented external economic developments and systems of political economy and, in part although to lesser extent, on how the representation of economics affected the act of writing itself. An early and influential contribution to the latter debate was made by John Vernon's 1984 *Money and Fiction* which drew parallels between the failure of traditional stores of economic value, such as money, to deliver predictable value, and the failure of fiction to mimic reality.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently these twin tracks have begun to converge and there now exists a flourishing array of critical literature, produced largely by scholars in the United Kingdom and the United States, on the representation of external economic conditions in prose fiction, on the relationship between literature and political economic theory and, increasingly but from a very narrow base, on my particular area of focus, narrative as a commentary on the conditions of its own production. I return to all of these below.

---

<sup>3</sup> Altick, Richard, *The English Common Reader. A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, second edition (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998). Among the many histories of modes of publication and reception in England in the nineteenth century, Paul Delany's *Literature, Money and the Market. From Trollope to Amis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) is a useful and more recent extension of Altick with a particular emphasis on the changing modes of commercialisation of the novel in the latter part of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth centuries. *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, ed. by Kate Flint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521846257>, accessed 23 April 2016, gives a good general overview of the publishing environment.

<sup>4</sup> Vernon, John, *Money and Fiction: Literary Realism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

Studies in French literature and economics have taken a rather different turn. The development of the publishing industry was documented at an early stage, in particular by Claude Bellanger's 1969 *Histoire générale de la presse française*,<sup>5</sup> and Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin's four volume *Histoire de l'édition française* from 1982 to 1986.<sup>6</sup> This early work revealed a rich seam of investigation on the economic, social and cultural history of publishing which has almost developed into its own discipline. René Guise's 1975 thesis established the importance of the *roman-feuilleton* as an economic driver of the periodical in the 1830s;<sup>7</sup> Jean-Yves Mollier documented the histories of the key publishers of the nineteenth century;<sup>8</sup> Françoise Parent-Lardeur the role of the *cabinets de lecture*.<sup>9</sup> Current work into journalism and its relationship to popular culture is being led by Dominique Kalifa, Judith Lyon-Caen, Marie-Eve Thérénty and Alain Vaillant, most recently in a wide-ranging and much-needed survey entitled *La Civilisation du Journal*.<sup>10</sup> Judith Lyon-Caen has investigated contemporary reader

---

<sup>5</sup> *Histoire générale de la presse française*, ed. by Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godeschot, Pierre Guiral and Fernand Terrou, 5 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969).

<sup>6</sup> *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. by Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin, 4 vols. (Paris: Promodis, 1982-86).

<sup>7</sup> Guise, René, *Le Roman-feuilleton 1830-1848: la naissance d'un genre*, 36 microfiches, Doctorat d'état, (Nancy: Nancy II, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Mollier, Jean-Yves, *Michel et Calmann Lévy, ou, la naissance de l'édition moderne* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1984), *L'Argent et les lettres. Histoire du capitalisme d'édition. 1880-1920*, (Paris: Fayard, 1988), *Le Commerce de la librairie en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle 1789-1914* (Paris: IMEC Editions, 1997) and *Louis Hachette, 1800-64: le fondateur d'un empire* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Parent-Lardeur, Françoise, *Lire à Paris au temps de Balzac: Les cabinets de lecture à Paris, 1815-1830* (Paris: Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1999).

reception as evidenced by readers' letters.<sup>11</sup> Christophe Charle has supplied complementary research into economic history and culture,<sup>12</sup> while others, in particular Martin Lyons<sup>13</sup> and Vaillant, have successfully compiled statistical databases and applied techniques of economic analysis to aspects of literary consumption.<sup>14</sup>

But in the area of literature as a reflection of theories of political economy, French criticism has historically been heavily influenced by a long tradition of Marxist analysis in French literature, dating back at least to the influence of György Lukács, whose 1916 *Die Theorie des Romans* and series of articles on Balzac in 1934-35, translated into French as *Balzac et le réalisme français* in 1951, had proposed a method of showing how Balzac's exuberant, totalising and commercial perspective could be taken as a realistic portrayal of a society in the throes of capitalist disintegration, despite the author's opposite personal convictions.<sup>15</sup> This seems to have resonated with French aesthetic hierarchies, already established in literary criticism from the time of Sainte-Beuve and his

---

<sup>10</sup> *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. by Dominique Kalifa, Philippe Régner, Marie-Eve Thérénty and Alain Vaillant (Paris: Nouveau monde éditions, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Lyon-Caen, Judith, *La Lecture et la vie. Les usages du roman au temps de Balzac* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Charle, Christophe, *Histoire sociale de la France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991) and *Le Siècle de la presse 1830-1939* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Lyons, Martin, *Reading Culture and Writing Practices in Nineteenth-century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Vaillant, Allain, *La Crise de la littérature. Romantisme et modernité* (Grenoble: ELLUG, 2005), in particular the third section, 'Mesure de la littérature', pp. 75-102.

<sup>15</sup> Lukács, György, *The Theory of the Novel: a historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of great epic Literature* trans. by Anna Bostock (London: Merlin Press, 1978) and *Balzac et le réalisme français*, trans. by Paul Laveau (Paris: François Maspero, 1951, reprinted 1967).

excoriation of *la littérature industrielle*, which rejected popular art and literature as an appropriate subject for academic study unless otherwise redeemed by a political justification.<sup>16</sup> The Marxist focus is visible in a wide range of sociological, critical and economic perspectives, from Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital,<sup>17</sup> to Pierre Barbéris's notion of the text as the home of the proletariat,<sup>18</sup> to Jean-Joseph Goux's proposition of counterfeit coin as the founding metaphor for a debased society.<sup>19</sup> Even more recent works, like Alexandre Péraud's 2012 *Le Crédit dans la poétique balzacienne*, which explores the relationship between financial debt and moral bankruptcy, acknowledge a debt to a long Marxist tradition.<sup>20</sup> Although the influence of this viewpoint now seems to be on the wane, over time it has, I think, rather restricted the scope of French critical thinking and perhaps hindered the development of new approaches to economic criticism.

In Russian scholarship even the basic tools for economic analysis are under-developed. It was not always thus: in fact the *ur*-texts appeared much earlier than in many other European countries. Mikhail Kufaev's

---

<sup>16</sup> Sainte-Beuve, Charles Augustin 'De la littérature industrielle', in *Revue des deux mondes*, 4:19 (1839), 675-691.

<sup>17</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979) and *Les Règles de l'art : genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Barbéris, Pierre, *Le Prince et le marchand. Idéologiques: la littérature, l'histoire* (Paris: Fayard, 1980).

<sup>19</sup> Goux, Jean-Joseph. *Frivolité de la valeur. Essai sur l'imaginaire du capitalisme* (Paris: Blusson, 2000), pp. 249-271 and his long analysis of Gide's *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* in *Les Monnayeurs du langage* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1984), pp. 27-124.

<sup>20</sup> Péraud, Alexandre, *Le Crédit dans la poétique balzacienne* (Paris: Garnier, 2012), pp. 25, 42-44.

1927 *History of the Book in Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (*Istoriya russkoi knigi v XIX veke*)<sup>21</sup> and Mikhail Muratov's 1931 *The Publishing Trade in Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (*Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX i XX vekakh*)<sup>22</sup> provide the foundation for analysis of the evolution of the readership and the role of changes in printing technology, distribution mechanisms and economic inputs, but neither is as comprehensive as its equivalents on the English or French markets. For almost half a century little more was added until William Mills Todd III's 1978 *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914*, which began the process of filling some of the 'serious lacunae in the study of Russian literature as a social institution' which it identifies in its very first sentence.<sup>23</sup> In part this is due to real evidential voids, as for example in literacy statistics until the first census of 1897, or in central bibliographical records of publications (despite more continuous censorship laws than anywhere else in Europe). In part it reflects a genuine absence of original basic research into what is, or might be, available in terms of the publishing history, the readership and the social culture of the nineteenth century.

The relative absence of basic research has complicated efforts to develop a more sophisticated debate on economic and literary

---

<sup>21</sup> Kufaeв, Mikhail, *Istoriya russkoi knigi v XIX veke* (1927, reprinted Moscow: Pashkov Dom, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Muratov, Mikhail, *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX i XX vekakh : ocherk istorii knigoizdatel'stva i knigotorgovli, 1800-1917 gody* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe sotsialno-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1931).

<sup>23</sup> *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914*, ed. by William Mills Todd III (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978).

interactions. Nonetheless, advances have been made in understanding the readership and the culture of reading, most notably by Abram Reitblat<sup>24</sup> and Jeffrey Brooks.<sup>25</sup> Todd has done the same for the role of serialisation in Russian periodicals;<sup>26</sup> Louise McReynolds for the development of the mass circulation press;<sup>27</sup> Deborah Martinsen for that of the literary journals;<sup>28</sup> Boris Mironov in the field of social history and sociological change.<sup>29</sup> But economic criticism as a separate branch of study has yet to become established. A seminal 1999 text, which I shall discuss later, entitled *The New Economic Criticism. Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics*, edited by Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen,<sup>30</sup> was indeed published in the Russian journal *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* in 2002, along with contributions to the economic debate by Todd, Mikhail Makeev, Séamas O'Driscoll, Kirill Postoutenko and Lev

---

<sup>24</sup> Reitblat, Abram, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu. Ocherki po istorii chteniya v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow: MPI, 1991) and *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii: istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki o knizhnoi kul'ture Pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Brooks, Jeffrey, *When Russia Learned to Read. Literacy and Popular Literature 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>26</sup> Todd, William Mills III, 'The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Serial Publication' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, 7 (1986), 87-97; 'Dostoevsky and Tolstoy: The Professionalisation of Literature and Serialised Fiction' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 15 (2011), 29-36; *Serialisation: Institutions of Literature as Patterns of Communication*, unpublished paper delivered at Oxford University, 31 May 2012; "To be Continued": *Dostoevsky's Evolving Poetics of Serialised Publication*, in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 18 (2014), 22-33; *Dostoevsky and the Moral Hazards of Serial Publication*, unpublished paper delivered at the annual conference of ASEES (November 2015).

<sup>27</sup> McReynolds, Louise, *The News under Russia's Old Regime. The Development of a Mass-circulation Press* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>28</sup> *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. by Deborah Martinsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Mironov, Boris with Ben Eklof, *The Social History of Imperial Russia 1700-1917* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999-2000).

<sup>30</sup> *The New Economic Criticism. Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics*, ed. by Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen (London: Routledge, 1999).

Usykin.<sup>31</sup> Postoutenko has also published other articles on the topic around the same time.<sup>32</sup> But I can find little more.

Economic criticism is hardly a new phenomenon, even though it has only recently begun to be recognised as a separate branch of interdisciplinary study. It has always been difficult to define. When Woodmansee and Osteen launched their attempt to establish it as a distinct discipline, their introduction suggested a redefinition by reference to four separate ‘approaches to the economics of literary texts.’ *Production* meant a focus on the ‘social, cultural and economic contexts in which [...] works have been produced’: a branch of New Historicism focussing mostly on the external conditions of production, though oddly they barely mention the publishing industry itself. *Internal circulation* argues that the representation of money, finance and transaction within a work can not only provide clues as to the author’s own hierarchy of value but can also mirror and critique external economic conditions both through content and through stylistic device. *External circulation and consumption* considers the economics of reception, the process of canonisation, the impact of changing tastes, as well as the author’s ‘debt’ to precursors from all possible intertextualities. Lastly, *metatheoretical*

---

<sup>31</sup> ‘Novaya Ekonomicheskaya Kritika’, ed. by Mikhail Gronas, in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 58 (2002), 7-87.

<sup>32</sup> e.g. ‘Die Geburt des Rubels aus dem Geist des Platonismus’, *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, 49 (2003), 75-91 and ‘Mezhdu monetoi i ikonoi. Sakral’naia ekonomika Nikolaia Vtorogo’, *Die Welt der Slaven*, 45 (2000), 2, 315-338.

provided a heading under which the methodology and theory of economic criticism could itself be discussed.<sup>33</sup>

In the intervening years the increasing volume of works on and around the subject of economic criticism (particularly in English literature), and parallel evolution in other aesthetic disciplines such as the fine arts and music, have allowed revised definitions to emerge from actual practice. Mary Poovey, writing in 2008, presages a reformulation when she suggests three broad categories: 'one that treats economic matters as ideas (or 'thought'), logics, metaphors or structural paradigms; one that focusses on the economic problems of Literary production, and one that deals with the formal, generic and commodity features that have allowed Literary writing to attain a degree of relative autonomy since the late eighteenth century.'<sup>34</sup>

In practical terms what has actually happened is the emergence of a far greater degree of economic awareness across three largely pre-existing approaches. The oldest of these is the *Literature as commerce* approach. In its earliest incarnations this almost always takes a pejorative line, representing the threat posed to aesthetics by populism – Paul Delany provides a good summary of the origins of this approach in *Literature, Money and the Market*, from Plato's preferment of ascetic

---

<sup>33</sup> *The New Economic Criticism*, ed. Woodmansee and Osteen (1999), pp. 35-38.

<sup>34</sup> Poovey, Mary, *Genres of the Credit Economy. Mediating Value in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 11.

Sparta over consumerist Athens to recent Marxist criticism.<sup>35</sup> The influence of economics on narrative was implicitly admitted by its very rejection, as witness Rémy de Gourmont's 1907 argument that serious art was essentially incomprehensible to the populace at large.<sup>36</sup> More recently Theodor Adorno's reading of aestheticism and art-for-art's-sake discourses, in his posthumous *Ästhetische Theorie*, argues that, despite their claims to despise the commercial market, these remain wholly dependent on it.<sup>37</sup> The original approach has long since given way to serious analysis of the business of publishing and, at least in France and England, a solid database of information about the growth of publishing as an industry and about the evolution of the readership now exists. The one area in which all these analyses are still lacking is that of the availability and sources of capital to finance growth. We know from other industries, particularly transport, how vital an enabling tool this is: publishing is little different save in scale, and more information on this point would give us another measure of value for literary production.

The second strand of current economic analysis is the *literature as economic critique* approach. This divided historically into two closely related sub-fields: *literature as socio-economic commentary*, which saw literature, and in particular Realist and Naturalist literature, as critiques

---

<sup>35</sup> Delany (2002), pp. 1-4.

<sup>36</sup> Gourmont, Rémy de, *Le Problème du style* (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1907), pp.193-202.

<sup>37</sup> Adorno, Theodor, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. by R. Hullot-Kentor, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 8.

of the social and economic conditions of contemporary society, and *literature as political economics*, which saw literature either through the prism of a political/economic interpretation imposed by the critic, as in much of Marxist criticism, or as a representation of a contemporary theory of political economy. The early foundations of both were laid by studies of the way in which Realist writers depicted the society they lived in through the prism of fiction. Thus modern criticism of Balzac, for example, begins with extensive analyses showing how Balzac's fictional representation of the emergence of a commercialised and consumerist bourgeoisie corresponded to the historical and sociological evidence. Jean-Hervé Donnard's 1961 *Balzac, Les Réalités économiques et sociales dans 'La Comédie humaine'* is, as its title suggests, a good example of this approach,<sup>38</sup> but many of the earlier critical works, such as Bernard Guyon's analysis of Balzac's political and social thinking,<sup>39</sup> André Maurois's biography,<sup>40</sup> or Harry Levin's survey of how realist writers write realism,<sup>41</sup> tend towards this perspective. At around the same time economists and sociologists were examining literary representations of society as evidence of public attitudes, as for example in Louis Chevalier's *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (1958), which compares the available evidence about

---

<sup>38</sup> Donnard, Jean-Hervé, *Balzac, Les Réalités économiques et sociales dans 'La Comédie humaine'* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1961).

<sup>39</sup> Guyon, Bernard, *La pensée politique et sociale de Balzac*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1969).

<sup>40</sup> Maurois, André, *Prométhée, ou, La vie de Balzac* (Paris: Hachette, 1965).

<sup>41</sup> Levin, Harry, *The Gates of Horn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).

the lower classes from economic, sociological and scientific observations against its representation in contemporary works of literature, in particular by Balzac, Sue and Hugo, as well as against contemporary theorists of political economy such as Saint-Simon, Fourier and Proudhon.

The same evidence was also repurposed by other critics to impose a reading from a political economic perspective. For decades the link between political economics and literature had been close. Political economics had explained, and was explained by, literary creation: Lukács<sup>42</sup> and Walter Benjamin<sup>43</sup> reinterpreted Balzac and Baudelaire in the light of urban commodity capitalism, while Marx used Goethe's *Faust* to articulate his theories on the power of money.<sup>44</sup> The dangers of this approach were amply demonstrated by the wholesale imposition of Marxist theory in the Soviet Union between the early 1930s and the early 1980s, a move which has severely limited the value of much Soviet criticism during this period. But new attitudes were also evolving. Regenia Gagnier's *The Insatiability of Human Wants. Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society*, published in 2000, traced the shift in nineteenth-century political economic thinking from 'notions of Economic Man as producer (Smith, Ricardo, Mill and Marx) or reproducer (Malthus) to a view of

---

<sup>42</sup> Lukács (1967).

<sup>43</sup> Benjamin, Walter, *The Writer of Modern Life* (1935-39), ed. by Michael Jennings, trans. by Howard Eiland and others, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> Marx, Karl, 'The Power of Money' in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Mulligan at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm>, accessed 9 April 2016.

Economic Man as consumer [(Jevons, Menger)].' She illustrated this with examples from contemporary literature to show how artistic products were both subject to, and could represent, this transition, and in doing so provided an intellectual basis for considering reception theory as an economic force.<sup>45</sup> It was now thinkable to enquire in more detail about how demand for aesthetic products could be produced and, more importantly, manipulated by their creator to be made even more desirable.

At the same time the field of literature as economic critique was also undergoing radical change towards a final category of economic criticism which I call *literature as economic self-commentary*. To an extent this dates back to the very emergence of the extended debate about Realism as simultaneously representation and critique of the conditions of its own conception: the very form of Realism is seen as a necessary condition of its ability both to represent the realities of nineteenth-century industrial society and to attract readers to read that representation. The inflection point at which economic critique becomes economic self-commentary is clearly shown in Christopher Prendergast's *The Order of Mimesis*, which treats narrative as an item in an economic exchange with the reader in which the reader has an expectation of a

---

<sup>45</sup> Gagnier, Regenia, *The Insatiability of Human Wants. Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), especially chapter 4, 'Production, Reproduction and Pleasure in Victorian Aesthetics', pp. 115-45. The quotation is from p. 2.

profitable return on both his time and his investment of trust in the narrative credentials. In his chapter on Balzac, Prendergast uses Balzac's representation of transaction and commerce as a way of asking what we can infer from this about the transaction between narrator and reader.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time the scope of literary criticism and its ability to access economic tools also underwent a significant change. Terry Eagleton's 1983 *Literary Theory: An Introduction* called into question all received attitudes to literary criticism and to literature itself.<sup>47</sup> Vernon's comparison between prose fiction and categories of texts which were at that time only beginning to be considered as part of the literary system, such as banknotes,<sup>48</sup> highlighted the benefits of a broader horizon, particularly when combined with the then recent reception theories of Iser<sup>49</sup> and Jauss.<sup>50</sup> Albeit slowly, this subsequently led to Poovey's proposition that virtually all forms of writing, from banknotes to treatises on political economy, should be treated as genres within a broad definition of narrative.<sup>51</sup> In turn this has legitimised the application of literary criteria to financial narratives and that of economic criteria to aesthetic representation.

---

<sup>46</sup> Prendergast, Christopher, *The Order of Mimesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 83-118. The comments on narrative as economic exchange are at pp. 101-11.

<sup>47</sup> Eagleton, Terry, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, revised 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Vernon (1984), pp.18-19.

<sup>49</sup> Iser, Wolfgang, *The Act of Reading: a Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1976), (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

<sup>50</sup> Jauss, Hans Robert, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

<sup>51</sup> Poovey (2008), pp. 1-2.

But this new form of interdisciplinary criticism needed more input from the economics side. Pioneers such as Marc Shell and Goux had become over-fascinated by the correspondence between linguistic and economic systems, as Delany argues, and had failed to develop a broader model for bringing the literary and economics together.<sup>52</sup> Catherine Gallagher, in *The Body Economic. Life, Death and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (2006) proposes a model which brings together an understanding of how the literary representation of a political economy can influence the composition and style of the narrative itself. She uses the example of Dickens's *Hard Times*, which she argues is an attempt to to represent and critique Benthamite political economy. The attempt, she contends, is reflected in the style of the work itself. 'The prose doesn't just mime the monotony of the environment but announces that the novel is both product and produce of the severe workfulness it seems to criticize. *Hard Times* relentlessly belabors its effortful prose and its unhappy (in both senses of the word) allegories. Workfulness is not just an attribute of people of this novel, it is a mode of representation and an angle of vision on the world in general.'<sup>53</sup> This is perhaps the closest example I have found to an illustration of my perspective, in that it shows clearly how the act of composition could be influenced by an economic objective. In this case, as she argues it, it is the representation, in fiction, of

---

<sup>52</sup> Delany (2002), p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Gallagher, Catherine, *The Body Economic. Life, Death and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). The quotation is from p. 63.

an economic theory rather than the variation of the perceived value of the text by the reader that is being achieved, but the principle is the same.

Literary historians have also started to make similar use of stylistic analysis. Franco Moretti's *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature* (2013) argues that the rise of the bourgeois in nineteenth-century Europe is reflected in the evolution of literary devices. Changing patterns of adjective use, for example, reflect a shift from the descriptive purposes of eighteenth century prose to the 'incrustation of value judgements over matters of fact' which, Moretti argues, characterise Victorian fiction. The new technique of 'filler' narratives around the main plot offers '*the kind of narrative pleasure compatible with the new regularity of bourgeois life*' (Moretti's emphasis). The implication is that the act of composition itself is influenced, whether consciously or not, by external economic and social factors.<sup>54</sup>

Even so, both Gallagher and Moretti miss a point. As the tone of Gallagher's analysis makes clear, she evidently thinks that the resulting stylistic changes have not improved the book's readability – in other words its value to the reader. Many subsequent critics have agreed with her. Yet at the time of its publication in 1854 *Hard Times* succeeded in doubling the circulation of *Household Words*. Ruskin thought it one of

---

<sup>54</sup> Moretti, Franco, *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature* (London: Verso, 2013), pp. 125-31 and 74-100. The quotations are, respectively, at p. 130 and p.81.

Dickens's finest.<sup>55</sup> What does this tell us about the literary and stylistic devices which made it attractive or valuable to the contemporary reader? Is there evidence to suggest Dickens was aware of what some now see as the novel's shortcomings, and if so are countermeasures visible in subsequent works? Gallaher's approach concentrates on the political economy angle and successfully demonstrates the interrelationship between theory and narrative structure, just as Moretti's links social to stylistic evolution, but both omit the additional angle which an appreciation of *literature as commerce* might have brought.

My own approach, and the one I want to explore in this thesis, is to treat the text as something which its author is, typically, trying to 'sell' to the reader, in both a strictly economic and a metaphorical sense – the title of my thesis, 'Buying the Story', encapsulates this very duality. The text itself will show the evidence of this activity both in the author's choice of subject and in his or her choice of style, genre or literary device. This is what I mean when I say that every narrative is, in some part, a self-reflexive commentary on the conditions of its own production. I suspect this may be true of all narratives, whenever produced, but my focus here is on the nineteenth-century 'professional turn', the point at which the writing of prose fiction became a commerce and writers were able to make a living, of sorts, from the business of selling narratives. An author's output encountered a commercial market where consumers, often

---

<sup>55</sup> Tomalin, Claire, *Charles Dickens: A Life* (London: Viking, 2011), pp. 249-51.

through powerful publishing intermediaries, defined the parameters of value and influenced, at times even dictated, the terms of trade. It is only to be expected that what is produced will reflect an awareness of what sells. Even the asserted absence of a commercial objective is itself a form of commentary.

Understanding the market into which an artistic product is launched thus becomes part of understanding the work itself. However creators define the value of their products – and there are many yardsticks of value, from economic, to critical, to posterity – all are related to the reception of those products in target markets. Understanding market context, in terms of both contemporary conditions and emerging trends, can alert a modern critic to authorial strategies used to modify the value of an artistic production. Such strategies, particularly if commercial and related to canonical works, are rarely recognised in current critical discourse. Exposing them can reveal a hitherto under-evaluated and under-appreciated awareness of, and responsiveness to, economic influences.

This, then, is the starting point for my investigation. The process relies on three rather basic analytical steps which I will discuss in more detail later. In summary:

- (a) Understanding the context, - economic, cultural, but most specifically the *publishing context* - of a given work provides

the tools to detect the pressures on artistic production at work on the author. An awareness of these pressures helps to recognise possible authorial responses in the text.

(b) Unbundling the role of *transaction* in narrative is the next step.

At an obvious level, nineteenth-century novels frequently use transactions – monetary, legal, psychological – as essential elements of plot. Behind this, though, the narrative itself can be viewed as the object of a real transaction between author and reader in which the reader trades his time against the anticipation of textual gratification. An awareness of both roles for transaction allows the reader to ask all sorts of rather down-to-earth questions more normally associated with commerce than with creativity: ‘What am I being sold? Why should I buy it? How much? How do the in-story characters value the very same narrative? If they buy the story, should I?’ Analysing narrative as transaction helps to isolate the economic effects of literary devices more normally approached in aesthetic terms.

(c) Finally, the two prior steps lead directly to a discussion of the constituents of *literary value*. Here I am less interested in the subjective reader response than in gathering evidence from the text itself of how the author tried to mediate or manipulate the value of his narrative to the reader, and thence attempting to deduce how the author might have conceptualised literary

value. The result is a rather practical approach to literary value which I call the '*point of sale*' perspective and which focusses on mining the text for what it reveals about the author's understanding of transaction and anticipated reader response at the point of composition. It prompts a series of questions about what tools authors have to mediate value, where the tools came from, whether there is textual evidence of their use, how effective they have been, and how effectiveness is itself to be judged.

In isolation, none of these steps is particularly original.

Woodmansee and Osteen's suggested approach in *The New Economic Criticism* contains all of these elements.<sup>56</sup> What is different is my focus on the synchronic viewpoint of the author at the point of sale, to the extent demonstrable from contemporary evidence including the text itself, as a way of examining how economic considerations might have influenced the composition of the same text. To an extent, this different viewpoint affects everything else: the focus of my perspective on transaction, for example, is on the various negotiating strategies which an author can adopt depending on his or her perception of how readers assess literary value. It is important to emphasise, though, that this is not a work of critical theory and it makes no claims to stand as such. My economic perspective is just that, a different point of view informed by experience

---

<sup>56</sup> See page 32 .

of another discipline which can, I think, provide a new approach even to major canonical texts which have been exhaustively analysed within existing critical frameworks. Since it is essentially a pragmatic approach, it is best illustrated by demonstration of its application. For reasons discussed more fully below, I have chosen three authors from across the nineteenth century and from across widely separated geographies and cultures, each represented by canonical works already familiar to critical attention: Balzac's *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, and Zola's *L'Argent*. But first, a better understanding of my three analytical steps is perhaps required.

## **The importance of the publishing context**

Changes in the wider economic and cultural contexts can have far-reaching effects once translated to the publishing environment. One of the themes I shall follow is the divergent *evolution of the book as a publishing format* across different countries. Each of my chapters on Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola will examine this in greater detail, but a general overview will provide a summary of the overall publishing context.

In England the early phases of the Industrial Revolution had created a literate middle class with enough spare time and money to buy

and read the works of Richardson, Austen, or Scott, as well as an economy with enough access to capital to invest in printing technology and distribution. Demand for all forms of printed matter grew as literacy, education and new publishing technologies expanded the market. Railways arrived to reach new readerships at ever growing speed. This thriving market could support multiple publishing formats, from newspapers to periodicals to stand-alone books, most notably the 900 page, 45 chapter, three-volume 'triple-deckers' required by Mudie's and bemoaned by Lady Carbury in my introductory quotation from Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*. Indeed, triple-deckers remained an important publishing format throughout the century until the mid-1890s despite competition from serialised novels, cheap 'yellowback' reprints and eventually from cut-price book format editions of original works. Other formats were able to coexist and grow alongside the book, from periodical miscellanies like *Blackwood's Magazine*, more literary weeklies such as Dickens's *Household Words* or the mass market newspapers like the *Daily Mail* introduced by the Harmsworth family in the 1890s. Authors had access to, or at least direct experience of, multiple and evolving formats and the most successful, like Dickens, could even dictate their own choice of format.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> See Altick's analysis of the book trade in England in Altick (1998), chapters 12 and 13, pp. 260-317.

By contrast, authors in nineteenth-century France were confronted by a rather different publishing environment. In comparison to England, the French economy started the century in a less developed state and continued to grow more slowly. Both population and productivity growth were weak; industrialisation and urbanisation took longer to happen; education and literacy followed suit. The publishing industry found itself in a vicious circle of high costs, low productivity, intrusive censorship, piracy and slow growth in the readership which led to widespread failures and a government bail-out of Parisian printer-publishers in 1830. When, in 1836, the first lower-priced periodicals appeared on the market the industry found itself in no state to support competing formats. For the next half century the book format would remain subservient to the dominance of the periodicals and the newspapers. Not that the book disappeared as a format, rather that the readership penetration achieved by the *roman-feuilleton* at the foot of the first page of a popular periodical or newspaper was so much higher than that of a stand-alone book, unsupported by the shop window of the periodical, that it became far less profitable for authors and publishers to choose the book format unless independently wealthy.

Not until the late 1870s would technological advances and the development of a mass readership change the equation and allow the book format to return as the leading marketplace for new original prose fiction. The virtual requirement, during the entire middle of the century,

to publish in a journalistic medium, in serialised format, in physical proximity to the news and scandal of the day that sold newspapers, in return for payment by the line or column, is of inescapable importance in understanding French authors of the period, even those who, like Flaubert, could afford to buy their way free of the system.<sup>58</sup>

The Russian market was, as usual, idiosyncratic. Its size, geography and economic backwardness created vast barriers to the development of a mass readership. It had developed its own hybrid publishing format, the 'thick journal', a monthly periodical often of several hundred pages in bound hardback book format, containing entire chapters of novels alongside essays on subjects from science to farming, which reached readerships of rarely more than a few thousand. Since the days of Peter the Great much of its aristocracy, thus a substantial proportion of the potential book market, had looked to the West for imported taste, manners and technology. The link with France was particularly close, though it remained very much a one-way street from France into Russia until late in the century. Publishers appropriated the latest developments in the French publishing market and applied them to a Russian market which lagged far behind in the development of its readership. Authors throughout the century found themselves addressing a readership a fraction the size of that in France which their publishers were attempting

---

<sup>58</sup> Since this is a summary of propositions I will develop more fully in the chapters on Balzac and Zola, readers are referred to those chapters for details of the source materials underlying my arguments.

to develop using tools designed for a wholly different market.

Nonetheless, the French market had demonstrated the potential of a mass market yet to come. So which market should an author address? I think it is difficult to understand an important aspect of nineteenth-century Russian literature without an appreciation of this point.<sup>59</sup>

Writers themselves document the translation of general economic trends into specific publishing strategies or pressures. Wilkie Collins, writing in *Household Words* of 1858, records his surprise at discovering ‘a reading public of three millions which lies right out of the pale of literary civilisation’, evidenced by the proliferation of penny journals as urban population growth and literacy begin to explode.<sup>60</sup> The relentless domination of the French press by the periodical and newspaper sector is chronicled and satirised by, among many others, Balzac in *Illusions perdues* (1837-43), the Goncourt brothers in *Charles Demailly* (1868) and by Maupassant in *Bel ami* (1885). Zola finally, and virtually singlehandedly, overcomes the power of the periodical, re-establishes the book as a profitable economic entity in its own right, and documents the process, as I shall argue, in *L’Argent*. The publishing context acts as filter and focus, bringing the implications of wider economic and cultural changes on the business of producing literature into sharper relief.

---

<sup>59</sup> Readers are referred to chapter 3 for source material on the Russian publishing market.

<sup>60</sup> Collins, Wilkie, ‘The Unknown Public’ in *Household Words*, 18:439 (21 August 1858), 217-22, p. 218.

## Literature as transaction

The notion of transaction implies a process, an act, and an account of both.<sup>61</sup> The process involves a negotiation through time to *discover* value and the levers which affect value, to *compare* the values of different commodities in an iterative process which may involve modifications and repeated reassessments, and finally to reach a point of *compromise* at which the parties to the transaction agree on an equivalence of value between two different commodities. The act involves the completion of an exchange between two or more parties or, alternatively, the completion of a performative process which results in a transfer of value even without a counterparty, as for example through a legal process, as in a will or a dowry, or through coercion, as in theft or extortion. Both cause a discontinuity, a sudden and radical change of state occasioned by, for example, a signature on a contract. Finally, transaction can be seen as an account, a narrative of itself, as in the transactions of a learned society; not merely the act but the story of the act as well.

Since Barthes we have become used to thinking of narrative as a commodity and of the *récit* as a contract between author and reader

---

<sup>61</sup> All three concepts are present in current definitions in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED Online, , <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/204582?redirectedFrom=transaction#eid> , accessed 22 April 2016 and in historical texts such as the 1835 *Dictionnaire de L'Académie française*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, 2 vols. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1832-35), vol. ii, p. 874, Larousse's 1866-77 *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 17 vols. (Paris: Administration du grand Dictionnaire universel, 1866-77), vol. xv, p. 411; and the contemporary *Dictionnaire de la langue française* of Littré, 4 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1873-74), vol. iv, p. 2312.

which can credibly be described as an actual transaction. The author offers a narrative in exchange for the reader's attention, often mediated by a publisher who establishes a monetary equivalent for the initial value of the narrative. The author's perception of value may extend beyond the reception of an immediate readership towards possible future readers and a concept of future value. The text becomes a commodity capable of establishing a form of exchange rate between the Marxist value of the author's labour, Coleridge's concept of the absolute or perpetual value of art, and the Jevonian marginal utility value of the work's reception over time. Georg Simmel discusses whether or not relationships based on a transfer of intellectual property can qualify as genuine exchanges in *The Philosophy of Money*. He establishes two criteria for defining what is, and what is not, exchange. Each party, he says, must offer to the other more than he possessed before; and each party must sacrifice a good in order to obtain the commodity he wants. The author/reader exchange satisfies both conditions: each reader, present and future, offers 'reach' - a larger audience and the possibility of eventual canonisation - and, indirectly via the publisher, a financial return to the author, who has sacrificed his time to create the narrative as the commodity of exchange. The author offers to the reader the prospect of enjoyment or education to be derived from the narrative: the reader sacrifices his time and attention to achieve these

objectives. In Simmel's terms it seems clear that the author/reader exchange would qualify as a genuine transaction.<sup>62</sup>

It seems justifiable, therefore, to think of literature as a form of transaction. In part this simply reflects reality; in part the discipline of allocating an economic category to a creative process provides a useful tool for unbundling the economic agency of individual parts of that process. It also provides an alternative lexicon for describing narration and narrative types which is sufficiently unfamiliar as to force us to reappraise previous commonplaces. It also allows us to apply some of the same techniques to a literary text as would be applied to the analysis of a transaction, by seeking to establish how the reader assigns value to the text, what methods the author uses to mediate that value, and whether the value of the story as perceived by its characters is the same as that adjudged by its readers.

It seems particularly appropriate to apply these techniques to the prose fiction of the nineteenth century in the light of the commercial revolution, which tracked its industrial counterpart across Europe at varying speeds over the course of the century. In France the sale of the *biens nationaux* in 1789 and 1792 was probably the single largest series of connected transactions of that or the following century. Robert Gildea

---

<sup>62</sup> Simmel, Georg, *The Philosophy of Money*, ed. by David Frisby and trans. by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 82-3.

argues that the opportunity this created may have been the catalyst for the rise of the commercial bourgeoisie in France.<sup>63</sup> In Russia the process of commercialisation began far later: arguably the negotiation of land reform which followed the 1861 emancipation of the serfs fulfilled a similar function to that of the sale of the French *biens nationaux* in making transaction an issue of national rather than merely individual significance. The development of literature from an aristocratic hobby to a profession required authors to transact with publishers. The 'industrialisation' of literature through its assimilation for extended periods of time by the newspaper or periodical industry required many authors to become part-time journalists, aware quite literally of the value of their product per column inch. An author's personal experience of transaction was likely to become more frequent, more intensive and more intrusive as the century progressed. It seems plausible that this should be reflected in literature, particularly in the prose narratives of novelists claiming in many different ways to offer a realistic portrayal of the money-obsessed, speculative and deal-driven world in which they found themselves.

Considering narrative as a form of transaction also has the advantage of recognising the importance of the recipient of the narrative as an equal and necessary partner in the exchange. Lee Erickson, in *The Economy of Literary Form*, describes the process in terms which many

---

<sup>63</sup> Gildea, Robert, *Children of the Revolution. The French 1799-1914* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 91-117.

economists would find familiar: 'Since readers read within a framework of desire, the economy of literary forms can be described from the perspective of reception as well as that of production. In this way, literary forms can be viewed as historical, aesthetic products of market forces reaching a momentary equilibrium between the aspirations of writers and the desires of their audiences.'<sup>64</sup> Erickson's perspective is essentially diachronic, and sees reception as a process that follows on from the publication of a literary text by means of criticism, appraisal, or approval: a transaction only revealed as such by the distance of history. My more synchronic approach looks at the 'point of sale' itself (a definition to which I shall return) and asks three questions:

(a) How does the author represent transaction within the story?

How do the in-story characters construct the narratives they tell to others; what techniques do they use to modify its value and what effect do they have on the credibility of the narrative in the eyes of the recipient; how are the processes of negotiation and completion represented? Understanding how the author conceives of and portrays the process of transaction gives us a yardstick by which to judge how he might approach the broader transaction of selling the narrative to the reader.

---

<sup>64</sup> Erickson, Lee, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 17-18.

(b) What clues does the story afford about how the author approaches the transaction with the reader? What techniques does he use to make his narrative more attractive/valuable to the recipient? Has the author introduced dissonances or gaps between the way his characters perceive the value of a narrative and the way the reader perceives it, and what can this tell us about how narrative value is created and manipulated? Is there evidence within the text of the inclusion of devices which demonstrably created narrative value in related publishing formats (most obviously the periodical or newspapers within which the texts were usually published and where the link between narrative value and increased subscription or copy sales could be demonstrated with some accuracy). How has the author reacted to external factors – censorship, editing, the process of serialisation? Building a comprehensive picture of the tools used by an author to mediate narrative value is the practical aim of this part of the analytical process.

(c) How does narrative value change with time? Within the author's creative lifetime, what evidence can be deduced from the alterations in the tools used by a novelist to create value? In particular, is there evidence of a cycle of feedback from readers, publishers, critics or other market forces within the publishing market? Many writers, amongst which all three in this study,

leave evidence of such exchanges in correspondence or diaries. Serialised works or works written over an extended period provide particularly compelling evidence of shifts within an established value hierarchy. Anticipated changes in the composition of the readership can also cause shifts or conflicts within systems of narrative value: what pleases one generation will not necessarily please the next. Over longer periods changing tastes alter perceptions of literary value, allowing the formation of a literary canon and creating a notion, to which I shall return, of 'posterity' or 'perpetuity' value. At this point the synchronic and diachronic axes fuse temporarily, in that authors can and do 'write for posterity' – allowing their views about the eventual reception of their works by posterity to act as a direct influence on current output.

Of course, not all authors, or even critics, would agree with the proposition that literary value is created through a process of transaction. Wordsworth, for example, evidently thought that the artist could prescribe his own literary worth and said so emphatically in the extended preface to his *Lyrical Ballads* of 1815: '...every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of creating the taste by which he is to

be enjoyed.’<sup>65</sup> But there are different types of transaction which can take account of differing perceptions of value creation, and this is perhaps the moment to introduce three categories which I will later use extensively in my examination of all three of the authors I shall discuss.

The approach I explore categorises texts according to their mode of economic agency. Most nineteenth-century prose fiction can, I believe, be usefully considered within a framework which describes its economic functions in relation to three fundamental methods of ‘value discovery’: ***prospectus***, ***auction*** and ***speculation***. The categories are intended only to serve as a *grille de lecture*, one further perspective among many others which may usefully clarify one particular aspect of the text. They are not proposed as a theoretical approach to either novelistic construction or reception.

## ***Prospectus***

The prospectus approach reveals value through assertion by author, narrator or character, just as a prospectus typically advertises goods in relation to a value fixed by the offeror. The recipient or buyer’s task is simply to decide whether to buy the offered commodity at the price stated: the opportunity to bargain or

---

<sup>65</sup> Wordsworth, William, ‘Essay Supplementary to the Preface’ in *Lyrical Ballads* (1815) <http://spenserians.cath.vt.edu/TextRecord.php?textsid=35963>, accessed 31 March 2016.

to assert a revised view of price is either absent or limited within a range defined by the seller.

All didactic and most sacred texts would typically belong to this category, as would any form of rhetoric which seeks to persuade, from legal argument to business opportunity. The category thus incorporates extremes, from credo to credit, and provides a useful tool for testing the economic agency of concepts not generally considered in an economic framework. At one end of the scale, for example, it would include Bakhtin's definition of 'authoritative discourse', as assertion outside the dialogic process. Bakhtin neither relates this to economic function, nor perceives it as part of a continuum with other forms of utterance, but the ability to classify religious texts as a form of prospectus will lead to a new perspective when we come to Dostoevsky.<sup>66</sup> At the other extreme, prospectus, because of its ability – propensity, indeed – to lie, is far closer to fiction than is generally assumed, as Poovey points out in *Genres of the Credit Economy* which, in a sense, licensed an expansion of the notion of genre to include 'financial writings' such as prospectus.<sup>67</sup>

The prospectus of the nineteenth century differed radically from our modern notion of a formal legal document. Its antecedents

---

<sup>66</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 342-44.

<sup>67</sup> Poovey (2008), pp. 30-31.

would have linked it to fraud and speculation in the shape of eighteenth-century stock exchange crashes like the South Sea Bubble of 1711 or John Law's 1720 Mississippi Company failure, which had led to a general financial crash in the French market. The demand for huge volumes of capital to finance the investments of the industrial revolution across Europe in the nineteenth century led to a proliferation of share and debt issues, all sold by prospectus. Even new literary works were advertised by prospectus, as we shall see in the case of Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*. Many literary journals were themselves sold by prospectus and subscription. In essence, the prospectus was a story about a story, a narrative asserting value which its readers were expected to evaluate and decide whether they bought the story. It was associated with hyperbole and sensation, genres which also characterised the popular press for much of the century. Contemporary readers, I think, must have been well aware of the prospectus's ability to project false as well as genuine value and of their own role as arbiters.

### ***Auction***

The auction approach is, in many ways, the opposite. It recognises that in many circumstances authors have no way of knowing the value of their work other than through reader reception. The author thus offers his narrative via a process of value

discovery, akin to an auction, which allows readers to establish the value of the narrative in competition amongst themselves. Goux argues in *Frivolité de la valeur* that the shift from fixed values to market-driven prices determined by those who had previously been the price-takers is an intrinsic factor in the emergence of the realist novel in nineteenth-century France, represented both in its pages and by its existence. 'Toutes les activités, toutes les pensées, toutes les productions de l'intelligence ou de l'imagination, sont entraînées sur un marché, une bourse, où dans le modèle de Walras, la valeur qui n'a pas d'autre fondement que l'échange instantané, se décide par une 'vente à la criée.'<sup>68</sup>

In France, at least, auctions would have been a thoroughly familiar method of sale, since the sale of the *biens nationaux* following the revolution had all been conducted using this technique, with reduced lot sizes to ensure maximum reach amongst the population. Even in a literary context value is established as much by financial results as by critical response, in the shape of increased copy or subscription sales, translated into cash by the intermediation of the publisher. Much of nineteenth-century prose fiction is affected, not least because narratives published in a journalistic context – most serialised novels of the

---

<sup>68</sup> Goux (2000), pp. 26-27.

century, for example - become auction texts by default through their participation in the sales strategy of the publication.

## ***Speculation***

Finally, the speculative approach recognises that neither author nor reader may be able to assign value to a given narrative on anything but a transient basis and that values may fluctuate significantly at each repetition as the narrative travels through time. It relies on iteration, either in the hope that multiple valuations are, over time, more representative than any methodology relying on a single point, or simply in recognition of the inevitability of value change over time. Again, it is a motif drawn from actual experience: contemporary accounts reveal, rather surprisingly, that by the 1870s Paris had become the most speculative bourse in Europe, its longer settlement periods, more favourable options terms and high liquidity giving it a decisive edge over the more staid London market.<sup>69</sup> The gaming resorts of Europe, from Bad Hombach to Monte Carlo, where the first casino opened in 1856 (after, of course, raising money by prospectus), were well known to travellers from as far afield as Russia and feature in correspondence from Dostoevsky and Turgenev among others.

---

<sup>69</sup> Maddison, E.C., *The Paris Bourse and the London Stock Exchange* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1877), pp. 16-18.

Speculation has close links to narrative value. William Kavanagh, tracing the history of speculation in France, quotes evidence that roulette players invent systems to beat the wheel despite knowing that none exists and that, by definition, their solutions are pure fictions which have value only to their authors.<sup>70</sup> The narrator of the *Arabian Nights* is clearly aware that narrative has variable value and that iteration of similar narratives can change the cumulative perception of their worth, but has no real guide as to the impact of each individual narrative iteration on overall value. Over the century the figure of the gambler, epitomised in tales such as Dostoevsky's *The Gambler* (*Igrok*, 1867) or Paul Bourget's *Autre Joueur* (1884), shows how narrative outcomes, just as much as the player's wallet, can fluctuate with each roll of the dice.

The distinction between prospectus, auction and speculative narrative seeks to identify, from the evidence of the text itself, how authors perceive their own ability to value their output. The framework proposed is comprehensive, in that all transactions other than gifts must fit at least one of the three types.<sup>71</sup> It differs from approaches which rely on

---

<sup>70</sup> Kavanagh, Thomas M., *Dice, Cards, Wheels: A Different History of French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), also available at <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:oxfaleph000594445>, accessed 24 April 2016, p.10.

<sup>71</sup> And, as Marcel Mauss debates in his seminal work on gift, raises the question of whether any gift is so truly altruistic as to expect no return of whatever nature to the giver. See Mauss, Marcel, *The Gift*, trans. by Ian Cunnison, (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954, reprinted by Martino Publishing, 2011), pp. 63-81.

subsequent reader reactions to texts, in that it focusses on evidence about the author's behaviour and state of knowledge at the point of composition. It is behaviourally credible, in that it corresponds with most people's personal experience of transaction and with established distinctions between transaction formats. Finally, it is particularly relevant to the nineteenth century, in that there is ample contemporary evidence of the existence of each transaction type in both commercial and literary sources, from prospectuses for railway shares to Dostoevsky's *Roulettenburg*.

## **The notion of literary value**

If literature is to be seen as a form of transaction, then we will need a practical method for understanding what we mean when we talk about literary 'value'. For all the difficulty of definition, a closer understanding of the concept is essential to bridge the difficult gap between economic value and aesthetic worth.

The idea of text as a repository for the transmission of value is one which takes root in the growth of literacy which characterised the nineteenth century across much of Europe, represented axiomatically by paper money which exchanges value into the narrative of value. The French Revolution brought with it a revolutionary currency in the shape of *assignats*, a paper currency issued by the *Assemblée nationale* from 1789

to 1796 backed by the security of the property expropriated from the Catholic Church. Doubts over both legality and liquidity soon led to the *assignats* trading at substantial and growing discounts to their face value. The prospectus, or assertion of value, on the face of the notes was routinely reassessed and translated into a fluctuating valuation which formed the basis for exchange transactions. A similar experience occurred in Russia, where the paper rouble, the *assignatsiya*, had collapsed in 1817. In England the gold standard had temporarily been abandoned during the Napoleonic wars, for almost twenty five years from 1797 to 1819. The previously gold-backed currency had been replaced by competing paper 'fiat' currencies issued by both the Bank of England and a variety of local banks.<sup>72</sup> Users had to act, in effect, as literary critics, comparing the value of one story of solidity and respectability against another to establish methods of differentiating value. Banks, meanwhile, discovered that by enhancing the credibility of the paper they circulated they could also boost their creditworthiness. The motto of the London Stock Exchange, 'My Word is My Bond' ('Dictum Meum Pactum'), perhaps the ultimate assertion of the equivalence of credibility and credit, dates from 1801.

It did not take long for the association of text and economic value to become established in more formally literary texts. Thomas Bridges, writing in 1770-71, casts a twenty pound note as the hero of his *Adventures*

---

<sup>72</sup> For a more extensive discussion of the role of paper currency and bank bills as a literary genre see Poovey (2008), pp. 42-51.

*of a Banknote*, implying that this symbol of value could also function as a focus of narrative interest, and cannily taking advantage of a popular fad for 'object narratives' to enhance the value of his own.<sup>73</sup> Goethe, perhaps with tongue rather in cheek, represents the economic agency of inscription as Mephistophelean alchemy in the second part of *Faust* (published 1832):

'Zu wissen sei es jedem ders begehrt:  
Der Zettel hier ist tausend Kronen wert.  
Ihm liegt gesichert als gewisses Pfand  
Unzahl vergrabnen Guts im Kaiserland.  
Nun ist gesorgt damit der reiche Schatz  
Sogleich gehoben, diene zum Ersatz.'

(*Faust*, Part II, lines 6057-6062)<sup>74</sup>

The devilry may lie rather in the implied equation between narrative as financial value, as offered to and accepted by the in-story characters, and the same narrative as literary treasure offered to Goethe's readers. By the time of Trollope's Melmotte in *The Way We Live Now* (1875), devilry had become sleaze, and the story's ability to carry economic value had sloughed off any last reliance on Goethe's underlying security, *vergrabnes Gut*, as his narrator acerbically observes: 'As for many years past we have exchanged paper instead of actual money for our commodities, so now it seemed that,

---

<sup>73</sup> Bridges, Thomas, *Adventures of a Bank-Note*, 4 vols., 1770-71 (reprinted New York: Garland, 1975). See also Poovey's argument that this text represents a bridge between economic and imaginative narrative, in *Genres of the Credit Economy*, Poovey (2008), pp. 144-152.

<sup>74</sup> <http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/-3645/13>, accessed 1 April 2016. 'To whom it may concern, this piece of paper is worth a thousand crowns. It is secured by a specific pledge over sufficient buried treasure in the Emperor's territory. It is to be exchanged for the rich treasure as soon as excavated.'

under the new Melmotte regime, an exchange of words was to suffice.<sup>75</sup>

The role of narrative as a carrier of value had been so well established that it could even be parodied: an article by Dickens's sub-editor, W. H. Wills, in *Household Words* entitled disingenuously 'Review of a Popular Publication. In the Searching Style' turns out to be a critique of a Bank of England banknote as a work of literature: 'Few can rise from a critical examination of the literary contents of this narrow sheet, without being forcibly struck with the power, combined with the exquisiteness of the writing. It strikes conviction at once. It dispels all doubts, and relieves all objections. There is a pithy terseness in the construction of the sentences; a downright, direct, straight-forward, coming to the point, which would be wisely imitated in much of the contemporaneous literature that constantly obtains currency (though not as much).'<sup>76</sup>

The professionalisation of the business of writing and the rise of journalism throughout the middle of the century and more or less across Europe offers another way of attaching financial value to literary production. Balzac, writing to Mme Hanska in 1836, is so explicit about the equivalence as to be worth an extended quotation:

'En 15 jours de temps, j'ai vendu 50 colonnes à la *Chronique*, pour mille francs; cent vingt colonnes à *La Presse*, pour huit mille

---

<sup>75</sup> Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, ed. Sutherland (2008), vol. i, p. 423.

<sup>76</sup> Wills, William Henry, 'Review of a Popular Publication. In the Searching Style' in *Household Words*, vol. i:18 (27 July 1850), pp. 426-31 and at <http://www.djo.org.uk/household-words/volume-i/page-426.html>, accessed 11 April 2016. The quotation is at page 426.

francs, 20 colonnes à une *Revue musicale* pour mille francs; un article au *Dictionnaire de la conversation* pour mille francs, cela a fait onze mille francs en 15 jours, j'ai travaillé 30 nuits sans me coucher, et j'ai fait *La Perle brisée* (pour la *Chronique* et qui a paru), *La Vieille Fille* (pour *La Presse* et qui paraît demain). J'ai fait *Le Secret des Ruggieri* pour Werdet. Dans 15 jours les deux derniers volumes des *Etudes de mœurs* paraissent: me voilà quitte. J'ai vendu deux mille francs mon 3<sup>me</sup> dixain (cela fait 13,000fr). Enfin, je vais faire *La Torpille* et *La Femme supérieure* pour *La Presse*, et *les Souffrances de l'Inventeur* pour *La Chronique*. En même temps, je suis en train de vendre, pour 18,000 francs, les réimpressions de *La Torpille* et de *La Femme supérieure*, accompagnés de *Un Grand Homme de province [à Paris]*, et des *Héritiers Boirouge*, tous deux commencés, ce qui me fera trente et un mille francs. Puis, n'ayant plus à m'appuyer sur cette planche pourrie de Werdet, je vais contracter avec une maison riche et solide pour les 14 derniers volumes des *Etudes de mœurs*, les tomes de 12 à 26, qui devront bien monter à 56 francs de droits d'auteur, sur lesquels j'en veux immédiatement 30,000. Si cela réussit, j'aurais trouvé par ces deux dernières affaires, que je vais poursuivre avec activité, 63 mille francs qui me sauveront de tout. Non seulement je ne devrai plus rien, mais j'aurai quelque argent. Mais il me faudra travailler nuit et jour pendant six mois et après, au moins 10 heures par jour pendant deux ans.'<sup>77</sup>

As a love letter this may lack finesse, but it shows convincingly how conversant Balzac was with the details of literature as a business, from the value of journalistic writing compared to prose fiction to the structure of contracts with publishers. Dostoevsky, who habitually ends his letters with

---

<sup>77</sup> Balzac, Honoré de, *Lettres à Madame Hanska*, ed. by Robert Laffont, 2 vols. (Paris, Editions Robert Laffont, 1990), vol. i, pp. 341-42 (Balzac's emphasis).

a request for money or a complaint about its absence, was variously publisher, editor and contributor to his own and others' periodicals as well as novelist. Dickens established his own weekly publications, *Household Words* followed by *All the Year Round*, partly in order better to control the commercialisation of his own literary production, a move which was evidently successful, to judge by a comment from the *Economist* of 1852: 'the works of Dickens are [as] sure to be sold as the bread which is baked is sure to be sold and eaten.'<sup>78</sup> Trollope's autobiography contains a list of all his works to that date and the money he had made from each, totalling £68,939.17s. 5d: a later biographer refers to it as the 'profit-and-loss account of his life and work'.<sup>79</sup> Even independently wealthy writers like Flaubert and Tolstoy seem to have been acutely aware of the financial value of their output – Flaubert broke with his publisher, Michel Lévy, in a bitter disagreement over Lévy's interpretation of the terms for the publication of *Salammbô*.<sup>80</sup> Tolstoy gifted the copyright to some of his works, in tacit acknowledgment of their financial value, to support the migration of the Dukhobor sect to Canada. Writing had become a business, literature had become a traded commodity and in contemporary financial terms its value was regularly and pragmatically established by publishers.

---

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Tomalin (2011), p. 230 from the *Economist* of 3 April 1852.

<sup>79</sup> Glendinning, Victoria, *Trollope* (London: Pimlico, 1993), pp. 441-42.

<sup>80</sup> See Mollier (1984), p. 400.

Many contested that financial reward could ever be a proxy for aesthetic worth and advanced other criteria for defining literary value.<sup>81</sup> In England the Lakeland poets asserted their right to prescribe the nature of reader reception, thus to control the mode of valuation for their output according to an abstract notion of absolute aesthetic value, but fell foul of their own need for income, the declining popularity of poetry in the 1820s after Byron's death and the vagueness and subjectivity of their surrogate value yardsticks. But their insistence on the incommensurability of aesthetic and literary value announces a common theme across other European cultures which will eventually lead to various permutations of the argument for a separate dimension of aesthetic activity capable of being valued only on its own, self-referential terms. In England the public debate between Walter Besant, Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson in the pages of *Longman's Magazine* in 1884 attempted to define the laws of fiction as they related to the representation of reality – and thus, presumably, a value hierarchy based on compliance with those laws.<sup>82</sup> In France contested rules which promoted artistic values over accurate

---

<sup>81</sup> For a fuller discussion of the various forms of literary value see Poovey (2008), chapter 5, 'Delimiting Literature, Defining *Literary Value*', pp. 285-335. Although this only deals with the literary scene in England the forms she identifies are, in broad terms, equally valid in France and Russia. For a particular discussion of Ruskin's views on literary value see Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), chapter 5, 'John Ruskin and the Political Economy of Literature', pp. 129-151. The paragraph which follows draws on both sources to identify a more comprehensive list of competing notions of literary value.

<sup>82</sup> See Besant, Walter, *The Art of Fiction*, lecture given at the Royal Institution on 25 April 1884, <https://ia600205.us.archive.org/23/items/cu31924027192941/cu31924027192941.pdf>, accessed 8 April 2016, James, Henry, *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, ed. by James Miller Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), pp. 27-44 for James's response to Besant's lecture, and <http://ezproxy->

representation would pit Gautier, the Goncourt brothers and eventually Huysmans and Mallarmé against the Realist and Naturalist schools.

The enthusiastic and influential participation of literary critics in these debates – Sainte-Beuve in France,<sup>83</sup> Ruskin in England,<sup>84</sup> and Shevyrev in Russia<sup>85</sup> to name but a few, suggests yet another definition of value in the shape of the critical appreciation of ‘literature’ as selected by a self-appointed elite. Ruskin adds further to the list with claims for pedagogical value, through the transmission of information and the power to excite noble emotions or intellectual visions, as he puts it in *Munera Pulveris* (1872) – a combination of informative and moral value.<sup>86</sup> He also, importantly, recognises the importance of posterity value, distinguishing in his 1864 *Sesame and Lilies* between ‘books of the hour’ and ‘books of all time’.<sup>87</sup> Other critics extend the list still further, as for example Pierre Bourdieu with his claim for literature’s ability to confer social or cultural capital on its recipients.<sup>88</sup>

---

[prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2059/docview/6535675/33FB745C311A491DPQ/103?accountid=13042](http://prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2059/docview/6535675/33FB745C311A491DPQ/103?accountid=13042), pp. 139-47, accessed 8 April 2016, for Stevenson’s response to both.

<sup>83</sup> Sainte-Beuve (1839), pp. 675-91.

<sup>84</sup> E.g. Ruskin, John, *The Political Economy of Art* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1857).

<sup>85</sup> Shevyrev, Stepan, ‘O Kritike voobshe i u nas v Rossii’ in *Moskovskii nablyudatel’*, 1 (1835), 494-525.

<sup>86</sup> See Shell (1978), p. 134.

<sup>87</sup> Ruskin, John, *Sesame and Lilies* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1891), pp. 14-15.

<sup>88</sup> Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Forms of Capital*, tr. by Richard Nice, at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>, accessed 2 April 2016.

This hardly helps in arriving at a workable definition of literary value. The list of the different approaches to value is too long - financial, artistic, critical, pedagogical, moral, social or cultural – and the criteria are too woolly and subjective. Nor do more purely economic models help in practice. A commercial definition of literary value would, I think, be based on a concept of ‘reach over time’, or the cumulative number of readers of any given work, in all media, since its first publication. Our current definition of the literary canon can probably be seen as a non-scientific way of evaluating the relative penetration of the overall (and evolving) readership over an extended time between different works. In theory some kind of proxy framework for relating readers to copy sales (in whatever format) might then give us a financial approximation of literary value. But there are too many holes in this approach for it to be genuinely useful. The time period required for assessment is too long to deal accurately with any but the older works in the canon. Reach is difficult to define – does reading, for example, an anthologised extract from a longer work count? Do we need to make adjustments, for example to reflect smaller possible readerships for earlier works? And how should we now deal with free distribution, made possible by the internet, as works fall out of copyright?

The definition which I have found most helpful, and which I shall by and large retain here, is based on what I call the ‘*point of sale*’. It asks how an author might have assessed the value of a manuscript as he creates it. It is pragmatic and empirical. It is synchronic, thus sufficiently restricted in

time to be more capable of delimitation and definition than diachronic approaches which seek to address value in the *longue durée*. It can be supported by contemporary evidence of market, culture and readership. Perhaps most importantly, it attempts to recreate the actual tensions between economic and literary value which confront every author and to deduce from the evidence of the text how the author dealt with the issue.

Part of the authorial assessment would, for any author dependent on publishing as a main source of income, be based on the *financial value* of the work in progress, as expressed in terms of reasonably visible and predictable income streams, so for example from serialisation, from publication in book format, from the sale of foreign rights, from theatrical royalties if the work could be turned into a play, even from merchandise sales for the most popular works. As we have seen in Balzac's letter, quoted above, this exercise certainly produced a definition of literary value of practical use, in that it not only paid the bills but gave authors a fairly clear guide as to how to vary their output to increase their income, if they were so inclined.

Another part, closely connected to the first, might be based on *reach*. We know that publishers were prepared to pay for texts which expanded circulation and attracted new readers, so to an extent 'reach value' overlaps with financial value. It seems reasonable to suppose, though, that authors might have had their own separate reasons for

seeking increased reach, perhaps as a measure of influence or prestige. Zola's spirited defence of the commercialisation of publishing in an article entitled '*L'Argent dans la littérature*' for both Russian and French periodicals in 1880 included a clear recognition of the important part that increased reach had played in the development of the market: 'D'abord, l'instruction se répand, des milliers de lecteurs sont créés. Le journal pénètre partout, les campagnes elles-mêmes achètent des livres. En un demi-siècle, le livre, qui était un objet de luxe, devient un objet de consommation courante.'<sup>89</sup> And Zola's own nineteen attempts to be elected to the Académie française seem to indicate that he thought the reach he had achieved had created a right to have its value recognised.

Finally, an author might be aware of precedents which indicated substantial changes to the readership were likely in the foreseeable future, even though they could not affect conditions at the time of publication. Stendhal's dedication of four of his works – *Promenades dans Rome*, *Le Rouge et le noir*, *La Chartreuse de Parme* and *Lucien Leuwen* - to the 'Happy Few' is usually taken to be a reference to a future readership able to comprehend his works. Dostoevsky's ability to compare the French publishing market, where the development of a mass readership was under way, with that in Russia, where the process had yet to begin, is crucial to understanding his relationship with his Russian readers. The initial

---

<sup>89</sup> Zola, Emile, *Le Roman expérimental* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), 167-202, with the quoted passage at p. 181. The article was first published in the Russian *Le Messager de l'Europe* of May 1880, then serialised in *Le Voltaire* from 23-30 July of the same year.

panning which *L'Assommoir* received led Zola to look to posterity for redress, as he writes to the critic of *Le Gaulois*. 'Peut-être faut-il que le vaste ensemble de romans auquel je me suis consacré soit terminé complètement, pour qu'on le comprenne et qu'on le juge. Et j'attendrai très bien dix ans encore...'<sup>90</sup> This creates a third component of value: posterity or perpetuity value, based on the anticipation of a mass, or simply a more receptive, readership to come.

My definition may seem rather subjective and prone to 'intentional fallacy' objections, but in fact each of my three components of value can, I think, be adequately supported by external evidence. An author's perception of financial value can be deduced from many different sources – from correspondence, as we have seen in the case of Balzac; from the terms of contracts with publishers; from contemporary documentation, and not least from the way in which narrative value is represented in the author's own works. Cultural value can be evidenced by a comparison between those works and contemporary literature in its broadest sense, comprising both journalism and fiction, to identify trends in reporting and representation which can then be compared with the author's output to detect whether and how the author has imported, for example, devices of proven popularity in other media. Awareness of posterity value can be implied from the speed of change in the readership, as evidenced by

---

<sup>90</sup> Letter to Louis Bosses de Fourcaud, 23 September 1876, in Zola, Emile, *Correspondance*, ed. by Bard Bakker and others, 10 vols. (Montréal: Presses de l'université de Montréal and Paris: CNRS, 1978-95), vol. ii, p. 495.

growth in literacy, improvements in reader access to printed materials (most notably, in the nineteenth century, by the extension of the railway and road networks), by the growing affordability of publications through efficiencies, technological advances, or rises in disposable income and leisure time, as well as by the invention of new publication formats, such as the boulevard newspapers of the mid-1860s in both France and Russia, specifically designed to address a growing mass readership.

Importantly, my definition recognises the transactional nature of the exchange in that it explicitly allows for both the vendor's and the buyer's perspectives of value. Serialisation provides an unparalleled opportunity for reader response and there are copious examples across the nineteenth century of letters to authors, from complete strangers as well as from friends, offering advice, criticism, requests, even their own personal stories as plot. Prendergast estimates that the 400 surviving letters from readers to Eugène Sue in response to his enormous and hugely successful *Les Mystères de Paris* represent only about a third of the likely total volume.<sup>91</sup>

Financial value is represented by the author's expectations of how reader demand for his product will translate into the publisher's willingness to pay for it. Cultural value reflects anticipated changes in value

---

<sup>91</sup> Prendergast, Christopher, *For the People by the People?: Eugène Sue's Les Mystères De Paris: A Hypothesis in the Sociology of Literature* (Oxford: Legenda, 2003), p. 13.

from greater or lesser conformity to the author's perception of popular taste. Posterity value reflects an author's view of elements which may acquire value in the future as a result of changes in demand as the readership evolves. Authors, I think, write by and large for the readership they can see at the point of sale plus the new readers which they think they might acquire as a result of reasonably foreseeable developments in the readership over a relatively short time horizon – a few decades, a century at most. '...j'écris ceci, sans mentir j'espère, sans me faire illusion, avec plaisir comme une lettre à un ami. Quelles seront les idées de cet ami en 1880?' asks Stendhal in *Vie de Henri Brulard*.<sup>92</sup>

This approach to value also furnishes a way of demonstrating how an author's choice of literary device can affect the economic value of a text. We see examples of this every day in, for example, the different treatments of the same subject between broadsheet and tabloid newspapers: stylistic variation is used to maximise demand within different target readerships. In this way the traditional tools of critical analysis can be repurposed to show how an author uses literary device to manipulate value. Plot, for example, has an evident economic function in acting as 'the motor forces that drive the text forward', as Peter Brooks describes it in *Reading for the Plot*.<sup>93</sup> A more accurate description might be 'the motor forces that drive

---

<sup>92</sup> Stendhal, *Vie de Henri Brulard*, ed. by Béatrice Didier (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 32.

<sup>93</sup> Brooks, Peter, *Reading for the Plot* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. xiii-xiv.

the reader through the text' and thereby create demand for the product. Brooks barely admits an economic dimension in his entire discussion, but some of his examples show economic agency at work. Balzac's ambitious heroes, from Rastignac to Rubempré, impel readers to read on to the very end to find out what happens. The rambling plots of Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*, serialised daily over almost eighteen months, suggest that equivalent value could be created simply by persuading readers to read to the end of a single episode rather than requiring the conclusion of the entire work. Detective stories increase demand by deliberately frustrating their readers' desire to know the end. Authors who subvert plot, as Brooks argues of Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale*, describing it as a novel of 'tenuous readability', may pay an economic price if their readers get bored.<sup>94</sup>

Genre is also a powerful driver of economic value. At the very core of the shift from Romanticism to Realism, and thence to Naturalism, lies an economic motive force. Reaction against the remoteness of Romanticism to a broadening readership, the attraction of the taboo-breaking novelty of Realism, the increasing influence of periodicals and newspapers as the carriers of prose fiction, and the influence of developing journalistic techniques of sensation seem to have coalesced into a product which attracted readers from an ever-widening demographic. Similar stories

---

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171. Zola, reviewing *L'Education sentimentale* in *La Tribune* of 28 November 1869, can hardly disguise his impatience with Flaubert's obsession with detail. <http://www.alalettre.com/flaubert-œuvres-education-sentimentale-suite.php>, accessed 26 June 2016.

unfurled across Europe: Scott gave way to Dickens, Chateaubriand to Balzac, Karamzin to Gogol' and Pushkin. There is no mistaking the intimate connection during the nineteenth century between the evolution of literary genre and the expansion of the readership as literacy and demand grew. The circularity of the relationship confers real economic agency on genre: improvements in literacy and education produce more readers, who in turn fuel demand for new or evolving genres of reading material, which in turn attract more readers. Critical opinion, though, has taken some time to come round to this point of view. Tzvetan Todorov typifies the more traditional point of view when he describes the link between genre and society as principally constative rather than performative, more a simple reflection of society than an agent for change: '...genres bring to light the constitutive features of the society to which they belong'.<sup>95</sup> In *Qu'est-ce qu'un genre littéraire?* Jean-Marie Schaeffer admits no economic dimension to his entire discussion.<sup>96</sup> Poovey, on the other hand, argues that we can extend generic classification much further to encompass not just imaginative genres but ways of creating money (monetary genres, including the role of bank notes and bills of exchange as narrative in their own right) and ways of talking about money and economics (financial writing, including journalism about finance).<sup>97</sup> In an era when the boundaries between fact and fiction were not easy to define, when the real

---

<sup>95</sup> Todorov, Tzvetan, *Genres in Discourse*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 19.

<sup>96</sup> See, for example his schematic representation of the nature of genre in Schaeffer, Jean-Marie, *Qu'est-ce qu'un genre littéraire?* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989), p. 116.

<sup>97</sup> Poovey (2008), pp. 25-55.

value of bank notes belied the stories on their face, when prospectus became puffery, when reporting blended with invention, the use of genre as a tool to mediate economic value was widespread.

Much the same can be said of other aspects of literary construction. Format is, to a large degree, a response to economic pressures. Robert Darnton's history of the publication of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* shows just how important a part the competing quarto and octavo formats played in ensuring the penetration of this key tool of the Enlightenment. '[The documentary evidence] show[s] how the book changed in shape as the publishers adapted it to an ever-widening audience and how publishing consortia succeeded one another as the speculators scrambled to exploit the biggest best seller of the century.'<sup>98</sup> Serial publication enabled newspapers and periodicals to exploit the evident commercial attractions of prose fiction in a journalistic format to drive subscriptions and copy sales. It also functions, as Todd has pointed out, as a means of shifting economic and ethical risk between publisher, censor and author.<sup>99</sup> Boulevard newspapers catered to a mass readership in a similar way to modern tabloids. The Russian 'thick journal' grew out of one publisher's attempt to devise a monthly compendium with content broad enough to attract urban and provincial readers in a format which could be distributed

---

<sup>98</sup> Darnton, Robert, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1979), p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Todd, William Mills III, *Dostoevsky and the Moral Hazards of Serial Publication*, unpublished paper delivered at the annual conference of ASEES (November 2015).

in the provinces without falling apart before it reached its readers: such are the practicalities of publishing.

Finally, many everyday literary devices can also be shown to have economic influence. My discussion of Dostoevsky relies in part on the economic power of iteration – the repetition of a single story over and over again in different narrative modes in order to maximise the chances of attracting readers, the literary equivalent of peppering the dartboard with darts. In the case of Zola I argue that his appropriation of journalistic devices, in particular hyperbole and compression, play a crucial role in the development of a literary style which enabled the book to re-emerge as an economically viable format.

## **Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola**

If my thesis of the novel as an implicit commentary on the conditions of its own production is to hold water, then it must be flexible and broadly applicable. In choosing works by Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola as my test beds, I hope to be able to show that the concept is relevant across time, geography and culture. To avoid spreading the butter too thinly, I have concentrated on the French and Russian literary markets of the nineteenth century. The core of the thesis consists of three extended and interlinked chapters on each of the three writers in which I have

approached a major work from the economic perspective I have set out above.

In 'Balzac: Narrative as Business' I show how Balzac's own commercial experience is reflected in his narratives. The large majority of his writing occurs at the precise moment of the migration of prose fiction from book format to that of the serialised *roman-feuilleton* in the periodical, from the mid-1830s to the mid-1840s. The interaction between fiction and format is traceable throughout his works. The fact that his works also depict an unmistakably Balzacian plethora of transactions affords a particular opportunity to study the relationship between the representation of transaction as a subject for fiction and the rapidly changing external realities of transacting with publishers and readers to sell his output. His own constant financial difficulties, until the final years of his life, lead to a well-evidenced concern for his own financial solvency throughout his writing career which translates, as we have seen, into an acute awareness of the economic value of narrative. His head-to-head rivalry in the early 1840s with Sue, possibly the most financially successful writer of his generation, allows a side-by-side contrast of very different approaches to creating literary value.

Given this perspective, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* ('*Splendeurs*') suggests itself as the text of choice. The span of its composition, over twelve years from 1835 to 1847, covers seminal

changes in the French publishing market and in the demographics of the readership, Balzac's own move into fiction as a serialised format in a journalistic context, and his painful evolution from serial debtor to established and, once married to Eveline Hanska, solvent *chevalier* of the Légion d'Honneur. Of Balzac's major works, it is the only one to have been written over such an extended period. Its nine year publishing history comprises two parts in book format from different publishers, three as serialised *romans-feuilletons* in different journals, and one appearance in a compilation volume of collected works. The commercial history of *Splendeurs* is in itself a mirror of the rapidly evolving world of publishing during the 1830s and 1840s. I present it as an extended discussion of the constituents of narrative value, which tracks Balzac's own growing disenchantment with the need to write for money and acts as an increasingly savage parody of the hierarchy of literary value emerging from the newly commercialised press. Balzac's initial confidence in his ability to create narrative value on his own terms, as the new era of the *roman-feuilleton* begins, degenerates into an introspective disassembly of the constituents of value to find out why the printing press seems to have broken as he competes with Sue in the early 1840s, and from there to a cynical mis-assembly to find out if the reader has noticed that the prospectus was false as his creative career draws to a spectacular close in 1847.

Dostoevsky, by contrast, represents a different culture, a different literary market and an opportunity to test whether my thesis applies to this new environment. In 'Dostoevsky: Who Buys the Story?' I argue that his major works all reflect real uncertainty about the nature of the readership for which he wrote. His novels mirror the uncertainty of the economic and publishing context in which he lived. The economic ramifications of the Great Reforms represented the greatest experiment with the structure of the Russian economy in the entire nineteenth century. The outcome of that experiment was far from clear at the time of Dostoevsky's death. Over the last two decades of his life, Dostoevsky had witnessed a switchback series of policy initiatives, partial successes, defeats and relaunches. The literary economy had followed suit as it copied developments in Western Europe. But whether or not either would prove capable of developing solutions suitable for the Russian context, with its different history and culture, remained unclear. Writing in the Russia of the 1860s and 1870s, Dostoevsky perforce addressed a relatively small and demographically narrow readership, since at the time the conditions for the development of a mass reading public did not exist in Russia. But an awareness of the possibility of a mass readership did exist, as for decades the Russian press had been following and copying French printing strategies designed for a far wider French readership. So Dostoevsky's literary technique blends Russian and French formats, content and genres in an attempt to create a literature which might have value both in the contemporary literary market and to a much larger

readership in posterity. But since writing for this future audience could be based on nothing much more than speculation as to its tastes and culture, Dostoevsky, I argue, adopted strategies to hedge his bets.

*The Brothers Karamazov* (published in serial format 1879-80, in book format 1881) is Dostoevsky's final work and to an extent draws together themes from across the entire body of his work. The struggle to find a mode of writing which had sufficient immediate commercial attraction to pay the bills, but which also dealt with serious philosophical issues in the hope that eternal truths would attract a perpetual readership, is played out in its text. So this chapter argues that *The Brothers Karamazov* is a novel about how to write a novel. It explicitly and repeatedly questions how recipients of narratives value what they receive, and forces the reader of the novel to participate in experiments designed to contrast the reader's experience with that of the in-story characters. It shows how the uncertainty over the identity of his target readership is visible in Dostoevsky's narrative technique, which mixes stylistic devices from contemporary journalism developed for the mass market with religious and philosophical text addressed to a narrow, educated audience. It suggests that Dostoevsky develops the device of iteration, which allows the same story to be retold many times in different genres to experiment with reader reception, into a key economic tool ensuring that his narrative appealed to as broad as possible a

contemporary audience as well as to an emerging but still future mass readership.

The chapter on Zola, 'Zola Inc.: The Business of Narrative', documents the rise of big business and its impact on narrative. Unlike Dostoevsky, Zola was able to address a mass audience which he himself had helped to create. His novels, written contemporaneously with Dostoevsky's major works, describe a world in which mass culture and big business affect all aspects of life, from department stores to mines. But the process which the novels describe also affects their own composition, as Zola combines the techniques of the populist press with a highly commercial approach to the business of writing which he had learned at the feet of one of its leading entrepreneurs, Louis Hachette. Naturalism migrates from literary theory to promotional platform to stylistic template, sanctioning the wholesale importation of journalistic devices. The effect is to release the book, as an independent commercial format, from a half-century long subordination to the newspaper serial, completing the cycle of which Balzac had recorded the beginning.

*L'Argent* (1891) is the eighteenth in the twenty-volume cycle of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, and also the second story about Aristide Saccard. *La Curée* (1872) tells the story of an earlier part of his life and is the second novel in the series. The two novels are linked by more than a hero. The twenty year gap between the two charts Zola's own rise from obscurity to

fame and wealth as a writer. By tracking the techniques Zola uses to construct his output from the early days of *La Curée* to the maturity of *L'Argent*, I illustrate how Zola's use of literary device is closely associated with external developments in the commercialisation of the novel in book format as well as with the rise of big business itself in the French economy.

His role in the industrialisation of narrative mirrors the rise of the story itself as a key tool of commercialisation – through advertisements, prospectuses, corporate presentations and public relations – and its ever-growing dissociation from underlying reality. *L'Argent* tells the story of Saccard's own story which, like the schemes he proposes, depends for its value entirely on its credibility as narrative rather than on the economic viability of the projects it sells. Zola, too, is enamoured of his own virtuosity as a story-teller and begins to take liberties with his readers in just the same way that Saccard does with his shareholders, presaging the gradual attrition of his own value as a novelist as he moves beyond the cycle of *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

All three authors have been extensively covered in critical analysis, and each chapter will discuss the critical context of each. The combined volume of works about them would dwarf their own output, which is perhaps another comment on literary value. This thesis contends that economic criticism represents an under-exploited resource which has yet

to deliver its own full value, both in developing new tools and in extending its geographic reach.

My focus on the **publishing context** ensures that the *literature as commerce* angle is extended to ask how the author might have varied his text to achieve commercial objectives. Reading text as **transaction** allows me to interrogate how an author uses the narrative tools at his disposal to manipulate the nature of the exchange with the reader, with the help of my three categories of prospectus, auction and speculation. This addresses and considerably expands the *literature as economic critique* perspective (and could be extended further into the sphere of literature as political economics, although my analysis does not cover this angle).

Finally, my synchronic view of **literary value** as the ‘point of sale’ perspective of an author at the moment of creation of a text gives me a practical and, I think, genuinely new contribution to how economic criticism might be understood and applied in the future. Taken together, the three axes form the methodological underpinning for my thesis, that the nineteenth-century novel is a self-reflective commentary on the conditions of its own production. The three chapters which follow, respectively on Balzac, Dostoevsky and Zola, show this approach in action.

\$\$\$\$\$\$



## Chapter II: Balzac

### Narrative as Business

'*La Comédie humaine*. Œuvres complètes de M. H. de Balzac. Edition de luxe à bon marché. 1<sup>ère</sup> livraison, in-8° de 3 feuilles plus une vignette... L'ouvrage sera publié en 12 volumes. Chaque volume, orné de huit gravures, se composera de 10 livraisons. On souscrit ici.'<sup>1</sup> Thus runs an advertisement accompanying the April 1842 prospectus for *La Comédie humaine*.<sup>2</sup> The emergence of the novel as a commercial driver behind a

<sup>1</sup> The advertisement is shown on the website of the Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes at <http://www.v2asp.paris.fr/commun/v2asp/musees/balzac/furne/historique.htm>, accessed 13 April 2016.

<sup>2</sup> References to primary works by Balzac are, unless otherwise indicated, to the 12-volume Pléiade edition of *La Comédie humaine* of 1975 ed. by Pierre-Georges Castex and are identified in my text by the volume in Roman numerals and the page number in Arabic, with the text of the *Prospectus* appearing at i.1109-10 and that of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, ed. by Pierre Citron, at vi.425-935. Similarly, references to Balzac's correspondence, unless otherwise identified and other than with Eveline Hanska, are to the 5-volume Pléiade edition of 1960-69 ed. by Roger Pierrot and are identified by the label *Corr.* followed by volume and page number. References to Balzac's correspondence with Madame Hanska are to the 2-volume Editions Laffont edition of 1990 ed. by Roger Pierrot and are identified by the label *EH* followed by volume and page number in the text. Both Pierre Citron and Antoine Adam, the editor of the 1964 Garnier edition of *Splendeurs* (hereafter '*Splendeurs*' ed. Adam (1964)), include extensive notes on the history of the text (at vi.1309-16 in the Pléiade edition and on pp. i-ix of the Introduction to the Garnier edition) on which I have relied without further detailed reference in the following section. Publication details are taken from Stéphane Vachon's *Les travaux et les jours d'Honoré de Balzac. Chronologie de la*

new generation of periodicals and newspapers which revolutionised the French press coincided closely with the span of Balzac's career as a writer. The extended composition of *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, occupying a twelve year period from 1835 to 1847, tracks both and provides a consistent thread by which to follow the impact of this process of commercialisation on Balzac's writing. Like most of Balzac's works, it represents, and comments on, a world in which transaction and commerce seemed to have replaced morality by masquerade, fraud and dissemblance. The story begins with a Faustian pact and ends with the erstwhile devil doing a deal to join the establishment. What begins as a prospectus for a new and vibrant form of literature ends as a false prospectus, a travesty of the value promised. What is delivered is not what was advertised, whether to the in-story characters or, ultimately, to the reader.

Unlike any other of Balzac's works, however, the novel's long evolution also provides a commentary on the emerging role of fiction and the author as agents of the commercialisation of the press in the hands of a new generation of newspaper and journal publishers. In the hands of Emile de Girardin and his emulators the novel had become a commercial tool which sold newspapers. *Splendeurs* is Balzac's investigation of the consequences of this process and a repudiation of the assumption that

---

*création balzacienne* (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1992), usually without further specific reference beyond the dates in the text which correspond to the relevant dated sections in Vachon's work. The more important references are, however, given.

fiction reliably delivered predictable value to readers. The transactions he describes within its pages between its characters mock the notion that any represented value is deliverable. And, as the plot gradually goes off the rails (a process this chapter will uncover), so the reader discovers that the text also fails to deliver on any conventional view of novelistic value. This novel of the false prospectus is itself a false prospectus, purporting to deliver value but in reality subverting its own claims. The analogy is more than mere metaphor and accurately describes the transaction between reader and author.

This chapter examines how Balzac establishes, develops and experiments with this concept over the course of the evolution of the narrative as we now know it. As we shall see, the false prospectus is at once the emblem of the compromised morality of the rising bourgeoisie of the 1830s-40s, a commentary on the breakneck commercialisation of the contemporary novel, and a literary device which exploits the willingness of the subscriber – both commercial and literary, of course - to accept fantasy as reality. Through the four main episodes of composition of the novel Balzac moves from the prospectus as the subject of the novel, through a behind-the-scenes exposé of its construction and operation, to an experimental disassembly of its mechanism and, finally, to a self-reflexive and self-destructive critique of its effects on the literary environment. Central to the novel's theme is the issue of how the reader-subscriber is not only able to interpret fantasy as a kind of enhanced

reality but is even prepared to collude in the process of self-deception. The title itself has the ring of a playbill, a prospectus to attract subscribers by the lure of excess, by *splendeurs* and *misères*, by intensity beyond everyday experience, by the transgressive attractions of the *courtisane* - and also by the implied reference to the speculative switchback of commerce. The plot rehearses the montage and exposure of a series of false prospectuses by his version of a novelistic superhero. But his fictional alias, Herrera/Collin/Vautrin/Trompe-la-Mort, runs riot; his every move becomes a source of narrative disruption and his narrative parodies the commercial success of his competitors, and most particularly of Sue, in duping readers into accepting this increasingly disjointed text as valid fiction.

However, as Balzac's own first-hand experience of inventing stories to fob off his creditors amply demonstrates, fantasy and deception regularly play a part in real life: credibility and credit are inseparable bedfellows. Where is the dividing line, Balzac seems to be asking, between the false prospectus which leads to a 'sale' and that which is revealed as false before the transaction can happen? If the deception is successful, then it is because reality and fantasy have become so intermingled that the recipient can no longer tell them apart. If the deception fails, then a discontinuity occurs: the fantastic no longer commands credibility, and artistic device collapses into exposed manipulation. What causes this loss of credibility? Does not the process of commercialisation of the novel lead

of itself to a Faustian pact with the reader in which satisfying the increasingly jaded customer eventually exposes the fraud? As *Splendeurs* gradually assumes its final shape, both author and reader are required to recalibrate their notions of narrative value: literally, from the point of view of the author, in terms of what sells in an increasingly commercial environment; and figuratively, from the point of view of the reader, in terms of when he or she stops 'buying' the story. The questions raised by the end of the novel about the nature of narrative credibility and the compromises which the contemporary novelist is required to endure lead to an exhausted withdrawal from the transaction, symbolized by a failure to complete the novel to its original plan and Balzac's almost total silence as a novelist after 1847.

Perhaps the very difficulty of pigeonholing *Splendeurs* has led to its virtual absence from modern critical discussion. Early critics tended to be dismissive – 'un [...] livre médiocre' - but were often working from incomplete texts.<sup>3</sup> The wave of interest in Balzac of the 1960s tended towards more general reviews which referenced *Splendeurs* in passing but typically spent more time on other texts, with the exception of Jean Pommier's exploration of the origins of *La Torpille*.<sup>4</sup> The most recent

---

<sup>3</sup> Arthur de Gobineau in *Le Commerce*, 29 October 1844. The entire article is reprinted in full in *La Querelle du roman-feuilleton: littérature, presse et politique: un débat précurseur, (1836-1848)*, ed. by Lise Dumasy (Grenoble: ELLUG, Université Stendhal, 1999), pp. 87-94. The quotation is at page 93.

<sup>4</sup> Pommier, Jean, *L'Invention et l'écriture dans La Torpille d'Honoré de Balzac* (Geneva: Droz, 1957). Examples of the more generalist critical literature of the 1960s have been referenced at p. 17.

monograph, Anne Novak-Chevalier's 2010 *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, is a useful compilation of background and themes which essentially views *Splendeurs* as an attempt to represent the totality of reality, from the highest to the lowest social milieu, through the widest possible range of novelistic and stylistic devices.<sup>5</sup> In doing so she follows one side of Lucien Dällenbach's argument, set out in two influential 1979-80 articles, that Balzac's ability to link each fragment to the whole gives him a genuine claim to a totalising, comprehensive viewpoint of contemporary society.<sup>6</sup> Dällenbach does not specifically focus on *Splendeurs*, but Prendergast, following a parallel track, uses it as an extended example in his own argument for Balzac's totalising realist vision which leads him to conclude that even Vautrin's final incarnation as chief of police is plausible in a world where Balzac can perceive the moral uniformity of criminal and authority.<sup>7</sup> By the time of his 1986 *The Order of Mimesis*, however, Prendergast seems to have swung around towards Dällenbach's subsequent argument, of the failure of the integrating vision in the face of a disintegrating world. The more explicitly economic perspective which Prendergast adopts in the latter work, in treating the novel as an item of economic exchange and Balzac's representation of a

---

<sup>5</sup> Novak-Lechevalier, Agathe, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010). See in particular her chapter entitled 'Lire le réel', pp. 92-121.

<sup>6</sup> Dällenbach, Lucien, 'Du fragment au cosmos (*La Comédie humaine* et l'opération de lecture I)' in *Poétique*, 40 (1979), 420-31, and 'Le tout en morceaux' (*La Comédie humaine* et l'opération de lecture II)' in *Poétique*, 42 (1980), 159-69.

<sup>7</sup> Prendergast, Christopher, *Balzac. Fiction and Melodrama* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), p.89 and more generally his chapter on 'Connection and Totality', pp. 61-89; and *The Order of Mimesis* (1986), pp. 83-118.

commercialised world as a proxy for his attempt to sell his narrative to the reader, is a line which I shall develop in my own analysis.

## 'Marchands de phrases'

To chart the episodic creation of *Splendeurs* is to follow the evolution of the relationship between the novel and the press in microcosm. The gradual emergence of *Splendeurs* as a completed and integrated narrative requires an understanding of how the writing, commercial sale and mode of publication of each of the four principal parts interrelates to the swift evolution of the publishing market.<sup>8</sup>

*La Torpille* was conceived as a serial but was eventually published in book format in 1838 following two rejections by *La Presse* as too racy for its readership. *Esther* did appear in the *feuilleton* of *Le Parisien* almost

---

<sup>8</sup> Since dates of composition are more relevant to this analysis than dates of publication, I shall refer to the four parts of *Splendeurs* by abbreviations relating to the four episodes of composition as follows:

' <i>La Torpille</i> '	vi.425-481, written during July/August 1838, first published September 1838: the Opera scene and Esther's subsequent reinvention by Vautrin and reuniting with Lucien.
' <i>Esther</i> '	vi.481-696, written in the months (?) up to May 1843, first published from May 1843: the seduction of Nucingen up to Esther's death and Lucien's arrest.
' <i>Lucien</i> '	vi.697-798, written from December 1845 to May 1846, first published from July 1846: the current third part of the novel: 'Où Mènent les mauvais chemins'.
' <i>Vautrin</i> '	vi.799-935, written in December 1846 and January 1847, first published from April 1847, the current final part of the novel: 'La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin'.

As noted, publication details are taken from Vachon (1992), again without further specific reference beyond the dates in the text.

five years later in 1843, but without its final chapters which were apparently withdrawn due to the uncertain financial standing of the journal. The completed text finally appeared in book format the following year, under a contract which had been retraded through three different publishers since its origin two years earlier.<sup>9</sup> *La Torpille* was almost immediately republished as part of the 1845 Furne edition of *La Comédie humaine*, but this time without *Esther*, presumably to allow the earlier edition to sell out first. *Lucien* appears in serial form in *L'Epoque* in 1846 and is almost immediately reprinted in book format, but under a different title, possibly to hoodwink at least some gullible readers into a double purchase. The final part, *Vautrin*, was intended for *L'Epoque* but its financial problems forced an on-sale to *La Presse*, where it formed part of a spectacular climax to Balzac's career as he published three novels simultaneously in the *feuilletons* of three different journals. The commercial history of *Splendeurs* is in itself a mirror of the rapidly evolving world of publishing during the 1830s and 1840s.

From the early 1830s it had become economically inevitable that book production would decline relative to that of newspapers and periodicals. The overall market for literary products of any kind was limited: the French population overall had grown from 30 million in 1815 to 32.5 million in 1830, but that of Paris, the centre of literacy, had risen

---

<sup>9</sup> For details see p. 129.

only from 713,000 to 785,000 over much the same period.<sup>10</sup> Parisian literacy rates, still far higher than those in the provinces, were still no better than 60%, giving an approximate Parisian total market across all social classes in 1830 of under half a million readers.<sup>11</sup> A provincial readership existed but was difficult and expensive to reach: the road network was only expanded in the 1830s, to be followed by the railways in the 1840s.<sup>12</sup> Provincial tastes were different from those of the capital and the stock-in-trade of the *colporteurs* who served the provincial markets outside the main towns was works of piety, almanacs and the *bibliothèque bleue*.<sup>13</sup> This was emphatically not a mass audience, which would only emerge in generations following the mass literacy campaigns initiated by Guizot's education reform of 1833 and by the gradual inclusion of women in literacy initiatives following the *loi Falloux* of 1850. It was a readership of urban bourgeois, actual and aspirant, whose novelistic tastes still centred round the classics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with only occasional excursions to current in-vogue writers, as Martin Lyons's examination of bestsellers in France over the first half of the nineteenth century demonstrates.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Hemmings, Frederick. W. J., *Culture and Society in France 1789-1848* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), p. 125.

<sup>11</sup> Crubelier, Maurice 'L'Élargissement du public', in *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, 25-45, p. 27.

<sup>12</sup> Price, Roger, *An Economic History of Modern France, 1730-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 1-26.

<sup>13</sup> *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 30-32.

<sup>14</sup> Lyons, Martin, *Reading Culture and Writing Practices in Nineteenth-century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), pp. 20-27.

The book publishing industry in the 1830s was in a mess. Average book prices were unaffordable for much of the prospective readership: as late as 1845 a generously typeset edition of Dumas's *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* occupied 10 volumes at an overall cost of 135fr., or around a month's wage for a good worker.<sup>15</sup> Inefficiently small print-runs of around 1,000 copies and multiple editions were the order of the day.<sup>16</sup> There is a tendency to blame this on technical factors such as inefficient presses and poor distribution channels but the evidence suggests that, when properly organised, volume production was possible: Louis Hachette's success in the educational publishing business following the 1833 *loi Guizot* seems to be confirmed by an order in 1835 for 500,000 copies of *Alphabet des écoles*, 100,000 of *Livret élémentaire de lecture* and 40,000 each of *Arithmétique*, *Géographie* and *Histoire de France* – all apparently successfully fulfilled.<sup>17</sup> Belgian piracy, much inveighed against by Balzac,<sup>18</sup> undoubtedly took part of the already small market but French publishers seem to have encouraged the habit by selling directly to pirates, as indicated by Buloz's sale of an unpublished proof of *Le Lys dans la Vallée* to a Russian publisher in 1835.<sup>19</sup> The *cabinets de lecture*, in their heyday in

---

<sup>15</sup> *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 39, 177-80.

<sup>16</sup> Gildea (2009), p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 186-94.

<sup>18</sup> For example in his 'Lettre adressée aux écrivains français du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Revue de Paris*, nouvelle série XI (1834), 62-82 (hereafter '*Lettre aux écrivains français*'): 'Quand le pauvre libraire français vend à grand'peine un de vos livres à un millier de misérables cabinets de lecture, qui tuent notre littérature, le Belge, lui, en vend deux milliers au rabais à la riche aristocratie européenne.', p. 68.

the 1820s,<sup>20</sup> were an effective way to maximise readership, but even for newspapers few ways existed to convert eyeballs into revenue, and Balzac certainly thought they did more economic harm than good.<sup>21</sup> But by and large these are symptoms of a more serious underlying malaise: a lack of capital and credit. The book publishing industry was largely owned by self-made entrepreneurs, hence fragmented, and without inherited wealth, hence either risk averse or financially volatile, as evidenced by the spate of publisher bankruptcies, including those of Balzac himself and his sometime publishers Urbain Canel and Louis Mame, leading up to a government bail-out of the industry in 1830.<sup>22</sup> Both author and publisher bills of exchange were regularly circulating at large discounts. If capital was available, it was only to the *haute banque* who used it to fuel their own speculations, while elsewhere the Banque de France followed a highly restrictive credit policy throughout the first third of the century which, though it failed to stop a property bubble, effectively restricted the provision of credit in the remainder of the economy.<sup>23</sup>

By contrast, the platform offered by newspapers and periodicals must have looked increasingly attractive as the 1830s progressed. Girardin introduced three crucial innovations: the ability to attract new

---

<sup>19</sup> See Pierre Castex's note at ix.1635.

<sup>20</sup> Parent-Lardeur, Françoise, *Lire à Paris au temps de Balzac: Les cabinets de lecture à Paris, 1815-1830* (Paris: Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1999), pp. 10, 123.

<sup>21</sup> *Lettre aux écrivains français*, p. 68.

<sup>22</sup> Felkay, Nicole, *Balzac et ses éditeurs 1822-1837. Essai sur la librairie romantique* (Paris: Promodis, 1987), pp. 81-99.

<sup>23</sup> Lemarchand, Guy, *L'Economie en France de 1770 à 1830* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2008), pp. 260-68.

readers through variations in format, illustrated by the success of the 1830 *Journal des connaissances utiles* and the slightly later 1833 *Musée des familles* in developing female and family readerships; the ability to create new subscriber demand by reducing price, illustrated by the 1836 launch of *La Presse* at an annual subscription of half that of the competition; and the ability to mobilise capital for investment in the periodical press, evidenced by the 800,000 francs raised to fund the start-up costs of *La Presse*. This becomes a virtuous circle: volume production allows unit costs to fall, permitting not only cover price reductions but also the absorption of distribution costs, thus opening up a new provincial audience which, in turn, creates more volume growth: Girardin offered free delivery across France for the *Journal des connaissances utiles* as early as 1831.<sup>24</sup>

Guise illustrates at length that the attractiveness to readers of prose fiction, initially in the shape of the short story, had been proven from the beginning of the decade in what he calls the 'folie du conte' of 1832-34, and that many of the extensions of literary genre, for example into the fantastic of Hoffmann, into new subject areas such as the prisons and the courts, and into the exotic of Russian or Arab tales, were first

---

<sup>24</sup> Morierval, Jean, pseudonym of Henri Thévenin, *Les Créateurs de la grande presse en France. Emile de Girardin, H. de Villemessant, Moïse Millaud*. (Paris: Editions Spes, 1934), pp. 53-57.

introduced at this time.<sup>25</sup> The craze confirmed the importance of short fiction as a tool for selling newspapers, though it could not solve the other problems of scale of the newspaper market which were not addressed until 1836 when Girardin successfully initiated a volume market which combined lower prices with the serialisation of longer works of fiction. By 1847 the total circulation of the Parisian press had risen, from 80,000 in 1836, to 180,000. 'Le roman-livre a abdiqué; le roman-feuilleton règne et gouverne' writes an unknown correspondent in the *Gazette de France* of 12 November 1843.<sup>26</sup>

The speed and scale of change in the publishing world at this time, as publishers experimented with the impact of differing forms of extended fiction in the pages of the newspaper or periodical to drive and retain subscriptions, must have presented particular difficulties for contemporary authors.<sup>27</sup> Balzac's own awareness of the economic role of narrative had been evident for some time: 'Il faut enfin obtenir qu'un volume se fabrique exactement comme un pain, et se débite comme un

---

<sup>25</sup> Guise (1975), vol. iii. pp. 210-331. I use the anachronistic phrase 'short story' as a useful shorthand to refer to works typically printed as a complete unity in a single edition of the periodical in which they appear: as Tim Farrant points out, much of Balzac's writing at this period was shifting towards the longer formats of the '*nouvelle*' and eventually that of the multi-episode novel. *Balzac's Shorter Fictions. Genesis and Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 129-52.

<sup>26</sup> In an unsigned article entitled 'Du Roman et du roman-feuilleton'. Cited in Lyon-Caen (2006), p. 67.

<sup>27</sup> Guise makes the point that reader saturation point with the short story had been reached by the end of 1833 and led naturally to experimentation with longer, more sustained forms of fiction which allowed experimentation in genre and literary technique in a more extended frame. (Guise (1975), vol. iii, pp. 318-31).

pain', he writes in 1830.<sup>28</sup> But what would readers value? Or publishers? And did the two notions of 'value' coincide? And did either coincide with the author's own perception? Writing about how value is projected and established within the fictional universe is a logical strategy both for experimenting with different approaches and for testing whether an authorial assertion of how value is created, and what constitutes value, is shared by publishers and readers.

Many of Balzac's early stories had, indeed, dealt with precisely these issues. *Sarrasine* (first published in the *Revue de Paris* of 21 and 28 November 1830) not only describes Zambinella as the emblem of the false prospectus, a literally seductive projection camouflaging a deception, but provides a frame audience to judge the literary quality of the fictional medium as well. *Sarrasine* records how Zambinella's value deflates: the unidentified marquise to whom the story is told in expectation of sexual favours delivers her own verdict on the story by refusing. Both *La Peau de chagrin* and *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* (both 1831) externalise and reify the false prospectus as the central object of the narrative and describe the process by which its apparent value is shown to be illusory or transient. In *La Peau de Chagrin* the gradual discovery that Raphaël's fortune is a deception is metaphorically measured by the shrinkage of the asses' skin, while in *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* the illusory nature of Frenhofer's talent

---

<sup>28</sup> 'De l'état actuel de la librairie', in *Le Feuilleton des journaux politiques*, March 1830, reproduced in *Œuvres diverses*, ed. by Pierre Georges Castex and Roland Chollet, (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), vol. ii, p. 667.

is symbolised by the gradual overpainting of his masterpiece until only a foot remains.

In *L'Auberge rouge* (1831) and *Madame Firmiani* (1832) the role of the prospectus is taken by the narrative itself, with the in-story audience and the reader cast separately in the role of valuers. Prosper Magnan's story of his role in the murder at the Auberge Rouge, described as 'une histoire allemande' (xi.90), and thereby associated with Hoffmannesque fantasy, is consequently disbelieved by the authorities who put Magnan on trial. But the story is nonetheless represented by its teller as 'true' to the frame audience, who pass conflicting judgements on its value as expressed in terms of its relevance to the narrator who, in turn, will form his own view of its value in deciding whether or not to marry the daughter of the murderer. Simply telling the facts of a story is insufficient to create value: value is generated during the process of reception by the individual point of view of the receiver. Facts may, ultimately, have nothing to do with it: 'Où en serions-nous tous s'il fallait rechercher les origines des fortunes?' (xi.119), says a Balzacian lawyer. On the one hand, credible fiction is preferable to inconvenient facts. On the other, the spectre, true or false, of past turpitude may itself be an important constituent of current social narrative and interpretation. In either reading, narrative emerges as the defining location of value in the hands of the recipient. *Madame Firmiani* suggests that perhaps a concept of consensus value exists: all the seventeen individual responses to Madame

Firmiani's public persona are quite different, (ii.142-145) yet the reader emerges with a distinct, if ill-defined, feeling that a credible fictional character has been created.

*Le Colonel Chabert* (1832 in its original incarnation as *La Transaction*, 1835 in its pre-Furne final form) is essentially a narrative about the value of narrative: Chabert as a person acquires or sheds value in direct correlation to the credibility of his narrative. Doubts over credibility lead directly to financial compromise: 'Il faudra peut-être transiger, dit l'avoué.'(iii.333) – transaction cannot happen without an adjustment of value. *Illusions perdues* (1837) even refers to the concept of asserted and punctured value in its title, and the false prospectus is an apt image for the conflation of duplicity, narrative and transaction as Lucien the poet writes 'délicieux verbiage brodé'(v.176) to Mme de Bargeton, as Lucien the journalist sells out to Vernou,(v.458-9) as Lucien the debtor forges bills of exchange on his brother-in-law.(v.545)

Using narrative to assert value, then playing out models of acceptance or rejection within the fictional environment allows an author both to experiment with alternative representations of authenticity and to get actual feedback from contemporary readers. Nor was this purely – or even principally -a theoretical concern. Bouvier and Maynial's analysis of Balzac's accounts show an opening debt at the beginning of 1835, when *La Torpille* first makes Balzac's to-do list, of just over 61,000fr., set against

---

prospective income of around 20,000fr. By the beginning of 1838, the year of its eventual composition, his debts had risen to just under 179,000fr. as a result of the 1836 failure of his own periodical, *La Chronique de Paris*, and sunk investment (quite literally given its subsequent problems with subsidence) in his new property in Sèvres, Les Jardies. Bouvier and Maynial link literary output to financial pressures: 'Il semble hors de doute qu'en bien de cas, Balzac a été tour à tour poussé à écrire ou découragé d'écrire dans la mesure où il était plus ou moins harcelé par ses difficultés financières'.<sup>29</sup> By default, the novel is an object of commerce whose value Balzac cannot reliably assess but equally cannot ignore.

In circumstances where value is difficult to assess, the prospectus is an important tool. Value itself can only be determined by the relationship between supply and demand, whether established by auction or by changes in demand in response to a fixed price. The prospectus is a means of asserting value by means of narrative. It is often the first public incarnation of its subject: most of the major infrastructure developments of the 1830s and 1840s, in particular the railways and canals, were first introduced to the public by means of a prospectus published in contemporary newspapers, just as *La Comédie humaine* was introduced to

---

<sup>29</sup> Bouvier, René and Edouard Maynial, *Les Comptes dramatiques de Balzac* (Paris: Fernand Sorlot, 1938), p. 271 for the quotation and pp. 200-71 for their analysis of his accounts over the period from 1835 to 1838. Their account perhaps overemphasises economic necessity as a driver at the expense of psychological factors: the sheer volume of Balzac's creation as well as his obsessive attitude to proof correction seems to indicate a compulsive, even pathological, urge to write.

the readership through Balzac's own prospectus in 1842.<sup>30</sup> The prospectus in the hands of the speculator becomes a symbol of the age, described by the Vicomte d'Arincourt in an eponymous article in the 1840 *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*: 'Oh! qu'il est beau, le spéculateur, lorsque, mollement étendu sur un fauteuil à la Voltaire, il lit voluptueusement le prospectus d'une entreprise étourdissante, où il apportera toute sa capacité, et ses amis tout leur argent! Comme il en étudie les chances! Elle lui paraît d'autant plus magnifique, qu'elle a l'air à peu près impraticable.'<sup>31</sup>

Paper money is one of the simplest forms of prospectus, carrying a straightforward assertion of a fixed exchange value often supported through imagery, such as a historic monument or a ruler, which suggests solidity and continuity: prospectus as pure sign.<sup>32</sup> The very origins of paper money in France at the beginning of the preceding century had indissoluble links with the false prospectus of John Law's *Compagnie d'Occident* (subsequently to become the Mississippi Company), set up to raise money for the crown by, effectively, privatising its trading privileges. When the scheme ran into difficulties in 1718 Law was granted further privileges including the right to issue paper money through his *Banque*

---

<sup>30</sup> Vachon (1992), pp. 212-16.

<sup>31</sup> 'Le Spéculateur' in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes. Encyclopédie morale du dix-neuvième siècle publiée par Léon Curmer*, ed. by Pierre Bouttier, 2 vols. (Paris: Omnibus, 2003), 373- 400, vol. i, p. 387.

<sup>32</sup> For a wider discussion of the significance and iconography of paper money see essays by Shell and Goux in *The New Economic Criticism*. ed. Woodmansee and Osteen (1999), pp. 53-74 and 114-28, respectively, and Goux (2000), pp. 221-48.

Générale, which thereby became in practice the first French central bank. Law's scheme required repeated share issues to keep growing: ever brighter visions of future prospects were published and, to finance share purchases by the public, Law offered loans in the paper money issued by his bank, collateralised by the shares they were to buy. Inevitably, the shares soared: inevitably, the dislocation between asserted and real values became apparent, though it took until 1720 for this to happen; inevitably, both shares and paper money, like the contemporaneous South Sea Bubble in England, then crashed.<sup>33</sup>

The French Revolution reminded the population once again that paper money, in the shape of *assignats*, could have a real value very different to their face amount. The prospectus itself would have been an entirely familiar, real and everyday concept to the contemporary readership of the late 1830s and 1840s. The boom in road and railway construction which began in the late 1830s and accelerated in the 1840s necessitated such large amounts of capital that new markets to provide it had to be developed. The newly established banking dynasties, led by the Rothschilds, were increasingly able to source investment from public markets; leading to a wave of speculative new share issues.<sup>34</sup> The press was full of prospectuses for new share issues and advertisements for proprietary medications. A search of *La Presse* around the time Balzac

---

<sup>33</sup> Ferguson, Niall, *The Ascent of Money* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), pp. 138-55.

<sup>34</sup> Donnard (1961), pp. 301-03; Gildea (2009), pp. 111-13; Ferguson (2008), pp. 81-91.

was writing *La Torpille* yields a prospectus for the Chemin de Fer de Paris à Tours par Chartres – ‘On doit faire remarquer que, d’après les recherches statistiques les plus authentiques, les capitaux rapporteront un dividende net de 18fr. 71c pour 100.’ – and advertisements for both pectoral syrup and paste ‘...de Nafé d’Arabie [...] SEULS pectoraux approuvés et reconnus SUPERIEURS à tous les autres, par un RAPPORT Fait à la Faculté de médecine, un Brevet, et par 54 Certificats des plus célèbres médecins...’<sup>35</sup> A modern reader will no doubt wonder whether either could deliver on their promises, and Balzac’s *César Birotteau*, with its exploration of the illusory claims of his *huile céphalique*, suggests that contemporary reactions were perhaps not so different.<sup>36</sup>

*La Comédie humaine* itself contains the word ‘prospectus’ fifty six times, in twelve separate novels (though not, incidentally, in *Splendeurs*).<sup>37</sup> The reading public was clearly quite well versed in its own forms of the false prospectus. As Thérenty argues, the rising importance of literature as an economic process gave rise directly to a market in fakes, from plagiarism, pastiche, pseudonymous works to actual counterfeit, and to commoditisation in the shape of collected works, anthologies, or status editions designed to look impressive on the

---

<sup>35</sup> *La Presse*, 19 March 1838, p. 4, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4273305/f4.item>, accessed 28 June 2016.

<sup>36</sup> The fictional prospectus for Birotteau’s *Huile Céphalique* (vi.156-57), first published in *César Birotteau* at the end of 1837 after the novel had undergone many false starts, may seem an ironic commentary on the 1840 prospectus for *La Comédie humaine*.

<sup>37</sup> According to an on-line text search at [http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic31/showrest\\_?conc.6.1.41168.0.55.balzacTEST2](http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic31/showrest_?conc.6.1.41168.0.55.balzacTEST2), accessed 10 March 2013, although no longer accessible on a more recent attempt.

bookshelves of the *nouveaux riches*.<sup>38</sup> The demand for volume production led authors to pass off the works of associates as their own, as Dumas's partnership with Auguste Macquet to develop a production line of *romans-feuilletons* illustrates. Publishers also created a 'junk bond' market in the works of their own authors as the pressure to clear out slow-moving stocks led to discount sales.<sup>39</sup> Then as now, buying the story was an activity which was an increasingly explicit part of everyday life.

Balzac seems instinctively to understand how this works and parodies its effect in *César Birotteau* (1837): 'La pâte des sultanes et l'Eau carminative se produisirent dans l'univers galant et commercial par des affiches colorées, en tête desquelles étaient ces mots: *Approuvées par l'Institut!* Cette formule, employée pour la première fois, eut un effet magique.' (vi.65) Both Birotteau and Balzac understand that the key to the success of the false prospectus is the reader's own desire to be convinced. Given the promise of a coveted objective, the reader's own propensity to believe changes, allowing him or her to accept as credible that which s/he would otherwise have rejected as fantastical or defective. Birotteau behaves precisely in accordance with this rule: '[il] rédigea lui-même un prospectus dont la ridicule phraséologie fut un élément de succès: en France, on ne rit que des choses et des hommes dont on s'occupe, et

---

<sup>38</sup> Thérenty, Marie-Eve, *Mosaïques. Etre écrivain entre presse et roman (1829-1836)*, (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003), ch. ii, 'Poétique de la supercherie littéraire', pp. 101-83.

<sup>39</sup> For examples of discounted remaindering, see Christophe Charle, 'Le Champ de la production littéraire' in *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 127-57, and Roland Chollet, *Balzac journaliste* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983), pp. 516-18.

personne ne s'occupe de ce qui ne réussit point.'(vi.65) Birotteau's false prospectus plays on the reader's willingness to collude in the process of his own deception.

In doing so, recipients place their faith in the projected narrative of a commodity rather than in their own analysis. But how does this process work? Helpfully, Balzac would have found parallels in a literary genre with which he would have been intimately familiar, that of melodrama, with its direct links to the Parisian boulevard theatre and the theatrical origins of many of Balzac's own early works.<sup>40</sup> Melodrama depends for its effect on a complex interaction of several processes, all of which are common to the way in which a false prospectus is accepted: the establishment of an initial antithesis through cultural stereotypes; the intensification of the antithesis through a process of iteration, and the exploitation of the audience's ability simultaneously to sustain two alternative interpretations of a text. Prendergast asks, in his examination of Balzacian melodrama, how Balzac persuades the reader to believe the exaggerated or fantastical elements of his plots, and argues that he is able to do this by reflecting a set of cultural values and conventions which his readership would recognise as part of the prevailing stock of social

---

<sup>40</sup> Brooks, Peter, *The Melodramatic Imagination. Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, reprinted 1995), pp. 111-12.

knowledge, in the same way that we can accept the concepts of reality of a Racine or a Corneille as governed by the rules of tragedy or *bienséance*.<sup>41</sup>

The melodramatic convention is governed by a relationship between the real and the fantastic which depicts the universe in terms of antithesis, of polarisation between good and bad, of moral values which are assumed to be absolute, constant, shared by author and audience alike. The contrast between the real and the fantastic is often heightened by the narration of the fantastic in the medium of the factual (the opening of Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris*, which embeds a Gothic tale of princely derring-do in a gritty description of the Parisian *classes dangereuses* is a good example). The resulting combination gives the reader reason to accept the narrative and simultaneously accentuates the antitheses of which melodrama consists.

This reliance on shared, common and credible values was also potentially attractive to the new breed of newspaper publishers whose need to drive subscriptions depended on the ability to deliver constant value to readers, the more predictable the better. The origins of melodrama in accepted convention create a problem for the author, though: how to create an original script out of received value? Melodrama answers this through a process of iteration, which typically finds novelty in fresh modes of representation of expected and conventional

---

<sup>41</sup> Prendergast (1978), pp. 147-73.

oppositions. Finding continuing ways to keep the model current, both between different works and particularly within a single text, tends to lead to a process of increasing hyperbole to maintain surprise or, simply, to engineer a climax. The fantastic from which melodrama starts thus tends to become more so, and Guise's analysis of the the *folie du conte* which swept through France from mid-1832 to 1833 identifies just such a trend.<sup>42</sup> The intensification of the fantastic is frequently accompanied by an equivalent and counterbalancing emphasis on the factual, 'the way [man] lives in the ordinary', as Brooks puts it, to give the appearance of grounding the narrative.<sup>43</sup>

Thus is the false prospectus born. The author's preface to *Melmoth* asserts a defence against accusations that he has concentrated too much on 'the horrors of the Radcliffe-Romance' by a stout assertion of mundanity: '...that I had made the misery of conventual life depend less on the startling adventures one meets with in romances, than on that irritating series of petty torments which constitutes the misery of life in general...'<sup>44</sup> That his subsequent narrative bears this out only in its detail, never in its substance, is a revealing reflection on the interplay of the real and the fantastic within the genre of melodrama. A simultaneous awareness and rejection of an alternative, more factual but less

---

<sup>42</sup> Guise (1975), vol. iii, pp. 210-331.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Brooks (1995), p. 22.

<sup>44</sup> Maturin, Charles, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, ed. by Douglas Grant and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5.

emotionally satisfying, variant of reality lies at the heart of successful melodrama and the false prospectus. The recipient must be aware of two parallel interpretations and must find reasons to reject the factual and prefer the melodramatic or hyperbolised version.<sup>45</sup> Creating the tension which allows the reader to collude willingly in his own deception creates major challenges for an author and also provides a new toolkit with which to vary the perceived value of the narrative in the eyes of the recipient. If the melodramatic is pushed too far, there is evidently a point at which the reader will give up and close the book, or turn the newspaper page.

But where does this point lie? And does it depend solely on content, on what is represented, or is it affected by the manner and medium of representation? Is this consistent with delivering a product which publishers will want to buy? Finally, does it allow the artist to produce a text which is not irretrievably compromised by the requirements of the market? There is, evidently, no straightforward correlation between realistic representation and credibility, since the evidence of the popular literary market from the melodramatic theatre of the boulevards to the *folie du conte* suggested public willingness not merely to suspend disbelief but actively to seek out the fantastic. The customers for Birotteau's *pate des sultanes* and *eau carminative*, however,

---

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Prendergast's discussion of 'Type and Transgression' in *Balzac, Fiction and Melodrama* analyses how Balzac departs from culturally accepted norms to defamiliarise the reader, implying an awareness in the reader's mind of an alternative and culturally conforming text, although he does not focus on the consequences of this. Prendergast (1978), pp. 147-73.

pass judgement not just on content but on delivery: they are explicitly willing to swallow ‘un prospectus dont la ridicule phraséologie fut un élément de succès’ in the context of a commodity they want, even though the commodity itself may be fraudulent. The parallels with Balzac’s literary competitors are too obvious to be ignored. And just as it explains why the fraudulent can become credible, so it poses the question of why this process can also fail, why the commodity can suddenly appear ridiculous rather than enticing, why the recipient can suddenly switch focus away from the embellishments to the implausibilities of the narrative; why narrative value, both literally and figuratively, can disappear. This question lies at the very heart of *Splendeurs*, which can be seen as a record of Balzac’s evolving attempts to answer it, as the only text of his which travels throughout this central period in the emergence of the *roman-feuilleton* and the commercialisation of the novel.

### ***La Torpille*: from real value to false prospectus**

*La Torpille* seems to have been conceived as a *conte*, first mentioned in a ‘to-do’ list of stories about female criminals on the manuscript of *Le Père Goriot* of 23 January 1835.(vi.1309) Its conception as a short story reflects the emergence, over the preceding few years, of the *conte* and, increasingly, of the longer form *nouvelle* as drivers of subscriptions for the new breed of commercially driven periodicals.

Although Balzac's prolific capacity as a writer attracted publishers, his choice of subject matter was to prove an immediate problem. Reader reaction to his *La Vieille fille*, Girardin's first serialisation in 1836, was deemed serious enough to provoke a formal complaint from the editorial board which was to have an immediate effect on the marketability of *La Torpille*: 'A l'auteur de *La Vieille fille*. Il nous vient de si nombreuses réclamations contre le choix du sujet et la liberté de certaines descriptions [...] que le g[érant] de *La Presse* demande à l'auteur de *La Vieille fille* de choisir un autre sujet que celui de *La Torpille...*' (*Corr.*, ii.155, 17 November 1836).

Balzac no longer had the option of publishing the (so far unwritten) narrative in his own *Chronique de Paris*, which had gone bankrupt earlier in the year, at least partly because of competition from Girardin's new and cheaper rival. The story, comprising only the scene at the Opéra and Esther's subsequent rescue and reinvention at the hands of Herrera up to the point of her reunion with Lucien, seems finally to have been written during Balzac's 1838 stay in Italy and was complete by the end of July when it was again offered to Girardin, this time in substitution for *La Maison Nucingen* which Girardin had rejected as too politically sensitive. Yet again Girardin rejected it, this time after having it typeset, on grounds of unsuitability for the audience of *La Presse*. It finally appeared in book form, published by Werdet on 24 September 1838, sandwiched in between *La Femme supérieure* and *La Maison Nucingen*, in

a quite possibly unfinished state since in this version it ends almost in mid-sentence (vi.481, n. *d*). The preface to the first edition (vi.424-28) indicates both an intention to write a sequel and a frustrated defence of the work's morality which reflects a growing tension between the commercial appeal of mild eroticism and the public face of bourgeois prudishness.<sup>46</sup>

*La Torpille* bears the hallmark of this hybrid creation: a *conte* which became a novel, a *feuilleton* which became a book, a failed attempt to write for the evolving market of newspaper subscribers. It starts as a celebration of the power of narrative and its author's virtuosity. It ends with a whimper, as Balzac's plot unravels and his narrative command evaporates. Its subject matter, appropriately, is the projection, manipulation and reception of a series of false identities. Lucien pretends to nobility and fortune; *la Torpille* to a romantic dream. Herrera poses as a Spanish priest, Esther as a convent novice. The manner of its narration illustrates, self-reflexively, an inconclusive attempt to establish a credible proposition for publisher, reader and author.

It is constructed from two almost separate narrative instalments written in quite distinct genres with equally distinct commercial qualities. The first of these, the 'Opéra' narrative (vi.429-46), is outwardly an exuberant projection of the power of narrative and of the existence of

---

<sup>46</sup> Vachon (1992), pp. 172, 175.

---

narrative values which will generate predictable responses from its readership. It was intended for the *roman-feuilleton* and starts by establishing a link, through a report of the Opéra ball, with the presumed readers of Girardin's *La Presse* as an 'unbuttoned' version of its 'Nouvelles Diverses' columns which relayed the doings of the aristocracy – whom the king had dined with, who had newly arrived, who had attended the latest balls – mixed with the spicier freedoms allowed in the columns of the *feuilleton*. It plays to a voyeuristic desire still evident in today's tabloids to spy on the goings-on of the rich and famous, to know who was seen at the theatre, what they were wearing, what the latest scandal is. The masked ball adds an element of the exotic, a genre symbolised by *Mille et une nuits* and of proven commercial value to the periodical, as had been shown during the period of the *folie du conte* when libraries of short stories from Arabia to China had been ransacked for material.<sup>47</sup> The figure of the anonymous dandy, introduced in the fourth sentence (vi.430), plays both to the power of fashion – Girardin, trend-setter as well as trend-spotter, had founded *La Mode* in 1829 - and the voyeuristic demand to know who lies behind the anonymity. The narrative asserts, from the outset, the notion of projected value, a system which only works if it is based on a system of shared values between transmitter and recipient. The narrator, as transmitter, implies that he understands what the reader wants and is in a privileged position to access it: secrets are known only to 'quelques

---

<sup>47</sup> Guise (1975), vol. iii, pp. 254-63.

flâneurs émérites', in whose number he clearly figures, and while 'la foule observe peu la foule', the reader can rely on the unwavering attention of the narrator to bring him them latest goings-on at the Opera ball.(vi.430) He understands how his readership responds and reflects its own values back to it. The subject of his narrative is, indeed, his ability to detect and unmask the false prospectus for the benefit of his readers: 'Qui n'a pas remarqué que là [...] il est une façon d'être qui révèle ce que vous êtes...' – he can see the prostitute behind the domino.(vi 431)

But behind this confident façade is a constant concern about the ambivalent power of the word to create and to pervert in equal measure. The group of observers, journalists and publishers who will later form the publishing world of *Illusions perdues*, Finot, Blondet, Vernou and Bixiou, are described as examples of the compromises inherent in combining authorship and the commercial pressures of the press: 'Quiconque a trempé dans le journalisme, ou y trempe encore, est dans la nécessité cruelle de saluer les hommes qu'il méprise, de sourire à son meilleur ennemi, de pactiser avec les plus fétides bassesses, de se salir les doigts en voulant payer ses agresseurs avec leur monnaie' (vi.437). They can still create – a group of journalists, suggests Blondet, would have transformed Esther into a grand courtesan: 'A nous tous, nous pouvions faire une reine. [...] Vernou lui aurait fait des réclames, Bixiou lui aurait fait ses mots!' (vi.441) – but it is implied that their creation would depend on cliché – the

standard 'reine', a received value instantly recognisable by an audience – and on the projection of an asserted value – 'réclames'.

The narrator's own position is ambiguous. On the one hand, the very virtuosity of his description of the group of journalists, and of Blondet's dialogue with its parody of the pedantic and showy style of the *Journal des débats* in particular, asserts that his own text should not be seen as compromised.(vi.441) On the other, his characterisation of Lucien as the dandy, or of de Châtelet as the starched representative of the *Ancien Régime*, are themselves caricatures which depend on similarly established commonplaces. Narrative certainly has the power to create value, true or false, but how that power is to be used is unclear. The false prospectus of Esther's mask at the ball is demolished by the unleashing of a single word: her name. Rebuilding it requires, literally and literarily, a change of genre, the introduction of the fantastic in the shape of the masked figure of Herrera, and a simultaneous demonstration that the reader will accept this because it plays to the established narrative conventions of melodrama and the false prospectus: that readers will prefer the more positive outcome even if they know it is the less credible, and that they will favour an open-ended narrative to an apparent full stop.

The second part of the story, that of Esther's attempted suicide and redemption, starts to raise questions about how this process works. It is essentially a narrative about rewriting. Balzac starts by writing the

alternative, tragic, end to *La Torpille* in which Esther commits suicide. He then passes the pen to Herrera, who rewrites her as a reformed sinner. When this fails to work she is again rewritten, this time in her final version as a courtesan. The opening version offers us a logical conclusion to the *conte* of the first part, and one which responds to Balzac's expressed desire in the preface to the 1845 Furne edition to write a work 'où sont peintes les existences, dans toute leur vérité, des espions, des filles entretenues et des gens en guerre avec la société qui grouillent dans Paris'.(vi.423)

But it situates it in a melodramatic cityscape in whose flickering pools of light, '[une] lueur incertaine et fumeuse' alternative endings are possible.(vi.446) It is a literary landscape with genre signposts to tell the reader what to expect, 'le monde fantastique d'Hoffmann le Berlinoise est là'.(vi.447) The imagery of melting words – 'Il tombe dans l'oreille de ces paroles que Rabelais prétend s'être gelées et qui fondent' suggests the malleability of reality through the medium of language.(vi.447) This is a landscape of inversion: 'Les conditions atmosphériques y sont changées : on y a chaud en hiver et froid en été'.(vi.447) Inversion can convert reality into the fantastic: Esther's suicide is underpinned by a series of details probably taken, as Antoine Adam records, from a wide variety of contemporary sources: Auguste Ricard, Paul de Kock, Esquiros, Eugène Sue, Nestor Roqueplan, Maurice Alhoy and, most important of all, Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet, in his 1836 treatise on the commerce and

social hierarchy of the prostitute world, *De la prostitution dans la ville de Paris*.<sup>48</sup> But in this melodramatic landscape factual detail simply serves to make the false prospectus more credible: the irruption of Herrera into this landscape seems not only desirable but inevitable. As the 1845 preface concludes, ‘il faut bien accorder quelque chose au Dieu moderne, la *majorité*, ce colosse aux pieds d’argile’:(vi.428, Balzac’s italics) the commercial call for longer fiction compounds with the reader’s desire for the story to be continued.

The stage is set for a melodramatic tale of demonic power, ‘pactes infernaux’ (vi.502), and moral redemption or compromise. At one level that is indeed what happens, and many critical appraisals have viewed it in this light. Kyoko Murata follows the evolution of Balzac’s treatment of the Faustian pact through Balzac’s work and presents it in terms of the way in which the eternal struggle of the ‘pacte diabolique’ against the ‘pacte angélique’ come to grips with the modern world of commerce and contract.<sup>49</sup> But at another level there is a nagging undertone of questioning. Are the assumptions about stable values really right? In this new environment, in front of the growing *feuilleton* audience for which

---

<sup>48</sup> *Splendeurs* ed. Adam (1964), Introduction, pp. xvi-xix, and a series of notes on sources throughout the text, in particular p.32, n.1, The sources are also demonstrated in Pommier (1957), pp. 31-67. For a broader assessment of the urban underworld and its literary representation in the nineteenth century, see Dominique Kalifa, *Les Bas-fonds* (Paris: Seuil, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Murata, Kyoko, *Les Métamorphoses du pacte diabolique dans l’œuvre de Balzac* (Osaka: OMUP, 2003), pp. 126-79 for an analysis of the ‘pacte diabolique’ and the ‘pacte angélique’ and pp. 229-55 for a discussion of its role in *Splendeurs*.

Balzac expected to be writing, are the conventions of melodrama, of fixed narrative values and predictable reader response, really tenable?

In earlier stories Balzac had experimented with challenges to the canon. *Melmoth réconcilié* (first published June 1835, x.345-88) comprehensively debunks the Faustian pact which fails, significantly, to survive its encounter with the modern world of financial transactions. The process relies not on any inherent implausibility of doing a deal with the devil but on the bathos of recasting the deal as a tradeable security. Castanier, the bookkeeper led astray by Melmoth, commits fraud by narrative: he issues ‘...des circulations’ – the link between fraud and the press is hardly accidental - which represent a fraudulent prospectus in which the value advertised does not exist ‘...des billets qui ne représentent ni marchandises ni valeurs pécuniaires fournies’.(x.360) The scam works only for as long as the transacting parties believe them to be credible and creditworthy. The Faustian pact proposed by Melmoth is exactly the same: a shared narrative which only retains value to the extent that the buyer shares the same valuation methodology as the seller. Castanier, by profession a cashier, understands the parallel and so when the time comes to pass the pact to the next recipient he does what comes naturally: he trades it on the Stock Exchange.(x.383-84) But exposing its value to a wider audience calls into question the convention which upholds its value. Once the value of the pact has been called into question, it takes a mere six pages out of forty-three for its entire value to

dissipate.(x.383-88) As the fantastic is reduced to the humdrum, so meaning itself starts to disintegrate. 'Cet homme est pyramidal' is how the startled German demonologist researching the story finds himself described, in terms more reminiscent (if anachronistically) of Ubu Roi than of Balzac.(x.388)<sup>50</sup>

Balzac also seems to find it difficult to accept the melodramatic turn his narrative seems to have taken without simultaneously questioning it. The theme of inverted value continues. Herrera, it is hinted, is himself an *inverti*, a man 'insensible aux jolies rondeurs d'un sein...'.(vi.450) Esther's narrative must be inverted: within a few pages we discover that 'Ce n'était plus une courtisane, mais un ange qui se relevait d'une chute'.(vi.463) Having offered us the possibility of a logical, if tragic, end to the story Balzac seems to be asking why we prefer the false coin of this inverted, sentimental redemption. We are left in little doubt that this is a primarily literary makeover. It has already begun by a performative act of rewriting as Esther submits her 'déclaration en forme à la Police' to be removed from the register of prostitutes.(vi.452) Balzac makes it clear that Herrera is the author of this version of the proofs. As we gradually discover, Herrera is more the personification of the false prospectus than of Mephistopheles. He is described exclusively in terms of the façade of his appearance: what lies inside is compared to a mirage:

---

<sup>50</sup> Although Balzac's contemporaries, unlike ours, might have recognized the pyramid as a buried reference to Hoffmann's *Salvator Rosa*, dealing precisely with a charlatan, a false prospectus, and evaporating value.

'Aucun regard n'aurait pu lire ce qui se passait alors en cet homme ; mais pour les plus hardis il y aurait eu plus à frémir qu'à espérer à l'aspect de ses yeux , jadis clairs et jaunes comme ceux des tigres, et sur lesquels les austérités et les privations avaient mis un voile semblable à celui qui se trouve sur les horizons au milieu de la canicule : la terre est chaude et lumineuse, mais le brouillard la rend indistincte, vaporeuse, elle est presque invisible'.(vi.455) Almost every detail we learn about him will later prove to be wrong. His real name is not Herrera. He is not a priest. His back story is politically implausible in both the 1838 and later 1843 editions.(vi.472-73 and 1346-47)<sup>51</sup> His own fictional creation is inverted: the composition of this narrative, which dates from July/August 1838 and which describes an established relationship between Herrera and Lucien, *precedes* that of the final part of *Illusions perdues* where Herrera first meets Lucien (started April/May 1839, not finished until 1842).

And as an author, Herrera has clear shortcomings. He is pompous, full of classical allusions which Balzac even took the trouble to reinforce between the manuscript and the published edition, book-learned, exclamatory.(vi.458-60) Balzac seems to be sending up his literary pretensions – much of the 'pompous' passage was shifted from the narrator's mouth to that of Herrera in the published edition. Even his authorial omniscience is mocked: 'Cet homme vit donc en ce moment la nature humaine à fond'(vi. 458) – and yet his analysis of Esther is

---

<sup>51</sup> See *Splendeurs*, ed. Adam (1964) p.62, n.1.

immediately shown to be wrong. His first attempt at constructing Esther's new narrative as a redeemed sinner fails the test even of the in-story audience, in the person of the convent superior whose judgement of Esther's sincerity as 'édifiante' is tellingly reserved.(vi.466) Balzac himself seems to have found it difficult to make this narrative flow fluently: the numerous alterations in different drafts of the manuscript to the description of Esther in the convent, for example, testify to his compositional difficulties.(vi.463-64) The former deftness of authorial touch so much in evidence in the Opéra narrative seems to desert him: Esther's hands are described as 'blanches comme les mains d'une femme en couches de son second enfant'; her eye at rest as 'comme un oeuf miraculeux dans un nid de brins de soie'.(vi.464)

The conclusion of the story, in which Balzac seems to take back the narratorial *parole* from Herrera as the narrative shifts from dialogue to third-party reportage, is tentative, contradictory and incomplete. His descriptions of Herrera are couched in the form of unanswered questions and declarations of ignorance. 'Personne ne pouvait répondre à ces questions ni mesurer l'ambition de cet Espagnol comme on ne pouvait prévoir quelle serait sa fin'.(vi.474) He shifts genre from the melodramatic to the sentimental: 'La passion d'un poète devient alors un grand poème où souvent les proportions humaines sont dépassées'.(vi.475) The narrative reverts to cliché as Balzac reunites Lucien and Esther at the point of Esther's first communion. We feel that Balzac's own interest in

the narrative may have narrowed to the purely economic: 'Il ne faut pas briser le balancier avec lequel nous battons monnaie', says Herrera to Lucien - a 'tart with a heart' is a more marketable literary commodity than a nun.(vi.477) Unable to survive these contradictions, the narrative limps to a halt in a tacit acknowledgement that there are significant questions about how to maintain its value.(vi.481)

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that *La Torpille* is an unsatisfying narrative, a tale which fails to live up to its original promise, a false prospectus. The momentum and vigour of its opening are not maintained. Faced with the need to expand what was essentially a short story into a longer narrative to address the changing requirements of the *roman-feuilleton* for which he expected to be writing, the narrative seems to be full of false starts and changes of direction.<sup>52</sup> It is certainly a text which takes as its subject matter the projection of false value, from Esther at the ball, through Esther at the convent, to the multiple deceptions of Herrera. It gives the impression of being a text driven partly by commercial factors, in that at each narrative check it seems to revert to a literary commonplace, a device that will sell well, 'le monde de Hoffmann le Berlinois'.(vi.447) It is therefore doubly ironic that the reason for its rejection by *La Presse* was the publisher's view that Balzac had misjudged the limits of acceptability to the journal's readership. Successful narrative

---

<sup>52</sup> A need driven not only by commercial considerations but, as Tim Farrant argues, also by aesthetic requirements, reflecting the rationale of the characters and situations Balzac had created thus far. Farrant (2002), pp. 211-16.

requires a delicate balance between artistic imperatives and the evolving commercial needs of publishers and readers. *La Torpille's* suspension in mid-flow is indicative of an unresolved problem.

### ***Esther*: the false prospectus, production model**

Balzac was not to return to *Splendeurs* for almost five years. In the meantime his debts had peaked in 1839 at over 230,000fr. and had hardly moderated by 1843 despite continuous publication and a reduced lifestyle; his level of financial sophistication, particularly in procedures for evading debts, had increased considerably, and his experience in concocting stories to deceive creditors, to divert the questions of Mme Hanska, and to delude himself about his financial position had grown exponentially. He regularly puts assets into the names of straw men to avoid attachment. The apparent sale of Les Jardies was a legal charade intended to force creditors into agreeing to write down outstanding debts. His apartment in Passy, where he lived under a false name, had two exits on separate streets to facilitate evasion.<sup>53</sup> The need to project value which did not exist was constant.

---

<sup>53</sup> Bouvier and Maynial (1938), pp. 305-09, 325-21, 346-51, 366-71.

By 1842 the power of the longer format novel in serialised form to drive subscriptions to periodicals of all sorts was conclusively evidenced by Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* which helped propel its platform, the staid *Journal des débats*, from 3,600 to 25,000 subscribers in a month and thereafter to 40,000.<sup>54</sup> For some authors this offered, at last, a way to financial independence and the ability to live from the earnings of their pen, but Girardin himself, writing in his own *Musée des familles* of November 1834, estimated that only two dozen writers in France could hope to sell more than 600-900 copies of a work and be paid more than 500-800fr. per volume on a consistent basis.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, this platform could also monetise additional reach, for example through the *cabinets de lecture*, in ways not open to the book such as advertising and product extensions - almanacs and keepsakes were among the many variants tried. Finally, fiction offered a way round increasingly intrusive press legislation from the new law of 1835 onwards, as the government attempted to reconcile a commitment not to impose censorship with an urge to do exactly that.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, fiction based on the depiction of real life offered novelists an easy way of mixing social comment and literary invention in ways which both made a point and provided a defence, making the choice of a genre closer to journalism both popular and practical.

---

<sup>54</sup> Prendergast, (2003), p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Musée des familles*, vol. ii (Nov.1834), pp. 45-47, cited in Thérenty (2003), pp. 34-35.

<sup>56</sup> Collins, Irene, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France, 1814-1881* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 80.

It is against this background of the novel as an increasingly integral part of the newspaper industry, and of the author as a hybrid extension of the journalist, that the next part of *Splendeurs* emerges. The narrative of *La Torpille*, now entitled *Esther ou les Amours d'un vieux banquier*, doubling its length to 39 *feuilletons* and dealing with the entire story of Esther to her suicide, finally reached the pages of the newspaper through serialisation in *Le Parisien* from 21 May to 1 July 1843. For the first time it is possible to put an accurate monetary value on this narrative: Balzac's contract with the publisher of *Le Parisien*, J. Amyntas David, entitled him to a payment of 5,000fr. But both narrative and payment remain incomplete: the final thirteen chapters were withdrawn by Balzac, probably because of his fears of non-payment by *Le Parisien* which he took to court on 1 July 1843 (according to a letter to Mme Hanska of even date. *EH*, i.701). The story once again reverts to book format, finally complete to the point of Esther's death and now under the title *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, appearing first in a separate three volume edition published at 22.50fr. on 28 August 1844 by Louis de Potter under a contract which had been concluded with Loquin, a banker, in 1842, immediately ceded to the publisher Dumont, invalidated for non-performance by the publisher, returned to the original banker and finally acquired by Potter earlier in the same month. It reappears in the eleventh volume of the Furne edition of *La Comédie humaine* one month later. The last of the seven instalments which comprised the eleventh volume contained, however, only the 1838 *La Torpille* narrative, presumably to

allow the Potter edition to be sold first. The missing instalments were subsequently published in 1845.<sup>57</sup>

The *Esther* narrative has often been seen as Balzac's attempt to emulate Sue's success with *Les Mystères de Paris*, published in the conservative columns of the *Journal des débats* from 19 June 1842 to 15 October 1843. 'Tout le monde a dévoré *Les Mystères de Paris*' writes Théophile Gautier the following year in a review of a theatrical adaptation of the novel, 'même les gens qui ne savent pas lire: ceux-là se les sont fait réciter par quelque portier érudit et de bonne volonté.'<sup>58</sup> 'Je fais du Sue tout pur', writes Balzac to Eveline Hanska on 31 May 1843 (*EH*, i.693).

But what did this really mean? Sue's narrative depends on a system of fixed exchange rates within which stock characters, plots and narrative devices can deliver predictable reader reception. It relies on an understanding of how techniques of journalism and popular fiction were merging to respond to the tastes of a rapidly growing readership as well as on an appreciation of fiction's commercial role as a driver of subscriptions. The very first words of the first three sentences of the narrative of *Les Mystères de Paris*, set out as separate paragraphs in the *feuilleton* of the *Journal des débats* of 19 June 1842, instantly create a quite specific and calculated effect: 'Un tapis-franc....Un repris de justice....Un

---

<sup>57</sup> Vachon (1992), pp. 237, 250.

<sup>58</sup> *La Presse*, 19 February 1844, p.1, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4294950/f1.image.langFR>, accessed 18 April 2016.

crime...’ If the reader has not got the message, Sue spells it out in the fourth sentence: ‘Ce début annonce au lecteur qu’il doit assister à de sinistres scènes...’ And for good measure the fifth sentence, referring to Fenimore Cooper and Walter Scott, lays claim to a literary tradition and asserts a link to a genre with which the audience would have been familiar.<sup>59</sup>

The same objective is visible in the use of realistic detail to retain an apparent anchor in the observed world and to make the fantastic and the imaginary appear more plausible as the level of intensity in the plot grows. ‘Nous conduirons le lecteur dans ce triste logis’ writes Sue as he introduces the Morel family: there follows five pages of detail of their attic apartment, which itself has been preceded by four chapters of preparation in a previous iteration.<sup>60</sup> As the reader responds to Sue’s *Les Mystères de Paris* indicate, what we might now see as the fantastical element of the ensuing plotline, as Rodolphe interprets his standard role of saviour, was taken by at least some readers as observed or at least psychologically ‘true’ fact. It seems that the desire to believe uses the realistic detail to

---

<sup>59</sup> *La Presse*, 19 June 1842, p.1.

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4458735/fl.item.zoom>, accessed 18 April 2016. The full text reads as follows: ‘Un tapis-franc, en argot de vol de meurtre, signifie un estaminet ou un cabaret du plus bas étage. Un repris de justice, qui, dans cette langue immonde, s’appelle un ogre, ou une femme de même dégradation, qui s’appelle une ogresse, tiennent ordinairement ces tavernes, hantés par le rebut de la population parisienne: forçats libérés, escrocs, voleurs, assassins y abondent. Un crime a-t-il été commis, la police jette, si cela peut se dire, son filet dans cette fange; presque toujours elle y prend les coupables. Ce début annonce au lecteur qu’il doit assister à de sinistres scènes: s’il y consent, il pénétrera dans des régions horribles, inconnues; des types hideux, effrayants, fourmilleront dans ces cloaques impurs comme les reptiles dans les marais.’

<sup>60</sup> *Les Mystères de Paris*, ed. by Judith Lyon-Caen (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), pp. 394-99 and 198-229.

---

justify its right to believe: ‘...j’avais lu son livre, j’avais bu son philtre, je m’étais enivrée de sa magie...’, writes one of Sue’s readers.<sup>61</sup> The essence of Sue’s success lies in replaying to his audience their own preconceptions, prejudices and tastes. Jules Janin, portraying the journalist in Léon Curmer’s 1842 *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, confirms the importance of popular response: ‘En même temps, au-dessus même du rédacteur en chef, et pour mener son journal, pour le conduire chaque matin où il faut qu’il aille, vous avez la foule que ce journal représente, c’est la foule qui lui donne ces inspirations, qui lui impose ses colères et ses vengeances...’<sup>62</sup>

But what was the message coming from this new readership? Prendergast’s study of reader response to *Les Mystères de Paris* illustrates a clear channel of communication between writer and reader made possible by the format of serial publication. But it also shows the diffuse nature of that exchange, the conflicting points of view expressed by readers, and the difficulty of drawing any specific conclusions about particular textual influence.<sup>63</sup> The feedback is neither homogeneous nor representative of any single point of view. I suggest that in this environment the default editorial response was to go for readability, the *juste milieu* hybrid, in the shape of a format designed for piecemeal consumption, stylistically manipulated to draw the reader on to *la suite au*

---

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1264: letter to Eugène Sue from Fanny Denoix.

<sup>62</sup> *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, ed. Bouttier (2003), vol. ii, p. 54.

<sup>63</sup> Prendergast (2003), p. 64.

*prochain numéro*, and for content which responded in predictable ways to contemporary fashions. Helping the reader to define who he or she is, and just as importantly who he or she is not, is an obvious place to start, as Judith Lyon-Caen argues, and one which goes a long way to explain the ubiquitous image of the mirror on society, reflecting a representation of the entire contemporary world, not just of the particular social stratum the reader happened to inhabit.<sup>64</sup> Christiane Mounod-Anglès's analysis of Balzac and his female readership, *Balzac et ses lectrices*, argues that Balzac took particular care to establish himself as a writer who understood the female demographic by a potent mixture of delivering what they demonstrably read – romance – carefully mixed with sensation and scandal which gave the impression of pushing at the bounds of what they could or should read. The result proved to be a real commercial success in this fast-growing part of the new literary market.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout French literary output of this period, whether literary or journalistic, there is evident a compulsion to name, describe, and classify, based in what seems almost a national obsession for attempting to understand and define what being French in the post-revolutionary, post-Empire era really meant. Janin describes *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* as an attempt to record a slice of history for posterity, but the obsession extends from Stendhal's mirror to Daumier's cartoons and

---

<sup>64</sup> Lyon-Caen (2006), particularly the chapter entitled 'Au Miroir du roman: lettre au romancier et expérience sociale', pp. 190-243.

<sup>65</sup> Mounod-Anglès, Christiane, *Balzac et ses lectrices* (Paris: Indigo, 1994), pp. 31-46.

beyond.<sup>66</sup> Lexicographers and encyclopædists attempt to classify language and to record knowledge, from Diderot's *Encyclopédie* to the 1835 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, and by the middle of the century the task had been taken up and appropriated for profit by Emile Littré and Pierre Larousse. Balzac satirically categorises his colleagues in his *Monographie de la presse parisienne*,<sup>67</sup> classifies society into zoological species in the 1842 *Avant-propos* to *La Comédie humaine*, and attempts to describe it in its entirety in the work itself. In the same vein, Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* can be seen as a taxonomy of *mœurs*, from the aristocracy, through the bourgeoisie and the working classes, to the criminal. But its point of view is always that of the reader of the *roman-feuilleton*. This is a literature which may be *about* the people but is certainly not *of* the people: it is written for the subscribing public, for an elite, middle-class audience peering over the author's shoulder and shivering with carefully cossetted horror at the lower classes, at Le Chourineur and La Chouette, at the untamed Paris of the old Ile de la Cité.

It is no coincidence that this theme links so strongly with the journalistic point of view of the *fait divers*, which shares a similar preoccupation with the sensational, the prurient and the criminal and which will eventually form the basis for a new genre of proto-tabloid journalism in Moïse Millaud's 1863 *Le Petit Journal*. Even Sue's rather

---

<sup>66</sup> *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, ed. Bouttier (2003), vol. i, p. 11.

<sup>67</sup> Balzac, Honoré de, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Maurice Bardèche, 28 vols. (Chambéry, Club de l'honnête homme, 1963), vol. xxvii, pp. 360-421.

tepid treatment of the theme reflects the limits of public morality: he is well aware of its power to stimulate the reader's attention but tactfully self-censors at the critical moment, or deflects to make a social point, or intervenes with a sententious sermon, or conjures up another *Rodolphe* *ex machina* rescue. Reader response provided a useful way of checking on changes in reader concerns. The letters addressed to Sue throughout the course of the publication of *Les Mystères de Paris*, whether from admirers, victims or political sympathisers, are remarkable for the way in which they talk more of senders' problems or reactions than of their views on the text. The narrative itself has simply become the catalyst for often unrelated outpourings which act as silent testimony to the accuracy of the text in touching communal nerve points and which, in turn, provide the novelist with a means of sensing changing attitudes to play them back more accurately.

Even the critics respond in the same way: Alfred Nettement's castigation of the work as immoral in his 'Lettres à une jeune femme du monde sur *Les Mystères de Paris*' reveals more of the contemporary royalist and catholic prejudices of the *Gazette de France* than of the work's own shortcomings, which are barely addressed.<sup>68</sup> The very format of Sue's platform, the *roman-feuilleton*, is the emblem of its topical and transitory

---

<sup>68</sup> A selection of the letters to Sue is reproduced in the dossier to *Les Mystères de Paris*, ed. Lyon-Caen (2009), pp. 1259-94, while others are cited throughout Prendergast (2003). A selection of critical responses, including that of Nettement, is set out on pp. 1219-44 of Lyon-Caen's edition.

relevance which can only be maintained by constant performance. It is driven by events and trends of the moment and its continual process of self-renewal makes it an ideal mirror of the fashionable and the ephemeral.

Perhaps for this reason, the reader is implicitly prepared to trade literary aspiration for immediacy or, simply, for more product – Sue’s blend of sententiousness and sentimentality, along with lapses in characterisation and continuity, are proof enough of that. It is precisely Sue’s lack of the literary qualities we admire elsewhere which makes his success so intriguing, and I suggest that this very lack of literariness (despite obvious literary aspirations) is an essential part of the newly evolving bourgeois taste. It is probably no coincidence that Sue’s style is closer to that of contemporary journalism, which also needed to self-censor the prurience of the *faits divers*, which holds and broadcasts both social and political views, and which is full of the sententious tub-thumping demonstrated even by its fiercest critics: Sainte-Beuve’s *De la littérature industrielle* is a good example.<sup>69</sup> The runaway success of *Les Mystères de Paris* is created by a kind of auto-suggestion induced by the author’s understanding of popular taste, rather than by the strength of his own views. The Goncourts will later describe exactly this process in *Charles Demailly*:

---

<sup>69</sup> Sainte-Beuve (1839), 675-91.

'L'homme aux trois francs vous a donc acheté, payé, emporté sous le coup de cette opération involontaire [the runaway success]. Il rentre chez lui, il rentre en lui-même. Vous êtes un nom tout neuf, il se défie de vous. Il se connaît, il se défie de lui; il a grand-peur de son jugement, il n'a pas l'habitude de penser lui-même, une opinion lui a toujours paru une propriété nationale, quelque chose que tous prêtent à chacun... Notez par là-dessus que cet homme est un public: il vous jalouse comme un lecteur jalouse un auteur. Il faut que vous passiez sur le corps à tous ces préjuges-là, et qu'à la dernière page de votre livre l'homme aux trois francs soit convaincu qu'il croit que vous avez du talent...'<sup>70</sup>

This ability to manipulate the reader by playing back to him his own concerns and prejudices, the subsuming of the author's character within that of the reader, is at the heart of bourgeois literary culture and perhaps explains why Sue's work was only able to resonate with a particular audience in a particular era.

For Balzac, it must have created a dilemma. Aping its success would, indeed, be financial salvation. Fixed narrative exchange rates were evidently productive of more stable revenues for their authors. Sue's early extravagances had led to bankruptcy in 1836 and to the need to write for a living: like Balzac, writing is as much about discovering the cash value of narrative as realising its artistic worth. His earlier success with *Arthur* in *La Presse* (1838) had allowed him to buy a house in Paris. Girardin had

---

<sup>70</sup> Goncourt, Edmond and Jules de, *Charles Demailly*, ed. by Adeline Wrona (Paris: Flammarion, 2007), p. 132.

secured another success for Sue with *Mathilde* in 1840-41 and was the underbidder for *Les Mystères de Paris* against *Le Journal des débats*. What was good for authors was also good for publishers, as *La Mode* sniffily observes in 1842: 'Le commerce de *La Presse* se trouve bien de cette longue immolation de la vertu sur la caisse du journal.'<sup>71</sup> Sainte-Beuve estimates that *Les Mystères de Paris* had earned Sue 30,000fr. by the middle of 1843.<sup>72</sup> A *succès de scandale* was beneficial to author, publisher and creditor alike.

It would hardly be surprising, therefore, if Balzac had wished to emulate Sue's success. But to do so involved a significant compromise of authorial identity. The novelist must, to a greater or lesser extent, become a novelist-journalist, *romancier-feuilletoniste*. Appropriately, we have evidence of the extent of the dilemma from both fictional and historic sources. Balzac's portrait of Lucien de Rubempré's descent from the romantic author of *L'Archer de Charles IX* to the mercurial journalist in the pay and at the bidding of Vernou - 'nous sommes des marchands de phrases'(v.458) - implies a received attitude that this is a degeneration of his talent, but it is quite evident that Lucien is a far better journalist than he ever will be a novelist and that as a journalist his work has an immediacy and an ability to connect with an audience which may, Balzac seems to imply, be one of the hallmarks of a true writer '...qui fit

---

<sup>71</sup> *La Mode*, 15 September 1842, reproduced in the dossier to *Les Mystères de Paris* ed. Lyon-Caen (2009), p.1227.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Letter to Juste Olivier, 28 July 1843, p.1224.

révolution dans le journalisme par la révélation d'une manière neuve et originale...'.(v.399) By contrast this readership is incapable of any kind of sophisticated critical reaction: Lousteau's audience of provincial worthies in *La Muse du département* do not even notice that the manuscript of *Olympia ou les Vengeances romaines* which he reads to them has the page-order scrambled.(iv.703-719)

Balzac's own contemporary journalism reveals a confused vacillation between a rejection of the apparent artistic standardisation required by this new literary culture and an enthusiastic embracing of the financial opportunities it represented. His 1834 *Lettre aux écrivains français*, published in the *Revue de Paris*, complains that piracy and unauthorised theatrical versions effectively robbed authors of part of their already compromised intellectual identity and their financial independence. 'Parlons donc capital, parlons argent ! Matérialisons, chiffons la pensée dans un siècle qui s'enorgueillit d'être le siècle des idées positives! L'écrivain n'arrive à rien sans des études immenses qui représentent un capital de temps ou d'argent : le temps vaut l'argent, il l'engendre.'<sup>73</sup> His satirical sketch of the press in his 1842 *Monographie de la presse parisienne* levels a series of charges at the industry of which enforced authorial anonymity, lack of originality, political venality and greed are only the beginning: 'Le Premier-Paris, qui n'existe que par la divination perpétuelle des pensées de son abonné, le surprend le

---

<sup>73</sup> *Lettre aux écrivains français*, p. 66.

lendemain agréablement en lui panifiant sa pensée.’<sup>74</sup> This notwithstanding, his solution to the novel’s reliance on the press, in the shape of the proposed *Société d’abonnement générale*, is essentially that of a periodical in disguise. The fact that his plan to publish 80-100 works a year, distributed by subscription largely to under-distracted provincial readers, never finds a commercial backer is probably an eloquent commentary on the inability of the novel to sell itself as a pure product unmixed with journalism – though it may also reflect a thwarted desire to preserve the purity of the novel as a genre still apart from journalism.

But the reality was that the move to a journalistic platform involved a considerable blurring of the notion of authorial identity. Who, indeed, is the author when publishers and readers, and indirectly politicians, regulators and investors all have influence over content? Even the selection of what to create becomes the subject of negotiation between publisher and author, with contracts based on synopses, volume, and delivery dates. Content which failed to resonate with readers could be summarily withdrawn, as Balzac found to his cost in 1844 when Girardin replaced *Les Paysans* with Dumas’s *La Reine Margot* after only sixteen episodes: *Les Paysans*, previously puffed as a ‘...phénomène du roman feuilleton devenu politique et social’,<sup>75</sup> was apparently boring readers because Balzac’s extensive character description in the opening chapters

---

<sup>74</sup> Balzac, Honoré de, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bardèche, (1963), vol. xxvii, 360-421, p. 365.

<sup>75</sup> *Gazette de France* of 29 November 1844, cited at ix.1243.

infringed public expectations of sensation and pace.(ix.1243-5) Its description as 'politique et social' indicates a further intrusion into the authorial domain: even if deliberate, these are characteristics more associated with the world of the newspaper than of the novel.

Balzac was evidently capable of writing about subjects which attracted readers, as his success during the *folie du conte* of 1832-3 had shown. But it must also have been clear that Sue's narrative style adapted more easily to the *feuilleton* format than did Balzac's. Lyon-Caen asks whether Sue's work is more extended piece of journalism than novel.<sup>76</sup> Thérenty points out the difficulties which Balzac experienced in aligning chapter and instalment and quotes Georges Sand's view that Balzac lacked Sue's talents for cliff-hanger endings to instalments.<sup>77</sup> Guise notes how this affected Balzac's writing career during the period between *La Torpille* and *Esther*, as Dumas and Soulié as well as Sue all succeed in publishing more in the *roman-feuilleton* than Balzac.<sup>78</sup> Even Balzac's method of writing and revision differed fundamentally: each narrative episode, usually consisting of multiple *feuilletons*, needed to be complete and painstakingly corrected at proof stage before the 'bon à tirer' could be

---

<sup>76</sup> Lyon-Caen (2006), pp. 180-185.

<sup>77</sup> Thérenty, Marie-Eve, 'Chapitres et feuilletons : les scansions-fantômes de La Comédie humaine' in *Balzac et alii, génétiques croisées. Histoires d'éditions*, ed. by Takayuki Kamada and Jacques Neefs, Actes du colloque international, organised by the Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes, 3-5 June 2010, <http://balzac.cerilac.univ-paris-diderot.fr/balzacetalii.html>, accessed 22 July 2016, pp. 8-14, with the quotation from Sand at p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> Guise, René, 'Balzac et le roman feuilleton' in *L'Année balzacienne*, (1964), 283-338, pp. 298-99.

given, while Sue wrote by instalment and appears untroubled by the inconsistencies which this engendered.

*Esther*, therefore, had to be a narrative capable of sustaining multiple alternative readings. It needed to be a financially viable narrative, capable of finding a place in the *feuilleton* and of exploiting the tricks of Sue to entice publishers and subscribers. Balzac's correspondence with Mme Hanska makes it quite clear that he thought of the competition with Sue in economic terms: in a letter dated 17 September 1844 he writes: '...je ne peux pas, je ne dois pas, je ne veux pas subir la dépréciation qui pèse sur moi par les marchés de Sue et par le tapage que font ses deux ouvrages...'.(EH i.910). On the other hand it needed at the same time to be a method of differentiation from Sue and of rejecting the notion of fixed narrative value. Its choice of subject – the creation of the false prospectus for *Esther's* public offering to Nucingen - betrays its construction: a false prospectus intended, by the very act of emulation, to debunk Sue, to demonstrate that his system of narrative fixed exchange rates where stock characters, plots and narratives devices can deliver predictable reader reception is bankrupt and credible only to those with no literary discernment. Its victims may even include Balzac himself, attempting to create a financially viable narrative out of his parody while simultaneously trying to demonstrate that he does not have to conform to the normative values of the *roman-feuilleton* to survive.

---

At one level, therefore, it is essential that the *Esther* narrative is capable of being taken as 'du Sue tout pur'. In two pages, Balzac sweeps away the baggage of *La Torpille*: the now unnecessary disguise of Herrera is cast aside; Esther is reinstated as 'une reine...de théâtre', and the diabolical powers of 'l'Espagnol', with anonymity reinforcing mystery, are reinflated.(vi.481-2) The characters of Europe and Asie acknowledge public taste for both the exotic and the taxonomic.(vi 483-485) The figure of Esther as spiritually reformed but physically practising prostitute allows Balzac to offer the promise of voyeuristic titillation while retaining a defence against immorality. The passage of time – 'quatre ans de bonheur' in the original chapter title allows a new scene to be set in which Esther's seclusion enables her to be repositioned as the maiden in distress.(vi.487) 'L'Espagnol' can be revealed as Jacques Collin, *dit* Trompe-la-Mort, escaped convict (vi.502-503) who can do battle on a level playing field with Sue's Chourineur.<sup>79</sup> Literary references are marshalled to guide the reader to established and familiar repositories of narrative value. Lucien and Esther's love affair is linked to a canon of romantic literature, *Paul et Virginie*, and to the classic of the exotic genre, *Mille et une nuits*.(vi.486,491) References linking Herrera to Faust, which had begun as soon as the masked figure appeared in *La Torpille* (vi.434, 445-46), culminate at the beginning of *Esther* in an overt allusion to the

---

<sup>79</sup> *Les Mystères de Paris*, ed. Lyon-Caen (2009), pp. 63-70.

Faustian pact which Lucien has concluded with Herrera – ‘...l'un de ces pactes infernaux qui ne se voient que dans les romans...’(vi.502).

The allusion to the novelistic setting is no accident: these are all attempts to anchor narrative value in known categories which produce predictable responses from the contemporary audience. Readers of *Maturin* or *Hoffmann* would find reference points for the Mephistophelean presence and powers of Herrera in Melmoth or the Archivarius Lindhorst of Hoffmann's *Der goldne Topf*. Readers of romantic literature would have found parallels for Esther's redemption across social and cultural divides in Chateaubriand's *Atala*. These were literary commonplaces which could be relied on for stable value. Iteration combined with growing fictional intensity, the stocks-in-trade of melodrama and of Sue's narrative construction in particular, carry the story to its climax. Nucingen fails four times to win Esther: when he fails to find her after the first, accidental, midnight meeting;(vi 495-99) when he is tricked by Europe into a meeting with a false Esther;(vi 552-56) when he is refused by Esther in an exchange of letters that reveals the seriousness of intent on both sides (vi 599-604), and when his final triumph is rendered hollow by Esther's suicide. (vi. 690-93) Balzac seems to follow Sue in his blend of the fantastic and a social commentary based in recorded observation. The depiction of the Parisian underclass, as represented, for example, by Europe, 'une figure fatiguée par les corruptions parisiennes'(vi. 485) relies on a mixture of detailed fact and

the received prejudices of the bourgeois target readership about the generic menace of the lower classes which Chevalier analyses in his *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris*.<sup>80</sup> The romance of Lucien's relationship with Esther is grounded by the financial realism and social hypocrisy of his courtship of Clothilde, illustrated by the original titles of succeeding chapters: 'Une fille de bonne maison' versus 'La maison d'une bonne fille'.(vi 510, 514) The candlelit drama of Esther's last supper is anchored by the most obscure details of her financial manipulations to falsify debts which Nucingen could be persuaded to pay.(vi.562-70)

But for all this imitation of Sue's and the *roman-feuilleton's* techniques, Balzac's narrative cannot disguise its differences. It is self-reflexive, aware of its own status as narrative, in a way which is foreign to Sue. 'Nous faisons de la prose' says Herrera on the first page of the 1843 script (vi.481): the implication, of sober factuality, is immediately belied by the following pages which create the Gothic spectacle of Esther as romantic heroine immured in solitary splendour, a creature of the night guarded by savage beasts. She herself is 'une reine...*de théâtre*',(vi.482, my italics) existing in a world of artistic illusion. Balzac ensures that the reader is continually aware of the status of the story as fiction and of its intended context within a journalistic environment. The literary

---

<sup>80</sup> Chevalier (1958): see especially pp. 469-96 for Chevalier's discussion of Balzac as a representative of bourgeois opinion on the lower and criminal classes.

references to *Paul et Virginie* and to *Mille et une nuits* are both signposts of convention and reminders of the fictional context. Herrera's Faustian pact with Lucien becomes not just a classic literary intertext but a specific reference to the journalistic motifs found in the *faits divers* or in the *Gazette des tribunaux*: 'un de ces pactes infernaux qui ne se voient que dans les romans, mais dont la possibilité terrible a souvent été démontrée aux Assises par de célèbres drames judiciaires.' (vi.502, my italics)

Nucingen's pastiche German accent acts as much as a diegetic obstacle to the reader's comprehension as a mimetic device to aid characterisation: it physically slows the process of understanding the text, emphasising the very viscosity of the medium itself.

References beyond the implied narrative frame to a wider narrative known to the reader and the author but not to the in-story narrator, in particular implied references to other titles of *La Comédie humaine*, (vi.488, 533, 534, 539, 559, 563, 567) ensure that we differentiate author from narrator in a manner foreign to Sue. The creation of Esther's elaborate false prospectus to fund Lucien's success out of Nucingen's lust is continually compared to the authorial process: 'Je suis l'auteur, tu seras le drame'. (vi.504) Different literary genres are explored, from the Shakespearean comic interlude (e.g. Peyrade as pastiche English *nabab*, vi.654-60), through the Richardsonian epistolary narrative (vi. 600-04), to a prototype *roman policier*: 'Pour la première fois, les deux artistes en espionnage [the two policemen, Contenson and

Peyrade] rencontraient donc *un texte indéchiffrable*, tout en soupçonnant une ténébreuse histoire'.(vi.629: the final phrase in the 1844 Potter edition is even 'un ténébreux roman')

And, as befits a text paid by instalment, the narrative is constantly aware of its own status as a financial commodity. The central plot line is that of the iterative auction for Esther's favours, illustrating precisely how the value of Esther's story can be manipulated by Herrera as 'auteur'. Lucien's courtship of Clothilde equates fiction and finance: his false love-letters, themselves a literary echo of Julien Sorel's seduction of Mme de Fervaques for her millions in *Le Rouge et le noir*. 'De quoi vit-il?' is the question on everyone's lips as Lucien's social ascent begins (vi.509): it relates equally to his financial and fictional status as both in-story characters and readers are asked to assess his creditworthiness and credibility. Even the lumbering puns of the original chapter titles are used to carry metaphors of investment and return, as 'Cent mille francs placés en Asie'.(vi 571) And the central images which link narrative and money are, of course, those of the *courtisane* and of Nucingen, essentially two sides of the same coin.

The metaphor of the courtesan(e) serves Balzac in many purposes: as a commentary on the commoditisation of human relationships; as a challenge to social hierarchy; as moral commentary on the used and the user; as a means of contesting gender stereotypes; not least as titillating

inducement to subscribers and readers. It also implies the false prospectus which Esther will represent for Nucingen. A *courtisane* is different from a *fille*: the name implies, at least in Balzac's world, an illusory promise of something more, overlaid on the fundamental commercial transaction – love, a relationship, status. Balzac shows us time and again the bad faith on which this is based. Florine secretly mocks Matifat (v.375-77); Valerie Marneffe manipulates Crevel (vii.331-37), just as Esther will play tricks on Nucingen (e.g. vi. 562-70). But he also is aware that the means by which the *courtisane* sells her proposition is exactly the same as the narrative device which drives acceptance of the fantastic: the punter's willingness to collaborate in his (or her) own deception.

The process is akin to a magician's trick in which the very denial of the fantastic ('look, no trickery') enhances its immanence. The audience understands it is being deceived but colludes in anticipation of pleasurable mystification. It allows itself to be persuaded to ignore or discount the fantastic by devices which deflect attention or bewilder, while at the same time demanding more. An appeal to an outsider can act as illusory self-validation of the authenticity of the narrative. The narrative acquires a sense not just of its ability to describe deception but of its capacity to be the agent of the process as well.

Nucingen is proof of concept: arch exponent of the false prospectus in *La Maison Nucingen*, here dupe himself. *La Maison Nucingen*, written and published contemporaneously with *La Torpille*, shows us the bridge between the false prospectus as financial tool and as literary device. The common element is that the narrative must be capable of different interpretations in the hands of different recipients. As a financial fraud, Nucingen's third and final bankruptcy depends on Claparon shareholders and Nucingen depositors both believing that Claparon shares are at first undervalued, then overvalued, while he, Nucingen, knows they are the opposite. The Nucingen depositors must also believe that Nucingen's rumoured bankruptcy is real while he knows it is not. Finally, Nucingen's partially informed associates, du Tillet and Rastignac, must behave with Claparon shareholders in respect of Claparon stock but with Nucingen in respect of Nucingen stock, choreographed to promote each in turn as the information they receive is manipulated. The same is true of the narrative itself. At the in-story level Nucingen's false prospectus is received and accepted as credible by his victims. At the level of the frame story Bixiou's narrative tells the opposite story and posits the existence of a 'discerning' reader able to penetrate and reveal the scam: the reader as investigative journalist or detective, with links to both literary genres. At the level of the reader of the text we may reflect, as does Armine Kotin Mortimer, on how the process of deception works, on whether we have not ourselves just been victims of a narrative manipulated to postpone our own understanding through a process of obfuscation, and on the conclusion

that Nucingen's skill ultimately lies as much in the manipulation of narrative as in that of securities.<sup>81</sup>

Is this narrative, therefore, also a false prospectus – not, or at least only in part, 'du Sue tout pur', but instead a parody of Sue? Balzac gives us fair warning that all narratives are potentially deceptive, and he ensures that we are constantly aware of the text's status as narrative. In parallel with the 'straight' reading of this part the reader becomes progressively more aware that an alternative reading could take it as a pastiche.

Its very subject matter is ambivalent, capable of being read as a simple, unreflexive narrative or alternatively as a parody of the simplistic assumptions about audience reception inherent in Sue's text. It describes the construction of a series of false prospectuses: Herrera will con Nucingen out of his money using the illusory value of Esther's availability; he will use Lucien to dupe Clothilde into providing him with a position in society; he will trick the establishment into accepting his own series of false identities. In each case the mechanism is that of the Sue novel: the audience's own preconceptions and criteria are played back to them. Esther becomes - almost - the *courtisane* that Nucingen expects her to be. Lucien provides – almost – the proof of financial substance required of him by the Grandlieus. But, as Esther remarks, each flower has its

---

<sup>81</sup> Mortimer, Armine Kotin, 'La Maison Nucingen, ou le récit financier', in *Romanic Review*, 69:1-2 (Jan-Mar 1978), 60-71.

worm,(vi.676) and we should perhaps take Balzac's hint to look closely. Herrera, superman and author of the false prospectus, fails at every hurdle. The market authorities, Peyrade and Contenson, are comically ineffective and, in Peyrade's case, melodramatically removed. But some of its recipients are able to see through its posturing: Derville and Corentin, literal readers of Lucien's backstory, are able to puncture the bubble of value.

The more we look at the detail, the more the fault lines appear. The opening section of the text is, as illustrated above, full of conventional devices of the *roman-feuilleton* designed to evoke predictable reader responses. Even here, we might notice a hint of cliché: the rather ham-fisted exoticism of Europe and Asie, the strained plausibility of Herrera's complete sequestration of Esther as the beauty in the tower. Even the original chapter heading as the scene is set seems to suggest an ironical and most un-Sue-like detachment: 'Chapitre ennuyeux car il explique quatre ans de bonheur'.(vi.487)

Gradually, however, Balzac seems to push the envelope. He is careful to introduce the shift slowly so that the reader only gradually becomes aware of it. A reader of *La Maison Nucingen*, for example, might notice that the Nucingen of *Esther* seems to share very little with his literary precursor: he may be called a 'loup-cervier' but what we see is a comically love-lorn Alsacien with a grotesque accent and a pot belly: this

is more vaudeville caricature than credible banker.(vi.492-95) The moral code of the narrative is that of the financial markets. As Charles Bernheimer notes, Herrera has saved Esther not out of moral purpose but to enhance her market value: the heart of gold has investable value - the very opposite of Rodolphe's treatment of Fleur de Marie.<sup>82</sup> Motifs of substitution and masquerade - 'le dandy, le faussaire et la courtisane' (vi 505) mix with those of narration and rewriting: underneath each of Herrera/Vautrin/Jacques Collin/Trompe-la-Mort's disguises is another one until - but this will only come much later - we begin to doubt that there is a 'real' character there at all. Peyrade's introduction as 'le père de Canquoëlles' presents us with another caricature, from the unpronounceable name which takes almost half a page to explain to the bombastic excess of his description: '...ce vieillard dodeliné de vices, calme comme un Vitellius dont le ventre impérial reparaisait, pour ainsi dire, palingénésiquement.'(vi 529) An original chapter headed 'Les Mystères de la Police' seems to confirm suspicions of a parody of Sue.

The shift towards the implausible is mirrored by an increasing inability to handle realism, as demonstrated by fictional overload in the passage originally, and aptly, entitled 'Faux abbé, faux billets, fausses dettes, faux amour' where the transaction by which Esther becomes the false debtor of false bills of exchange is so complicated as to lose even the

---

<sup>82</sup>Bernheimer, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute. Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 53-54.

most financially educated reader – and Balzac deliberately revises this passage in the Furne edition to introduce the completely new and immediately dropped character of D'Estourny to complicate the plot even further.(vi.563-64)

And could it be that Balzac reverts to what seemed inadvertent lapses in *La Torpille* to encourage us to see Herrera not as master criminal but as incompetent 'auteur'? Small errors in continuity appear: Esther is brunette, not blonde (vi.554 vs. 461), Herrera forgets an address he already knows.(vi.635) More crucially, he has failed to do his homework in establishing Lucien's character. Derville and Corentin, the lawyer and the policeman, the market-makers of narrative in *La Comédie humaine*, visit Angoulême and, within a few pages, are able to take apart Lucien's story. Herrera's own camouflage is pierced by one apparently trivial error in not disposing of a porter who has recognised Lucien: within a page, the 'texte indéchiffrable' becomes *lisible*.(vi.629)

Which way is up? The same themes of inversion which were first hinted at in *La Torpille* resurface. Herrera, characterised by the narrator as 'Le Mal, dont la configuration poétique s'appelle le Diable' (vi.504) is both author and lover of Lucien, 'cet homme à moitié femme':(vi.502) is authorship then equivalent to perversion? Is Peyrade's secret vice, entirely irrelevant to the plot, simply an excuse for another Sue-esque excursion into the sordid but compelling shallows of human depravity, or

is it a Balzacian commentary on the predictability of publisher or reader expectations? This narrative affords no definitive answer, perhaps because its need to remain a hybrid, a text which competes with Sue as well as a parody of his method, means that it cannot afford to. Its inflexion point is, symbolically, Esther's exchange of letters with Nucingen (vi.599-604). On the one hand it is the point at which she acquires her own narrative voice and an immediacy which greatly enhance the pathos of her death and the authenticity of Nucingen's grief. It is therefore an important device in securing narrative credibility. On the other, it is an equally striking parody of the implausibility of character construction in the *roman-feuilleton*, as the hitherto practically illiterate Esther suddenly acquires epistolary fluency. *Lettres échangées* become *lettres de change*, implying simultaneously the acquisition of real value by Esther as character and the suspicion that, despite her new-found plausibility, this is still a false prospectus.

Some contemporary critics seem to have agreed. Gobineau reviewed the Furne version of *Esther*, published finally under the title *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* in September 1844, (which, it will be remembered, omitted everything after the renewal of Esther and Lucien's love affair, vi.481) in *Le Commerce* of 29 October and was clearly unimpressed. '...dans Esther, dont la fable est excessivement compliquée ...l'action circule avec peine à travers les labyrinthes laborieusement construites ; elle se brise mille fois en route et, à la fin, au

lieu de se dénouer, elle se casse définitivement sans qu'on puisse deviner pourquoi ce livre s'arrête là.' He delivers a forceful critique of all the clichés of the plot and characterisation: 'Les courtisanes devenues des modèles de chasteté, les forçats luttant de dévouement et de délicatesse avec les plus beaux modèles de l'antiquité et des temps modernes, nous sommes accoutumés à ces singularités qui n'ont rien d'extraordinaire pour nous.' And perhaps, unlike subsequent critics, he spots the parody. 'Ainsi, à les bien considérer, les *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* peuvent nous servir, tout comme un autre livre médiocre, à inaugurer un système d'indulgence envers le roman-feuilleton. Ici, il peut venir un doute : ce roman a-t-il réellement paru au bas d'un journal quelconque ? Notre réponse sera catégorique ; peu importe que le fait matériel ait eu lieu, il suffit qu'Esther porte les marques évidentes de l'intention.'<sup>83</sup>

### **Lucien: deconstructing the false prospectus.**

It is at this point, sometime between February and July of 1844, that the story acquires its eventually definitive title, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*. A letter to Mme Hanska on 6 February calls it *Les Amours d'un vieux millionnaire*, while another on 16 July refers to it by its current

---

<sup>83</sup> *Le Commerce*, 29 October 1844 and *La Querelle du roman-feuilleton: littérature, presse et politique: un débat précurseur, (1836-1848)*, ed. Dumasy (1999), pp. 87-94. The quotations are at pp. 91, 92 and 93.

name in terms which imply a recent change (*EH*, i.803, 882). Is this, too, a false prospectus? The title seems at first to be rather Sue-esque with its implications of melodrama, investigative journalism and voyeurism. But on closer analysis an element of ambiguity creeps in. To which part(s) of the narrative do *splendeurs* refer? To which *misères*? Which category does Esther's death fall into? How will bourgeois morality cope with resplendent prostitutes without bowdlerising the very excess which the title advertises? And where, indeed, have all the *courtisanes* gone? – there are practically none in the final two parts of the book..., unless, that is, the allusion is gender-neutral in which case the prospectus is offering something else entirely. Perhaps the title itself is an invitation to re-read against the theme of the false prospectus. Received values, *splendeurs* and *misères*, turn out to be ambivalent, possibly inverted. Inversion leads to perversion as the underlying theme of sexuality resurfaces. Narrative itself becomes slippery, the medium of deception, perpetually self-questioning, multi-referential. Successful narrative, Balzac implies, requires excess - *splendeurs* and *misères* –to achieve melodramatic credibility, but the quest for intensity must inevitably end in failure as excess turns, at some unpredictable point, to over-the-top. And performing for money, creating predictable value for publishers, as the courtesan does for her (or his) clients, merely makes the inevitable happen sooner, as Esther's suicide has just proved.

The title appeared in between the publication of *Esther* in *feuilleton* form in mid-1843 and its re-edition in book form in 1844 against the apex of Sue's popularity. *Le Juif errant*, acquired by *Le Constitutionnel* for a record-breaking 100,000fr. in an auction with the *Journal des débats*, took over from *Les Mystères de Paris* and ran from 25 June 1844 to 26 August 1845. Not to be outdone, the *Journal des débats* acquired the serial rights to Dumas's *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*, serialised in competition to Sue from 28 August- 26 November 1844 for the first part and, after a suspenseful break to encourage subscription renewals, from 20 June 1845 to 15 January 1846 for the second. Balzac seemed to struggle to find his niche in this new market. His output dropped from 100 *feuilleton* instalments in 1841 to 54 in 1842, and although this picked up again to 109 in 1843 he was consistently unable to access the major titles and certainly could not compete with the rates commanded by Sue and Dumas.<sup>84</sup> The suspension of publication of *Les Paysans* was a watershed following which his publications in the *feuilleton* slowed to a trickle. But, as the short-lived craze for the *conte* had demonstrated, public tastes were fickle. Publishers tried to cash in: every newspaper had to have its *feuilleton*, and even the Dumas production line was unable to satisfy demand. Quality dropped: the critics were quick to pounce, and Balzac was recalled.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Guise (1964), p. 307 and Vachon (1992), pp. 217-19, 228-31.

<sup>85</sup> Guise (1964), pp. 305-24.

The third part of *Splendeurs*, consisting of the story of Lucien's imprisonment, interrogation along with Vautrin, and suicide, was written between December 1845, when Balzac visited the Conciergerie, and May 1846, and appeared in 14 *feuilletons* from 7-29 July 1846 in the pages of *L'Epoque* under the title *Une instruction criminelle*. It was republished almost immediately in volume 12 of the *Furne Comédie humaine*, but under the title *Où mènent les mauvais chemins* and without chapter headings – one wonders how many readers bought both expecting a different story. Both the platform of initial publication and the speedy re-issue indicate that, despite improvements, Balzac's financial position was not yet so assured that he could afford to ignore the successes of Sue and Dumas. He had made a more determined effort than ever before to reduce his debts, including repurchasing old letters of credit at discounts of up to fifty per cent of par on the strength of his own doubtful creditworthiness, and had at last squeezed a substantial sum out of Mme Hanska, but had then rather marred the result by over-spending in true Balzacian style on the new house at rue Fortunée and investing in railway stock which promptly crashed.<sup>86</sup> The need to make money was still there, as was the dilemma about how to reconcile literary production for posterity to that for profit.

'Le moment exige que je fasse deux ou trois œuvres capitales qui renversent les faux dieux de cette littérature bâtarde...', Balzac writes to

---

<sup>86</sup> Bouvier and Maynial (1938), pp. 410-45.

Mme Hanska on 16 June 1846. The context makes clear that he is thinking of a series of works including the two volumes of *Les Parents pauvres*: ‘...il faut pour la fin de juin, que j’aie fait 150f[euille]ts, 10 par jour en moyenne’.(*EH*, i.213) The *Lucien* narrative has been criticised as hastily constructed – Citron refers to ‘une rédaction trop rapide’, (vi.747, n. 1) Adam to lapses in style.<sup>87</sup> Prendergast describes the plot as ‘exotic’ and ‘threaten[ing] to run out of control’ from this point.<sup>88</sup> Brooks suggests that Balzac’s attempts to reconcile ‘a world of representation and a world of signification that do not coincide and do not necessarily offer access from one to the other’ drive him to ever greater excesses of melodramatic hyperbole.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps it is more helpful to consider *Lucien* as an experimental text in which Balzac attempts to disassemble the mechanism behind ‘les faux dieux de cette littérature bâtarde’ to find out if it is possible to construct a narrative which mimics its effect whilst simultaneously laying bare the artifice of its creation.

The narrative is an allegory of the process of creating contemporary fiction. It is composed of two competing accounts of the same story, those of Lucien and of Vautrin, pitched to the magistrate Camusot whose task is to decide which is true and which false, related by an opinionated and didactic narrator who provides a contextual overlay to the *récit*. He intrudes immediately and extensively, dominating the first

---

<sup>87</sup> *Splendeurs*, ed. Adam (1964), p. xxvi.

<sup>88</sup> Prendergast (1986), p. 109.

<sup>89</sup> Peter Brooks (1995), p. 148.

thirty or so pages of the story in a series of tail-gating digressions on *le panier à salade*,(vi.697-98) the judicial arrest and remand system,(vi.700-02) a guided tour of the Conciergerie,(vi.706-13) solitary confinement,(vi.715-16) the role of the *juge d'instruction* ...(vi.717-18)

Why? What is Balzac's purpose in changing the narrative frame at this stage in the text? Eric Bordas suggests that these narratorial digressions provide a link to a wider context to which the reader can relate.<sup>90</sup> The wider context is, in practical terms, that of the *roman-feuilleton* within the typical layout of the contemporary newspaper page. The narrator is in the position of a journalist. Outwardly he is self-assured, with expert knowledge of legal procedures and prison operations, and positions the narrative as purported documentary providing enlightening and socially instructive content, with helpful, if a trifle patronising, explication: 'Mais avant d'entrer dans le drame terrible d'une instruction criminelle, il est indispensable, comme il vient d'être dit, d'expliquer le marché normal d'un procès de ce genre...'.(vi.700) Beneath the objective exterior we soon become aware that he is colluding with author and publisher to select information which sells newspapers.

The prison system provides a fertile source of such commercial material: voyeurism into the lower classes, exotic depravations, access to

---

<sup>90</sup> Bordas, Eric, 'Pratiques balzaciennes de la digression' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:20 (1999), 293-316, pp. 315-16.

forbidden and criminal places, while simultaneously maintaining a defence against accusations of prurience. Explicit allusion is made to actual crimes with which the contemporary reader would have been familiar from, precisely, newspaper reports. The celebrated case of the murderer Castaing, guillotined in 1823 for poisoning the two sons of a rich notary to secure their inheritance and, thereby, the hand of his socially superior mistress, is referred to twice in the novel (vi.608 and 746). The first, by Asie to Nucingen in *Esther* as she ramps up the price of access to Esther, is no more than an unnamed allusion to the lengths to which men will go to get a girl. The second, at the opening of Camusot's interrogation of Herrera in *Lucien*, refers directly to the crime 'commis par Castaing', ostensibly as evidence of the psychological acuity of the magistrate, but indirectly as proof that the narrator's own investigative skills and access have created a written text with commercial value, as he is at pains to point out: 'Ce petit détail peut indiquer aux gens les moins compréhensifs combien est vive, intéressante, curieuse, dramatique et terrible la lutte d'une instruction criminelle, lutte sans témoins, mais toujours écrite'.(vi 746) It is difficult to imagine a more apposite description of the type of text a publisher could rely on for predictable reader response. The narratorial context provides a commercial backdrop to the rest of the narrative and a constant reminder that the text has to co-exist within a commercial framework whose objective is to sell subscriptions next week rather than create literary works for posterity. It is another version of the false prospectus, purporting to represent an

objective reality which is, in fact, selectively edited to fit in with the publisher's commercial objectives. Everything, the narrator asserts, comes to be seen through the prism of the newspaper. 'Ainsi, comme on le voit, les plus grands événements de la vie sont traduits par de petits faits-Paris plus ou moins vrais. Il en est ainsi de beaucoup de choses beaucoup plus augustes que celles-ci.'(vi.798)

'...*plus ou moins vrais*...'Narratorial *insouciance* masks authorial concern. The opening of the *Lucien* story, so dominated by the narrator, gives way to a discourse on disguise. Asie borrows both costumes and identities as she visits Camusot, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Mme de Sérizy in her efforts to help Herrera and Lucien.(vi.733-45) The figure of the 'marchande à la toilette', simultaneously costumier, trader of identities and procuress, is constructed from the essential building blocks of *Les Mystères de Paris*: mask, eroticism, social satire, the fascination of the upstairs/downstairs divide. But it also parodies the iterative hyperbole, the repetitive chase for intensity, of the Sue genre. Within a bare dozen pages Asie transforms herself into a *baronne du faubourg Saint-Germain* sufficiently convincing to penetrate the Conciergerie at exactly the right moment to meet Herrera, but yet is described in a manner which suggests more pantomime dame 'rudement sanglé[e]' than noblewoman. (vi.735) At what point, Balzac seems to ask, as Asie disappears down a staircase in pursuit of her lapdog, does the reader cease to respond as expected to the stimuli? The figure of the 'marchande

à la toilette' is an implicit challenge to narrative credibility. Asie moves effortlessly through society with no more than a change of clothes. If character is reduced to no more than clothes-hanger, then how can the novelist ever construct a credible personality within the straitjacket of the rules of the *roman-feuilleton*? Can the 'marchand de phrases' ever become a 'real' author?

The question is even more acute when applied to Herrera. The device of interrogation allows the separation of his story from that of Lucien: the two narratives, of the same series of events, are thereby opposed and contrasted for the reader as well as for Camusot. From the beginning of the *Lucien* narrative his character takes on a disturbing fluidity. 'Néanmoins, Jacques Collin ou Carlos Herrera (il est nécessaire de lui donner l'un ou l'autre de ces noms selon les nécessités de la situation) connaissait de longue main les façons de la police, de la geôle et de la justice' (vi.703): the implication that personality as well as alias might alter depending on situation leaves us wondering how this differs from the creation of an entirely new fictional character.

The impression that we are watching an experiment in narrative construction is reinforced when the very writing materials for his story emerge from under his wig as we see him laboriously composing his text for Camusot.(vi.717) Herrera's story (or is this Collin's?) is cast in the traditional Gothic devices characteristic of Sue and intended to evoke a

predictable audience response: the exotic Spanish priest, the disguised convict, a tale of poisoning and resurrection, of branding and firing squad. But at every point Balzac reminds us that we are readers of fiction, makes us aware of the devices he is using and uses the process to debunk the character he is creating. 'Il faut faire observer ici que Jacques Collin parlait le français comme une vache espagnole, en baragouinant de manière à rendre ses réponses presque inintelligibles et à s'en faire demander la répétition. Les germanismes de monsieur de Nucingen ont déjà trop émaillé cette Scène pour y mettre d'autres phrases soulignées difficiles à lire, et qui nuiraient à la rapidité d'un dénouement'.(vi.746) Balzac's rejection of pastiche accent here merely serves to underline his awareness of its effect in *Esther*. The original *feuilleton* chapter titles are studded with the usual heavy puns and wordplay: Herrera is 'un homme de marque';(vi.746, n. a) pithy phrases are finessed: 'Fin contre fin, quelle en sera la fin?'(vi 749, n. b) Perhaps the emblematic reference here is to the story of the 'Vinaigre des Quatres-Voleurs', a tale of thieves who stole with impunity from plague victims because they believed in the fiction that they would be protected by this vinegar.(vi.749) Some are able to thrive on implausibility: for others, the merest hint of suspicion would be enough to undermine the most carefully constructed fiction.

Balzac, we feel, experimentally drives his narrative over the edge of plausibility to find out where it is. Herrera feigns death by poison and survives: this is a stock device of melodrama which fits a narrative

convention accepted by both in-story audience and the reader.(vi.748) He bluffs his way out of the discovery of his branding by a tale of disfigurement by firing squad which already causes suspicion amongst the in-story listeners and strains credulity at the reader level.(vi.747) And finally he is identified by a spinster from a previous story who recognises his chest hair.(vi.756) Even the in-story audience giggles at this point: the modern reader may reflect that narrative momentum and credibility have been severely damaged: peeling off one layer of disguise has revealed the underlying failure of the fictional skeleton.

Herrera/Vautrin is, as he has been since *La Torpille* and *Les Souffrances de l'inventeur*, the agent of narrative disruption. Even the physical characteristics of the text contribute. In the *feuilleton* version of the *Lucien* text Balzac immediately establishes a new style of shorter chapters, typically addressing a single subject, such that the Furne text which dispenses with chapter headings can seem discontinuous and abrupt at times. Bordas suggests that the numerous digressions cause visible damage to the continuity of the text: 'La digression balzacienne, c'est l'aveu stylistique d'une disparate discursive qui prétend à la complétude et à la cohérence, mais dont l'énonciation ne cesse de faire entendre le rythme des brisures, des décalages et des contradictions.'<sup>91</sup> The Herrera narrative forces us to consider whether its Sue-like carapace

---

<sup>91</sup> Bordas (1999), p. 316.

is not, in fact, a false prospectus which is ultimately unable to deliver the value it promises.

If we assume for a moment that Balzac might have reached a similar conclusion, a natural response would be to try the experiment again in another genre to see if the same result was obtained. The story of Lucien's interrogation, involuntary inculpation of Herrera and suicide from remorse is, on the face of it, a romantic melodrama which has overt structural parallels to the conclusion of the preceding *Esther* narrative. The shift is heralded, appropriately enough in a chapter originally entitled 'Assez', by the delivery to Camusot of Esther's last letter to Lucien. The Epilogue to *Les Mystères de Paris* had been dominated by a series of increasingly tear-jerking letters describing Fleur-de-Marie's rejection of marriage and happiness, withdrawal to a convent, decline and eventual death.<sup>92</sup> Esther's letter sets a similarly sentimental and clichéd tone: the image of her arranging herself on her funeral bed before taking poison - 'je me *poserai*' (vi.760, Balzac's italics) - may even be reminiscent of George Cattermole's 1841 illustration of Little Nell's similarly composed death scene in Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop*.<sup>93</sup> Her previous foray into correspondence with Nucingen had differentiated her from the stock Magdalene through the liveliness of her epistolary style. Here the movement is in the opposite direction: despite retaining a freshness of

---

<sup>92</sup> *Les Mystères de Paris* ed. Lyon-Caen (2009), pp. 1157-1212.

<sup>93</sup> See <http://charlesdickenspage.com/curiosityshop.html>, accessed 29 June 2016.

expression she retreats back to the cliché of the dying heroine, as though whatever originality she possessed had been snuffed out by the requirement to conform to a literary stereotype: 'Onze heures sonnent. J'ai fait ma dernière prière, je vais me coucher pour mourir'(vi.763). Lucien begins in cliché as Herrera describes him in Byronic terms: '...une âme si jeune, si fraîche, une beauté si magnifique, un enfant, un poète...'(vi.764). His credibility is sustainable in front of neither Camusot nor the reader, and Balzac carefully points out that it is the act of writing which demolishes both. The *procès-verbal* he signs confirms Camusot's penetration of his cover and simultaneously causes a surge of strength with which Balzac purports to justify a change of character so dissonant with anything with which we have associated Lucien that it merits a special narratorial explication. 'Chez les gens dont le caractère ressemble à celui de Lucien, et que Jacques Collin avait si bien analysé, ces passages subits d'un état de démoralisation complète à un état quasiment métallique, tant les forces humaines se tendent, sont les plus éclatants phénomènes de la vie des idées'.(vi. 776)

Narrative itself is the very medium of 'la vie des idées' and the implication that Lucien's narrative credibility has just 'éclaté' is perhaps not entirely fanciful. The narrator dryly notes that his suicide reduces him to the status of a literary commonplace '...en lui remettant en mémoire le dénouement de Roméo rejoignant Juliette'.(vi 787) His will, two letters to Grandville and Herrera and the formal retraction of his evidence (vi.787-

91) self-consciously echo Esther's three letters to Nucingen and farewell to Lucien, and represent not only the attempt to recreate similar narrative value by plucking the same strings, but also its failure. His farewell letter compares Herrera to Pugachev, Robespierre, and Louvel.<sup>94</sup> We can only guess at the associations these three figures would have evoked in the mind of a contemporary reader, but it seems reasonable to suggest that they would have been relatively one-dimensional: Pugachev the pretender, Robespierre the architect of the king's execution; Louvel the now forgotten assassin of the duc de Berry in 1820. They represent people whose mention will create a predictable response from the audience because there is little else with which they are commonly associated.

And, this, the narrative suggests, is the real depravity of contemporary fiction: to pretend that this cliché-ridden, formulaic system in which fixed correspondences exist independently of the reader's judgement and into which the artist can retreat without challenge can in some way represent valid narrative. 'C'est la plante vénéneuse aux riches couleurs qui fascine les enfants dans les bois. C'est la poésie du mal', (vi.790) and its representative is the addressee of Lucien's letter, Herrera, the very agent of narrative perversion and author of this failed attempt to fix narrative exchange rates.

---

<sup>94</sup> Proust notes perceptively that these allusions are more credible in Balzac's voice than Lucien's. *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, ed. by Pierre Clarac (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 293.

How, then, Balzac seems to ask, is the reader to sift the false prospectus from the real? To assess his competing narratives Balzac proposes an in-story reader, editor and valuer: the magistrate Camusot. Just as Herrera has acted as author, so Camusot functions as a metaphor for the publisher: a recipient of the narratives of others, an initial judge of narrative value, an intermediary in passing the narratives on to an audience which may have very different views of value or whose evaluations may be influenced by different external factors, and, most importantly, as editor, able to rewrite or even suppress the narratives told to him.

Like Balzac, he tries to disentangle real value from the values others wish to project. 'Amants de la vérité, les magistrats sont comme les femmes jalouses, ils se livrent à mille suppositions et les fouillent avec le poignard du soupçon comme le sacrificateur antique éventrait les victimes; puis ils s'arrêtent non pas au vrai, mais au probable, et ils finissent par entrevoir le vrai'.(vi.767) He compares narratives: Herrera's against Lucien's, police records against oral *récit*. He can dismantle received narrative hierarchies, in particular the expectation that police files should be more truthful than oral testimony, comparing them ironically to the Bank of France's records of maintaining financial discipline. (vi.726) He is aware of the variable value of narrative and the difference which good editing can make – even to police files: 'Ces cartons

fournissent en quelque sorte l'envers de la tapisserie des crimes, leurs causes premières, et presque toujours inédites'.(vi.726)

He is conscious of his own role as reader and of the way in which his own reactions are manipulated by the narratives of others in ways designed to provoke a particular response, particularly through genre: Esther's suicide note to Lucien creates the intended spasm of jealousy but just as quickly represses it.(vi.763) He is also an editor, able to manipulate the texts of others, as his role in the redaction of Lucien's evidence illustrates.(vi.785) As publisher, though, he loses control of his own destiny to that of '...les sept à huit publics qui forment le public' (vi 719) who seek to manipulate the narrative to their own ends. His wife, the prosecutor general, Mme d'Espard, Mme de Sérizy, the Duchesse de Maufriigneuse, Herrera and Lucien all seek to amend, suppress or subvert the evidence. The implication is that narrative itself is unstable: one version may conform to a predictable value association, and then only within a defined readership, but multiple other actual or potential versions of the same narrative can exist simultaneously. The destruction of one variant simply allows another to take its place: the chapter ends with the forcible censorship of Lucien's incriminating *procès-verbal* by Mme de Sérizy and its replacement, symbolically, by '...de petits faits-Paris plus ou moins vrais'.(vi.798)

What appeared initially as ‘une rédaction trop rapide’ seems on closer inspection to be a carefully constructed investigation of the mechanisms for creating narrative value in the contemporary market for literature. If so, its conclusions are fairly pessimistic. The search for predictable value leads towards narrative which, like those of Vautrin and Lucien, only work up to the point where their iterative search for intensity drives them over the edge of parody. Only a blissful lack of awareness of the parodic potential can confer any authenticity to this approach: the technique is simply not acceptable, Balzac implies, for any author alert to it. Publishers have the power to misappropriate, rewrite or substitute narrative in an effort to create an illusion of authenticity that the reader will buy. For the reader, no narrative is definitive, there is always another format, a pirate version of the text, a different edition, a censored copy, a version told by another, another false prospectus.

### ***Vautrin* – Vautrin or Vaut rien – who decides?**

The title of the final part, *La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin*, immediately echoes this theme of multiple narratives. It suggests both conclusion and confusion. Is this the last, or merely the latest, of Vautrin’s incarnations? And what of Herrera, Jacques Collin or Trompe-la-Mort? Do these aliases perish in a final incarnation as Vautrin, or do they survive in alternative, renamed and distinct incarnations? Do they, indeed, become

separate fictional characters? And why do all these questions arise, since the title also implies the agency of an author who appears to know from the outset that this is some sort of final version and who can therefore determine narrative direction? Does the title, in fact, imply the opposite of what it appears to represent: questions instead of answers; iteration instead of certainty, *misère* instead of *splendeur*, a false prospectus in a phrase?

There is evidence to suggest that the *Vautrin* narrative was written at a point in Balzac's life when some of the previous pressures had eased. The manuscript, which had been planned together with the *Lucien* story, was written during December 1846 and January 1847 and seems to have been finished around 21 January 1847. Eveline Hanska had agreed to marry him. His financial problems, thanks principally to her credit, were less pressing although the house on the rue Fortunée remained a money sink. At the same time *La Cousine Bette* was appearing in *Le Constitutionnel*, where from 8 October 1846 it alternated with Sue's competing title, *Martin, ou l'enfant trouvé*, which was serialised from 26 June 1846 to 5 March 1847. For the first time Balzac seemed to have gained the upper hand. *Martin* had disappointed readers and publishers: '...Sue dégringole', Balzac writes on 5 August 1846 to Mme Hanska 'Il n'y a qu'un cri sur sa publication. On trouve cela hideux et honteux, il est perdu'. (EH, ii.291) Its failure, at least by Sue's previous standards, led to a reevaluation, both financially and critically, of Balzac's work. *Bette* was an

immediate success and Balzac's stock rose. 'L'immense succès de *La Cousine* a causé des réchauffements chez les journaux, ils voudraient de moi...' is his typically modest commentary to Mme Hanska on 24 October. (EH, ii.389)

Once again he had access to the major circulation newspapers. *Vautrin* was quickly picked up by Girardin's *La Presse* when the publisher of *L'Epoque* hit financial difficulties, despite continuing rankles over the 1844 midstream cancellation of *Les Paysans*. In the spring of 1847 Balzac found himself publishing three novels simultaneously, in the pages of three different journals: *Le Cousin Pons* in *Le Constitutionnel* from 18 March to 10 May; *La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin* in *La Presse* from 13 April to 4 May, and *Le Député d'Arcis* in *L'Union monarchique*.<sup>95</sup> Everything seems to suggest that Balzac had finally found a literary formula which reconciled the competing demands of the newspaper and the novel. There was even to be a sequel, another incarnation, depicting a final subterranean duel between *Vautrin* and *Corentin*.

The *Vautrin* narrative is, in many senses, a story of deception. It relates a tale of duplicity: Collin (to give him his prison identity) starts by convincing the other convicts to help him in maintaining his cover as Herrera; he exploits this to save the guilty Calvi by deceiving La Pouraille into taking the blame for Calvi's crime; he blackmails the authorities into

---

<sup>95</sup> Guise (1964), pp. 327-32, Vachon (1992), pp. 255-75.

reinventing him as chief of police against the return of compromising letters which themselves reveal the hidden natures of society ladies. This is a narrative that would not look out of place in any of Sue's works. It plays on cliché and received attitudes: the same fascination with the criminal classes that we have seen in earlier parts;(vi.822-44) the same revulsion in front of the machinery and method of execution;(vi.844-51, 856-59); the same curiosity in the face of an apparently unsolvable crime;(vi.851-56); the same titillation from the revelation of sexual depravity particularly when related to class hierarchy.(vi 831-35, 901-03). It is an aggressive assertion of confidence in the ability to carry the reader through further and more extreme iterations in the search for a novel way of experiencing the expected.

It relies on a narrative hierarchy of reader reaction every bit as established as the hierarchies it so carefully describes: the aristocracy of the criminal world, the *haut pègre*, the Grands Fanadels and the Société des Dix-Mille;(vi 831-32) the aristocracy of high society whose rules are set out by the duc de Grandlieu 'On doit, avant d'admettre quelqu'un, bien connaitre sa fortune, ses parents, tous ses antécédents...' and commented on by the narrator: 'Cette phrase est la morale de cette histoire, au point de vue aristocratique'.(vi.883) It is no coincidence that Balzac chooses to emphasise these hierarchies so clearly in the *Vautrin* narrative, nor that he links them to specific language codes which emphasise their relevance to its medium. The *argot* of the criminal world becomes a shorthand

which immediately alerts the reader to setting, context and emotional response.(vi.828-30) The explicit nature of Diane de Maufrigneuse's correspondence with Lucien represents a transgression of the indirect and allusive mode of expression of the aristocracy, and its description in a further layer of circumlocution acts as a sort of linguistic veil to intensify the expected erotic charge. 'Aussi la duchesse avait-elle conservé ces lettres émouvantes, comme certains vieillards ont des gravures obscènes, à cause des éloges hyperboliques donnés à ce qu'elle avait de moins duchesse en elle.'(vi.877)

The reader will be able to follow the story to its most fantastic reaches without loss of credibility precisely because these rules of fiction specify that the more fantastic something appears, the more real it is likely to be: 'La hardiesse du vrai s'élève à des combinaisons interdites à l'art...'.(vi.873) This is, self-consciously, the narrative of Vautrin, an assertion of the stability of identity, of the existence of rules on which an author can rely, on a system of fixed cultural, social and emotional correspondences shared with a readership, and finally on a predictable financial exchange rate for the publication of narrative which will recognise the creative force of the author. It is the world in which genius can, reliably, thrive, since all the inconveniences and unpredictability of audience response based on free will have been eliminated. It is symbolised by 'l'homme au secret', the prisoner in solitary confinement and the original title of the fourth chapter of the narrative in which

Vautrin is (re)introduced. His reincarnation, we are told, is a narrative inevitability after Lucien's death: 'Le petit épagueul mort, on se demande si son terrible compagnon, si le lion vivra!'(vi.813) In this world where reader reaction can be determined before it has even happened it is easy to postulate fixed correspondences. 'Dans la vie réelle, dans la société, les faits s'enchaînent si fatalement à d'autres faits, qu'ils ne vont pas les uns sans les autres'.(vi 813) Without a reader other than the planted *mouton* the artist can express his untrammelled talent without constraint, in echoes of *Séraphîta*: 'la solitude n'est habitable que pour l'homme de génie qui la remplit de ses idées, filles du monde spirituel...'.(vi.849)

But this is the world according to Sue. In a parallel universe this cosy reliance on fixed exchange rates disappears. Balzac seems openly to subvert his own text. He sets up an opposition within which the reader has a stark choice: to subscribe to the prospectus and 'buy' Vautrin's conversion to civic worthy – or to tear up the prospectus and walk away empty-handed.

From the very first chapter narrative is, again, confirmed as unstable. Themes of rewriting and re-reading appear repeatedly in an opposition which echoes the theme of the title, *splendeurs* and *misères*. The section opens with depictions of both: Amélie Camusot redrafts her husband's interrogatories to suit alternative audiences,(vi.802) while Vautrin re-reads Lucien's final letter, repeated verbatim to emphasise the

focus now on the act of reading rather than writing.(vi.819-20) The original title of the first chapter, 'Les deux robes', suggests both disguise and co-existing alternatives: whatever the provisional truth, it can be revised, as Amélie Camusot demonstrates. Even scientific fact is open to reinterpretation, as Balzac's digression on magnetism underlines, by relating as fact opinions which readers in 1847 would have known to be a sham.(vi.810)<sup>96</sup> The act of rewriting calls into question the validity of any apparent narrative hierarchies. The protagonist's identity fluctuates according to label and milieu in a parody of conventional literary device: the Vautrin of the title is quickly discarded for 'Jacques Collin, surnommé Trompe-la-Mort dans le monde des bagnes, et à qui maintenant il ne faut donner d'autre nom que le sien...' (vi.812; we may recollect with irony a similar phrase at vi.703 which limits the choice to Collin or Herrera) but, as if this confusion were not enough, the narrator reverts within three pages to calling him both Vautrin and Trompe-la-Mort.

Carefully built suspense is sabotaged: the much awaited confrontation between Collin and the convicts ends in bathos as Collin's mastery of disguise is exploded immediately, itself a commentary on the ease with which rewriting can be rewritten.(vi.841-42) Narrative itself becomes an obstacle to comprehension, as illustrated by the use of *argot* as both a code requiring specific skills on the part of the reader and a parodic questioning of the value of acquiring such skills. *Argot* overload,

---

<sup>96</sup> *Splendeurs*, ed. Adam (1964), p. 502, n. 1.

together with translations in brackets, forms a visual and typographical barrier to comprehension which seems to draw attention to its role as a disruptive device and to act as a graphic parody of Sue's own use of convict slang.(vi 845-46)

The plot zigzags erratically. New characters – the convicts, Théodore Calvi and his entire entourage - appear with as little regard for narrative convention as Balzac accorded to Esther and Lucien in dismissing them from previous sections.(vi. 851-65) Vautrin's conversion from master-criminal to chief of police parodies any narrative hierarchy that can think this a plausible development. By extension, a common critical reading of this switch as social satire, a Balzacian commentary on the lack of difference between the worlds of crime and high society,<sup>97</sup> is also undermined: if implausible, then hardly satirical. Time and again the reader is asked whether he is prepared to accept yet another iterative round of excess as *vraisemblable*: at what point, precisely, does he put the book down? What system of narrative conventions allows us to suspend disbelief as we read a scene in which Asie, stuffed into the costume of a *marquise*, is able to hold an entire secret conversation with Collin dressed up as a Spanish priest in front of assembled magistrates and police simply by adding random endings to French or *argot* words?(vi.868-65) Are we so mesmerised by the notion that the fantastic is an indicator of

---

<sup>97</sup> Prendergast, for example, argues that this is an essential part of Balzac's totalising vision, in which vice, symbolised by motifs of debased sexuality common to all classes, erases social and moral distinctions. Prendergast (1978), pp. 61-89.

intensified reality that we fail to consider that it might be simply preposterous?

Looking to readers for answers is a fruitless exercise. The in-story readers/recipients of the Vautrin prospectus - layers of magistrates, politicians, police, wives and mistresses, criminals – all fall into the traps and deceptions of the text with depressing predictability. Camusot vaunts his ability to develop reading strategies which unlock entire criminal plots from a single glance – but his report still has to be rewritten by his wife.(vi.805) The audience is frequently untrustworthy, a stooge in a solitary cell, a policeman in disguise.(vi 851, 859-62) Reception does not imply comprehension: even the capacity to understand is mocked. Collin is able to plot with Calvi within earshot of the disguised Bibi-Lupin simply by talking in Italian.(vi.859) Balzac emphasises the connection by telling us that the conversation took place at reading speed.(vi.860) Calvi's crime is a sealed-room conundrum in which the eventual explanation, when revealed, is as obvious as it is improbable – and as improbable as it is obvious.(vi.861)<sup>98</sup> like the ape in Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*.<sup>99</sup> The deal by which Collin persuades La Pouraille to take responsibility for Calvi's crime is so complicated that the reader, like La Pouraille, is left confused and with an ill-defined feeling of having been taken for a ride.

---

<sup>98</sup> The murders in a sealed room are this time explained by Calvi's diminutive girlfriend who climbs down the chimney to let him in, then locks the door and climbs back out once the crime has been committed.

<sup>99</sup> First published in *Graham's Magazine*, April 1841, translated into French and published in *La Quotidienne*, 11-13 June, 1846.

(vi.865-72) La Pouraille's suspicions will, of course, turn out to be justified when Collin betrays him: just like the reader, he has been sold a false prospectus.

Increasingly all that matters is the ability to project a story, irrespective of any underlying concern for plausibility. 'Les états qu'on fait dans le monde ne sont que des apparences; la réalité, c'est l'idée!' says Collin as he prepares his own false prospectus as chief of police.(vi.911) a transaction which will be symbolically completed by an exchange of narratives: his rewritten biography against the letters of Lucien's three lovers, fantasy censoring reality.(vi.920)

The final pages emphasise this point, if emphasis were needed. Mme de Sérizy is consoled by a letter from Lucien containing expressions of devotion which we as readers know to be fake.(vi.932-33) Collin's new position is based on evidence of Esther's and Calvi's innocence which, again, the in-story recipients believe to be genuine but which we know to be fraudulent.(vi.926-27) The conclusion itself, when it comes, is so perfunctory as to raise questions about whether Balzac cares at all about the reader's opinion.(vi.934-35) Readers, Balzac seems to imply, are simply not equipped to value a narrative which they lack the basic skills to decipher. Worse, there is no consistency of interpretation: every reader seems to produce a different interpretation and there are as many interpretations as readers. The writer is caught in a vicious circle: if the

reader, finding no value in the text, stops reading, then there is no point in writing. The reader who continues reading is, arguably, of value only to the publisher, never to the author.

Writing for a posterity which might bring a different set of values is the only option, and here again *Vautrin* incorporates its own answer. Trompe-la-Mort is the very emblem of posterity, the narrative that survives, the icon of perpetual reincarnation. But, asks Balzac, how credible is the pastiche reincarnation which *Vautrin* achieves? Is translation from Gothic outlaw to establishment functionary promotion or demotion? There is a sense in which Balzac's ending calls into question the entire value of writing: *Vautrin* or *vaut rien*, indeed.

So are we to take this as the final part of an experimental novel in which Balzac explores the contradictions between the demands of the marketplace and the qualities of viable literature, or simply as a failed example of Balzac trying too hard to write for a *feuilleton* readership? Both Gide and Proust seem to suspect the latter, with Gide criticising Balzac's ham-fisted attempts at subtlety<sup>100</sup> and Proust his servile adherence to a received social hierarchy.<sup>101</sup> But we have followed the evolution of *Splendeurs* through all four episodes of its creation over a period of twelve years. Through each we have seen how Balzac first

---

<sup>100</sup> Gide, André, *Journal, 1889-1939* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), pp. 1225-26.

<sup>101</sup> Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, p. 292.

engages with the marketplace and then comes to challenge the literary straitjacket which it imposes. This final part of the text is, perhaps, an acknowledgement of defeat.

From the opening chapter, Balzac hints that the normal processes of narrative formation are breaking down. Camusot, a lawyer and thus of generic importance in *La Comédie humaine* as market-maker and marketplace of narrative, returns in a state of 'décomposition'. His wife tells him to start his story from the end.(vi.799) Inverted text signals inverted meaning, 'l'envers des tapisseries', just as his wife rewrites his manuscript.(vi.803) And inversion leads to the *inverti*, 'l'homme au secret' – a man with a secret as well as a man ostracised from society. It is not, perhaps, until this final part of *Splendeurs* that we realise that the strongest and clearest impressions we take away probably relate to the erotic undertones– and if we find them pungent today we can assume that they would have appeared even more so to a contemporary audience. Collin's reaction to Lucien's death confirms the strength of homoerotic emotion in the bonds which linked them.(vi.818) There is a clear lesbian overtone in Diane de Maufrigneuse's semi-nude promenade in front of Mme Camusot.(vi.879) The salacious letters of all three of Lucien's lovers confirm what we have suspected for some time: that his own confused sexuality acts as a catalyst to release inhibitions in others, from Esther to Collin.

This theme, we now understand, has been gathering intensity throughout the work. What in isolation seemed like a bid for shock value now becomes part of a consistent pattern. Esther's sexuality is intensified by the contrast between her submissive façade and her training as a *filie*. Peyrade, clownish maestro of the instantly penetrated disguise and *père de famille*, saccharinely overprotective of his daughter Lydie, is also the Père Canquoëlle, paedophile.(vi.534) Lydie herself, another of Lucien's lovers even if only from a distance, is kidnapped, prostituted and finally driven mad.(vi.677-83) The criminal world is characterised by its gargantuan sexual appetites.(vi 833-34) As the novel advances through its four stages, so the Sue-esque concept of retribution for deviance weakens.<sup>102</sup> Peyrade may die, but Vautrin survives.

Other contemporary works show a similar degeneration into sensory excess. The description of the relationship between Pons and Schmucke, never explicitly confirmed as homosexual, is described in terms which suggest a married couple – 'en mariant leurs richesses et leurs misères'(vii.499) - and, one suspects would have been all the more transgressive to a contemporary audience by the very suggestion that this was 'normal'. Remonencq's sexual appetite, driven by 'les brutalités de [ses] désirs' leads to the murder of Mme Cibot's husband.(vi.655) Baron

---

<sup>102</sup> Bernheimer suggests that this is a cornerstone of Sue's moral viewpoint. 'The model of enlightened behaviour Sue proposes for the rich thrives on plotting the elimination of characters whose erotically charged deviance provides the plot of *Les Mystères de Paris* with its most narratable story lines.' Deviance is tolerable only as long as it provokes the appropriate counter-discipline. Bernheimer, (1989), p. 51.

Hulot, pillar of the establishment initially in *La Cousine Bette*, joins Peyrade in his taste for young girls.(vii.438) Valérie Marneffe, the obverse of Esther's coin in exploiting sensuality rather than sentiment, ends in physical and narrative disintegration: her bodily 'décomposition' from disease introduced by Montès (vii.329-430) is paralleled by the narrative disintegration introduced by Vautrin's return as chief of police (vii.402). The metaphor of disintegration, *Le Tout en morceaux* as Dällenbach calls it, is picked up in the *Vautrin* narrative.<sup>103</sup> Collin goes to pieces in the presence of Lucien's body: the image is compared first to over-smelted iron, then to Napoleon's 'dissolution' after Waterloo.(vi.821-2)

The plot and linguistic disintegration we have already seen are not just clever devices to make a point about literary value: they are genuine impairments to the text which suffers accordingly. If the in-story audience is confused or finds its credulity stretched, then so do we as readers. In contrast to previous sections, it is more difficult to engage as a reader with this last part of *Splendeurs*. The central plot of Vautrin's conversion would defy credibility entirely were it not for the already shaky characterisation of a Balzacian superhero who suffers from such a surfeit of aliases that we realise we have never been quite sure about who he is anyway. The removal of the more one-dimensional major characters, Lucien and Esther, leaves a void which a plethora of lawyers and convicts barely fills. This is a damaged, limping script which Balzac seems by the end to be in a

---

<sup>103</sup> Dällenbach (1980), 159-69.

hurry to get rid of. The promised sequel was withdrawn after its first mention. The false prospectus is, finally, revealed for what it is. Perhaps we should not be surprised that, to all intents and purposes, *Splendeurs* was Balzac's last major work.

*Splendeurs* is, I think, almost a secret diary of Balzac's struggle to come to terms with the commercialisation of the publishing industry in the 1830s and 1840s. It is unique amongst his works for its drawn-out composition over the entire central portion of this period. It was evidently important to Balzac, as demonstrated by his repeated returns to the text. Its completion seems to have marked some sort of a turning point in his life, since he wrote almost nothing more until his death in 1850. It is a novel which critics have found problematic, since it tends to disrupt most attempts to make sense of the Balzacian universe, particularly those which take Balzac at his word in suggesting Vautrin as the 'spinal column' of *La Comédie humaine*.<sup>104</sup>

I think it needs to be seen as an extended reflection on the emerging rules for the creation of narrative value, not by means of overt

---

<sup>104</sup> As, for example, Donald Fanger in *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 44-65. Balzac's own suggestion to this effect comes, tellingly, in the final part of *Splendeurs*: 'Il est impossible de faire une longue digression au dénouement d'une scène déjà si étendue et qui n'offre pas d'autre intérêt que celui dont est entouré Jacques Collin, espèce de colonne vertébrale qui, par son horrible influence, relie pour ainsi dire le *Père Goriot* à *Illusions perdues*, et *Illusions perdues* à cette Etude.' (vi.851) The fact that Balzac is about to make just the digression he denies so emphatically may be an indication that his tongue is firmly in his cheek.

commentary but through the composition of the text itself. Balzac begins in a burst of excitement as his own ability to turn narrative into income is confirmed. Competition brings self-analysis, not just of why he is losing but of what it takes to become a wholly professional writer in terms of stylistic compromise. Self-analysis leads to parody, but neither readers nor publishers seem to notice and satirical excess becomes, extraordinarily, a final burst of competitive and commercial triumph. In disgust, Balzac downs tools. In this narrative of the commercialisation of literature, Balzac is both virtuoso and victim.

\$\$\$\$\$\$

## Chapter III: Dostoevsky

### Who Buys the Story?

‘Isn’t this, too, some sort of novel?’<sup>1</sup> asks Fetyukovich, Dmitry’s defence counsel. A few pages later the prosecutor responds ‘We are accused of writing novels. But what is the defence doing, if not writing one novel about another.’<sup>2</sup> What, indeed, constitutes a credible narrative? Who decides? And is a single narrative adequate, or is iteration – a novel on a novel – an integral part of representation? I argue in this chapter that Dostoevsky’s literary output, and in particular *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Brat’ya Karamazovy*), evidences a continuing struggle between a desire to treat text as a prospectus-style medium for asserting an authorial view of its value, and a recognition that the need to write a work of fiction with

---

<sup>1</sup> ‘Уж не роман ли и это?’ (xiv.307). References to Dostoevsky’s works are to the Voskresen’е, 2003-05 edition, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii F.M.Dostoevskogo v XVIII tomakh*, ed. by G. N. Seleznev and others, 18 vols. with three supplemental volumes, hereafter referred to in the text by the volume number in Roman numerals followed by the page number in Arabic, thus: xiv.269, and in notes as *PSS 2003-05*. Supplementary volumes are identified as Suppl. i-iii. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Нас упрекают что мы насоздавали романов. А что же у защитника как не роман на романе?’ (xiv.319).

commercial value which would attract and retain readers imposed quite different requirements.

Evidence of Dostoevsky's preoccupation with reader reception is apparent even in his earliest works. His re-engagement with the literary world of the early 1860s after his return from exile placed him in a situation in which almost all public texts became part of a wider polemic. The Great Reforms imposed new commercial, legislative and judicial structures on a population which appeared to demand change but had little experience of how to handle it. The press copied the mass-market techniques of its English and French counterparts without having developed a mass market to address. Professional writers could not avoid becoming part of the polemic but needed to attract and retain subscribers for the periodicals in which they were published. Successful prose fiction demanded novelty to attract readers, yet had to be a predictable source of value for publishers. Dostoevsky's literary output reveals an unresolved tension between the economic need to tell a racy story which combined the staple commercial drivers of sex, money and crime with a philosophical debate about morality and nationhood.

So this chapter proposes an 'economic' reading of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Specifically, it addresses the issue of how the need to write for a commercial market, and the nature of that market, can be identified within the text through an examination of textual features which have

economic effects. In particular, I think that Dostoevsky uses genre and iteration, in other words the retelling of similar narratives in different styles or from different points of view, as an experimental technique to discover how changing the mode of delivery of a narrative can change its value to the reader.

My approach is of necessity interdisciplinary, involving aspects of economics, history and culture as well as literary analysis, so it intersects with the daunting body of critical literature on Dostoevsky at various levels without ever, I think, overlapping fully. It blends approaches taken by Todd, who shows how serialisation affects the novelistic structure of Dostoevsky's works, with those of Robin Feuer Miller and Robert Belknap, who show how stylistic devices, such as interpolated or iterated narratives, affect the act of reading and of reader reception.<sup>3</sup> It folds in those who have demonstrated the influence of changing newspaper formats and content on Dostoevsky's work. Leonid Grossman recognised as early as 1925 the importance of the commercial aspects of the literary market in which Dostoevsky participated and in particular the success of

---

<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing we still await Todd's promised work on serialisation, but a body of work has nonetheless been accumulated in a series of articles, edited volumes and unpublished papers, of which the most important for the present study are listed in note 13 to chapter I. A fuller list is given in the bibliography. Of Robin Feuer Miller's works *Dostoevsky's Unfinished Journey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), *Dostoevsky and The Idiot* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Twayne, 1992) are the most relevant. Robert Belknap's two major works on *The Brothers Karamazov* are contained in *The Structure of 'The Brothers Karamazov'* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967, reprinted by Northwestern University Press, 1989) and *The Genesis of 'The Brothers Karamazov'* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990).

the boulevard newspapers and the content which drove their sales.<sup>4</sup> John Jones and Jacques Cateau have examined Dostoevsky's use of newspaper material, particularly crime reporting, in his novels.<sup>5</sup> Gary Saul Morson, Harriet Murav and Irina Paperno, among others, have shown how *Diary of a Writer* (*Dnevnik pisatelya*) uses material from contemporary court cases, in particular those of Kairova, Kornilova and Velikanova, in a more journalistic setting.<sup>6</sup> Igor Volgin's work on Dostoevsky as a journalist also highlights how his scope encompasses both the intellectual and the popular registers.<sup>7</sup>

My analysis starts, deliberately, from an economic rather than a literary critical or a philosophical perspective. So, for example, I look for economic motivation in a switch of genre: does the new genre address a different reader demographic than the previous and, if so, why? Previous economic analysis of Dostoevsky's work has tended to focus on how he

---

<sup>4</sup> Grossman, Leonid, *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennaya akademiya khudozhestvennykh nauk, 1925), in particular the first chapter entitled *Kompositsiya v romane Dostoevskogo*, pp. 7-63.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, John, *Dostoevsky* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), part 3, 'Parajournalist', pp. 199-362, and in particular the final chapter, 'The Brothers Karamazov', pp. 297-362; and Cateau, Jacques, *Dostoevsky and the Process of Literary Creation*, trans. by Audrey Littlewood, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 180-91.

<sup>6</sup> See in particular Morson's introduction to Kenneth Lantz's translation of *Diary of a Writer*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), pp. xix-lxxiii, as well as broader studies such as Harriet Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998) and Irina Paperno, *Suicide as a cultural institution in Dostoevsky's Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Volgin, Igor, *Dostoevsky-zhurnalists: ('Dnevnik pisatelya' i russkaia obshchestvennost')* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1982). In his introduction to Peter Sekirev's *The Dostoevsky Archive* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1992), Volgin summarises his conclusions on the *Diary* thus: '...the ordinary readers of this periodical... felt the richness and diversity of different points of view united by some hidden denominator which defined the unity of publication and brought it out of the traditional limitations of the journalistic genre.', p. 28.

represents economic agents in his works. This has led to a 'Dostoevsky as social commentary' approach which draws attention to his depictions of the economic circumstances of his characters, from *Poor People* (*Bednye lyudi*) to Arkady Dolgoruky's ambition to 'become a Rothschild' in *The Adolescent* (*Podrostok*),<sup>8</sup> or alternatively to the way in which he represents money, again usually seen in opposition to the spiritual dimensions of his works. The role of the text itself as an economic agent, and of how Dostoevsky may have modified it to alter its commercial effect, has been less well addressed but is, to my mind, equally important.

The economic context is relevant as well. Both Bruce Lincoln's historical and economic account of the Great Reforms and Olga Maiorova's analysis of their cultural impact emphasise the feeling that Russia was in the middle of a gigantic experiment which would affect not just the political order in Russia but also its entire social, cultural and economic structure.<sup>9</sup> Old certainties had disappeared, to be replaced by a new and experimental order, as Ekaterina Pravilova illustrates in her analysis of the concept and legal status of private property over the period of the Great Reforms and beyond.<sup>10</sup> The literary world was no different. All Dostoevsky's major novels of the period depict the instability of any

---

<sup>8</sup> 'Моя идея, это – стать Ротшильдом' (x.61).

<sup>9</sup> Lincoln, W. Bruce, *The Great Reforms. Autocracy, Bureaucracy and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990), particularly chapter 5, 'Testing the Great Reforms', pp. 159-91; and Maiorova, Olga, *From the Shadow of Empire. Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology, 1855-70* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), particularly chapter 1, 'A Shifting Vision of the Nation', pp. 26-52.

<sup>10</sup> Pravilova, Ekaterina, *A Public Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

moment of equilibrium, from Myshkin's pre-epileptic second of rapture to the fleeting solidarity of Stavrogin's bickering small-town revolutionaries. The novel becomes, at one level, a repetitive debate on how to deal with the conditions of its own production. John Jones suggests, memorably, that Dostoevsky was 'writing the same book all his life' in different iterations.<sup>11</sup> Victor Terras speculates all too briefly that the novel may be a reflection on the art of writing a novel but never develops the thesis.<sup>12</sup> *The Brothers Karamazov* is Dostoevsky's most carefully orchestrated example of this technique of multiple, sequential, narrative bets. The very title suggests multiple perspectives around a family focus. Its plot is, in its barest essentials, a courtroom drama, a genre which depends on the competitive retelling of narratives. The accused's fate hangs not on facts but on narrative credibility. The issue of who has the 'better story' is fundamental both to Dmitry's conviction and to the opposition between Ivan's Grand Inquisitor and Alyosha's Russian Monk. It matters how the story is told. Genre has both philosophical and economic function: 'flawed utterance', in Malcolm Jones's phrase, may indicate a fallen world but, more practically, may deter readers.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> John Jones (1983), p. 308.

<sup>12</sup> Terras, Victor, *A Karamazov Companion* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), pp. 108-09. The theme is slightly further developed in a later article, 'The Art of Fiction as a Theme in *The Brothers Karamazov*' in *Dostoevsky. New Perspectives*, ed. by Robert Louis Jackson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 193-205.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, Malcolm, *Dostoevsky after Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.187.

I see Dostoevsky as a 'speculative' writer, acutely conscious of the difficulties inherent in presenting philosophical and moral debate within the context of fiction without reducing its economic value, strategically experimenting by retelling stories from different perspectives, or in different genres, to explore how altering the balance affects reader reception. The continuing critical polemic about Dostoevsky's 'meaning' or 'message' in *The Brothers Karamazov* is testament enough to the unresolved struggle between text which seeks to assert a fixed value and that which relies on the vagaries of reader judgement.<sup>14</sup> Iteration, the planned and controlled return to the gambling table to try a new game theory or simply to hedge bets, the re-versioning of a text to test a new mode of narration, becomes an obsessive inevitability. Speculation is at once an accurate descriptor of Dostoevsky's narrative technique, a reflection of his own character and an emblem of the culture of his age.

## **Reform, experiment and the novel**

Dostoevsky's strategy is, in many ways, simply a response to the uncertainties of the world in which he lived. The Great Reforms overlaid a major social and political restructuring on an already weak economic

---

<sup>14</sup> Susan McReynolds provides a good survey of the critical school which regards Dostoevsky as a Christian prophet and imputes messages to his works accordingly: see *Redemption and the Merchant God* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), pp. 3-19 and particularly pp. 5-6.

foundation. With hindsight, it is perhaps unsurprising that it took a full two decades, and the whole of Dostoevsky's life after his return from Siberia, to work through the problems created by the combination. In the early 1860s there were many open questions but few satisfactory answers. The economic consequences of reform were, in effect, a lottery.

Russia's 1856 defeat in the Crimean War sounded an economic as well as a political alarm call. The outdated muskets and warships which were overwhelmed by the modern equipment of the English and French forces attested to a chronically underinvested industrial base, a sclerotic civil service and a labour market still based on feudal principles. The conflict sharply exposed the contrasts between Russia and the West. The industrial revolution in Russia's main European competitors was completed by the construction of the railway network: in Russia it heralded the beginning. By the start of the 1860s Russia had laid just 1,500 kilometres of track compared to 15,000 in England.<sup>15</sup> Russians who travelled abroad could see clear evidence of the economic gulf not just in transport, but in technology, entrepreneurial opportunity and the availability of capital. Russia had hosted industrial exhibitions continuously since 1829, yet Dostoyevsky's *Underground Man* chooses the 1851 Crystal Palace in London as his emblem of industrial progress.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Konotopov, Mikhail and Stanislav Smetanin, *Istoriya ekonomiki Rossii* (Moscow: KnoRus, 2008), p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> A series of exhibitions called the All-Russia Industrial Exhibitions (*Vserossiskie promyshlennye vystavki*) were sponsored by the Ministry of Finance every four years from

Why had Russia allowed itself to lag so badly? A series of wars dating right back to the Napoleonic invasion had depleted the state coffers. Printing paper money in response had caused a collapse of the paper rouble, the *assignatsiya*, in 1817, and heralded a century-long sensitivity to the discounted value of paper money to silver coin.<sup>17</sup> The sheer size and climate of the Russian territory impeded industrial restructuring. The industrial base itself was fragmented both geographically and structurally, with few large enterprises and many urban trades and rural crafts traditionally operated by sole traders. The Russian labour force became a by-word for low productivity. Repeated social unrest in the West, particularly in France, also suggested a link between urbanisation, labour market reform and political activism which the authorities were not keen to import. War in the Caucasus in the 1840s had further destabilized the budget and undermined the fragile economic gains of the previous decade. After the defeat in Crimea the economic pressures to reform were, arguably, even stronger than the social and political drivers.

The social and political changes introduced by the Great Reforms were thus accompanied by a series of attempts to reform the economy. Mikhail Reiter, the finance minister to whom Alexander II entrusted the

---

1829, alternating between St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw. (St Petersburg Encyclopædia; [www.encspb.ru/object/2804001685?lc=en](http://www.encspb.ru/object/2804001685?lc=en), accessed 22 April 2016)

<sup>17</sup> Polunov, Alexander, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Autocracy, Reform and Social Change, 1814-1914*, ed. by Thomas Owen and Larissa Zakharova (Armonk: Sharpe, 2005), p. 73.

management of the economy from 1862 to 1878, was an educated and well-travelled man who had visited England, France, Prussia and The United States. Indeed, he was known as an Americanophile and was even nicknamed the 'Yankee'.<sup>18</sup> His travels would have made him acutely aware of the extent to which the Russian economy lagged behind those of its Western competitors. His response was to introduce some of the economic liberalization which had driven growth in the West. State finances were consolidated and even made public from 1862. Some state interventions, like the monopoly on salt, were abolished. Rights to collect taxes on alcohol were privatized, causing a sharp rise in alcohol abuse which Dostoevsky records in *Crime and Punishment (Prestuplenie i nakazanie)*. Regulations governing private enterprise were eased: founding a joint stock company no longer required government permission. Plans were drawn up to simplify the tax system and move from taxing individuals to taxing income. Tariff barriers were initially lowered and imports of technology encouraged. In particular, real efforts were made to introduce a private credit system to encourage allow greater access to capital. A new state bank was founded in 1860; private banks were introduced from 1863, and the state itself provided seed capital for key industries. By the mid-1870s more than 40 new banks had been established. Alaska was sold back to the United States in 1867 for

---

<sup>18</sup> Polunov (2005), p. 129.

\$7.2 million (some \$114 million in 2014 dollars, still a bargain) and the proceeds reinvested in railway construction subsidies.<sup>19</sup>

The market took the hint. Between 1865 and 1875 over 15,000 kilometres of new railways were constructed. The line from Warsaw to St Petersburg on which Prince Myshkin arrived had been completed in 1862, five years before Dostoevsky wrote this episode. Demand for raw materials became a catalyst for growth in the coal, oil and metal industries. Demand for workers stimulated reform in the labour market and in productivity levels. Capital flooded in, much of it from foreign sources, enticed by high rates of return and government backing.<sup>20</sup> A new class of merchant entrepreneurs emerged, providing local credit: Grushenka's successful investment career in *The Brothers Karamazov* illustrates, perhaps, how the demand for capital opened up new opportunities for different social groups to participate.(xiii.281)<sup>21</sup> From 1870 to 1873 259 new companies were formed with a combined capital of 516 million roubles.<sup>22</sup> Railway expansion opened up entire new economic regions, from iron and coal in the Donets Basin to cotton farming in the Transcaucasus.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-35.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.

<sup>21</sup> For a general discussion of the rise of the merchant classes during the Great Reforms, see Owen, Thomas, *Capitalism and Politics in Russia. A Social History of the Moscow Merchants 1855-1905* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), especially pp. 53-71.

<sup>22</sup> Polunov (2005), pp. 135.

<sup>23</sup> For a more extended discussion of the impacts of the Great Reforms on agriculture and industry, see Kahan, Arcadius, *Russian Economic History: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Roger Weiss (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), pp. 6-19.

Yet these proved to be isolated successes. The Great Reforms contained within them, or at least within their implementation, the seeds of their own failure. Not until the 1880s and beyond would the promise of the reforms be translated into real economic growth. The labour market required a mobile workforce free of ties to the land and prepared to work in new industries for wages, yet the terms of emancipation tied peasants unprofitably to their old estates. Land was redistributed but a series of compromises left the former serfs with redemption obligations stretching over 49 years, labour obligations to former landlords, and illiquid assets in the form of a share of the output of the communes to which they were assigned.<sup>24</sup> Land values were inflated, based on a notional annual quit-rent income capitalized at 6%, and compensation was 80% underwritten by the state. So landlords had little incentive to modernize or rationalize, and every incentive to retain employees on their land in a state of permanent indebtedness.<sup>25</sup> Even in 1877 Tolstoy's Levin still apparently requires a work quota from his former serfs, battles against their low productivity and is resigned to renting out privately land formerly offered to the collective.<sup>26</sup> And the government's fear of political unrest still obstructed the concept of a fully mobile, urbanized workforce.

---

<sup>24</sup> For a fascinating analysis of the evolution of property rights over this period and the economically stifling effects of multiple poorly planned and executed changes which created continuing uncertainty over property ownership, see Praviłova (2014), pp. 89-92.

<sup>25</sup> For more extended discussions of the impact of the terms of emancipation on the economy, see Konotopov *et al.* (2008), pp. 166-70 and Polunov (2005), pp. 106-09.

<sup>26</sup> *Anna Karenina*, book 8, chapter 11.

The very economic circumstances which had made radical reforms essential also conspired against their success. The financial foundations on to which emancipation was bolted were shaky. By 1862 the Russian state was on the verge of bankruptcy with over 2.5 billion roubles of debts. A wave of corporate bankruptcies had occurred and savings had dried up. An attempt to make the rouble convertible, at least against bullion, had been made in 1862 with the backing of a £15 million loan from the Rothschilds, but the loan proved insufficient, the currency collapsed and convertibility was suspended in 1863.<sup>27</sup> Plans to reform the tax system towards income and land taxes, which might have helped align tax incentives with labour reforms, were shelved. The sheer complexity of introducing such massive changes across society itself seems to cause a sharp drop in economic activity. Agricultural productivity remained stubbornly low until the 1880s and beyond. Industrial production initially shrank and investment dried up while uncertainty prevailed. Imports grew and the balance of trade deteriorated. Protectionism ensued and tariff barriers in many parts of the economy rose again after an initial attempt at liberalisation.<sup>28</sup> By the early 1890s a pound of sugar would cost three times as much in Russia as in England.<sup>29</sup>

Importing capitalism also meant importing its parasites, which found a supportive host in an already corrupt and opaque political

---

<sup>27</sup> Polunov (2005), p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Konotopov *et al.* (2008), pp. 172-84; Polunov (2005), pp. 135-38.

<sup>29</sup> Konotopov *et al.* (2008), p. 179.

economy. Speculation flourished, even though stock exchanges trading shares were forbidden until 1900.<sup>30</sup> The copy of the *Stock Exchange News* (*Birzhevye vedomosti*) in which Rogozhin wraps the 100,000 roubles he intends to pay for Nastasya Filippovna in *The Idiot* (*Idiot*) is indicative more of the growth of a trading mentality and the accompanying need for information than of any specific economic innovation. (viii.124) Railway barons abused government concessions and corruption remained endemic. Substantial transfers of wealth from the state to the private sector occurred. When, in 1874, the European economic crisis which had followed the Paris Commune of 1871 finally hit Russia, the fragile financial system collapsed. The combination of recession, a stock exchange crash, the bankruptcy of a major bank, a run on deposits and the subsequent Russo-Turkish War of 1877 undermined confidence and provoked a currency crisis and an exodus of foreign capital. Reitern resigned in 1878 and government economic policy, already returning to increased state regulation, became increasingly intrusive and restrictive.

The two decades of the 1860s and 1870s stand out as an economic as well as a political and social experiment. Comparison with European competitors highlighted the need for change. But introducing Western capitalism to an economy just emerging from feudalism was an experiment which would take far longer to conduct, and prove far more complicated, than anyone could foresee. Dostoevsky represents economic

---

<sup>30</sup> Polunov (2005), p. 135.

change as a threat or a pipedream. The very process of transaction itself, of exchange and negotiation, is characterized as revolutionary, the age of the third horseman of Lebedev's Apocalypse, "...the one that has the rider with scales in his hand, because in our age everything is weighed in the balance and settled by negotiation".<sup>31</sup> Luzhin's mercantile assessment of Dunya as an asset to be acquired in *Crime and Punishment* is both insistent and sinister.(vii.209-10). Arkady Dolgoruky's ambitions of wealth implied an impossible dream rather than a realisable aspiration.(x.61) Even gifts are suspect: Myshkin's windfall legacy in *The Idiot* may enhance his credit but the melodramatic inflation of his bank balance does little for his credibility as a fictional hero.(x.128-29) The theme of economic change as threat recurs in Dostoevsky's journalism, from his critique of European greed in his essays on the bourgeois in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions (Zimnie zametki o letnykh vpechatleniyakh, iv.336-51)* to his discussion of a feeling of social fragmentation or entropy, *obosoblenie*, in *Diary of a Writer (xi.346-49)*.

What was true in the wider economy was also true for the press. By the mid-1870s Russian literary culture had for decades parallel-tracked West European, and particularly French, publishing strategies without developing a comparable readership. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the French publishing market had begun to develop

---

<sup>31</sup> '[...мы...при всаднике] имеюшем меру в руке своей, так как все в нынешний век на мере и на договоре...' (ix.153).

the periodical newspaper as the decisive tool with which to expand the readership back in the 1830s. The Russian market followed suit, even at times appearing to lead the way. Publishers in both markets realised almost simultaneously the power of innovative, cheaper formats to drive subscriptions to periodical literature. In 1834 the Russian publisher Senkovsky set out to change the economics of the book trade by introducing the *Library for Reading (Biblioteka dlya chteniya)*, the first of Russia's 'thick' journals at a subscription price of 50 roubles per annum, far lower than the equivalent output in book form. A full two years later, in 1836, Girardin introduced *La Presse*, priced at 40 francs per annum or half the norm for competing papers. But the Russian readership was tiny in comparison. When Léon Curmer published his enquiry into the French national character, *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, in 1840-42, he was able to attract 22,700 subscribers. A very similar work published in Russia at the same time, *Nashi, spisannye s natyry russkimi* (literally *Our People, Painted from Nature by Russians*), attracted just 800.<sup>32</sup> Subscriptions to the *Library for Reading* peaked at around 5,000 and Senkovsky had ceased trading by 1845.<sup>33</sup> Subscriptions to *La Presse* peaked at 70,000 in December 1848 and the paper would go on to make

---

<sup>32</sup> Kufaev, Mikhail, *Istoriya russkoi knigi v XIX veke* (1927, reprinted Moscow: Pashkov Dom, 2003), p. 129.

<sup>33</sup> Beaven, Miranda 'Aleksandr Smirdin and Publishing in St. Petersburg, 1830-1840' in *Canadian Slavonic Papers*; 27:1(Mar, 1985), 15-30, pp. 22-29.

Girardin almost 3 million francs in cumulative profits by the time he sold it in 1863.<sup>34</sup>

Writers discovered that narrative could have economic as well as literary value. The use of serialised fiction to promote subscriptions to an expanding periodical industry occurred more or less simultaneously in the mid-1830s in both France and Russia. In the absence of a mass readership, faster presses, cheaper distribution networks, or any of the other factors which would eventually transform the business of literature, it was considerably more efficient to distribute literary content bundled into journal form. Authors were paid up to ten times as much for periodical content as for books.<sup>35</sup> For the next half century the publication of major prose fiction in serialized form, ahead of any eventual appearance, if successful, in book format, remained the norm in Russia as well as in France. But over that period the French pool of literate readers over fourteen years of age grew from an estimated 7.3 million in 1801 to some 17.8 million in 1871.<sup>36</sup> Although literacy statistics for the period in Russia are suspect, in 1825 there were perhaps 50,000 'real' readers out of a nominally literate pool of no more than 5% of the population, or 2.5 million individuals. By 1860 this might have grown to a book readership, of all types of books, of some one million.<sup>37</sup> Book titles published in France

---

<sup>34</sup> Morierval (1934), pp. 73-75.

<sup>35</sup> Reitblat (1991), pp. 32-47, 78-97.

<sup>36</sup> Gildea (2009), p. 174.

<sup>37</sup> Reitblat (2001), pp. 14-15 and Reitblat (1991), p. 10.

grew from 2,547 in 1814 to 13,883 in 1866.<sup>38</sup> In Russia 583 titles were published in 1825, of which almost half were by foreign authors, and 2,085 in 1860.<sup>39</sup> Investment in roads and railways had opened access to the French provincial reading public in the 1840s but would not do so in Russia until the 1870s. New printing technologies had increased capacity and reduced costs in France, but the same technologies would lag by almost half a century in Russia, at least in part because of concerns at the government level over the political risks in broadening the reach of the press.

By the early 1860s the beginnings of a mass market with a readership spanning class and geography were discernible in France. Moïse Millaud's introduction in 1863 of the first representative of what we would now call the tabloid press, *Le Petit Journal*, is an evident response to these market trends. But the same happens in Russia, with the introduction in 1864 of the first boulevard newspaper, the *Petersburg Flysheet* (*Peterburgsky listok*). Even though some expansion of the readership into the military, the merchant classes and lower ranks of civil servants had taken place in the wake of the Great Reforms nothing remotely resembling a mass readership existed. The *Petersburg Flysheet's* street sales were tiny: around 1,000 copies per issue in 1867, and still only 2,200 by 1880, even if many copies were passed around until they

---

<sup>38</sup> Allen, James Smith, *In the Public Eye: A History of Reading in Modern France, 1800-1914* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 27, 38, table A.

<sup>39</sup> Jeffrey Brooks, (1985), p. 61.

disintegrated.<sup>40</sup> It took several make-overs and changes of editor before the *Petersburg Flysheet* finally started to develop a broader readership from the 1880s onwards, perhaps indicating that its own evolution was dictated by the pace of that of its audience.<sup>41</sup>

Instead, the idiosyncratic Russian readership gave rise to its own unique format, the 'thick' journal. Its omnibus content addressed a market too small, at least initially, to support more targeted periodicals. Its book-like format allowed for the relatively efficient delivery in a single compact package of a month's worth of reading, allowing journals to access the provincial market where timely receipt was impossible to guarantee. As few as 2-3,000 subscribers ensured breakeven, but equally constrained what publishers could pay contributors. At the beginning of the 1860s some 8-10 titles were sufficient to cover the available market. Reitblat estimates that the total print-run of all the Russian 'thick journals', the major vehicles of serialised fiction, was around 30,000 copies in 1860, rising to 40,000 in 1880. The most successful had subscriber lists of 6-10,000 in the 1860s, rising slowly into the 1880s but offering little or no indication of the development of a mass reading public.<sup>42</sup> Dostoevsky's

---

<sup>40</sup> Louise McReynolds, *The News under Russia's Old Regime. The Development of a Mass-circulation Press* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), Appendix A, table 4.

<sup>41</sup> Reitblat 1991, pp. 109-129, and Louise McReynolds 1991, pp. 52-63.

<sup>42</sup> For a fuller discussion of the rise of the Russian 'thick' journals see Reitblat (1991), chapter 32, 'The Thick Journal and its Readers' (*Tolsty zhurnal i ego publika*), pp. 32-47 and *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. by Deborah Martinsen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), particularly Todd, 'Periodicals in Literary Life of the Early Nineteenth Century', pp. 37-63, and Robert Belknap, 'Survey of Russian Journals 1840-1880', pp. 91-116.

own *Diary of a Writer*, despite its extraordinary popularity, was capable of being run in its entirety from Dostoevsky's own home as a cottage industry by his wife.<sup>43</sup> By comparison, Zola's *Nana*, published in book form in March 1880, the same year as *The Brothers Karamazov* appeared in book format, had a first edition print run of 55,000 copies and had reached its 82nd edition by July 1881.<sup>44</sup>

French writers had enjoyed full access to the Russian literary market for almost the entire century: from 1875 to 1880 Zola even wrote a regular column for the *Le Messager de l'Europe (Vestnik Evropy)*, while most Russian writers would remain more or less unknown in France until the 1886 publication of Vogüé's *Le Roman russe*.<sup>45</sup> Nikolai Strakhov, writing in his 1881 memoirs of Dostoevsky, attests to the influence of French literature on the literary society in which Dostoevsky moved: 'Certainly, the outlook of this circle [that of A.P.Milyukov] was directed by French literature'.<sup>46</sup> One of the key imports from France was the format of the *feuilleton*. Through it, writers reflected and influenced public taste. The *feuilleton* posed as the reader's friend, acting both as a guide through the complexities of the Great Reforms and as a sympathetic echo of his or,

---

<sup>43</sup> Todd, *Dostoevsky Studies* (2014), p. 26.

<sup>44</sup> Luquet, Isabelle, 'Les Lecteurs de Zola' in *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), pp. 506-07. Although editions were usually of 1,000 copies this was not always the case, especially for first impressions, so the number of editions is more reliable as a minimum than as an accurate indicator of published copies.

<sup>45</sup> Pogorelskin, Alexis, 'The Messenger of Europe' in *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, 129-49, p. 142-43.

<sup>46</sup> Strakhov, Nikolai, 'Iz vospominanii,' in *Semeinye vechera* (Feb. 1881), 235-48, cited in an unattributed translation in *The Dostoevsky Archive* (1997), p. 148.

increasingly, her frustrations. Katia Dianina argues that it played an important role in developing a broader audience, particularly in the growing broadsheet newspaper formats: 'One way or another, the feuilleton always addressed the subject that interested the general readership most: their own tastes and opinions.'<sup>47</sup> The need to appeal to a broadening audience dictated a wide range of content from serious intellectual debate to populist entertainment. Dostoevsky, writing principally in the thick journals where the feuilleton existed as a loose stylistic designation rather than a literary context at the foot of a newspaper front page, took the device to heart: '....nowadays the feuilleton is...is almost the most important thing. ...This is what I think: that if I weren't an occasional feuilletonist but one with a permanent position, on a daily basis, I'd like to turn into Eugène Sue, to write about the mysteries of St Petersburg', his feuilletonist narrator writes in the January 1861 issue of *Time (Vremya)*.<sup>48</sup> Vladimir Zakharov, reviewing the range of Dostoevsky's output as a feuilletonist, remarks on how he uses its breadth of content to cover travelogues, social commentary, national promotion and religious issues as well as polemics with rivals and more populist subjects.<sup>49</sup> Its breadth of genre also allows Dostoevsky to

---

<sup>47</sup> Dianina, Katia, 'The Feuilleton, an Everyday Guide to Public Culture in the Age of the Great Reforms' in *The Slavic and East European Journal* 47:2 (Summer, 2003), 187-210, p. 191.

<sup>48</sup> '...фельетон в наш век – это...это почти главное дело...Я думаю так: если б я был не случайным фельетонистом, а присяжным, всегдашним, мне кажется я бы пожелал обратиться в Эжена Сю, чтоб описывать петербургские тайны.' From *Petersburg Dreams in Verse and Prose (Peterburgskie snovideniya v stikhakh i proze, iv.8)*.

<sup>49</sup> Zakharov, Vladimir, 'A genius feuilletonist (Genial'ny fel'etonist)' in *PSS 2003-05*, iv.501-13.

experiment with a similarly wide range of diegetic registers from fiction, the *roman-feuilleton*, to journalism, to *feuilleton, tout court*. The flexibility afforded by the *feuilleton* format of *Diary of a Writer* allowed him to shift from melodrama to diary, from confession to psychoanalysis. And even though its physical broadsheet context may be absent in the thick journal, Dostoevsky borrows from its original proximity to the newsworthy by means of copious reference to topics which, in the French context, were clearly broadening the newspaper readership. Catteau calls him a ‘deep student of newspapers’ and notes his use of the *faits divers* not just as a source of novelistic plots but as evident hooks to retain reader interest by stories from the world of crime, the courtroom, the lower classes, the sexual, the psychological – the very drivers of French literature and journalism.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the readership at which these devices were targeted in France barely existed in Russia. The most obvious audience consisted of a relatively narrow stratum of wealthy cosmopolitan society in St Petersburg and Moscow, most of whom had received a European or European-influenced education and were readers of foreign literature, together with a small group of intellectuals and writers who provided many of the publishers, editors and critics for the commerce of literature. This group numbered perhaps 20,000 at the beginning of the 1860s, to which could be added a university student population of some 5,000 and a

---

<sup>50</sup> Catteau (1989), p. 190.

number, perhaps 5-15,000, of self-educated women at home who were becoming an increasingly important part of the readership demographic. Since this was the group from which Dostoevsky's social circle was largely drawn, and which was also in a position to express its views through the medium of journalism and salon culture, its responses were probably relatively easy to identify. A second group of largely provincial landowners and the upper echelons of merchant society, mostly self-educated and reading only in Russian, provided a further audience of up to 250,000 with secondary education, whose views Dostoevsky would have encountered in his years of exile but whose responses would otherwise have been muted by distance or class barrier. The final, and by far the largest, group consisted of the smaller landowners, provincial merchant classes and increasingly the more educated peasantry, into whose ambit Dostoevsky's works would barely have reached during his lifetime.<sup>51</sup>

As a professional writer who depended upon the existence of a literary market to sell his work, Dostoevsky would have been acutely aware of the economic value of his work. In his lifetime he was variously journalist, novelist, publisher, editor and press entrepreneur. His exchanges with successive publishers reveal an intimate familiarity with the worth of his literary output in terms of roubles per printer's page-

---

<sup>51</sup> Reitblat (1991), p.11-12 and more generally pp. 8-32. Reitblat's categories are stated as being derived ultimately from definitions proposed in 1862 by the censor F. F. Veselago, so may reflect a contemporary view of the readership.

proof, as well as a developed sensitivity to his literary ranking against other writers expressed on the same scale. His financial position remained tenuous until the mid-1870s. 'He had to write to the deadline...The reason was that he lived only from the income from his literary work and...except for the last three or four years of his life, he was in great financial need' writes Nikolai Strakhov.<sup>52</sup> The eventual stabilisation of the family's finances owed much to Dostoevsky's good sense in marrying one of Russia's first professional secretaries (and stenographer to boot, illustrating the introduction of new skills), who took over many of his business dealings. Maximizing current revenue meant producing content which contemporary readers would pay for in the shape of subscriptions to the periodical which carried them. It also meant becoming part of his publishers' sales strategies, which not only dictated serial publication but also timed the appearance of highly-rated content to maximise subscription renewals. In addition, it required sensitivity to political winds to avoid censorship.

Determining the value of literary production involved a delicate judgment between writing for a contemporary readership which paid the bills and for a future mass readership which was clearly developing in West European markets but was still in its infancy in Russia. Just like the Great Reforms, this prospect opened a new landscape but gave little

---

<sup>52</sup> Strakhov, Nikolai, 'Iz vospominanii,' in *Semeinye vechera* (February 1881), 235-48, cited in *The Dostoevsky Archive* (1997), p. 152.

guidance on how to reach it. The reforms themselves created a proximate incentive to reading: the decrees were distributed widely in printed form as well as being read aloud in churches, the process of transferring land required a significant amount of paperwork, and participation in the new *zemstva* even more.<sup>53</sup> Although the boulevard newspapers and ‘thin’ periodicals would not attain their peak popularity till the 1880s and 1890s, their subscriber base was already growing fast.<sup>54</sup> The railway network was, as we have seen, finally expanding.<sup>55</sup> New bookstores were opening to serve the growing readership and to provide distribution outlets for the rising number of periodicals which flourished following the relaxation of censorship in the new press laws of 1865. The number of periodicals and newspapers published rose from 170 in 1860 to 485 by 1880.<sup>56</sup> New formats, like the boulevard newspapers, and new literary genres, like the detective story, were being invented to address this nascent readership. The *Intermediary* (*Posrednik*), a periodical launched in 1884 to address this market, achieved copy sales of 400,000 by the end of its first nine months.<sup>57</sup> Over the final quarter of the century increasing urbanisation would finally create a mass readership across all social classes. Russia’s first census in 1897 still reveals overall literacy at only around 21%, or 26.5m readers, compared to over 90% in England and

---

<sup>53</sup> Reitblat (1991), p.12.

<sup>54</sup> Jeffrey Brooks (1985), pp. 114-25.

<sup>55</sup> Konotopov *et al.* (2008), p.158 and Polunov (2005), p. 135.

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Brooks (1985), pp. 112.

<sup>57</sup> Lindstrom, Thais, ‘From Chapbooks to Classics; The Story of the *Intermediary*’ in *American Slavic and East European Review*, 16:2 (April, 1957), 190-201, p. 194.

---

France, but the process towards broader literacy across the population was under way.<sup>58</sup>

Dostoevsky's works can be seen as a mirror of the economic context in which he lived. The economic ramifications of the Great Reforms represented the greatest experiment with the structure of the Russian economy in the entire nineteenth century. The outcome of that experiment was far from clear at the time of Dostoevsky's death, and twenty years later Chekhov would return to many of the same questions about the eventual consequences of emancipation in works like *The Peasants* (*Muzhiki*, 1897) or *In the Ravine* (*Vovrage*, 1900). During the last two decades of his life Dostoevsky had experienced a switchback series of policy initiatives, partial successes, defeats and relaunches. The literary economy had followed suit as it copied developments in Western Europe. But whether or not either would prove capable of developing solutions suitable for the Russian context, with its different history and culture, remained unclear. Dostoevsky had evidently gone some way towards merging Russian and French formats, content and genres in an attempt to create a literature which might have value both in the contemporary literary market and to posterity. But ultimately writing for this unknown but obvious future audience could be based on nothing much more than

---

<sup>58</sup> Brooks, Jeffrey, 'Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era' in Todd (1978), pp. 119-120 and Reitblat (1991), p.17. Brooks makes the point that literacy rates in many sub-groups of the general population were considerably higher, particularly amongst younger urban males. French and English literacy rates are derived from, respectively, Jean Hébrard, 'Les Nouveaux lecteurs' in *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), pp. 471-508, and Altick (1998), p. 171.

guesswork about what its tastes might be. A strategy of multiple iterative texts, speculating on the value a future and broader readership might attach to each, is a logical response.

Considering narrative as a commodity with a clear economic function as well as a proven link to speculation also seems justified in terms of Dostoevsky's own personal economic circumstances. As Joseph Frank's biography records, from his days as a student his correspondence reveals an almost continual lack of money fuelled by spending habits regularly in excess of whatever income was available. Advances from publishers regularly fed his own gambling habit during his travels in Europe in 1867-68 – a voyage in part enforced to escape domestic creditors.<sup>59</sup> A misjudged and highly speculative contract with Stellovsky almost led to the surrender of rights to his pre-1867 output when he narrowly avoided failing to deliver the manuscript of *The Gambler (Igrok)* on time.<sup>60</sup> His own experience with publishers, from the initial impact of *Poor People* and the unexpected success of *Notes from the House of the Dead (Zapiski iz mertvogo doma)* to the critical rejections of *The Double*

---

<sup>59</sup> Dostoevsky's correspondence contains too many references to his parlous financial condition to list individually. A letter to his publisher Katkov in September 1865, sent from Wiesbaden, asks for a minimum payment of 125R per printer's sheet (*pechatny list'*, xv.118); another to Apollon Maikov in August 1867 details his gambling losses as well as the increasing frequency of his epileptic fits (xv.173-82). Over a dozen years later, in May 1878, when his gambling had long stopped and his financial affairs were in far better order, he is still writing to Lyubimov, his editor, to complain of his immediate needs for money. (xvi/2.100). Joseph Frank's biography traces his financial fortunes throughout his life in passages far too numerous to list separately (Frank, Joseph, *Dostoevsky*, 5 vols., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976-2002), while Jacques Catteau provides a useful summary of his financial affairs in Catteau (1989), pp. 135-68.

<sup>60</sup> Frank (1976-2002), vol. iii, pp. 32, 162-63

(*Dvoinik*) and *Notes from the Underground* (*Zapiski iz podpol'ya*), had illustrated the variable value of his own output, and the several interventions by the censor, or by publishers acting - justifiably or not - as censors, had indicated the extent to which value could be changed through external forces.<sup>61</sup> Developing methods of hedging against volatile valuations by the various recipients of his output is a logical authorial strategy.

Dostoevsky's awareness of the economic function of narrative is evident from his earliest works. *Poor People* openly discusses how literary value is created. The epistolary form itself draws attention equally to the act of writing and that of reception. Repeated intertexts with, in particular, Pushkin and Gogol' emphasise its own claims to literary worth.(i.47-49) Makar Devushkin is a copyist, the lowest rung of literary creation where innovation is forbidden: all that is possible is for him to subtract value from a text by omission or error. But he is obsessed with the nature of literary value-creation. At times it appears quite arbitrary and inexplicable, epitomised by a copying error which lands him 100 roubles instead of a reprimand.(i.71-73) At other times it seems formulaic and predictable: he accurately identifies Ratazyayev's use of different genres to enhance the value - expressed in roubles per printer's sheet - of his production capacity, and contemptuously dismisses these as

---

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, pp. 137-39 in relation to *Poor People*; pp. 308-09 in relation to *The Double*; vol. ii, pp. 213-16 in relation to *Notes from the House of the Dead*; pp. 311-14 in relation to *Notes from the Underground*.

indicators of commercial, rather than literary, value. 'Just look at how even that Ratazyaev pulls it in! What effort does it cost him to write a sheet? And some days he's even written five, at 300 roubles a sheet, so he says. Some trivial anecdote or other, or some odd titbit – five hundred, take it or leave it, don't argue, pay up.'<sup>62</sup> And we, the external readers, are left wondering what qualities of the text keep us reading – the commercial mixture of sentimental romance, melodrama and voyeurism, or the intellectual debate about literary worth into which we are none too subtly nudged by Dostoevsky? Morson argues that as early as 1847 Dostoevsky was already using his *Petersburg Chronicles* (*Peterburgskaya letopis'*) – his own *feuilleton* in the *St Petersburg News* (*Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti*) – to illustrate how the writer ends up relating not the story but the process of reading the story, and suggests that this metaliterary play is already a literary convention associated with literature in a journalistic context.<sup>63</sup>

At some level all of his works can be seen as an exploration of ways of creating (or, at times, destroying) narrative value. Even *Notes from the House of the Dead*, self-evidently Dostoevsky's own convict memoirs but dressed up as the fictional recollections of Aleksandr Petrovich Goryanchikov, forces us to consider whether the text somehow has a different value if considered as fact or fiction. *The Double*, written in a first

---

<sup>62</sup> 'Вот хоть бы и Ратазяев, - как берет! Что ему лист написать? Да он в иной день и по пяти листов писывал, а по триста рублей, говорит, за лист берет. Там анекдотец какой-нибудь, или из любопытного что-нибудь – пятьсот, дай не дай, хоть тресни, да дай!' (i.40).

<sup>63</sup> Morson, Gary Saul, *The Boundaries of Genre* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 20.

(1846) version before Dostoevsky's exile, received a poor critical reception and was substantially revised for republication in 1866. It is a text quite literally retold, at a distance of twenty years, to improve its commercial value. *Notes from the Underground* is rarely analysed from a commercial perspective but contains many devices whose function is as much economic as psychological or philosophical. The narrator's trick of simultaneously repulsing the reader and seeking his or her sympathy as an underdog is a skilful way of ensuring that readers attracted by either trait keep reading. The narrative is self-reflexively aware of its status as narrative and conscious of the irony of a narrator writing a private memoir which the author will publish: 'But are you really so credulous that you think I'm going to publish all this, let alone give it to you to read? And another problem: why am I calling you 'gentlemen', why am I treating you as if you really were readers?'<sup>64</sup> The narrator's ability to assert value may appear to be undermined by his representation as dysfunctional, but his narrative is itself a highly functional construct designed to ask questions about how readers place value on fictional discourse. Its shifting genres, from diary, through confession, philosophical dialogue and newspaper reportage, to mock-sentimental melodrama, make us acutely aware of the narrative medium and force us to consider how each genre affects our reception of the text.

---

<sup>64</sup> 'Но неужели, неужели вы и в самом деле до того легковверны, что воображаете, будто я это все напечатаю, да еще вам дам читать? И вот еще для меня задача - для чего, в самом деле, называю я вас господами, для чего обращаюсь как будто и вправду к читателям?' (vi.28).

In *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky turns to the new commercial genre of the detective story, itself a relatively new introduction to the European *roman-feuilleton* readership popularised by Poe's works. Dostoevsky had already published translations of three Poe stories in his own periodical, *Time*, in 1861, suggesting that he recognised the commercial as well as the literary potential of Poe's writing.<sup>65</sup> His inversion of the genre from 'whodunnit' to 'whydunnit', which many critics have noted, is at least in part an effective commercial device designed to keep readers searching for an answer which ultimately never fully comes. His choice of subject comes closer and closer to that of the boulevard newspaper: two, possibly three, gruesome murders, a fatal traffic accident, a cat-and-mouse police investigation, sexual perversions, a suicide. Combined with these commercial drivers is an active engagement with contemporary ethical, social and philosophical concerns: criminal motivation, social deprivation, natural justice, perhaps reflecting the typical spread of content of the 'thick' journal. Once again the narrative is aware of its own status and effect: Oliver Ready's introduction to his new translation talks about '...the complicit and complicating role of literature itself...Raskolnikov has blood on his socks and ink on his fingers'.<sup>66</sup> The emergence of the newspaper and periodical industry as the key economic driver of the commercial publication of

---

<sup>65</sup> Frank (1976-2002), vol. ii, pp. 74-75. Dostoevsky's editorial introducing the Poe stories is to be found at v.63-65.

<sup>66</sup> Dostoevsky, Fedor, *Crime and Punishment*, trans. by Oliver Ready (London: Penguin, 2014), p. xxv.

prose fiction during this period creates an inevitable tension between the requirements of publishers for texts which will drive the growth of the reading public into new demographic areas, and those which satisfy an authorial ambition for intellectual content.

Dostoevsky himself appears to recognise the tension when he writes to Strakhov in 1869, in a much-quoted phrase: 'I have my own particular take on reality (in art), and what most people would call quite fantastic and unrepresentative is sometimes for me the very essence of the real.'<sup>67</sup> Time and again Dostoevsky asks us, as readers, to consider the difference between the narration of reality and reality itself. His concept of realistic representation is explicitly associated with its newspaper context: 'In every edition of every newspaper you will find *reports of facts* [my italics], from the most mundane to the most far-fetched. To writers here they seem fantastic, if they are noticed at all; but in the meantime they constitute reality precisely because they are *facts* [Dostoevsky's italics]'.<sup>68</sup> The facts Dostoevsky refers to are, in all probability, those of the *faits divers*, thus facts which have been preselected by journalists and editors for their commercial impact and which define the genres which sell newspapers. This is, perhaps, less of a definition of realism than a

---

<sup>67</sup> 'У меня свой особенный взгляд на действительность (в искусстве) и то что большинство называет почти фантастическим и исключительным, то для меня иногда составляет самую сущность действительного.' (xv/2.300).

<sup>68</sup> 'В каждом номере газет Вы встречаете отчет о самых действительных фактах и о самых мудрёных. Для писателей наших они фантастичны, да они не занимаются ими, а между тем они действительность, потому что они *факты*.' Letter to Strakhov, 26 February 1869, (xv/2.300, Dostoevsky's italics).

commentary on the role of journalistic writing in recreating a story which readers would buy, both metaphorically and literally.

The novels become experimental – or possibly accidental - test-beds for assessing how readers discover value. *The Idiot* is a narrative *about* the value of narrative. Dostoevsky's correspondence and notes indicate a clear desire to use the text to convey values defined by the author in the shape of his presentation of Myshkin as a type of moral ideal. 'The main idea behind the novel is the representation of a perfectly good man', he write to his niece Sofya Ivanova in January 1868, before admitting that having written the first part, he has no idea how to continue.<sup>69</sup> Myshkin puts the theory to the test by offering narratives to the other in-story characters: this is a form of narrative auction in which Myshkin's fictional credibility will be established by the reception he is given by the recipients of his narratives. He is an outsider with neither family nor fortune to rely on, so the results of the auction determine both his credibility and his credit balance. The very terms in which the debate is framed suggest an intrinsic conflict. Dostoevsky offers his perfectly good man through a form of prospectus narrative based on fixed values asserted by the author through his character. But the very concept of the good man depends on the establishment of an alternative, non-financial concept of exchange based on ethical or emotional criteria such as

---

<sup>69</sup> 'Главная мысль романа – изобразить положительно прекрасного человека.' Letter to Sofya Ivanova, 1 January 1868, (xv/2.216-17).

goodness, respect or love.<sup>70</sup> All Myshkin's attempts to establish such a basis of exchange fail. He is trumped by Rogozhin's cash in his offer for Nastasya Filippovna. He fails to win Aglaya. Even his offer of reparations to Burdovsky is spurned. Dostoevsky provides in-story yardsticks, in the shape of the reactions of Nastasya Filippovna and Lisaveta Prokof'evna, by which his slow-motion failure is recorded. The narrative structure itself is forced to rescue Myshkin by the intrusive device of an unexpected legacy when his credibility is threatened.(viii.128) The internal logic of the prospectus has been replaced by pure randomness: the *skandal* of the auction for Nastasya Filippovna is as much to do with the shameless attempt to subvert the plot as to pervert the heroine. Unsurprisingly, Myshkin's financial substance is only restored at the cost of his fictional credibility. Narrative is revealed as more speculation than prospectus or auction, as Dostoevsky's own analogy reveals: 'I chanced it, just like at roulette. Maybe it will develop as I write.'<sup>71</sup>

Narrative devices hint at implied values which seem to contradict those asserted on the surface of the text. Myshkin's extended encounter with Rogozhin at his house represents an extended moral debate on the nature of faith, with Myshkin asserting a strongly Christian ethical position.(vii.155-69) It is no coincidence that this episode is described in

---

<sup>70</sup> Mauss proposes just such a description of a 'gift' economy in which such fixed values, typical of a society based on commercial exchange, give way to ethical or emotional exchanges. See Mauss (2011), pp. 69-76.

<sup>71</sup> 'Рискнул как на рулетке: "Может-быть под пером разовьётся!"' Letter to Maikov, 31 Dec. 1867, (xv.209).

the genre of Gothic melodrama, announced by the symbol of Rogozhin's burning eyes.<sup>72</sup> The implication that prose fiction is only capable of sustaining serious moral or philosophical engagement in a genre characterised by excess, hyperbole and the fantastic is profoundly damaging to any suggestion of the viability of prospectus narrative. Indeed, the theme of the failed transaction, not just the failed gift, is central to *The Idiot*: the auction for Nastasya Filippovna fails, Burdovsky's claim against Myshkin fails, Ippolit fails to commit suicide. All completion risks failure. Better, perhaps, to avoid defining value, or to revalue at a moment's notice, as the behaviour of Lisaveta Prokof'evna and Lebedev demonstrates. The motifs of *The Gambler* - iteration, rolling the dice again, speculation on constantly shifting values with unpredictable results - again become at once the hallmarks of credibility as a character and the foundations of narrative structure.

*The Idiot* bears the hallmarks of impetuous experimentation, from the failure to plan beyond the first book to the repeated problems in establishing the credibility of Myshkin's character on a consistent basis. *Diary of a Writer* is a more considered response to the dilemma. Its format explicitly allows prospectus text, where the author is able to assert and promote his own values, and ensures that the result is not capsized by the need to support a superstructure of fiction. It must, however, prove itself

---

<sup>72</sup> For a fascinating analysis of the Gothic markers which allow the reader to recognise the genre, see Miller, Robin Feuer, *Dostoevsky and 'The Idiot'* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 108-26.

commercially by attracting subscribers, so cannot divorce itself from reader reception, as the prospectus in miniature at the end of each issue reminds us. Despite the diary format, it can still publish prose fiction, just as its competitors do. Morson suggests that the ongoing nature of the debate from issue to issue is a form of response to the dangers of premature completion identified in *The Idiot*. The reader's approach to the text, 'harvesting' items which catch his eye rather than proceeding sequentially from start to finish as in a single work of prose fiction, is also better able to reflect the discontinuous nature of observed reality.<sup>73</sup> But it is nonetheless clear that Dostoevsky enjoys a vehicle which allows him to assert his own values without direct contradiction or editorial intervention. Indeed, his position as his own editor places him above the discontinuity of which he writes, as the *déchiffreur* of society.

As a successful commercial venture *Diary of a Writer* gives us some indication as to what readers valued – or at least as to what Dostoevsky thought readers valued - in the mid-1870s. In terms of subject matter there is a clear concentration around the genre of the *fait divers*. The themes appear in both factual and fictional contexts, illustrated by the retelling of the Kornilova murder case, on which Dostoevsky comments at length in the October 1876 issue, as the story of *The Meek One* (*Krotkaya*),

---

<sup>73</sup> *A Writer's Diary*, ed. Morson (2009), pp. xxv, xliv-v, xlix-l.

published in November.<sup>74</sup> This suggests that Dostoevsky assumed that in this respect the growing Russian readership would behave like the French, where the importance of these themes as commercial drivers had long been established, as much in Zola's contemporaneous novels as in the columns of the Parisian boulevard newspapers. A further common ground appears in the fascination over issues of national identity, expressed throughout *Diary of a Writer* as Dostoevsky's belief in the otherness of the Russian psyche and destiny.<sup>75</sup> The irony of Dostoevsky using a theme so common in Western European literature to assert the distinctiveness of Russian culture simply serves to highlight the hybrid nature of Dostoevsky's creation. The intellectualisation of these themes, often through Dostoevsky's use of a narrator or protagonist whom he dubs the 'paradoxalist' and whose role highlights the discontinuities of contemporary life, can also be seen as a recognition that his 2-3,000 actual subscribers (perhaps 6-7,000 including newsstand sales) expected a hybrid diet of melodrama and intellectual debate. But Dostoevsky's paradoxalist is also a virtuoso debater who is demonstrably able to argue convincingly from any point of view.<sup>76</sup> The reader can never be quite sure whether Dostoevsky is arguing for something he genuinely believes in, or simply replaying the reader's own prejudices to him as a commercial

---

<sup>74</sup> 10/76, 1.1, xi.520-524; 11/76, 1, xi.548-574. The numbering of articles in *Diary of a Writer* uses the following sequence: 'Volume/Year. Section.Subsection' together with page references to *PSS 2003-05*.

<sup>75</sup> For example, as the guardian of Orthodoxy, (e.g. 6/76, 2.4, xi.437-41) on the Eastern question, (e.g. 7-8/76, 4.5, xi.485-87), or through his anti-Semitism. (e.g. 3/77, 2.1-4, 3.1-2, xii.69-85).

<sup>76</sup> E.g. in defence of war as a socially useful phenomenon (4/76, 2.2, xi.387-90).

device. His defence of the alleged murderess Kairova, on the grounds that the intention of another person is never fully knowable, shows how this intellectual point of view can be combined with a prurient topic to create a fusion of the philosophical and the commercial.<sup>77</sup> The success of *Diary of a Writer* demonstrated that this combination worked within a journalistic format. Whether it would work as well in the extended format of the novel was less clear. *The Brothers Karamazov* is, I suggest, Dostoevsky's way of finding out.

## How to write a novel?

Even in its preface *The Brothers Karamazov* advertises its own status as narrative. The very title of the preface, 'From the author' (*Ot avtora*), reminds us of its creative origin. It takes the form of a direct address to the reader. It lays claim to a format and a hero: a fictional biography (*zhizneopisanie*) of Alyosha.(xiii.7) It describes the work as a multiple narrative, two novels in one, 'two stories "within the essential unity of the whole": parallel biographies of this hero at different times of his life.<sup>78</sup> The title of the novel itself echoes this sense of multiple narratives, of brothers, plural. And the preface also forces us to engage with the text as literary artefact. Who is this tongue-in cheek 'author' of

---

<sup>77</sup> 5/76, 1.3, xi.402-10.

<sup>78</sup> '...два рассказа "при существенном единстве целого"...', (xiii.8).

the preface? Is this really the author at all? It serves to remind us that the reader has an active role in deciding textual value and, as the 'author' admits, the ultimate sanction of closing the book. 'Of course, nobody's obliged to do anything, you can always just close the book two pages in to the first story and never open it again'.<sup>79</sup> The story is offered, in part, as a discussion of the structural issues addressed in its own creation.

Serialisation, too, creates multiple narratives. Publication took place in Katkov's *Russian Herald* (*Russky vestnik*) in sixteen instalments over a twenty three month period from January 1879 to November 1880.<sup>80</sup> Four books (5, 8, 11, and 12) occupy two instalments. Breaks of a single month occurred in March, July and December 1879; two-month breaks intervened either side of the publication of book 10 in April 1880. Dostoevsky began writing in July 1878 and it is clear from the chronology of the notebooks for each chapter as well as the records of composition from his correspondence that composition and publication were broadly aligned, with each instalment being written shortly, sometimes very shortly, before the publication deadline.<sup>81</sup> Todd notes that each instalment was intended to be an artistic whole, with little recourse to the normal serial writer's devices of surprise or suspenseful endings.<sup>82</sup> The first instalment, in January 1879, is the only one to contain two books and the

---

<sup>79</sup> 'Конечно никто ничем не связан, можно бросить книгу и с двух страниц первого рассказа, с тем чтоб и не раскрывать более.' (xiii.7-8).

<sup>80</sup> See Appendix A for a full schedule of the serialisation of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

<sup>81</sup> *The Notebooks for The Brothers Karamazov*, ed. by Edward Wasiolek, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 12-18.

<sup>82</sup> Todd (1986), 87-97, p. 90.

preface, and in doing so ensures that Dostoevsky's entire exposition of the creative process is uninterrupted.

The notebooks indicate a more orderly planning process than, for example, that of *The Idiot*. Belknap's analysis of the genesis of the novel reveals both how far some of its themes can be traced back through Dostoevsky's life, work and reading and how developed the plot seems to have been by the time Dostoevsky came to write each book.<sup>83</sup> The notebooks are, by and large, not used to develop the overall shape of each book, as for earlier novels, but much more to work out individual scenes or fragments of dialogue which fitted into an overall canvas which, evidently, Dostoevsky saw no need to record. Nor are there many significant changes between the published text and the notebooks, with the exception of some omissions, generally to prevent the reader from solving the crime too quickly, a technique already developed in *Crime and Punishment*. The impression, reinforced by evidence of planning from Dostoevsky's correspondence, is that he had a fairly clear idea of the overall shape of the narrative before putting pen to paper even if some of the detailed development and research had yet to take place. If, as I think, *The Brothers Karamazov* is in part an experiment in the creation of literary value, then it seems to have been a carefully planned one, and its architecture does indeed suggest just that.

---

<sup>83</sup> Belknap (1990), pp. 45-56.

The first serial instalment consists of a series of converging narratives in contrasting genres. As the preface advertises, the first book begins as a biography of the Karamazov family, describing origins and relationships in a relatively conventional manner which would not look out of place in a novel by Balzac or Dickens. Each brother comes equipped with his own genre. Dmitry's is the Romantic, emphasised both in the biographical details given to us by the narrator in the first book and following his dramatic entry in the second. He is initially represented by the narrator as a stock Romantic hero, complete with Lermontovian tags of soldierly derring-do in the Caucasus, duels, debts and women.(xiii.13) Fedor Pavlovich describes him as a character from Schiller's *Die Räuber*.(xiii.61) Zosima's bow to him in the second book creates an aura of Romantic mystery. Ivan introduces a new genre, that of the intellectual essay in the pages of a Russian 'thick' journal, when he summarises his arguments on Church and State.

It is easy for a modern reader to overlook the fact that the physical context of this instalment was in the January edition of *The Russian Herald*, which itself contained essays on subjects as varied as the importance of woodland in classical mythology, the Eastern question, or student life in Germany, along with a poem by Maikov, a short story, and a play in four acts about a marriage arranged for money in addition to the

first part of *The Brothers Karamazov*.<sup>84</sup> The genre of Ivan's discourse, which we are even told he has previously published as an article in a similar periodical, must have been obvious to a contemporary reader. When the narrator's biographical focus shifts to Alyosha, his entry into monastic life is also the cue for a genre shift towards hagiography, introduced through a chapter on the role of the church Elders and pursued in the anecdotes from Zosima's life. The narratives converge on Fedor Pavlovich, who has his own genre, to both of which we shall return.

The main characters and genres are linked by two common themes: belief and inheritance or, to rephrase in more literary terminology, credibility and posterity. The impetus to rephrase comes from the narrator himself. His role has been the subject of critical interpretations without end, too numerous to summarise here. Most overlook the simple fact that he reminds us that we are being told a story. His viewpoint, from local diarist limited by his own knowledge to omniscient author able to reveal the deepest feelings of his characters, shifts with growing frequency over the course of this first instalment. The shifts, which pass unnoticed at first but become more insistent at each iteration, have the effect of making the reader more aware of the diegetic

---

<sup>84</sup> Russky Vestnik, 139 (January 1879). The essays cited are at pp. 5-35, 36-64 and 264-91; the poem and fictional works at pp. 262-63, 291-308 and 309-396. The first part of *The Brothers Karamazov* is at pp. 104-207.

medium.<sup>85</sup> His frequent references to literary intertexts – Shakespeare’s Ophelia appears on the very first page,(xiii.9) - to the fact that he is writing a novel, to the existence of his readers,(e.g. xiii.18) constantly remind us of the fictional frame. Narrative reality, he seems to imply, is the only sort that matters. ‘Dmitry Fedorovich hasn’t yet come into existence’ is the literal translation of Fedor Pavlovich’s answer to a question about whether Dmitry has yet arrived: the phrasing of the response seems to be as much a commentary on his fictional realisation as his observed presence.<sup>86</sup> The narrator continually asks us, at times even directly, to reflect on how the story is being told, on whether we find it credible and, if so, on why we believe it.<sup>87</sup>

Belief and credibility are two sides of the same coin. The multiple narrative threads and different genres compete for credibility and insure the writer against the failure of any one. The gradual accretion of different modes of narration slowly makes the reader aware that the issue of determining credibility, or establishing a hierarchy of value, rests with him or her. To make the point clear the narrative illustrates the difference between belief and credibility. The chapter describing the church Elders

---

<sup>85</sup> For example in the story of Alyosha’s childhood, book 1, chapter 4, where the narrator shifts from omniscient penetration of the four-year old Alyosha’s deepest feelings for his mother to gossipy disapproval of the sort of expressions children learned in the modern world, and all within the space of a couple of pages.(xiii. 19-20).

<sup>86</sup> ‘Да, Дмитрия Федоровича еще не существует.’(xiii.33).

<sup>87</sup> An example of a direct approach to the reader on the basis of an assumption of shared common experience occurs in the final sentences of the very first chapter: ‘In most cases people, even the bad ones, are far more naïve and straightforward than we think. And we are just the same.’ ‘В большинстве случаев люди, даже злодеи, гораздо наивнее и простодушнее чем мы вообще заключаем. Да и мы сами тоже.’ (xiii.11).

illustrates belief by assertion, pure prospectus narrative. It depicts a society governed by values asserted by the elderhood: even the burial of a saint is impossible without his elder's permission.(xiii.26) Narrative authority is absolute: this is Bakhtin's 'authoritative word' in its purest form, and in Karamazovian terms Bakhtin even describes it as 'the word of our fathers'.<sup>88</sup> This form of belief is utterly secure in its assessment of its own value and seeks no external validation.

But it only attains credibility when validated by the recipient. The possibility of doubt implies the agency of the receiver in assessing a narrative. In an image which will recur when Ivan meets his devil, almost as a frame to the entire novel, the narrator evokes the figure of Doubting Thomas, who 'believed only because he wanted to believe'.<sup>89</sup> The two modalities are directly contrasted in the titles of the third and fourth chapters of book 2: 'Peasant Women Believers' (*Veruyushchie baby*) versus 'A Lady of Little Faith' (*Malovernaya dama*) which oppose the unquestioning faith of the peasants to Mme Khokhlakova's belief contingent on a verifiable return, prospectus value against auction value.(xiii 41, 46) Ivan proposes a further alternative: belief based on a process of Euclidean logic, which recruits the power of reason and intellectual argument to render the process of belief credible, but here the archaic, Biblical resonances of the title of the chapter 'It will be, it will be!'

<sup>88</sup> Bakhtin (1981), pp. 342-49, with the quotation at p. 342.

<sup>89</sup> '...уверовал он лишь единственно потому, что желал уверовать...' (xiii.25, compared to the same image in similar terms in Ivan's dream at xiv.227).

(*Budi, budi!*, xiii.52) seems to imply, ironically, that this is simply a different kind of asserted value. This first instalment insistently asks the reader to reflect on whether any belief is genuinely independent of its reception, thus of the medium by which it arrives at the receiver. Or, in literary terms, does the way in which the story is told affect its credibility and, if so, how?

Lasting credibility creates inheritable value in the shape of memories and narratives which travel between generations. In its simplest form inheritance, financial, doctrinal and artistic, is the basis of the plot of the novel. The Karamazov family has gathered at the monastery to find an environment in which it is possible to have a serious debate about Dmitry's inheritance claim. The narrative credibility of Dmitry's claim is thus measured in terms of its posterity value: the more credible it is, the more it should be worth in securing his future. Its credibility is intimately linked to the mode of its expression: its value, the narrator tells us, has already been affected by the manner in which Dmitry has asserted it and the reception Fedor Pavlovich has accorded it.(xiii.13) As readers, we are given too little information to form a view based on fact, so our own perception of right and wrong is swayed by the way in which the story is told. The notion that the best story, rather than any measure of factual accuracy or observed reality, will win the contest for lasting value is fundamental to the construction of *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Other forms of discourse are also shown as having enduring worth. The word of an Elder has value literally beyond the grave.(xiii.26) Zosima is represented as on the verge of death and capable of creating a lasting heritage for his monastery.(*ibid.*) The narrator implies that Alyosha's faith is linked to his mother's memory.(xiii.19) Belknap makes the case for the importance of memory as a form of inheritance in the novel generally.<sup>90</sup> Literary devices themselves can indicate inheritance: quotations and literary intertexts are both expressions of posterity value through memory. Nina Perlina's examination of the role of quotation in *The Brothers Karamazov* goes even further in suggesting that Dostoevsky's system of quotation establishes a hierarchy of asserted narrative value in which the word of the Holy Writ takes precedence.<sup>91</sup>

And yet throughout this first instalment runs a challenge to all asserted values and hierarchies. It is represented by Fedor Pavlovich and by the genre of the commercial boulevard newspaper. It is as much a challenge to how the story is told as to what the story tells. It is expressed by the disruption of the narrative itself. The theme first appears as part of the plot. Fedor Pavlovich is depicted as an agent of disruption within his own community and family, as the narrator lingeringly describes over the first four chapters. His disruptive behaviour, though, is ironically a crucial

---

<sup>90</sup> Belknap (1990), ch. 5 on 'The Theme of Memory', pp. 73-87.

<sup>91</sup> Perlina, Nina, *Varieties of Poetic Utterance. Quotation in 'The Brothers Karamazov'* (New York: University Press of America, 1985), especially pp. 11-52 for a discussion of Perlina's proposed hierarchy.

part of why readers keep reading. The themes of commercial fiction, sex, crime, money, dominate his biography. The narrator's juicy scandal-mongering and speculation is both biographical detail and a commercial device to persuade readers not to put the book down, as the author of the preface had feared.

Fedor Pavlovich's representation is full of disruptive devices. He is described as a clown (*shut*), a traditional figure of disruption, which Bakhtin associates with the concept of the testing of an idea and its carrier.<sup>92</sup> He forces the reader to recognise that narratives can lie. 'I made it up to spice up the story', he admits, in yet another reminder that narrative credibility has nothing to do with truth or authenticity.<sup>93</sup> He drives a wedge between belief and credibility. Why should we believe in hell, he asks, if the devil can't even get his story right: if sinners are hung on hooks then there must be a ceiling to hang them from, yet none of the stories about hell mentions the ceiling.(xiii.24) His discourse jettisons both Ivan's logical progressions and Zosima's scriptural assertions in favour of a narrative which relies on graphic imagery, shock value and an appeal to a common denominator of public taste.

In short, they are fictional '*faits divers*', often referring explicitly to sources in the newspaper journalism of the boulevard newspapers. He

---

<sup>92</sup> xiii.34. Bakhtin's arguments on the relationship of the carnival to the notion of testing are set out in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp.134-36.

<sup>93</sup> 'Для пикантности присочинил.' xiii.37.

---

twice calls Maksimov by the name 'von Sohn' (xiii.33, 75): the two episodes bracket the second book and stand as an emblem of this compulsive vein of narrative. We eventually find out that a newspaper article had reported the murder of a man named von Sohn whose body had been sent in the luggage van of a train from St Petersburg to Moscow in a crate. '...And while they were nailing him down, exotic dancers sang songs and played on the gusla, or rather the fortepranco'.<sup>94</sup> The relevance to the anecdote to Maksimov is never established. But the combination of newspaper *fait divers*, the criminal, the ghoulish, the exotic and the comic failure of the pun, in Russian as well as in my translation, requires the reader to focus on the mode of transmission of the narrative. This is a commercial register, as the quotations and imagery from the newspaper world confirm, which offers a different bill of fare to its readers. It challenges established concepts of literary value and disrupts conventional hierarchies of literary merit, just as its content disrupts hierarchies of belief. It is explicitly represented as a literature of the future, the publishing world which Ivan expects Rakitin to join, rejecting his monastic novitiate in favour of the editorship of a thick journal. Ivan's sarcastic formula for Rakitin's commercial success, introduced in this first instalment but heralding a theme which will follow the novel throughout its length, is to play back the readers' own values to them, publishing the journal, once he had obtained control of it: '...definitely from a liberal and

---

<sup>94</sup> 'А когда заколачивали, то блудные плясавицы пели песни и играли на гусях, то есть на фортоплясах.'(xiii.75).

---

atheist standpoint, with a bit of a socialist tendency and even perhaps a lick of socialism proper, but keeping an ear to the ground, which really means keeping a foot in both camps and one step ahead of idiots.’<sup>95</sup>

Literary values, it implies, may be changing.

The ‘scandal’ scene with which the second book ends is thus not merely chapter title and plot description, it is also a challenge to conventional literary judgement. It asks the readers of this serialised instalment to consider how they assign value to text and to question the relevance of received methods of valuation. It implants a suspicion that the compulsion of the commercial narrative vein which has kept the plot moving to this climax could also be a potent challenge to a new generation of readers’ tolerance of sustained intellectual debate of the sort represented by Ivan and Zosima. It suggests that, beyond the reach of the thick journal which carries the story, a new readership may be developing, that of the boulevard newspaper, which may have quite different criteria. It seems significant that Dmitry’s melodramatic irruption into the text and the narrative disruption which Fedor Pavlovich symbolises have so much in common. Perhaps Dmitry’s real inheritance from his father will prove to be literary rather than pecuniary?

---

<sup>95</sup> ‘... и непременно в либеральном и атеистическом направлении, с социалистическим оттенком, с маленьким даже лоском социализма, но держа ухо востро, то есть в сущности держа нашим и вашим и отводя глаза дуракам.’ (xiii.71).

## The novel as prospectus

The first serial instalment had implicitly posed a series of fundamental questions about the type of narrative which contemporary readers would buy, both literally and commercially, and about whether future readerships would react in the same way. Novels clearly had to be commercially viable, not just for the good of the writer but because this was likely to be the only way to persuade publishers to target a mass readership. But 'dumbing down' to reach a broader readership was an unnecessary price to pay, as his commercial success with *Diary of a Writer's* idiosyncratic blend of intellectual debate and populism had indicated. Achieving the same success in a work of fiction required a different approach, but offered the prize of far greater posterity value than the ephemeral impact of journalism. The remainder of the novel is, I think, a series of carefully orchestrated experiments in varying the proportions and natures of the commercial and the intellectual to discover whether a point of equilibrium exists which could maximise both current and possible future value. This is, indeed, a novel about how to write a novel.

The starting point is to establish whether any form of asserted value is compatible with the novelistic format. Dostoevsky chooses a series of genres traditionally associated with the transmission of a message from author to recipient and, over the course of four entire books

explores whether any of these can coexist with a commercially viable work of fiction. The 'headline' genres he selects are confession, a traditional vehicle for the assertion of personal belief; melodrama, which relies on predictable audience reception of hyperbolic emotion; parable, where the narrative is expected to carry a message, and hagiography, which assumes a shared set of beliefs between author and recipient. In their different ways, all are experiments in 'prospectus' narrative. The narrator of each asserts the value of their story as something which can validly be determined by them, even if others do not accept their view. Narrative structure and content combine to form an extensive and multifaceted investigation of the novel's ability to function as prospectus while at the same time retaining the ability to tell a compelling story.

Each experiment forms the central part of a separately serialised episode in the *Russian Herald*. The confessional genre is represented by Dmitry's confession to Alyosha in book 3, '*Sladostrastniki*', usually translated as 'The Sensualists' or 'The Voluptuaries'. It appeared as the second episode in February 1879, followed by a one-month pause. The various stories grouped under the title '*Nadryvy*', or 'Lacerations' of book 4 experiment with different levels of melodrama and appeared in the April edition. Ivan's philosophical exchange with Alyosha of book 5, 'Pro and Contra' ('*Pro i Kontra*') uses stories of the suffering of children and Ivan's legend of the Grand Inquisitor as parables to investigate the authority of asserted narratives. The book, which was divided into two

parts with 'Rebellion' ('*Bunt*') in the first and 'The Grand Inquisitor' ('*Veliky Inkvizitor*') occupying the whole of the second (in a single immense paragraph as the result of a printer's error), appeared in the May and June editions, again followed by a one month break. Finally, Alyosha's life of Zosima in book 6, 'A Russian Monk' ('*Russky inok*') is an experiment in hagiography and was printed in the August issue. So for seven entire months the readership was required to follow Dostoevsky through his laboratory of narrative value.

A key image which helps to illustrate Dostoevsky's investigative technique occurs at the opening of 'Rebellion'. Ivan refers to the story of St John the Merciful (*Ioann Milostivy*), celebrated as a reformed parricide who ended his life atoning for his crimes by acts of great contrition and self-abasement:

'I read somewhere that some saint or other, called St John the Merciful, when a famished and frozen traveller came to him begging for warmth, lay down with him in bed, wrapped him in his arms and started to breathe straight into his mouth which was festering and foul from some terrible disease.'<sup>96</sup>

Terras notes that the image probably comes from Flaubert's *St. Julien l'Hospitalier*, translated into Russian by Turgenev in 1877, the same

---

<sup>96</sup> 'Я читал вот как-то и где-то про "Иоанна Милостивого" (одного святого), что он, когда к нему пришел голодный и обмерзший прохожий и попросил согреть его, лег с ним вместе в постель, обнял его и начал дышать ему в гноящийся и зловонный от какой-то ужасной болезни рот его.' (xiii.196).

year as its publication in France.<sup>97</sup> Like the two other stories of Flaubert's *Trois contes*, the narrative is as much about the interrelationship between genre and credibility as it is about the moral issues raised by the tale.<sup>98</sup> Flaubert's image, derived from a stained glass window in a local Normandy church, depicts a saint, reformed from a childhood of sadism, butchery and the eventual murder of both his parents, achieving epiphany by embracing and warming with his own body a dying leper who turns into an image of Christ:

'Julien ôta ses vêtements; puis, nu comme au jour de sa naissance, se replaça dans le lit; et il sentait contre sa cuisse la peau du lépreux, plus froide qu'un serpent et rude comme une lime. ...

[Il] s'étala dessus complètement, bouche contre bouche, poitrine sur poitrine.

Alors le lépreux l'étreignit; et ses yeux tout à coup prirent une clarté d'étoiles; ses cheveux s'allongèrent comme les rais du soleil; le souffle de ses narines avait la douceur des roses; un nuage d'encens s'éleva du foyer, les flots chantaient....Le toit s'envola, le firmament se déployait; - et Julien monta vers les espaces bleus, face à face avec Notre-Seigneur Jésus, qui l'emportait dans le ciel.'<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Terras (1981), pp. 221, n. 120.

<sup>98</sup> A full discussion of this approach to *Trois Contes* is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Its premise, that the mismatch between what is represented and the genre of its representation is a way of testing the boundaries of reader acceptance, would perhaps not be seen as a conventional interpretation of these stories, but the way in which Dostoevsky seems to have responded to this probable source suggests that even then such an interpretation was actively considered.

<sup>99</sup> Flaubert, Gustave, *Œuvres complètes*, 16 vols., (Paris: Club de l'honnête homme, 1971-75), vol. iv, p. 249.

The image contains almost all the themes Dostoevsky investigates. It is part hagiography by virtue of its received religious interpretation which presumes predictable reader responses. It raises key philosophical and theological issues of the 'cost' of sin and the 'price' of redemption. It explores the limits of melodrama in figures of polarisation and hyperbole as well as the registers of pathos and sentimentality. And finally it employs all the commercial techniques of the *fait divers* in its outright sensationalism, shock value and voyeuristic titillation. Flaubert's description of the embrace is meticulously constructed, grotesquely detailed, and sexually compromised.

It is also a typically Flaubertian experiment in narrative subversion. It employs devices of conventional religious hagiography. At the same time it seems to push the graphic excess of its description as if to test the limits of reader tolerance. At the diegetic level it asks if the reader is still able to believe the story when pushed to these limits. Are we repulsed by some unwritten infringement of literary taste in the sexual prism through which a traditionally religious image is viewed? Or is this justified by an appeal to codified religious symbolism, where the signification of the symbol overwhelms any digressive signal from its mode of representation? At a philosophical level it asks whether the ethical and moral issues are in some way linked to a genre of excess: does the reader's ability to engage with a moral debate depend on the mode of its representation? And if the fictional narrative depends on excess to

facilitate the process of suspending disbelief, does this undermine in equal measure the applicability of the ethical debate to a more everyday representation of reality? The image is simultaneously moral ideal and compulsive viewing, situated so precisely on the border where compulsion meets repulsion as to call both its philosophical and its commercial value into doubt.

Dostoevsky seems to experiment, similarly, with different 'strengths' of fiction in his four experiments. In each case he seems to be asking at what point the credibility of the narrative as fiction breaks down. The concept of 'excess' is one to which he had returned time and again, in the tipping point between reason and fantasy in *The Double*, in the philosophical hamster-wheel of the underground man, in Svidrigailov's dream and subsequent suicide in *Crime and Punishment*, in the point at which small-town posturing leads to murder and suicide in *The Devils*, in the metaphysical confluence of Myshkin and Rogozhin when in the Gothic reaches of the latter's house. In *The Idiot* a point of equilibrium does seem to be achievable within which narrative can expand to encompass a rich philosophical vein. But, as we have seen, this seems to coincide with the point of maximum fictional 'strength', the furthest extent of Gothic melodrama as the two meet over Nastasya Filippovna's murdered body in the cell-like alienation of a Gothic set. The implication is that the medium of fiction can only carry the kind of

intellectual weight Dostoevsky seems to crave when its method of transmission is least suited to such an attempt.

Dostoevsky's fascination with the link between the content and style which sold newspapers and the intellectual weight they were able to sustain was not a new subject. The story of the French murderer Lacenaire, the archetype of the educated criminal who wrote his memoirs while awaiting execution, recurs as both a model for Raskolnikov and a point of reference for Ippolit in *The Idiot*.(viii.317) It illustrates the point that apparently incompatible genre and content did not necessarily lead to reader rejection and could still form the basis of serious psychological analysis. Alex de Jonge comments thus: '[Lacenaire] wrote in a stilted, old-fashioned rhetoric of sensibility, which would have rendered his work perfectly comprehensible to a contemporary of Rousseau. Lacenaire uses this utterly inappropriate code to provide the most matter-of-fact account of his crimes.' – but that had clearly not impeded either the commercial success of Lacenaire's memoirs or their relevance as an intellectual discussion of the motivation of murder.<sup>100</sup>

In the October and November 1876 editions of *Diary of a Writer* Dostoevsky reports, comments on, and then fictionalises the story of a destitute seamstress who has committed suicide by jumping from a

---

<sup>100</sup> Jonge, Alex de, *Dostoevsky and the Age of Intensity* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975), p. 88.

window while holding an icon.<sup>101</sup> The process is revealing. Dostoevsky's initial journalistic commentary highlights less the religious conundrum of a suicide holding an icon than the compulsive, and commercially powerful, recurrence of the image in his memory. The fictional account in *The Meek One*, which occupies the entire November edition, is an expression in narrative of this recurrence in recognition of the fact that it can, on its own, sell an entire journal issue. It, too, explores the limits of plausibility. The story imagines the suicide from the point of view of her husband, justifying to the reader his abusive behaviour which had led to her suicide. Dostoevsky, writing the preface to the story, calls it a 'fantastic tale' (*fantastichesky rasskaz*) and explains that the fantastic comes not from the content but from the implausible position of the narrator: 'And so it is this assumption of a stenographer recording everything (and whose account I simply polished) that I call the fantastic element of my story'.<sup>102</sup> Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the story functions as a commercial success and as a form of serious ethical debate. It appeared that combining commercial drivers with intellectual content could, under the right circumstances, be made to work.

---

<sup>101</sup> 10/76, 1.3, xi.529, and 11/76, xi.548-572.

<sup>102</sup> 'Вот это предположение о записавшем все стенографе (после которого я обделал бы записанное) и есть то, что я называю в этом рассказе фантастическим.' 11/76, xi.548, trans. Lantz in *A Writer's Diary* ed. Morson, (2009), p. 236.

## Confession

Dostoevsky was familiar with numerous variants on the genre of literary confession, from Karamzin's short story *My Confession* (*Moya ispoved'*) to Rousseau's *Les Confessions*. Confession is a complex genre, as Richard Terdiman points out in his introduction to an article on Musset's *Confession d'un enfant du siècle*. If it is considered as an act of expiation, then the very process of narration immortalises that which it seeks to expunge. A liturgical process becomes an act of literary performance. The effect of this, he argues, is to relativise the sacramental role of confession, implying that an assertion of faith is only as good as the skill with which it is told.<sup>103</sup> Miller's analysis of the influence of Rousseau and *Les Confessions* on the character of Stepan Trofimovich in *The Devils* (*Besy*) points up the link when she talks about how Dostoevsky combines 'men and literary characters... begotten from ideas' with narrative devices reliant on sexual taboos and voyeurism.<sup>104</sup> How the story is told is what matters. Dmitry's confession highlights precisely the importance of the means of narrative delivery. The confession is divided into three chapters, echoing the three parts of the narrative conundrum posed by Fedor Pavlovich. The three sections contrast three narrative approaches, identified by chapter titles which refer directly to literary registers or devices, and which together

---

<sup>103</sup> Terdiman, Richard, 'The Mnemonics of Musset's *Confession*' in *Representations*, 26 (Spring, 1989), 26-48, pp. 26-27.

<sup>104</sup> 'Transformations, Exposures and Intimations of Rousseau in *The Possessed*' in Miller (2007), 86-104, p. 94.

become a formulation of an authorial strategy for the subsequent role Dmitry plays in the novel.

The first, the 'Confession of a Burning Heart. In Verse' (*Isповед' goryachego serdtsa. V stikhakh,*) invites us to consider Dmitry's confession from the perspective of a discourse in literary language. His performance, a borrowed mix of Romantic poets and biblical imagery, parodies his attempt to lay claim to the genre. From the very start, the novelistic contrivance of Dmitry's coincidental meeting with Alyosha suggests that his confession, too, may be more artefact than accident. His narrative starts off as a rambling, drunken circumnavigation of the point: 'Well, you can see for yourself how this could all end up as some sort of natural disaster. I'm here in secret and I've got a secret to keep. I'll get to the explanation, but because it's a secret I suddenly start talking all secretively, like some sort of whispering idiot, for no reason at all.'<sup>105</sup> Unable to express himself adequately, he borrows the philosophical and emotional vocabulary of others in quotations (and misquotations) from Nekrasov, Pushkin, Goethe, the Bible and, at length, Schiller.<sup>106</sup>

Even the most apparently intense moments of confession are ambiguous: is this a credible literary character speaking, or the novelist's

---

<sup>105</sup> 'Ну, вот сам видишь, как может выйти вдруг сумбур природы. Я здесь на секрете и стерегу секрет. Объяснение впредь, но понимая, что секрет, я вдруг и говорить стал секретно, и шепчу как дурак, тогда как не надо.' (xiii.88).

<sup>106</sup> See Terras (1981), pp. 170-71 for the identification and origins of the various quotations and allusions used by Dmitry.

own ideas in the mouth of a *porte-parole*? 'And right in the middle of this disgrace I suddenly strike up a hymn. I may be cursed, I may be base and vile, but let me kiss the hem of the mantle which envelopes my God; though in the same moment I consort with the devil, yet am I thy son, O Lord, and love thee and experience that happiness without which the world can neither exist nor continue.'<sup>107</sup> Dmitry's character is too little developed by this point in the novel for the reader to resolve the ambiguity definitively. When he finally comes to the point, which he expresses through a complicated analogy to a warring alliance of Sodom and the Madonna, both the reader and Alyosha have difficulty in understanding what he is getting at, partly because he has not yet explained the context of the various religious allusions he makes, and partly because we still have no means of knowing whether this is genuine profundity or the wisdom of a drunk and, if the former, Dmitry's own words or an author putting an argument into the mouth of a character unsuited to the role.

Alyosha, as perpetual recipient of the narratives of others, stands proxy for the reader. As the novel progresses, his role as reader will become more complex, since he will not only receive narratives but also transmit them onward. The process of onward transmission transforms

---

<sup>107</sup> 'И вот в самом-то этом позоре я вдруг начинаю гимн. Пусть я проклят, пусть я низок и подл, но пусть и я целую край той ризы, в которую облачается бог мой; пусть я иду в то же самое время вслед за чортом, но я все-таки и твой сын, господи, и люблю тебя, и ощущаю радость, без которой нельзя миру стоять и быть.' (xiii. 91).

his role from that of reader to that of an actual editor, in ironic juxtaposition to Rakitin's so far unrealised ambitions to edit a 'thick' journal in St Petersburg. The edited narrative will of necessity assume its own identity, separate from the original, introducing the possibility for ambiguity in even as apparently trustworthy and transparent a vessel as Alyosha. Just as Karamazov blood places him in a hierarchy that ultimately leads to the excesses of Dmitry, even if on the bottom rung, so his participation in the process of narrative will eventually implicate him in the failure of the 'authoritative' word, the ability of narrative to carry a single meaning, prospectus.

For now, though, Alyosha is simply the recipient of Dmitry's narrative, in the same position as the reader. His status as a novice monk, and Dostoevsky's presentation of his character thus far, incline us to consider his critical verdict seriously. His reaction to Dmitry's Schillerian rapture is complete silence. The jury is out, but the possibility of incipient reader indigestion remains on the table. The swift shift to a more contemporary short story format, styled a confession 'in anecdotes', suggests that Dmitry's pretended kinship to the Romantic heroes of Schiller, Pushkin and Lermontov is as suspect as his attempt to borrow their genre.

Dostoevsky calls the second chapter a confession 'in anecdotes' (*V anekdotakh*) The genre take us back to Fedor Pavlovich's method of

narrative progression as well as to the narrative register which opens the third book. Its subject is a commercial transaction –the exchange of Katerina Ivanovna’s honour against her father’s rescue from financial misappropriation. Readers are attracted not by intellectual debate but by a titillating mix of sexual and financial indiscretion, mixed with a voyeuristic fascination with the lower classes in the story which opens this book of the rape of Lizaveta Smerdyashchaya, made all the more alluring by overtones of religious mania. This suddenly sharper, more pacy style, with its contemporary intertexts to Paul de Kock (xiii.93) and its focus on sex and money, relies on the use of narrative and plot device well understood by readers and carefully signposted by these genre markers which appear to act as interpretative instructions. The 5,000 rouble bill of exchange which is to pay for Katerina Ivanovna’s honour is hidden in a French dictionary – a pointer to the values of Balzac and the *roman-feuilleton*.<sup>108</sup> Dmitry’s fluency as a narrator contrasts pointedly with his inability to express himself in the preceding chapter and suggests that this prose genre is far better suited as a mode of transmission for his narrative to the reader. Significantly, Alyosha listened ‘extremely attentively’.<sup>109</sup>

As we are already beginning to realise, whenever the narrative returns to Dmitry from now on it will assume ‘commercial’ characteristics

---

<sup>108</sup> In Balzac’s *Ursule Mirouët*, for example, Docteur Minoret conceals Ursule’s inheritance of 36,000 francs in bearer bonds in the third volume of Justinian’s *Pandectes*. *La Comédie Humaine*, ed. Castex (1976), vol.3, pp. 831, 916.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Алеша слушал чрезвычайно внимательно.’ (xiii.93).

– pace, sensation, melodrama. The title of the final part, ‘Head over Heels’ (*Vverkh pyatami*’, perhaps better translated as ‘Upside Down’ or ‘Topsy Turvy’ to avoid the English-only implication of ‘...in love’), suggests that uncertainty and suspense are part of this genre too. Katerina Ivanovna has suddenly become rich, by a novelistic inversion characteristic of the plots of Eugène Sue, Paul de Kock or, indeed, Dostoevsky himself, who likens it to something from the Arabian Nights.<sup>110</sup> She may or may not love Dmitry, or Ivan.(xiii.9) Dmitry may or may not have intended to defraud her but his status as Romantic hero is clearly compromised.(xiii.101) He may or may not be serious about murdering his father and rival for Grushenka.(xiii.103) Dmitry may not inherit financially, but he is already the legatee of his father’s narrative *leitmotif* in the shape of this commercially tagged, disrupted narrative. Alyosha begins at last to show some emotion in his responses.

The implication is that confession has had to be recast as a genre. Its traditional incarnation as a Romantic expression of individualism has been reinterpreted as a more contemporary variant in which the commercial drivers of the boulevard newspaper have all but overwhelmed its ability to convey the message of high moral purpose with which Dmitry starts out. The theme of inversion and challenge is

---

<sup>110</sup> ‘Let me explain it to you now in a couple of words. In Moscow their affairs took a new turn with lightning speed and all the unexpectedness of an Arabian fairytale.’ / ‘Поясняю тебе теперь в двух словах. В Москве у них дела обернулись с быстротою молнии и с неожиданностью арабских сказок’(xiii.98).

repeated in Smerdyakov's story, which follows. He too rejects the literary heritage which he is offered, in the shape of classics from Fedor Pavlovich's library, (xiii.105-6) just as he goes on to reject the standard biblical interpretations of the nature of belief. (xiii.109) Traditional values can no longer be accepted without question: even Ivan and Alyosha's dispute about the existence of God and everlasting life degenerates into a sterile 'does/doesn't' exchange which mocks the very possibility of intellectual debate (xiii.113) and, inevitably, ends in fisticuffs (xiii.117) and a cat-fight (xiii.127). As Alyosha returns to the monastery, even the monks are shown inventing fictitious confessions. (xiii.132) Received values can no longer be relied on, but the new genre of action, sexual tension and money certainly maintains narrative momentum.

## **Melodrama**

Book 4, 'Lacerations' was published in the April edition of the *Russian Herald* after a one month pause. During this gap the first reactions to *The Brothers Karamazov*, both critical and commercial, were becoming apparent. Dostoevsky writes to Putsykovich on 12 March 1879 '*The Brothers Karamazov* is causing a furore here – at court, with the general public, at public readings, as you can see, by the way, from the papers (*The Voice, Rumour, etc.*)'<sup>111</sup> Invitations from the imperial family and public

---

<sup>111</sup> 'Братья Карамазовы производят здесь фурор – и во дворце и в публике, и в публичных чтениях, что в прочем увидите из газет (Голос, Молва и проч.)' (xvi/2.92).

readings followed.<sup>112</sup> Not all the papers shared the same view, though, and as serialisation progressed it would become more and more apparent that popular success did not imply universal critical acclaim. Both Todd and Terras make the point that these contemporary critics were hardly judging the novel on its own merits. 'In summary, then, contemporary reviewers sought to find in Dostoevsky's novel no more and no less than a confirmation of their own views. Few of them were satisfied.' is how Terras puts it.<sup>113</sup> It would rapidly become evident that the commercial value of the text was less volatile than its critical value, a situation which probably still holds true today. It would also become apparent that the early critics looked more for reflections of their own views in the text, rather than at what the text actually said, a situation which is frequently also true today.

So the fourth book, and first instalment of Part II, can be seen as a continuation of the process of experiment with different registers of narrative which we have seen in the first part. Its Russian title, *Nadryvy*, has been translated as *Lacerations*, *Heartache*, *Crack-up* or *Strains*.<sup>114</sup> In the text the word is also translated as hysterics. Belknap's sensitive

---

<sup>112</sup> Letter to K.K. Romanov, 21 March 1879, (xvi/2.93); and Frank (1976-2002), vol 5, pp. 413, 424-25.

<sup>113</sup> Todd, William Mills III, 'Contexts of Criticism: Reviewing *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1879.' in 'Literature, Culture, and Society in the Modern Age: In Honor of Joseph Frank', ed. by Edward J. Brown *et al.*, in *Stanford Slavic Studies* 4:1 (1991), 293-310, and Terras (1981), pp. 33-38. The quotation is at p. 36.

<sup>114</sup> Respectively, Garnett, ed. Mc Reynolds Oddo, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); Magarshack (London: Penguin, 1958); McDuff (London: Penguin, 1993, reissued 2003); and Pevear/Volokhonsky (London: Vintage, 2004).

analysis of this book suggests that *nadryv* is strongly allied, in its drive towards excess, to the concept of buffoonery which characterises Fedor Pavlovich, but with an overlay of authenticity which inverts buffoonery's tendency to the base into a quest for dignity.<sup>115</sup> The concept of the exploration of excess, symbolised by the legend of St John the Merciful, is intimately linked with its role in genre. The different translations of the title of the book suggest at least four different registers, from the potentially tragic ('lacerations'), through the sentimental ('heartache'), to the psychological and possibly even comic ('crack-up/hysterics').

The common theme is that of melodrama, a genre which enables excess to play both a commercial and a philosophical role. Prendergast argues that melodrama uses its hallmark polarisation of virtue and evil to create a more legible universe in which cause and effect become easier to anticipate.<sup>116</sup> His argument could be extended into a discussion of the commercial attractions of the genre as one which generates predictable reactions from readers and, thereby, reliable subscription income for publishers, as Eugène Sue had effectively demonstrated with his *Mystères de Paris*. Peter Brooks suggests, in his analysis of Balzac's use of melodrama, that in a desacralized world where all received readings are open to challenge, this legibility, revealed only at the apex of excess, provides fleeting moments where signification is restored and, by

---

<sup>115</sup> Belknap (1989), pp. 37-45.

<sup>116</sup> Prendergast, (1978), pp. 7-8.

implication, the moral compass can relocate true north. 'Melodrama is a necessary mode of ethical and emotional conceptualisation and dramatization in the forms and for these writers [Brooks is referring to Balzac, Dickens, Dostoevsky and Henry James], and only in direct, unembarrassed confrontation of the melodramatic element do they yield their full ambition and meaning.'<sup>117</sup> But just this experiment had previously led to narrative failure in *The Idiot*, where melodrama did indeed create an atmosphere in which an ethical message could be tabled in the Gothic sanctum of Rogozhin's house, but where the very dissociation of this setting from the remainder of the action of the novel created a dislocation which affected the integrity of the novel's construction and of the relevance of the ethical proposition in equal measure.

We can, perhaps, view this book as an investigation into the literary role of melodramatic excess, this time in carefully moderated doses. The series of anecdotes which constitutes the chapter all represent excess in various guises. Ferapont tries to cast out devils only he can see. Ilyusha bites Alyosha's finger. The Khokhlakov family provides comic relief in a permanent state of near-hysteria. Katerina Ivanovna pledges herself to Dmitry while, we are given to understand, secretly loving Ivan. Snegirev tramples charity underfoot. All of these individual narratives frame more serious discourses. Ferapont's rantings accompany Zosima's

---

<sup>117</sup> Peter Brooks (1995), p. 55.

last sermon; Ilyusha's stone-throwing finally gives Alyosha a voice; Lise's 'natural' love for Alyosha is compared to the self-centred attachments of Katerina Ivanovna; Snegirev's tantrums highlight Ilyusha's suffering. It is as though Dostoevsky is trialling various blends of melodrama with different weights of intellectual content. Here intellectual content is suggested, rather than brought to the foreground, and is the more effective for being better integrated. The narratives incorporate many commercial features: they are fast-paced, vivid, and they avoid significant digression or expansion. They serve to build tension in expectation of a crisis to come: as the title hints, these are lacerations, not yet murder.

By and large, the combination seems to work at this moderate level of intensity. There are some hints, though, that the conflict has not been entirely resolved. All the stories are told to an audience of one or both of Alyosha and Mme Khokhlakova, who sometimes also participate in the action, and sometimes simply listen. Their responses are an interesting guide. Alyosha, our narrative barometer, has trouble remembering all of Zosima's sermon (xiii.135) whereas he has no difficulty recalling the events of Ferapont's appearance.(xiii.141) The chapter title, 'Father Ferapont' rather than 'Zosima's Last Sermon', suggests that Dostoevsky also suspected which track his reader would follow.

Mme Khokhlakova, an avid consumer of the emotional excesses of others, rejects any attempt at intellectualisation, simplifies everything and

categorises events repeatedly into genre buckets of comedy or tragedy.(xiii.150) Both listen to Katerina Ivanovna's agonising between Ivan and Dmitry. Alyosha responds to the substance of her dilemma and offers his reading of the situation (that she secretly loves Ivan not Dmitry, xiii.159).But excess confuses him and, ironically, upsets rather than confirms his moral compass: 'He couldn't love passively, and once involved he immediately set about trying to help...But instead of a fixed objective there was nothing but murk and mess. 'Hysterics, heartache' – that was the word which had just been uttered. But what on earth was he to make of these hysterics and heartache? He didn't even understand the first word in the whole tangled mess.'<sup>118</sup> His asserted judgement is certainly rejected by Katerina Ivanovna and by Ivan, even if the reader may suspect that Dostoevsky would like us to take it as a perceptive prophecy. Mme Khokhlakova, by contrast, responds to the symptoms, visibly enjoys Katerina Ivanovna's emotional distress, and generally reacts as the reader of a boulevard newspaper might, seeking the voyeuristic pleasure of a good read about other people's problems. Katerina Ivanovna has *nadryvy*; Mme Khoklakhova calls them *isterika*.(xiii.159 vs. 161) There seems to be a clear sense not just that different readers find different things in the same narrative, but that the narrative must also find a way of coping with all these different requirements.

---

<sup>118</sup> 'Любить пассивно он не мог, возлюбив, он тотчас же принимался и помогать.... Но вместо твердой цели во всем была лишь неясность и путаница. "Надрыв" произнесено теперь! Но что он мог понять хотя бы даже в этом надрыве? Первого даже слова во всей этой путанице он не понимает!' (xiii.155). I have included alternative translations of *nadryv* to give a sense of the genre differences between the two.

---

Judging the impact of narrative can, however, be difficult. The story of Snegirev and his son begins an experimental journey into another form of melodramatic excess, that of the sentimental. It seems to ask whether intensifying the level of melodrama, of excess, leads to greater predictability of reader reaction. Dostoevsky forces the pathos, to the extent that the latter parts of this episode begin to resemble scenes from *Insulted and Injured* (*Unizhennye i oskorblennye*), such as that in which Nelly, like Snegirev, also refuses charity.(iv.219-220) He labels Snegirev with a leitmotif of excess in the shape of his straggly beard, described as a washrag (*mochalka*), which Dmitry has earlier pulled and which now encapsulates the extent of his debasement and humiliation.(xiii.164, 165, 169) The very point of the leitmotif is that it depends on a pre-programmed reception, capable of being repeated on command by the author. On one level this clearly works: Snegirev's character is pitiful and rebarbative in equal measure and uses the proven technique developed in *Notes from the Underground* to pique the reader's curiosity by the volatility of his responses. The more unpredictable the character, it seems, the more predictable the reader response.

There is, though, a parallel sense that at another more reflective level conventional expectations of reception are not to be trusted. Snegirev accepts, then repulses, Alyosha's charity, but does so in a way which leads Alyosha to think that he is simply paving the way for later acceptance.(xiii.175) But is Alyosha's conclusion right, or just a rather

smug presumption about the acuity of his perception? Snegirev may, indeed, later accept the money, but his actions do not seem to us as premeditated as Alyosha assumes. And are Alyosha's motives pure or is he, too, trying to buy off trouble for his brother? For readers of detail, Alyosha's credibility has already come under suspicion. He tells Snegirev that the 200 roubles he is offering come from Katerina Ivanovna and have nothing to do with Dmitry. This is not, in fact, strictly true. Dmitry has lent 5,000 roubles to Katerina Ivanovna. When she inherits, she repays him in total 4,800 roubles. She needed only 4,500 roubles to save her father, so repaid 300 roubles immediately to Dmitry out of the 5,000 roubles bill of exchange, net of 200 roubles negotiation fees; and the remaining 4,500 roubles on receiving her inheritance. The outstanding 200 roubles were apparently never repaid so, ironically, in a sense the money Alyosha offers to Snegirev did come from Dmitry, despite Alyosha's denials. Whether consciously or not, Alyosha is not always as dependable as he seems, either as a reader or as a projector of narrative.

'Lacerations' seems experimentally to anticipate the response of the contemporary literary market. The commercial characteristics of this series of experiments in melodrama appeal, on a broadly predictable basis, to any readership represented by Mme Khokhlakova. Alyosha's reactions suggest that not only is he also swayed by the same textual devices but that when he engages with the more intellectual or

philosophical dimension of the narrative his responses are less trustworthy.

## ***Parable***

The combination of an enthusiastic public reception and the suggestion in Book 4 that some sort of equilibrium between the commercial and the intellectual might be attainable seems to have encouraged Dostoevsky to push the experiment to a new level. Book 5 proposes a narrative which dramatizes a philosophical debate, through Ivan's 'Rebellion' and 'The Grand Inquisitor'. The title of the book, 'Pro and Contra', implies the context of a debate and a trial. Dostoevsky's intentions, as expressed in his correspondence, appear consistent with the idea that this is some sort of experiment in the ability of fiction to carry a significant philosophical charge. A letter to Lyubimov in May 1879 describes its concept in terms of the depiction of abstract ideas – atheism, anarchy and social disintegration: 'The thought behind [the book], as you will see from the text I've sent you, is to portray out-and-out blasphemy and the nub of the idea of the destruction of our times in Russia amongst a younger generation completely detached from reality, along with atheism and anarchism...'<sup>119</sup> A further letter in June describes the structure of a

---

<sup>119</sup> 'Мысль ее, как Вы уже увидите из посланного текста, есть изображение крайнего богохульства и зерна идеи разрушения нашего времени в России, в среде оторвавшейся от действительности молодежи, и рядом с богохульством и анархизмом...' Letter to Lyubimov, 10 May 1879, (xvi/2.98).

response, in the shape of Zosima's last words.<sup>120</sup> At the same time it was becoming clear that the scale of the experiment was greater than originally envisaged: Book 5 stretched over two instalments, in May and June; Book 6 would not appear until August, and in early July Dostoevsky writes to his editor to give him the news that the entire novel would now extend into the whole first quarter of 1880.<sup>121</sup> The need to keep readers on board for an extended period was becoming more acute.

The strength of Ivan's argument, on which critics agree who rarely see eye to eye elsewhere, owes much to the manner of its transmission. Dostoevsky carefully blends intellectual argument with commercial device. Like Dmitry's earlier confession, Ivan's confession to Alyosha in 'Rebellion' is couched in a series of anecdotes which take the form of parables by virtue of their association with a projected philosophical or ethical viewpoint. The subject matter of the six anecdotes is all related to suffering inflicted on those who cannot defend themselves, in particular children: atrocities inflicted by Turkish soldiers on enemy children; the execution of a murderer after his conversion to Christianity and repentance; a tale from Nekrasov about a peasant beating a horse; two stories about parental child abuse, and a final anecdote which Ivan remembers as being from an old archival collection but which had actually appeared much more recently in the very periodical in which *The Brothers*

---

<sup>120</sup> Letter to Lyubimov, 11 June 1879, (xvi/2.104).

<sup>121</sup> Letter to Lyubimov, 8 July 1879, (xvi/2.111).

*Karamazov* was being published, about a boy hunted down for sport by dogs.(xiii.197-201)<sup>122</sup> They recall the similar series of interpolated narratives in *The Idiot* with which Myshkin stakes his claim to fictional substance and take the form of a similar claim by Ivan, who has so far featured hardly at all in the narrative since the second chapter, to literary credibility.<sup>123</sup> The very presence of the anecdotes in the text seems to be a literary contrivance, a set piece scene engineered to raise key philosophical or moral issues. They are literary artefacts and are framed by allusions to this status.

The reference to St John the Merciful, and intertext to Flaubert's *St Julien*, introduces them and, as I have previously noted, opens an enquiry into the role of excess in attracting or repelling readers. In contrast to Dmitry's borrowings from the Romantic canon, Ivan borrows from newspapers, and openly admits as much.(xiii.199) Dostoevsky's correspondence explicitly refers to this as a device to enhance the relationship between abstract argument and reality: 'Everything my heroes say in the text I sent to you is based in reality. All the stories about children really happened and were reported in newspapers – I can even

---

<sup>122</sup> Terras 1981, p. 224 in relation to the source of the anecdote about the hunted boy.

<sup>123</sup> Myshkin establishes his credibility with the Epanchin family by means of three stories, of the prisoner reprieved from execution, of the final moments of a man sentenced to execution, and of his own relationship with the handicapped Marie in Switzerland (viii.49-50, 52-53, 54-61). Like Ivan, his skills as a narrator and the sensational or sentimental aspects of his stories are shown as being key attributes enabling him to attract and hold an audience.

show you where. I didn't invent any of it.'<sup>124</sup> But despite this apparent abjuration of authorial manipulation, Ivan's anecdotes use the familiar stylistic tricks of the press to create impact –sentimentality, sensationalism, iteration, hyperbole, melodrama. John Jones calls his handling of the source material 'parajournalistic' and points out how he has revised the story of the hunted boy to focus on the boy rather than his mother, as the notebooks indicate.<sup>125</sup> The simplified rhetoric of the journalistic anecdote, the immediacy of the *fait divers*, the appeal to emotion over intellect prove to be powerful tools in asserting Ivan's prospectus. Dostoevsky's notes for the chapter refer to a quest for the sensational in literature and cite a potent literary precedent: '...bestial depravity, with all its consequences, to the point of cruelty, to the point of crime, to the point of the Marquis de Sade.'<sup>126</sup> The power of the narrative lends force to Ivan's argument and shows how a deft combination of journalistic technique and ethically charged material can, at one level, support a philosophical proposition.

Such intertexts, however, are not just an indication of Dostoevsky's desire to dramatise a philosophical debate. They reveal an underlying ambiguity. Just as they create a sense of narrative drive so, in equal measure, they become an ironic commentary on Ivan's need to resort to

---

<sup>124</sup> 'Все что говорится моим героем в посланном Вам тексте, основано на действительности. Все анекдоты о детях случились, были напечатаны в газетах и я могу указать где, ничего не выдуманно мною.' Letter to Lyubimov, 10 May 1879, (xvi/2.98).

<sup>125</sup> John Jones (1983), p. 314.

<sup>126</sup> '...Скотское сладострастие, со всеми последствиями, до жестокости, до преступления, до Маркиза де Сада.' (PSS 2003-05, Suppl. vol. iii, p. 114).

these devices of excess and melodrama to convey an intellectual point. The reader – or at least this reader – continually asks whether the compulsion to keep reading does not stem more from the strength of the anecdote than from any engagement with the moral debate. Fiction – at least in this genre - simultaneously transmits and infects philosophy.

Dostoevsky seems to be well aware of this conundrum, as he exploits it himself in Ivan's self-reflexive analysis of narrative value in 'The Grand Inquisitor'. Ivan's presentation emphasises its claims to literary status: the narrative is labelled a '*poema*', and he adds a genre signpost and claim to literary value by comparing it to the opening of Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*.(xiii.204) Even his dismissal of the story as '...the stupid work of a stupid student',<sup>127</sup> and his introduction which highlights its pretentiousness and derivative origins have the opposite effect: his self-deprecation is contradicted by the scale and evident importance of the encounter in the novel. (xiii.204-05)

In contrast to the authentic prospectus of Ivan's rebellion, this is an experiment in promoting a series of false prospectuses. The Grand Inquisitor himself knows that his projected altruism conceals covert tyranny.(xiii.212) For both, therefore, the credibility of their narratives to the intended recipients is crucial. A key plank of the Grand Inquisitor's argument is that man follows credible stories not real religion: '... if man

---

<sup>127</sup> '...бестолковая поэма бестолкового студента.'(xiii.217).

---

once rejects miracle, he will simultaneously reject God, for man seeks not God but miracles.<sup>128</sup> The Grand Inquisitor plans to achieve power through a projected narrative of such power as to convince the majority of humanity, even though he is aware of its falseness. Ivan also tries to convince Alyosha by the power of narrative, despite his reservations about the effectiveness of the medium. Dostoevsky, too, is experimenting with a new narrative variant as a vehicle for a far more dense ethical debate than he has previously attempted in the novel, and the genre he chooses for his experiment is that of full-strength melodrama.

The three qualities which, the Grand Inquisitor claims, underpin his philosophy are precisely those of successful melodrama: miracle, mystery and authority or, to retranslate in more literary terminology, fantasy, suspense and authorial control. Dostoevsky is simultaneously writing a narrative describing the attempt by the Grand Inquisitor to seize control of his fictional universe and exploring whether the same techniques work on his own readers. He starts by setting the scene in the traditional manner of melodrama. The location of the Grand Inquisitor's narrative is a chiaroscuro dungeon on a 'dark, hot and 'breathless' Seville night' smelling of lemons and laurel,<sup>129</sup> amid the fabled brutalities of the Inquisition.(xiii.189) The story is segregated from the remainder of the narrative at every level: the setting is remote in time; the country is far

---

<sup>128</sup> '...чуть лишь человек отвергнет чудо, то тотчас отвергнет и бога, ибо человек ищет не столько бога, сколько чудес.'(xiii.212).

<sup>129</sup> 'Темная, горячая и 'бездыханная' ночь'(xiii.207).

from Russia; the Grand Inquisitor meets Christ at night in a prison. In the frame narrative Ivan and Alyosha converse alone in a partitioned room of an inn. Even the text is physically segregated as a separate chapter. Within this isolated fictional world the normal laws of credibility seem to be temporarily suspended, as happened in Rogozhin's house, in anticipation of a moment of revelation.

The subject of his tale is authorial control. The Grand Inquisitor's route to narrative credibility relies on the threat of coercion to suspend disbelief: the very metaphor of the Inquisition implies as much. Ivan suggests that the author of a successful prospectus narrative, which can create, manipulate and sustain predictable recipient response and thereby control his audience, is equivalent to a successful dictator. The Grand Inquisitor's concept of the perfect state is one in which all responses are controlled and predictable. 'Yes, we'd make [people] work, but in their free time we'd arrange their lives just like a children's game, with children's songs sung in choirs and innocent dances'<sup>130</sup> Even experience beyond life can be controlled: 'In peace will they die, in peace will they expire with your name on their lips, and beyond the grave they will find only death.'<sup>131</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> 'Да, мы заставим их работать, но в свободные от труда часы мы устроим им жизнь как детскую игру, с детскими песнями, хором, с невинными плясками.' (xiii.214).

<sup>131</sup> 'Тихо умрут они, тихо угаснут во имя твое и за гробом обрящут лишь смерть.' (xiii.215).

But the very isolation which encourages fantasy also threatens it. The setting referred to above could be the opening of a chapter from *Melmoth*, where Maturin's 'Tale of the Spaniard' is set at the time of the Inquisition and occupies over a third of the entire work.<sup>132</sup> The intertext with a work which played a significant role in establishing the Gothic Romance as a cornerstone genre of popular literature is ironic in the context of a narrative laying claim to philosophical weight. Dostoevsky, rather than Ivan, seems to be asking whether authorial control within a genre so far removed from reality is not, in fact, self defeating. Coleridge raises similar doubts about the ability of Gothic fantasy to support a moral argument in his review of Lewis's *The Monk*: 'All events are levelled into one common mass, and become almost equally probable, where the order of nature may be changed wherever the author's purposes demand it...The writer may make us wonder, but he cannot surprise us. For the same reasons a romance is incapable of exemplifying a moral truth.'<sup>133</sup> The issue raises precisely the Flaubertian questions about the links between narrative control, excess and philosophical credibility which Dostoevsky had himself introduced at the very start of the scene with the reference to St John the Merciful. Is Dostoevsky planting the seeds of failure of the Grand Inquisitor's philosophy by his choice of mode of narration? Or does it have more to do with a general incompatibility

---

<sup>132</sup> Maturin, Charles, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, ed. by Douglas Grant and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 73-261.

<sup>133</sup> Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, Review of Matthew G. Lewis, 'The Monk' in *The Critical Review*, 2.19 (Feb. 1797), pp. 194-200.

between philosophical discourse and narrative fiction, as he had discovered in *Idiot*?

Dostoevsky's correspondence, as we have seen, suggests that he is depicting a point of view with which he has little sympathy and that his intention is to show its failings.<sup>134</sup> But the text itself is more ambiguous, at all levels. The Grand Inquisitor's argument in favour of despotism is itself presented as a response to the unpredictability of narrative credibility. If audience reaction is incapable of being programmed, chaos will result, he claims to Christ: 'Instead of the fixed law of old, man in future has to decide freely for himself what is good and what evil, with only you as role model – but surely it must have occurred to you that in the end he would challenge and question even your model and your truth if you saddled him with such a heavy burden as freedom of choice.'<sup>135</sup> Prospectus, an assertion of 'true' worth, is the only way to assure the value of narrative but is immediately invalidated as a lie. The audience response within Ivan's narrative itself implies rejection: the Christ figure remains silent.

At the level of the frame story, Alyosha responds by questioning the credibility of Ivan's entire narrative – he describes the story as a 'wild fantasy', states bluntly that the Inquisitor is not credible as a character,

---

<sup>134</sup> Letter to Lyubimov, 11 June 1879, (xvi/2.104).

<sup>135</sup> 'Вместо твердого древнего закона, - свободным сердцем должен был человек решать впредь сам, что добро и что зло, имея лишь в руководстве твой образ пред собою, - но неужели ты не подумал, что он отвергнет же наконец и оспорит даже и твой образ и твою правду, если его угнетут таким страшным бременем, как свобода выбора?' (xiii.215).

and seems to imply that the text has trouble dealing with the philosophical weight put on it: 'What's more, such a fantastical character as your inquisitor clearly couldn't have existed. What are these sins of men that they take on themselves? Who are these keepers of the mystery who have assumed some sort of curse for the happiness of mankind? When were they ever seen?'<sup>136</sup> By the end of the story Ivan is even losing his claim to authorship: the phrase most closely associated with his philosophy, 'all is permitted' (*vse pozvoleno*), turns out to be Dmitry's, and Alyosha plagiarises the kiss which Christ gives to the Grand Inquisitor.(xiii.218) Creating a credible narrative which can sustain real intellectual weight turns out to be more difficult in the context of a novel than it had been in the more flexible but less enduring context of *Diary of a Writer*.

It is easy to forget Smerdyakov. His status is never defined – a possible by-blow of Fedor Pavlovich, so a possible half-brother to the three legitimate sons. His story has so far been tucked into corners dominated by others. His birth is described not together with the stories of the other brothers but at the opening of a book dominated by Dmitry's confession. His education and ideas preface Ivan's exposition of his own philosophy in 'Rebellion' and 'The Grand Inquisitor'. And his suggestion to

---

<sup>136</sup> 'Да и совсем не может быть такого фантастического лица, как твой инквизитор. Какие это грехи людей, взятые на себя? Какие это носители тайны, взявшие на себя какое-то проклятие для счастья людей? Когда они виданы?' (xiii.215).

Ivan that, by faking an epileptic fit, he can put himself in a position to manipulate Fedor Pavlovich's fate forms a curious coda to the same book.

Initially his story acts as a commentary on the value of the narratives of others. The numerous parallels which many critics have identified between him and the other sons turn his story into a partial re-narration of their own. William Leatherbarrow characterises him as the composite double of all the other brothers, part person in his own right, part travesty, and notes how even his linguistic register is polluted by idioms copied from his siblings.<sup>137</sup> The genre of his genesis, in the boulevard newspaper voyeurism of his birth and mother's death, sharply separates him from the genres associated with his siblings: the formulaic discourse of scripture associated with Alyosha, the dated Romanticism which introduces Dmitry, and the Gothic fantasies of Ivan's imagination. The interpolation of parts of his story throughout the confessions of the other sons ensures that they act as a running commentary on the many ways in which their attempts at prospectus narrative can fail. The sophistry of his philosophical argumentation, acquired under Ivan's tutelage, interrogates the sophistication of Ivan's own proposals and the validity of his prospectus. Smerdyakov's own life story denies all forms of asserted values, from the class structure which denies him social standing and inheritance rights to the received wisdom of the scriptures. The

---

<sup>137</sup> Leatherbarrow, William, *Fyodor Dostoyevsky – 'The Brothers Karamazov'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 38-41.

captured soldier in Smerdyakov's anecdote of the prisoner forced to recant his faith to avoid torture can, indeed should, abjure his religion to escape the consequences: no values are permanent and narrative can, if necessary, be twisted to legitimise each new position.(xiii.109)

There is, however, one set of values which Smerdyakov does claim to control: that of a commercial author. Diane Thompson notes his role from childhood in corrupting what she calls the collective sacred memory – he holds a mock religious ceremony over a cat he had killed, he challenges the story of Genesis, he casuistically distorts the parable of the mustard seed – but perhaps these should also be seen as early and unconscious attempts to rewrite received narratives.<sup>138</sup> It is not until the scenes after the Grand Inquisitor chapter that he proposes himself as surrogate novelist. His epilepsy both pre-qualifies him, in the Dostoevskian value system, and provides his creative inspiration. He suggests faking an epileptic fit which, we and Ivan are pushed to speculate, would allow him to murder Fedor Pavlovich while throwing suspicion on to Dmitry.(xiii.224-25) His proposal to Ivan is, effectively, to allow him to take over as the author of the story by arranging that most novelistic of devices, a coincidence, to take control of the narrative line.

---

<sup>138</sup> Thompson, Diane Oenning, *'The Brothers Karamazov' and the Poetics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 136-40. The three episodes referred to are at xiii.105 and xiii.110.

Ivan admits that he is unable to deal with coincidence: 'Ivan Fedorovich would have tried 'not to think' but even that wouldn't have helped. What was really annoying and irritating about this depression was that it felt almost coincidental and had nothing to do with him'.<sup>139</sup> Smerdyakov, though, can. He is, he points out, in a privileged position to see all the plot lines through his possession of the admission codes to the key location, the sequence of knocks which will gain access to Fedor Pavlovich's house. He can rewrite the story by faking illness. He understands the importance of proper preparation and research, and can exploit his own personal experience to make his narrative realistic. He is aware of the role of literary device and understands how to use coincidence, one of Dostoevsky's own favourite devices. As his narrative develops in his own eventual confession to Ivan, we discover that he even thinks like the novelist of a courtroom drama: if he removes the money he has stolen from Fedor Pavlovich from its envelope, he muses, that will throw suspicion on to suspects who needed to check its contents – whereas he, Smerdyakov, would have known what the envelope contained.(xiv.222) And finally he proposes a rational method for valuing this narrative: he will deliver it to the person who he believes will value it most highly based purely on financial criteria, in the shape of Ivan, who would be the chief beneficiary if Fedor Pavlovich were to die ostensibly at

---

<sup>139</sup> 'Иван Федорович попробовал было 'не думать', но и тем не мог пособить. Главное, тем она была досадна, эта тоска, и тем раздражала, что имела какой-то случайный, совершенно внешний вид; это чувствовалось.'(xiii.220)

Dmitry's hand before marrying Grushenka, since the inheritance would then be split between two brothers rather than three.(xiii.225-226)

The interposition of his narrative immediately after the narrative of the Grand Inquisitor is significant. It debunks the grandiose claims of Ivan's hero to authorial control in the interests of a philosophical ideal. It serves to highlight Ivan's own state of intellectual paralysis. Low cunning, it implies, is just as effective as Gothic fantasy and creates a far more convincing story to boot. Melodrama, *pace* Coleridge, may be able to carry more intellectual baggage but is hardly needed if Smerdyakov's pragmatic subterfuge works. The Grand Inquisitor's benevolent dictatorship appears even more fantastical when confronted by Smerdyakov's slippery, down-to-earth self-interest. And the narrative register of Smerdyakov's proposition is that of a future generation of readers to emerge in Russia, barely visible when Dostoevsky was writing these pages – the aspirant urban member of the lower classes seeking to better himself and dreaming of moving to the city to open a restaurant.(xiii.186) It suggests the ability to take control of one's own destiny, but with limited and modest aims. In careers as in narrative, it seems, aiming too high deflates the credibility of the proposition.

## **Hagiography**

Notwithstanding Smerdyakov's intervention, Dostoevsky's own commentary suggests that he saw both 'The Grand Inquisitor' and the following book, 'A Russian Monk' as part of a wider discussion of how to create this new genre of 'philosophical fiction' within a commercial environment. In a letter to Pobedonostsev he voices concerns that the need to stay in character will prevent him from offering a direct refutation of Ivan's position in both 'Rebellion' and 'The Grand Inquisitor'. 'So I had intended this sixth book, 'A Russian Monk', which is coming out on 31 August, to be the answer to all this negativism. But now I'm afraid, in the sense that it might not be an adequate answer. The more so in that it's not a direct answer, in terms, to the propositions already set out (both in 'The Grand Inquisitor' and earlier), but more an oblique response...And on top of that there's the artistic imperative: the character needed to be portrayed as humble and majestic, while life is full of comedy ...so willy-nilly, for artistic reasons, I had to touch on even the most mundane sides of my monk's biography so as not to harm its artistic realism.'<sup>140</sup> A slightly earlier letter, also to Pobedonostsev, refers to the wave of commercialism

---

<sup>140</sup> 'Ибо ответом на всю эту отрицательную сторону, я и предложил быть вот этой 6<sup>й</sup> книге, *Русский Инок*, которая появится 31 Августа. А потому и трепещу за нее в том смысле; будет ли она достаточным ответом. Тем более что ответ-то ведь не прямой, не на положения прежде выраженные (в *Великом Инквизиторе* и прежде) по пунктам, а лишь косвенный. ...А тут вдобавок еще обязанности художественной потребовалось представить фигуру скромную и величественную, между тем жизнь полна комизма....так что поневоле, из-за художественных требований, принужден был, в биографии моего инока коснуться и самых пошловатых сторон, чтобы не повредить художественному реализму.' Letter to Pobedonostsev, 24 August 1879, (xvi/2.152, Dostoevsky's italics).

which Dostoevsky found on his return to Bad Ems in Germany (and which he attributes, unattractively, to a Semitic invasion) but which he expresses in quasi-literary terms as the ‘spirit of speculative realism’.<sup>141</sup> To Putsykovich he voices concern that the process of serialisation, and in particular interventions by his publisher Katkov, would prevent the exposition of more sides of the argument: ‘That’s not the only thing: in the novel I had to put across several ideas and points of view which I’m afraid won’t go down well at all with him [Katkov], particularly as right up to the end of the novel you could end up with the wrong end of the stick on all these ideas and propositions.’<sup>142</sup> Taken in this context ‘A Russian Monk’ can be seen as an experiment in the hagiographical genre, to determine whether it could provide the philosophical refutation of Ivan’s propositions which Dostoevsky seems to have intended, whilst at the same time maintaining both commercial momentum and aesthetic integrity.

Dostoevsky is very specific about the status of this text. The narrator tells us, in an extended ellipsis, that it is a collage formed of recent memories of Zosima’s last conversations to which, the narrator speculates, Alyosha may have added recollections of previous teachings to

---

<sup>141</sup> ‘*дух спекулятивного реализма*’ Letter to Pobedonostsev, 9 August 1879, (xvi/2.136, Dostoevsky’s italics). The use of the words ‘speculative realism’ appears at least in part to be a euphemism for ‘Jewish greed’ in this context.

<sup>142</sup> ‘Мало того: мне в романе предстояло провести несколько идей и положений, которые, как я боялся, им будут очень не по нутру, ибо до окончания романа, действительно, можно эти идеи и положения понять превратно...’ Letter to Putsykovich, 11 June 1879, (xvi/2.106).

form a composite and uninterrupted whole.(xiii.235-236) He makes the specific point that these were conversations which were not seen as specifically important in themselves but which acquired value subsequently by virtue of Zosima's death. Although the text is thus clearly co-authored by Zosima and Alyosha, their authorship has entirely different functions which differentiate the value of Alyosha's text from that of Zosima. Zosima's teaching is, effectively, a gift, an exchange from master to pupils without a discernible expectation of reward and without attempt to attach especial value to the words. In Mauss's spectrum of the relative disinterestedness of gifts, the episodic and fitful nature of the teachings seems to downplay their claim to a return – although the reader may remember from the very first book that the status enjoyed by the Elders derived from their imparted wisdom, so the transaction is not entirely altruistic.<sup>143</sup> Alyosha's hagiography is, just as evidently, an attempt to create posterity value by the acts of compilation, editing and publication. If we accept this distinction we have, perhaps, a useful tool to differentiate the two widely differing modes of reception which have characterised this chapter. Those who focus on the religious substance of Zosima's teachings ascribe value to the message while either ignoring the medium, or allowing their perception of the value of the teachings to influence their judgement of the message.<sup>144</sup> Those who note the flaws in

---

<sup>143</sup> Mauss (2011), ch.1, pp. 6-16.

<sup>144</sup> Reviewing the considerable body of criticism on both sides of this debate is beyond the scope of this chapter. As noted already, the introductory chapter to Susan McReynolds's *Redemption and the Merchant God* (McReynolds (2008), pp. 3-19) provides a good overview

the medium tend to assume that this reflects flaws in the message, which thereby becomes an unsatisfactory refutation of Ivan's case for the opposition.

Differentiating medium from message allows us to give weight to a characteristic which Alyosha has, in fact, demonstrated for some time but which is only now coming to prominence. The early parts of the novel show him primarily as a reporter, using his station as novice monk to move freely between the monastic and secular societies of the town as an observer trusted by all, spectating but rarely commenting. As the plot develops, so he gradually acquires his own story and voice. In doing so he discovers, to his evident surprise, how the process of communication can produce unplanned and quite speculative results. He thinks he has convinced Snegirev to accept Katerina Ivanovna's charity, but Snegirev abruptly changes tack and rejects the proffered money.(xiii.175) Lise mocks his clumsy post-rationalisation,(xiii.179) and her own irrationality is a sarcastic commentary on his expectations of predictability. Mme Khokhlakova, talking about Lise, points out in terms how language can behave in unpredictable ways: '....the great thing about her is her little turns of phrase and expressions, really surprising expressions, the sort of thing you'd never have expected, but which suddenly seem to jump out of

---

of the 'Dostoevsky as a prophet' school of thought, while those who voice doubts over the effectiveness of 'A Russian Monk' as a repudiation of Ivan's position include Grossmann, Jackson, Leatherbarrow, Morson, and Wasiolek.

her mouth.’<sup>145</sup> Throughout the love scene with Lise, which forms the first chapter of the book which contains Ivan’s ‘Rebellion’ and ‘The Grand Inquisitor’, her flighty inconsistency is contrasted to Alyosha’s expectation of logic and meaning. Narrative is suddenly made to appear speculative, unpredictable, random. Ivan’s philosophical exposition in ‘The Grand Inquisitor’, which depends on an assertion of authorial control, is framed on one side by Alyosha and Lise’s demonstration of the difficulty of controlling language and, on the other, by a theft of authorial control as Smerdyakov takes control of Ivan’s narrative. It is difficult to imagine a more ironic commentary on the ability of any author to assert a prospectus narrative.

And yet this is precisely what Alyosha tries to do through his hagiography of Zosima in ‘A Russian Monk’. Indeed, the very choice of the hagiographic genre implies as much, since its very essence is the projection of biography as exemplum, a measure of unchanging value by which others can assess themselves. Alyosha’s voice, though, is barely developed. So, just like the novel itself, he experiments with different styles. In fact, in one of the more ironic twists in the novel, he borrows from his brothers. He tells three anecdotes, echoing Dmitry’s three confessions, the Grand Inquisitor’s three temptations and the narratives of the three brothers. The first is the story of the short life, spiritual

---

<sup>145</sup> «...а главное эти фразы и словечки, самые неожиданные эти словечки, так что никак не ожидаешь, а вдруг оно и выскочит.» (xiii.176).

transformation and ecstatic death of Zosima's elder brother Markel. It explores the voice of Romantic sentimentality. It echoes, as many readers have noticed, the story of Alyosha's memories of his own mother (xiii.19) as well as Ivan's hankerings after a Rousseau-esque return to nature (xiii.190). In repeating these motifs Alyosha also intensifies the emotion: the casual tragedy of his mother's death becomes rather cloying pathos as Zosima's brother expires. The repetition and intensification seem to raise the issue of whether this borrowed style turns to cliché if pushed to excess. Alyosha abruptly curtails his own narrative: 'And there was a whole lot more which I can't remember and shan't include'<sup>146</sup> and switches style.

The next anecdote relates episodes from Zosima's early secular career as an army officer, in which he misbehaves in the manner expected of army officers, repents after abusing his servant, abandons a duel with an opponent he has wronged, leaves the army to become a monk and undergoes a moral rebirth. It borrows a voice which we associate with Dmitry's upbringing. Zosima is shown as a Romantic hero, with intertexts to Lermontov's Pechorin (to whom he has already been compared: xiii.114), a host of Byronesque precedents and, of course, Dmitry's own confession in verse which had earlier seemed so dated. Zosima's moral awakening echoes Dmitry's own, as well as recalling a plotline from Pushkin's *The Shot (Vystrel)* so strikingly similar as to be immediately

---

<sup>146</sup> 'И много еще было чего и не припомнить, и не вписать.' (xiii.238).

recognisable to a contemporary Russian readership. We might, indeed, remember that Ivan had jokingly accused Alyosha of plagiarism when the latter copies Christ's kiss from 'The Grand Inquisitor': the association reminds us that this is still an assumed, experimental voice. This anecdote reveals different tensions. It is pacy and melodramatic: in the space of a few pages we have a love affair, a duel, and a theatrical religious conversion. It contrasts sharply with the immediately preceding interpolation, dealing with the importance of Holy Writ in Zosima's life, and seems to acknowledge that readers might appreciate a return to action to carry the narrative forward. But it is equally evident that this register is only of temporary assistance: Zosima's conversion implies that this style has to be left behind, along with his life as a soldier. Alyosha is forced to change voice once again.

The third anecdote tells the story of the mysterious visitor Mikhail, who discloses to Zosima the secret that he had murdered a girl who preferred another suitor and pushed the blame on to a servant who had subsequently died while under arrest. Zosima convinces him to accept responsibility for his crime and to own up. The story experiments with psychological melodrama in a genre which seems to mix Poe and parable. Caryl Emerson puts it thus: 'Much in Mikhail's conflated character seems

an awkward graft of sensational crime to saintly prototype'.<sup>147</sup> Alyosha seems yet again to be experimenting with how to blend commercial device, which ensure the reader keeps reading, and hagiography, which encapsulates the message. And once more there are issues. The subject of the story is, explicitly, the ability of narrative to mislead: the credibility of Mikhail's false story led to the conviction of a servant for a murder which Mikhail had himself committed, and he is now left with the problem of convincing his reader – Zosima – of the credibility of its contradiction. One story may conceal its own opposite. Neither Alyosha nor, we may speculate, Dostoevsky would have intended recipients to infer that the same counter-narrative may exist for the Gospels, but language is unstable and unpredictable. The reader is left with the uneasy feeling that the reason he has kept reading is the 'courtroom drama' urge to find out which narrative prevails, coupled with the pull of the sensational and prurient, rather than the appeal of moral salvation. And just as the previous narratives have drawn on family intertexts, so this is perhaps Alyosha's imitation of Smerdyakov's voice: Mikhail's story will turn out to be a template for Smerdyakov's concealed murder of Fedor Pavlovich, transfer of suspicion to Dmitry, subsequent back-stage confession to Ivan, and ultimate extinction along with the proof of his involvement.

---

<sup>147</sup> Emerson, Caryl, 'Zosima's "Mysterious Visitor": Again Bakhtin on Dostoevsky, and Dostoevsky on Heaven and Hell.' in *A New Word on 'The Brothers Karamazov'*, ed. by Robert Louis Jackson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004), 155-79, p. 163.

The final chapters of the book are, in hagiographic tradition, the teachings of Zosima. Even here there is an incipient conflict between medium and message. Alyosha's narrative is that of pure prospectus, asserted value in the expectation that the reader will accept and share the same system or that he will recognise the error of his ways. Zosima's teachings, by contrast, focus on passivity, humility, a refusal to judge, an acceptance that others have different value systems by which they choose to live. Given the earlier problems with his experimental voices it is perhaps understandable that Alyosha, as Zosima's life writer, should give up on fictional device and revert to a pure hagiographic style despite its defects.

What is less easy to deal with is that Dostoevsky should have chosen to include such a slab of text, devoid of normal reader incentives, in the middle of a novelistic context. Some critics have taken the position that Dostoevsky's theological proposition is itself so powerful that no narrative device is required for its credibility, but the implication that *The Brothers Karamazov* can only be properly appreciated from a Christian believer's perspective seems to be undermined by Dostoevsky's own correspondence which clearly sees a necessary polemical role for these chapters in refuting the arguments of those closer to Ivan's position.<sup>148</sup> As

---

<sup>148</sup> For a relatively recent summary of critical attitudes to the role and status of religion in Dostoevsky's work see Malcolm Jones, *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), particularly the section entitled 'An Introduction to Current Debate', pp. 25-43.

we have already seen, Dostoevsky himself questions whether the Zosima response is adequate given the requirements for artistic authenticity. Other critics have assumed that this is simply an instance of an artistic failure by Dostoevsky. 'The writing is pallid, abstract and lacking in drama [...] The fragments are amplified, but the amplification is that of exposition and not of drama' writes Wasiolek.<sup>149</sup> Morson is blunter: the problem with utopias, he says, is boredom. 'One might ask, as critics of utopias frequently have, how narrative art is possible at all without conflict and change; for what, if not change, could be narrated? In a curious way, the question about theodicy – if God is all good, how can evil exist? - re-emerges as an aesthetic question for utopia: if heaven and the Republic are perfect, how can there be narratable events?'<sup>150</sup>

A further possibility, particularly in the light of Dostoevsky's insistence to Pobedonostsev on the need to maintain artistic integrity, is that this is more a reflection on Alyosha's ability to tell a story than on what he is trying to communicate. Alyosha is trying to find a way to create posterity value through narrative. His attempts to do so using borrowed voices from his brothers have all foundered on inherent contradictions between genre and the object of its representation: sainthood sits as uneasily with sentimental cliché as with Romantic heroism or psychological drama. His reversion to the traditional record of the saint's

---

<sup>149</sup> *Notebooks*, ed. Wasiolek, (1971), p. 91.

<sup>150</sup> Morson (1981), p. 83.

teachings is an admission that he has not yet found the right medium to convey sanctity credibly. The non-fictional nature of the text in the middle of a work of fiction serves to emphasise this dislocation. The narrator's intervention at the end of the chapter to repeat that Alyosha's text is incomplete and fragmentary reinforces the impression of a failure. He rapidly dusts off the parked plot and deals with Zosima's death in a single paragraph. As importantly, he signals a return to commercial values by creating a swift cliffhanger ending promising something so unexpected in the next chapter that the town was still talking about it. (xiii.266)

His reference, of course, is to the premature decomposition of Zosima's body in the first chapter of book 7. A chapter which had begun as Alyosha's attempt to create posterity value for Zosima's life and teachings ends in a representation in the crudest of terms of his failure to achieve immortality, and in front of the in-story readers for whom Alyosha's words would have been intended. Even more ironically, in a celebration of the power of memory to create lasting value, the narrator implies that the one memory of Zosima which will persist in the minds of the townsfolk is the tabloid scandal of his corpse. If this attempt to create a narrative of lasting value through the assertion of the worth of a character whose entire life has built towards this point has collapsed, then prospectus narrative has indeed failed.

---

## The rejection of prospectus

Book 7, entitled 'Alyosha', was serialised in the September 1879 issue of *Russky Vestnik*. By this time it was already obvious that the novel was a considerable commercial success, even if reactions from professional critics continued to be more variable. Dostoevsky records its extraordinary reach, even amongst the youth who might have been deterred by the unflattering portraits of the young revolutionaries in *The Devils*, in a letter to Pobedonostsev at the end of the summer of 1879.<sup>151</sup> But for all its success it remains an experimental text: the same letter refers to Dostoevsky's doubts that the novelistic format will allow him to convey properly his refutation of 'The Grand Inquisitor', and suggests that such polemics are more easily expressed in the 'firm, fearless voice' of a format like that of *Diary of a Writer*.<sup>152</sup> From now on the novel's focus will shift more towards a representation of the external, commercial world outside the gates of the monastery. To Lyubimov, in a letter accompanying the first three chapters of 'Alyosha', he indicates that he is now done with the monastery, about which there would be nothing more.<sup>153</sup> The change of representational focus is mirrored by a similar switch towards an investigation of the commercial characteristics of fiction. Joseph Brodsky, writing about Dostoevsky in a 1980 article, notes the trend: 'Every act of creation begins as an individual striving for self-perfection and, ideally, for

---

<sup>151</sup> Letter to Pobedonostsev, 24 August 1879, (xvi/2.151).

<sup>152</sup> '...тверд[ое], не боящ[ее]ся слов[о]', (*ibid.*).

<sup>153</sup> Letter to Lyubimov, 16 September 1879. (xvi/2.155).

sainthood. Sooner or later – and rather sooner than later – the writer discovers that his pen delivers far better results than his soul.<sup>154</sup>

The narrative structure of the novel follows a similar curve. Books 1-2 set out the bones of the narrative problem. Books 3-6 have tested to destruction the ability of different genres to represent philosophical, ethical and theological convictions while keeping readers on the hook. Books 8-12 will chart the ascendancy of the commercial possibilities of narrative along with increasing problems of controlling it. Book 7, sandwiched between the end of Zosima's spiritual quest and Dmitry's desperate chase for money, is the pivot around which this change of narrative direction occurs.

It starts by a parody of the Grand Inquisitor's recipe of miracle and mystery in a series of anecdotes which are open to quite different interpretations if seen as spiritual or secular narrative. The conflict of two apparently stable interpretations destabilises both. The rot, literally, begins with Zosima's death: the report of his decomposing body questions whether he qualifies for the expected miracle and is precisely the mystery the boulevard press would seize on. (xiii. 267-76) Dostoevsky insists, in correspondence with his editor, that the coarse verb, *provonyal* ('stunk'),

---

<sup>154</sup> 'Всякое творчество начинается как индивидуальное стремление к самоусовершенствованию и, в идеале, - к святости. Рано или поздно - и скорее раньше, чем позже – пишущий обнаруживает, что его перо достигает гораздо больших результатов, нежели душа.' Brodsky, Joseph, *Vlast' stikhiy. O Dostoevskom*, (1980) <http://brodsky.ouc.ru/vlast-stikhiy-o-dostoevskom.html>, accessed 26 April 2016.

which he puts in Ferapont's mouth to describe the process of Zosima's putrefaction should not be adulterated: the shock value of language is an inherent component of the linguistic register he is seeking to achieve.<sup>155</sup> Journalism meets hagiography, just as Rakitin, proto-journalist, meets Alyosha as he leaves the monastery.

The clash of expectation and result causes Alyosha's faith to wobble. Just as importantly, the contrast between the hagiographic subject and the sensationalist reportage forces the reader to re-examine how narrative value is created. The two succeeding anecdotes are open to equally conflicting interpretations. Alyosha's visit to Grushenka is, alternatively, the beginning of her miraculous spiritual redemption or the attempted seduction of a novice monk by the town tart, procured by an aspiring reporter in the shape, once again, of Rakitin. The narrator lingers over the description of Grushenka's commercial acumen (xiv.281), allowing her subsequent redemption to be interpreted at one level as a rejection of commercial values— but simultaneously using the very description of her prowess to create a narrative with powerful dramatic and commercial characteristics. Grushenka's story of the wicked old woman and the onion similarly serves two purposes. On the one hand it is a parable of salvation. Kate Holland interprets it thus: 'The onion narrative offers two different conclusions: in the legend the old woman fails the moral test set by her guardian angel, but in the novel itself

---

<sup>155</sup> Letter to Lyubimov, 8 September 1879, (xvi/2.155).

Grushenka takes the onion, refuses to seduce Alyosha, and thus begins her moral regeneration.<sup>156</sup> But it is also a story which appeals on a much more immediate level to readers: as Grushenka says: 'It's just a fable, but it's a good story – when I was still a small child my Matryona, the one that works for me now in the kitchens, used to tell it to me.'<sup>157</sup> It is, indeed, a good story and we should not overlook its commercial role as a device which slots neatly into at least two categories associated with defined reader responses. That of 'fable' (*basnya*) links it to a long tradition of simple, folkloric morality tales and thus to an expectation of an asserted moral value. That of the nursery tale, passed down from, presumably, Grushenka's nurse, links it to a recurring literary theme and particularly to Pushkin's evocation of romantic domesticity in Tatyana's exchanges with her nurse in *Evgeny Onegin*, or in his descriptions of his own nurse, Ariona Rodionovna, in, for example, the poem *A Winter's Evening* (*Zimnii Vecher*). Why, the text seems to ask, do we keep reading: is it the compelling nature of a tale of moral resurrection, or is it the impetus of a good traditional folktale in a slightly salacious context?

This querying of reader motivation continues, I think, in Alyosha's dream of Cana of Galilee, which Dostoevsky himself sees as 'the most essential chapter of the book, and perhaps of the whole novel' (although

---

<sup>156</sup> Holland, Kate, *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013), p. 176.

<sup>157</sup> 'Это только басня, но она хорошая басня, я ее, еще дитей была, от моей Матрены, что теперь у меня в кухарках служит, слышала.' (xiv.288).

we might note he said the same of the chapter 'A Russian Monk'.<sup>158</sup> Once again, the text physically juxtaposes a narrative allied to an established reader response – in this case the biblical text, quoted *verbatim*, of the miracle at Cana, - with Alyosha's own epiphany. The biblical narrative is spare and factual, relying on established interpretation to provide emotional and intellectual stimuli. The description of Alyosha's experience uses, by contrast, images of Romantic excess: a vision of Zosima, a message from beyond the grave, a mystical communion with nature and the universe, the suggestion of a spiritual revelation. The voice is not that of Alyosha but of an omniscient narrator able to see into Alyosha's deepest thoughts. Yet despite this ability neither he nor Alyosha can describe this experience in other than the vaguest terms: 'Some sort of idea, or something along those lines, rose to power in his mind' is how the narrator describes it, while Alyosha in his own words is even less specific: 'Someone visited my soul at that moment'.<sup>159</sup> No matter how much we want to believe in Alyosha's spiritual transformation, the text forces us to contrast the biblical description of a 'real' miracle, grounded in received reception, with the excess and lack of specificity of Alyosha's experience. Petr Bitsilli compares this passage to Prince Andrei's epiphany after the battle of Borodino in *War and Peace* (vol.iii, part 2, ch.37) and uses the

---

<sup>158</sup> '...самая существенная во всей книге, а может быть и в романе.' Letter to Lyubimov, 16 September 1879, (xvi/2.155). Dostoevsky uses similar language to describe 'A Russian Monk' in letters to Lyubimov and Putsykovich of 8 and 9 August 1879 respectively, (xvi/2.135, 137).

<sup>159</sup> 'Какая-то как бы идея воцарялась в уме его... «Кто-то посетил мою душу в тот час»' (xiii.296).

contrast to illustrate how easily Dostoevsky's version slips into cliché.<sup>160</sup> Yet again Alyosha is associated with a narrative mode which seems to question its own ability to deliver a text matching its apparent intentions. In some circumstances, particularly in asserting faith-based prospectus values, authorial control may be more difficult to manage than the Grand Inquisitor seems to assume.

### **Auction: the return of commercial value**

If prospectus narrative has failed because the recipient of the narrative cannot be relied on to accept it in the way the author intended, then how can an author convey his message to the reader? One answer is evidently to investigate which values do generate predictable reader responses and to see if those can be combined in some way with the author's intellectual and philosophical concerns. This approach uses the techniques of the auction, in that it assumes consistent enough responses from buyers of the text to generate an approximate theory of how recipients determine value, while recognising that the offeror cannot independently assign value to the text.

---

<sup>160</sup> Bitsilli, Petr Mikhailovich, 'O vnutrennei forme romana Dostoevskogo', in *O Dostoevskom. Stat'i*, ed. by Donald Fanger (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966), 4-56, pp. 41-43.

So it is, perhaps, unsurprising that the narrative changes character from this point. Through books 8 and 9, 'Mitya' and 'The Preliminary Investigation' (*Predvaritel'noe sledstvie*), the plot moves ahead more rapidly as the murder investigation unrolls. Digressions (other than the story of the children, to which we will return) almost disappear. The narrative describes a series of attempted commercial transactions, in Dmitry's attempts to get money; in his shopping at Plotnikov's, in his consumption at Mokroye. The frequency of occurrence of the motif of 3,000 roubles rises dramatically, as Dmitry dashes headlong from Samsonov to Lyagavy, to Mme Khokhlakova and on to Mokroye. Perhaps in recognition of this, the theme of money takes on a new importance in the second half of the novel. References to it in the third and fourth parts of the novel occur almost four times as frequently as in the first two parts.<sup>161</sup> Between the second and third parts the increase is even higher. Relationships, people and motives are reducible, ultimately, to monetary values. Katerina Ivanovna's honour is set at 4,500 roubles. The auction for Grushenka establishes her value at 3,000 roubles. Family relationships are reduced to disputes over inheritance monies. The object of the murder is money. The evidence which convicts Dmitry relates to how much he had previously stolen from Katerina Ivanovna.

---

<sup>161</sup> Based on the frequency of occurrence of derivatives of the Russian for thousand, тысяч, the overwhelming majority of which refer to money: part 1 - 62; part 2 - 33; part 3 - 146; part 4 - 126.

Much has been made of the relentless drumbeat of the sum of 3,000 roubles throughout the novel. Boris Christa notes Dostoevsky's habit of referring repeatedly to specific sums of money and argues that he uses a technique of 'trial by money' to demonstrate the moral and spiritual worth of his characters.<sup>162</sup> Brodsky cites Elizaveta Shtakenschneider's assessment, recorded in her 1880 diary, as evidence of Dostoevsky's ability to connect with his readers on a level they understood –: 'He [Dostoevsky] is a bourgeois....[it comes across] in a variety of ways you would notice in an intimate conversation, but most of all in his works...in describing serious wealth a big number for him would always be 6,000 roubles': this colossal sum, she implies, could genuinely represent colossal emotional expenditure and create colossal literature.<sup>163</sup> Perhaps not entirely coincidentally, 6,000 roubles is also the sum Fedor Pavlovich has paid to Dmitry in an attempt to impose a final settlement on Dmitry's inheritance claim.(xiii.95)

The motif of 3,000 roubles does indeed recur repeatedly. It is, variously and possibly not even exhaustively, Dmitry's residual claim on Fedor Pavlovich for his mother's estate;(xiii.102) the amount Katerina

---

<sup>162</sup> Christa, Boris, 'Dostoevskii and Money' in *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevsky*, ed. by William Leatherbarrow, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 91-110, pp. 108-09.

<sup>163</sup> "...но он мещанин....Оно [мещанство] проглядывает в некоторых чертах, заметных в интимной беседе, а больше всего в его произведениях... для изображения большого капитала огромной цифрой всегда будет для него шесть тысяч рублей." From Elizaveta Shtakenschneider's 1880 diary, cited by Brodsky in Brodsky 1980. *Meshchanin* is perhaps more accurately translated as 'burger' but 'bourgeois', of similar derivation, has more accurate economic overtones.

Ivanovna asks Dmitry to send to her sister in Moscow;(xiii.101) what Dmitry allegedly stole from Katerina Ivanovna and spent on Grushenka during his first visit to Mokroye;(ibid.) the amount he tries to borrow from Samsonov,(xiv.13) Lyagavy,(xiv.19) and Mme Khokhlakova;(xiv. 27) what he is alleged to have spent during the second visit to Mokroye;(xiv.37,43,49) the amount he offers to the Poles for Grushenka;(xiv.61) the price offered by Fedor Pavlovich for her,(xiii.102) and hence the amount in the envelope stolen by Smerdyakov and passed to Ivan;(xiv.217) the difference between Maslov's and Gorshkin's offers for Fedor Pavlovich's wood which Ivan was to have negotiated at Chermashnya (8,000 roubles vs 11,000 roubles, respectively);(xiii.230) and the fee paid to the lawyer Fetyukovich for Dmitry's defence.(xiv.171)

At one level this clearly comments on the commercialisation of life, the reduction of human emotion to commercial values, the opposition of the commercial to the spiritual dimensions of the Russian character and similar social issues, as Sophie Ollivier argues.<sup>164</sup> But such a theme was not new – writers from Balzac to Dickens and Gogol had used it as a recurrent characterisation of the nineteenth century. Nor does it explain fully the choice of a fixed value when any measure of monetisation would have done.

---

<sup>164</sup> Ollivier, Sophie, 'L'Argent chez Dostoïevski' in *Europe* 510 (October 1971), 70-84.

The figure of 3,000 roubles is perhaps best seen as the emblem of an emerging approach to narrative. At a superficial level it signifies a genre and a narrative tempo associated with sensation and action. Through iteration it acts as shorthand for 'readability', for that particular register of easily recognised commercial fiction based on the representation of sexual and financial greed which is the key motive force of the plot. The combination of iteration and stable signification creates a predictable reader response, or at least the anticipation of one. Repetition also conveys a sense of inevitability: just as the lives of the characters revolve directly or indirectly around money, so the text must return frequently to its commercial roots if it is to maintain the reader's attention. The figure of 3,000 roubles is just as much a reminder of the commercial value of narrative as it is a symbol of the in-story commercial motives of the characters. Its iteration, significantly, also shows how cliché is born, through the repetition of a fixed association until the original signification is dulled into banality.

Not all monetary values are fixed, and deviations from the 3,000 rouble gold standard are particularly noteworthy and usually act as signals of submerged currents which undercut the apparently stable equivalences of the surface. The diminishing credibility of Dmitry's narrative is signalled by the serial rejection of his loan requests from Samsonov, Lyagavy, Mme Khokhlakova and eventually the Poles. The purse (*ladonka*) around his neck, supposedly containing 1,500 roubles

and therefore both half full and half empty, becomes a symbol both of the possible reflation of the value of his defence narrative if his alibi has value, and of its terminal deflation if not. Since the alibi cannot be proved the purse becomes a symbol of speculative value, the more so as the very existence of the purse itself is called into question as Dmitry fails to offer a credible narrative for its provenance. Even the external reader, who would like to believe Dmitry but is as dismayed as the prosecutor is sceptical at the flimsiness of his alibi, is forced to participate in the experience of the value of Dmitry's narrative fluctuating wildly each time he is asked a new question about the purse.

This mutation of an apparently fixed value into something more speculative or factitious is nothing new. Dostoevskian money often pointedly fails to establish value or to translate into real spending power. Makar Devushkin's copying mistake, as we have already seen, brings him 100 roubles – the logic is as arbitrary as the sum.(i.71-73) Raskolnikov fails to use the famously precise 317 roubles he steals.(vii.367) The eleventh-hour arrival of Myshkin's legacy makes us realise how artificial his fictional construction is.(x.128-129) And in *The Gambler* the arbitrariness of monetary values which rise and fall at the throw of a die is mirrored by human relationships which couple and uncouple with an equal lack of consequentiality. Fictional identities follow suit: Mademoiselle Blanche acquires a surname complete with aristocratic particle and a mother, Madame *veuve* Cominges, at the moment she teams

up with the Marquis des Grieux whose name is not only derived from picaresque fiction (*Manon Lescaut*) but whose title and very existence turn out to be fictional.(vi.254-255) The hero of *The Gambler* sums it up: 'The point here is that one spin of the wheel changes everything...What am I today? Zero. What could I be tomorrow? Tomorrow I could come back from the dead and start a new existence.'<sup>165</sup> But whether a new existence would be more or less credible than the old as a fictional construct remains, itself, a matter of speculation. Mere intention is insufficient to guarantee results. Dostoevsky's own gambling habit, which had dogged him through much of the 1860s, must have shown him how the good intentions so repeatedly expressed in contrite letters could evaporate in a few moments.<sup>166</sup>

And so with the construction of novelistic value. The apparently fixed exchange rates which allow predictable exchange values, in the shape of reliable reader reactions, to be established, do work some of the time. But they are not consistently reliable. As Alyosha has found out, the unintended, the unforeseen ambivalence and slipperiness of language perverts meaning and impact. Iteration acts as a kind of reset button, allowing a reversion to the initial assumption of fixed values. Yet the

---

<sup>165</sup> 'Тут дело в том, что – один оборот колеса и все изменяется...Что я теперь? Zero. Чем могу быть завтра? Я завтра могу из мертвых воскреснуть и вновь начать жить!'(vi.313).

<sup>166</sup> For example, Dostoevsky's letter to Maikov of 16 August 1867 which talks of the impact on his wife of his latest gambling losses. (xv/2.176-77).

expectation of distortion, of an outcome produced by speculation rather than intention, lurks behind every repetition.

The 3,000 roubles is thus also a motif of incipient failure. What is common to all of the transactions in which it figures is a failure to complete. Dmitry does not collect his inheritance, nor does he send the money to Katerina Ivanovna's sister, nor does he spend the full 3,000 roubles on Grushenka at Mokroye at least on the second occasion, nor does he succeed in borrowing it from any of his potential lenders. Fedor Pavlovich never succeeds in acquiring Grushenka and the amount in the envelope is unverifiable by the time it reaches court in Ivan's possession. The deal for the wood is never completed. Dmitry never pays the Poles who convert the sum into the amount they want to be paid to go away and, ironically, reduce it over time from 3,000 roubles to one rouble as the value of their narrative evaporates. And, finally, Fetyukovich's defence of Dmitry fails.

So, with some irony, this fixed sum becomes a sign of the failure to establish stable relationships between the commodities for which it is exchanged. We are led to believe that a relationship might exist by the coincidence of identical value, or by equivalences which turn out to be valid only incidentally, but eventually we realise that its own inflexibility simply provides a common currency against which the fluctuations of the value of other commodities can be measured. Belknap seems to describe,

in different terms, exactly this process when he argues that Dostoevsky converts financial relationships into far more volatile emotional ones.<sup>167</sup> And since other commodities, as we have seen, are often expressed in their own narratives, it becomes a measure of the instability of narrative value. Grushenka's Poles write florid letters to demand money, implying that a grand style should bring a grand reward, only to find that their narrative currency is swiftly devalued to worthlessness.(xiv.170)

The mere mention of the fixed sum of 3,000 roubles eventually becomes an authorial signpost for speculative value. The amount itself is of a size to be credible in almost all the instances where it is used: Dmitry defends his inheritance claim as proportionate to the profits Fedor Pavlovich has made from investing his first wife's dowry, while his father's offer for Grushenka is equivalent to the profit he expects to make on a sale of timber.(xiii.102) John Jones rightly notes that this attention to small tactile details is a cornerstone of Dostoevsky's approach to realism.<sup>168</sup> But in other instances the claimed value vanishes. Dmitry may, or may not, have spent 3,000 roubles at Mokroye. Smerdyakov produces the actual 3,000 roubles stolen, yet Ivan cannot prove their validity. Fetyukovich, as counsel for the defense, argues that they never in fact existed, while Ippolit Kirillovich, as prosecutor, maintains that they were indivisible so while the entire 3,000 roubles must have existed, a separate

---

<sup>167</sup> Belknap (1989), pp. 59-61.

<sup>168</sup> John Jones (1983), p. 341.

1,500 roubles could not have.(xiv 280) Signifier and signified become gradually detached, just as the face value of contemporary paper money deviated from its exchange value. Iakov Zundelovich expresses this process of adjustment in quasi-mathematical terms as a 'conundrum facing the writer who has – as he imagined - carefully distinguished clear positives from clear negatives in his mind's eye, but who, when he comes to give artistic expression to these intellectual constructs, discovers painfully that his positives are not at all as definitive as he had thought, and that his negatives have shades and gradations which do not allow him to take them out of square brackets.'<sup>169</sup>

Narrative value follows the same pattern. The established conventions and hierarchies of genre create an architecture of fixed relationships which the author cannot ignore if he cares about the commercial success of his output. But the speculative nature of communication perverts and distorts these established relationships in an unpredictable manner, leading to potential interpretations which, as with Flaubert's *St Julien l'Hospitalier*, challenge both the received interpretation and the reader's own methods of measuring narrative value. In an effort to cling on to established commercial value the novelist may frequently

---

<sup>169</sup> 'Этот анализ подводит нас к осознанию противоречий писателя, который умозрительно ясно различал – как ему казалось – идеально-положительное и отрицательное, но который, переходя к художественному воплощению этих умозрительных представлений, мучительно убеждался в том, что его положительное – вовсе не так положительно, а отрицательное имеет оттенки и оттеночки, не позволяющие взять все отрицательное за скобки'. Zundelovich, Iakov; 'Romany Dostoevskogo' in '*Stat'i*', (Tashkent: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, srednyaya i vysshaya shkola UzSSR, 1962, reprinted Moscow: Ardis, 1984), p. 70.

revert to the commonplaces of genre, to sensation and melodrama, but each iteration may require greater excess, to the point where credibility is lost, or may alternatively lead to cliché through the simple process of repetition. Even maintaining a formula dilutes its effect, as Sue had discovered in the process of trying to repeat the success of *Les Mystères de Paris*. Excess and cliché become the Scylla and Charybdis on which the plotted narrative course founders, and the rules for avoiding the rocks are self-subverting.

The courtroom drama, with its hidden central trunk of ‘what really happened’ surrounded by a forest of alternative versions, is the perfect genre to allow the author to maximise the commercial potential of the novel. Its essence is the assumption that the author will offer multiple possible narratives in such a way that the value of each is deliberately uncertain, hidden or open to misinterpretation. Dostoevsky’s notebooks offer clear examples of detail subsequently suppressed in the final text to obscure motive and maintain dramatic tension: for example, Ivan’s awareness of the involvement of Smerdyakov in the murder of Fedor Pavlovich is present in the notes, but is suppressed in the novel, evidently to maintain dramatic tension on this point.<sup>170</sup>

---

<sup>170</sup> Suppl. iii.129. The difference is also picked up by Wasiolek in his edition of the notebooks to *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Notebooks*, ed. Wasiolek, 1971, p. 63).

Value discovery happens by the techniques of the auction room, where objects are serially presented to buyers for valuation by competition. Dostoevsky shows us how the in-story characters participate, with different values being assigned to the same narrative by different recipients. How much did Dmitry spend at Mokroye on his second visit? He says less than 1,500 roubles.(xiv.109) The innkeeper swears to double, perhaps even 6,000 roubles over the two visits.(xiv.117-8) The Poles confirm that Dmitry offers them a 3,000 roubles bribe.(xxiv.119) What figures Dostoevsky gives us, the readers, for Dmitry's expenditure add up to a total of 1,266.40 roubles.(xiv.102)

Competitive tension arises both between reader and author over whether the reader can spot the false trails laid by the author, and between reader and in-story characters over the consequences of mismatched levels of information. The narrator assumes multiple identities, switching from an ability to see inside the innermost thoughts of his characters to professions of ignorance of anything beyond his own direct knowledge in such an overt way that the reader cannot help but notice the trick. The techniques acts as a kind of novelistic laboratory where each iteration allows the author to test its value on the in-story audience and to take the results into account in formulating the next iteration, and eventually in presenting a completed episode of the serial to

the external reader.<sup>171</sup> Breaking the narrative into discrete component parts also allows the author to rely on the cumulative experience of all past iterations in formulating the next, just as an auctioneer relies on precedent to estimate the value of new goods for sale.

Over the remaining five books Dostoevsky will propose no fewer than eight full and thirty partial retellings of the central story, which itself is never wholly revealed.<sup>172</sup> Some are presented as within the direct knowledge of the narrator himself, others as dramatized scenes in which he is able to reproduce accurately the dialogue of others in direct or indirect speech, and at times even the thoughts of the characters involved. The changing focus and apparent variability in the narrator's powers of memory jolt the reader into awareness of a process of narrative manipulation. The narrator begins with his own full version of the murder scene. Narratives two to six are Dmitry's subsequent variants of the story as told to Fenya and Perkhotin, Perkhotin's further speculations when Dmitry leaves him, and Dmitry's own reflections at Mokroye and when he is arrested. Seven and eight are Fenya's and Mme Khokhlakova's

---

<sup>171</sup> In their analysis of serialisation in the Victorian novel Hughes and Lund also note how the format of serial publication is especially well suited to the courtroom drama, with sequential episodes from different narratorial positions as witnesses and counsel present alternative versions of the plot. Hughes, Linda and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), pp. 91-2.

<sup>172</sup> See Appendix B for a full list with textual references. Some iterations are evidently more comprehensive than others, but I consider it relevant to include even partial iterations of the story to demonstrate how many different points of view Dostoevsky represents. The appendix also describes briefly the manner of representation, which varies from simple narratorial description (albeit from a narrator whose point of view can vary from limited to omniscient unpredictably) to indirect speech, to reported direct dialogue.

interpretations to Perkhotin. Nine is the full initial police version of events as reported by the narrator. Ten is the record, again supplied by the narrator, of Dmitry's full interrogation. Eleven to fifteen are supplied by the witnesses interviewed in the police investigation at Mokroye (the landlord and his staff, Kalganov, the two Poles, Maksimov and Grushenka),

The sixteenth, and a key full variant, is the tabloid report of the crime written by Rakitin in the Petersburg boulevard newspaper *Rumours* (*Slukhi*) and retailed by Mme Khokhlakova to Alyosha, who subsequently gives his own interpretation of guilt to Ivan (seventeen). Smerdyakov's confession, a full account in three extended sections, is interpolated with three contradictory indications culminating in the letter from Dmitry to Katerina Ivanovna, reported *verbatim* and another full account, which directly conflicts with Smerdyakov's confession. These four narratives form iterations eighteen to twenty-one. Ivan's decision to confess, as reported to Alyosha after the devil scene, is the twenty-second. Finally, the factual and expert witnesses at the trial - Grigory, Rakitin, Snegirev, the landlord, the Poles, Alyosha, Katerina Ivanovna, Grushenka and Ivan, together with the three doctors, add twelve more accounts, and raise the total to thirty-four. The speeches of the prosecutor and defence counsels at the trial add a further two full versions. Dmitry's final plea is the penultimate repetition. The jury verdict, as interpreted by the narrator, could be said to provide the final, thirty-eighth, variant.

Iteration is a novelistic device with proven commercial function. Balzac had used characters who returned in subsequent novels to encourage his readers to follow the trail across different publications. The success of *A Christmas Carol* led Dickens to produce regular Christmas stories. Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart*, subtitled *Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*, follows a single family through the iterations of its genes. Dostoevsky would have been well aware that Zola had succeeded almost singlehandedly in changing the economics of the French publishing market with the 1877 publication in book form of *L'Assommoir*, which ran through thirty-eight editions in its first year, seventy-three by 1880 and became the fore-runner of modern bestsellers with huge print-runs.<sup>173</sup>

*The Brothers Karamazov* had been a commercial success from the outset and Dostoevsky proved able to maintain the commercial value of the text consistently over ten episodes of serialisation from the end of book 6 to the Epilogue spanning fourteen months, from September 1879 to November 1880, with three gaps totalling five months. One of these gaps occurs in December 1879, when he publishes an apology for the delay of the expected episode. Book 8 ended in November 1879 on the cliffhanger of Dmitry's arrest: the delayed book 9 would deal with the police investigation. December is an important month for subscription

---

<sup>173</sup> Becker, Colette, with Gina Gourdin-Servenière and Véronique Lavielle, *Dictionnaire d'Emile Zola* (Paris: Laffont, 1993), p. 425.

renewals: delaying book 9 to January looks suspiciously like a publisher's ruse to encourage subscription renewals, despite Dostoevsky's denial of such tactical manoeuvres. 'In the papers, I've read with my own eyes on three occasions already accusations and insinuations against the publishers of the *Russian Messenger*, to the effect that they have deliberately (for some mysterious reason or other) spun out novels (Leo Tolstoy's and mine) over two years.'<sup>174</sup> The same correspondence again makes clear that Dostoevsky is well aware of the commercial success of the novel: 'The novel is being read everywhere, people are writing me letters, young people are reading it, the same in high society, the critics either love it or hate it and from the impressions it produces all around I've never so far had such a success'.<sup>175</sup>

But for all this, finding a readership which was able to accept intellectual weight along with the murder mystery remained elusive. Dostoevsky even, perhaps, describes the newly emerging readership. Mme Khokhlakova, subscriber to her Petersburg gossip sheet (xiv.175), recipient of Perkhotin's melodramatic account of the murder of Fyodor Pavlovich (xiv.75), butt of Rakitin's vindictive doggerel (xiv 189) and listener at keyholes (xiii.181), is perhaps a representative reader of the

---

<sup>174</sup> 'В газетах уже сам читал раза три обвинения и инсинуации на Редакцию Русского Вестника в том что она нарочно (для каких-то причин непонятных) растягивает романы (Льва Толстого и мой) на два года.' Letter to Lyubimov, 8 December 1879 (xvi/2.162).

<sup>175</sup> 'Роман читают всюду, пишут мне письма, читает молодежь, читают в высшем обществе, в литературе ругают или хвалят и никогда еще, по произведенному кругом впечатлению, я не имел такого успеха.' *Ibid.*, (xvi/2.161).

developing mass market in commercial fiction, just as Rakitin is the representative of a new breed of commercial journalists. She is a woman living in the provinces, of independent means, literate and educated to a point, and so a member of a relatively new demographic for the Russian market of the late 1870s. She is fashion-conscious and aware of her sexuality: Alyosha suspects her of compulsive flirting.(xiv.174) She is fascinated by criminality and legal procedure, although her views on the new post-Reform courts are amusingly simplistic.(xiv.179) It is no accident that she is the means by which Rakitin's sensationalised article on the murder reaches us, nor that she is represented as trivialising intellectual ideas, as she does with her notion of how a plea of temporary insanity ('*afekt*') works.(xiv.179) She is by her own admission an avid consumer of gossip, where she finds Rakitin's version of the murder: 'Here it is, in the paper, in *Rumours*, the Petersburg paper. It came out earlier this year, this *Rumours*, I just adore gossip so I subscribed, and look what I've brought on my head, that's gossip for you'.<sup>176</sup>

By the time the contemporary reader reached this description, at the beginning of the penultimate book of the novel, published in July and August 1880, he or she might have realised that for the past nine months Dostoevsky had been producing material apparently directed at just these tastes. The final four books are dominated by motifs from the popular

---

<sup>176</sup> 'Вот здесь в газете *Слухи*, в Петербургской. Эти *Слухи* стали издаваться с нынешнего года, я ужасно люблю слухи, и подписалась, и вот себе на голову: вот они какие оказались слухи.'(xiv.175).

press which would barely look out of place in the *faits divers* columns of the boulevard newspapers: murder, theft, sex and a wild party, a police investigation, arrest, trial and punishment. Terras notes the parallels with the Zaitsev murder case, spectacularly reported in the Petersburg newspapers in January 1879.<sup>177</sup> In laughing at her foibles we become uneasily aware that what has driven our own engagement with the text is perhaps not so different.

But what consequences, then, must an author draw if Mme Khokhlakova is representative of the new generation of mass readers? She sees the world around her in terms of her own tastes and simply rejects anything which does not conform. Like Mme Epanchina in *The Idiot* she is, in Gide's phrase, 'inconséquente' in the highest degree.<sup>178</sup> She and readers like her may respond consistently to some textual stimuli. The author may even be able to manipulate audience reactions in a predictable manner, and to exploit its own desire to be manipulated, in the manner of a crowd responding to a magician. His ability to do so within the confines of a courtroom drama has been amply demonstrated over the course of books 8 and 9. He has, arguably, proven the success of the auction approach to narrative. But he has also, inadvertently, shown its shortcomings. The price has been a commercially successful text which has found itself quite incapable of including the kind of intellectual weight which the earlier

---

<sup>177</sup> Terras (1981), p. 316, n. 40.

<sup>178</sup> Gide, André, *Dostoïevsky* (Paris: Plon, 1923), p.170.

books had so clearly sought. The 'Mme Khokhlakova problem' was neatly demonstrated in real life when one of his readers, a Mme Lebedeva, wrote to ask whether Dmitry was guilty of the murder or not. Dostoevsky's testy reply shows he was sure that he had left enough clues for an intelligent reader not to be fooled: 'It's not just the subject of the novel which is important for the reader, but also that he should have some understanding of the human mind (of psychology): every author has a right to expect that of his reader'.<sup>179</sup> But, evidently, neither Mme Lebedeva nor, in all probability, Mme Khokhlakova could be relied on to bring such intelligence to the table. Unhelpfully, the Grand Inquisitor turns out to have been right: fantasy, suspense and authorial control are very effective at controlling an audience but may be poor tools for intellectual dialogue.

## Speculation

For the space of two entire books, (book 8, 'Mitya', and book 9, 'The Preliminary Investigation'), representing three serial instalments covering a four month publication period from October 1879 to January 1880, Dostoevsky had concentrated on the murder and the investigation to the exclusion of any digressions, interpolated narratives or philosophical

---

<sup>179</sup> 'Не один только сюжет романа важен для читателя, но и некоторое знание души человеческой, (психологии), чего каждый автор вправе ждать от читателя.' Letter to E. N. Lebedeva, 8 November 1879. (xvi/2.158).

debates. The narrative describes, in a tightly controlled fashion, the process by which a murder investigation itself runs out of control. This combination of diegetic control and mimetic unravelling is a highly commercial device which was clearly successful in keeping readers hooked.

But for the writer simply being the virtuoso creator of courtroom drama may not be enough. The next two books, 10 and 11, seem to experiment with the return of different forms of intellectual content, represented by the renewed focus on Alyosha and then Ivan as the central characters of the respective books, within different genres. Both characters had earlier demonstrated how any attempt to project value through prospectus narrative had been undermined by a failure in the mode of transmission which resulted in an entirely unpredictable outcome, like the spin of a wheel at roulette. Both books, now, investigate how this loss of control arises and its implications for narrative value.

Dostoevsky seems deliberately to disrupt his own text to jolt it out of its commercial rut. Jean Genet puts it in terms which might have appealed to Dostoevsky himself, or at least to Ivan Karamazov: 'Is my reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* incorrect? I have read it as a joke. ...Having read the book in this way, it now seems to me that any novel, poem, painting, or musical composition that does not destroy itself – by which I mean, that is not constructed as a blood sport with its own

head on the chopping block – is a fraud’.<sup>180</sup> Images of excess start to appear, recalling the still unanswered questions posed by Ivan at the beginning of his ‘Rebellion’ by his evocation of the figure of St John the Merciful/St Julien l’Hospitalier. The disruptions are both figurative and structural and open a debate about the author’s ability to control his own text which will continue throughout the remainder of the novel.

Representations of loss of control are a consistent theme in the novel, but one of which we only become aware gradually through iteration. We have already investigated how Alyosha loses control of his narrative in his hagiography of Zosima, only to be followed by a parallel loss of control of his own emotions in ‘Cana of Galilee’. The image of loss of control is inherently ambiguous and Dostoevsky is able to exploit its contradictions to the full. On the one hand it becomes a metaphor for the entropic vision of the world he describes in which discontinuity, disintegration and fragmentation affect so many lives. He discusses this on several occasions in *Diary of a Writer*: ‘Indeed, I keep thinking that we have begun the epoch of universal ‘dissociation’. All are dissociating themselves, isolating themselves from everyone else, everyone wants to invent something of his own, something new and unheard of...Meanwhile, there is scarcely anything about which we can agree morally; everything has been or is being broken up, not even into clusters but into single

---

<sup>180</sup> Genet, Jean, ‘A Reading of *The Brothers Karamazov*’, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, in *Grand Street* 47 (Autumn 1993), 172-76, p.176.

fragments.<sup>181</sup> On the other it is at times an ironic reminder that only an author in control of his text can describe loss of control so effectively. But as the novel progresses there seems to be a shift from a discussion of loss of control to the sensation that it may actually be happening in real time. Fedor Pavlovich proposes the theme in the very first book and asks how the novel will deal with both behavioural disruption and narrative discontinuity. The representation of Dmitry shows how closely the author can stay in control diegetically while describing an escalating loss of control at the mimetic level. To make sure the reader does not miss the point, Dostoevsky even incorporates a description of the process into the narrative: Smerdyakov fakes loss of control in his pretend fit to show how an author figure can remain in charge while depicting dysfunction - but then is ironically dethroned by the real epileptic seizure which follows.

Dostoevsky concludes his description of the preliminary investigation in book 9 with a description of Dmitry's dream of a starving child, *ditë*, in a burnt-out peasant village.(xiv.122-123) In this penultimate chapter of the book the narrator refers three times to the novelistic qualities of Dmitry's story. In the first instance Dmitry's experience on the night of the murder is called a 'novel', in quotation marks.(xiv.118) In the second and third the prosecutor is described as shying away from the

---

<sup>181</sup> 'Право, мне все кажется, что у нас наступила какая-то эпоха всеобщего «обособления». Все обособляются, уединяются, всякому хочется выдумать что-нибудь свое собственное, новое и неслыханное. ...Между тем, ни в чем почти нет нравственного соглашения – все разбилось и разбивается и даже не на кучки, а уж на единицы.' (xi.346. The translation is taken from *A Writer's Diary*, ed. Morson, (2009), p. 145.)

more 'novelistic', or possibly 'romanesque' ('*romanichesky*') aspects of the case – specifically Dmitry's relationship with Grushenka - in favour of the financial details.(xiv. 119,121) The effect, I think, is to sensitise the reader to the novelistic qualities of the text itself and, in particular, to prepare the ground for Dmitry's dream. The passage of the dream stands out from the preceding text by virtue of the intensity of its fiction, as Dmitry passes voyeuristically through a landscape of destitution, destruction, and misery. It has been heralded as the beginning of his spiritual redemption.<sup>182</sup> But it is also a striking image of loss of control. As Dmitry loses control of his own senses in this dream with overtones of madness, so the text itself seems to require the reader to notice its own incipient loss of control. The authorial viewpoint switches abruptly from that of third party police reporter, assiduously documenting the preliminary investigation, to a poetic standpoint within Dmitry's own consciousness, able to accompany Dmitry to the edge of madness without compromising his own lucidity. Is this the reporter simply showing off his powers after a boring day in the police department, or is it a sign that the text itself can go off the rails as easily as Dmitry?

The theme of loss of control is taken up in the very next book. The story of the Snegirev family has already registered as a significant change of narrative direction and genre in book 4. Its continuation in Book 10,

---

<sup>182</sup> See, for example, John Jones (1983), p. 325. Jones argues that the dream is the turning point in a series of details which have so far marked Dmitry's descent and from this point on will mark his spiritual rebirth.

'The Boys' (*Mal'chiki*) intervenes equally abruptly in the build-up of the murder narrative. As if to emphasise its experimental nature, the book is isolated in time by the circumstances of its publication. Book 9 had appeared in *The Russian Herald* in January 1880: book 10 did not appear till April. After its publication a further two month gap intrudes before the appearance of the first part of book 11 in July. Dostoevsky evidently saw it as a rather different narrative thread. 'By the way,' he writes to Lyubimov, 'I'm very pleased that the book "The Boys" [...] is so separate and episodic: the reader won't fuss nearly as much as if I'd broken off at a quite unfinished point and stuck in 'to be continued' '- and points out in addition that the further delay would also help the novel's commercial prospects as reader numbers typically rose over the summer months.<sup>183</sup>

The reader, forewarned perhaps by the way in which the preceding book had just been concluded, is forced to stop and ask why the author is embarking on this new experiment. Despite the many echoes of the main text, the book is quite different in both content and genre from the surrounding narrative of Dmitry's trial. Some of its episodes, such as the touching vignette of Kolya's care for the 'bubbleheads' (*puzyri*), the two children of a single parent in the neighbouring apartment, (xiv.131-35) seem to have almost no relevance to the remainder of the plot and disappear as swiftly as they arrive. 'I know, I only said it because it

---

<sup>183</sup> 'Кстати, я очень доволен что книга 'Мальчики' ... столь отдельна и эпизодна: читатель будет не столь претендовать, как если бы на самом оконченном месте вдруг прервать и поставить: продолжение будет.' Letter to Lyubimov, 29 Apr 1880, (xvi/2.181).

sounded good' says Kolya to the children, and Dostoevsky's selection of some of his material gives the impression of having been based on the same criterion.<sup>184</sup> Its highly charged emotional content makes it easy for the reader to be swept along by the Dickensian pathos of the story of the dying Ilyusha. This momentum makes it an undeniably successful commercial narrative. But simultaneously the sentimentality of the genre, reminiscent of *The Insulted and Injured*, makes us wonder whether this is not another experiment in Flaubertian excess. At what point, Dostoevsky seems to be asking, does the author's apparent control of this narrative slip into something with far less predictable results?

Alyosha's encounter with Kolya shows how easily this can happen. Kolya is to Alyosha what Alyosha was to Zosima in the early books: acolyte, novice, pupil. The gang of boys plays the role of monastic congregation. Kolya, though, trivialises Alyosha. Instead of wisdom he learns precocity. His version of Alyosha's scriptural heritage is fragments from the supposed humanist canon – Smaragdov, Pushkin, Belinsky, parrot-learned and asserted with a bravado which mocks not just Ivan and his ideas but Alyosha's own attempts to project a narrative. He is the purveyor of illusion, unashamedly and ironically borrowing the Grand Inquisitor's recipe of miracle and mystery to ensure his in-story audience accepts his values, that Ilyushka believes the dog Perezvon is not Zhuchka, that canny peasants will be taken in by his swagger. Alyosha responds not

---

<sup>184</sup> 'Знаю, я только для красоты слога сказал.' (xiv.134).

with wisdom but with banality. 'Don't be like everyone else; even if you are the only one to stay out, don't be like everyone else' is Alyosha's version of Zosima's last sermon.<sup>185</sup> 'You are a prophet' (*Vy prorok*) responds Kolya a few lines later: the accolade from his mouth suggests the opposite.

And in the lines between the two quotations an ambiguous exchange occurs in which Kolya declares his love for Alyosha. (xiv.163) Alyosha's handsomeness has previously been noted, (xiv.142) and Kolya starts blushing. There are no signposts as to whether this is due to the overcharged emotional atmosphere, or whether another homo-erotic explanation is possible. Suzanne Fusso points out that Dostoevsky must have been aware of homosexuality from his own environment so a completely naive reading appears unlikely.<sup>186</sup> But the mere possibility of the suspicion suggests a wayward and speculative narrative which is less tightly under the control of the author than we had previously suspected.

This is a narrative which ultimately seems to trip itself up. As Miller argues, at one level it is finely constructed with a web of intratexts and mirrorings which tie it in to the remainder of the novel. At another it is indeed a 'narrative tour de force' which she acknowledges as her

---

<sup>185</sup> 'Будьте же не такой как все; хотя бы только вы оставались не такой, а все-таки будьте не такой.' (xiv.163)

<sup>186</sup> Fusso, Susanne, *Discovering Sexuality in Dostoevsky* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006), p. 45.

favourite book.<sup>187</sup> But I would argue that it seems to achieve a series of perverse outcomes. What begins as an apparent satire on Ivan's philosophy ends up as a debunking of Alyosha's putative conversion into seer. It shows how iteration, in the shape of a retelling of the main themes of the work in a different genre from a different perspective, with children playing the role of adults and parodying their behaviour, turns from repetition into a commentary on inauthenticity. The process of retelling itself seems to encourage a flight to excess, in this case of melodramatic pathos, in which the very exaggeration which can guarantee specific reader reception in one plane seems to undermine its own effect on another.

Book 11, 'Brother Ivan Fedorovich' (*Brat Ivan Fedorovich*) turns out to be a further examination of the implications of loss of control. It chronicles Ivan's destructive influence on those around him and his descent into madness. There are obvious parallels and contrasts with Dmitry's progression towards his own loss of control in book 9, and with Alyosha's ambiguous epiphany at Cana as well as his more recent deflation at the hands of Kolya. And just as the story of Ivan's rebellion in the previous book about him, book 5, 'Pro and Contra', had begun with an image of excess in the shape of St. John the Merciful, so this book, which bears Ivan's name as its title, opens with an image of excess in the form of Lise's dream of the pineapple compote.(xiv.184) Alyosha visits Lise, who

---

<sup>187</sup> Miller, Robin Feuer, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Twayne, 1992), p. 108.

is ill, capricious and plotting to transfer her affections to Ivan. She recollects a crime story in which a four year old boy had been mutilated and crucified by a Jew who then claims in mitigation at his trial that the boy died within hours. Lise imagines that she was the perpetrator and would then sit in front of the crucified boy eating pineapple compote.

Belknap links the images of St John and the pineapple compote as creating an awareness in the reader of 'an over-arching evil existing in some sense outside of both Ivan and Lise', but they may also act in a much more direct way as indications of an inner battle within the text.<sup>188</sup> The image of the pineapple compote is itself one of uncontrolled excess and is used to suggest a loss of control in Lise, who is represented as on the verge of a breakdown. It operates on the reader at an initial level through commercial compulsion, in much the same way that a horror movie or the tabloid reporting of a gruesome murder does - we are even told that its source is 'a book I read about some trial or other', probably an almanac of sensational crimes.<sup>189</sup> The context also has the effect of overwhelming the alternative debate which the image seeks to prompt on the moral issues of child suffering and anti-Semitism, partly because this lead is simply hijacked by the competing narrative and partly because its seriousness is undermined by the sensationalised genre of its presentation, which suppresses the intellectual in favour of the emotional.

---

<sup>188</sup> Belknap (1989), p. 89.

<sup>189</sup> '[Вот у меня] одна книга, я читала про какой-то где-то суд...' (xiv.184).

The reference to pineapple compote, with its overtones of the exotic, the exclusive and the fashionable reinforces the dominance of the trivial over the intellectual, but also sets up a jarring note which references Lise's possible mental state at one level and, at another, the possibility that, once again, the experimental disruption has caused a fundamental loss of control within the text itself. The chapter in which this scene occurs pits Lise's emotion against Alyosha's lack of it. After the stylistic excess of his Cana epiphany, he seems to have reverted to his former inarticulacy. His answers to her intense questions are monosyllables, repetitions of her queries or short statements – no answer in the entire chapter extends to more than two lines of printed text. The epithets used to describe his reactions are lacklustre: 'Alyosha, why don't you love me at all?' [Lise] concluded in a frenzy. 'I do love you!' replied Alyosha warmly'.<sup>190</sup> His profession of love for Lise is expressed in Russian in a single word. Alyosha's lack of conviction as a red-blooded lover seems to deliver another knock to his credibility. Like Prince Myshkin, the credibility of the 'beautiful man', '*prekrasny chelovek*', which Dostoevsky seems to have wanted to portray turns out to be much harder to deliver than envisaged.<sup>191</sup> Is Alyosha, we ask, really the hero of the novel as the

---

<sup>190</sup> 'Алеша, зачем вы меня совсем, совсем не любите! – закончила [Лиза] в исступлении. – Нет, люблю! – горячо ответил Алеша.' (xiv.185, translation from Magarshack (1958), vol. 2, p.686). Both Magarshack and Garnett, translating this scene, can only muster 'warmly' for '*goryacho*', while McDuff and Pevear/Volokhonsky choose respectively 'ardently' and 'hotly'. Garnett ed. Oddo, (2011), p. 493; McDuff (2003) p. 748; Pevear/Volokhonsky (2004), p. 585.

preface would have us believe, or has the author in fact lost control of his text in a far more fundamental way?

Images of narrative loss of control intensify throughout book 11. Alyosha's visit to Lise provokes the image of the pineapple compote, perhaps the point at which the exploration of excess derails. Dmitry, pursued by his own hallucinatory image of excess in the shape of his dream of the abandoned baby, talks of symbolic escape, of breaking the controls of the body politic.(xiv.193) Once again Dostoevsky uses Smerdyakov as the in-story author of his own narrative to show how the process works. His confession in three parts to Ivan is a virtuoso display of how iteration can be used to manipulate an in-story audience by allowing glimpses of a truth which is not revealed until the final episode, in ways which contrive to throw doubt on the denouement until it finally arrives. Just as he misleads Ivan, so Dostoevsky toys with his readers who suspect the outcome but still need it confirmed 'in writing': the act of narration constitutes reality. Dostoevsky calls him a 'storyteller', '*rasskazchik*',(xiv.221) a word only once used elsewhere in the entire novel and then, in ironic contrast, to refer to Dmitry's confession to the prosecutor (xiv.92) in which he entirely fails to manipulate his stolid and unimaginative police audience. But Dostoevsky then illustrates how even Smerdyakov's ability to control narrative fails. His control over the events

---

<sup>191</sup> As, for example, Dostoevsky states in relation to Myshkin in a letter to his niece Sofya Ivanova of 1 January 1868 (xv/2.216).

of the murder is destroyed by that most random of external interventions: a real epileptic fit, just as Dostoevsky's own creative process was repeatedly disrupted. And over the course of his three interviews with Ivan the narrative which for so long he has tried to hide forces its way out of his deteriorating body. Narrative, even more so than murder, will out, and not even its own author can ultimately control it.

There seems to be a fundamental contradiction between the figure of Dostoevsky as *rasskazchik*, the confident professional storyteller, the auctioneer of narrative able to manipulate the reactions of his buying public, with the intellectual whose attempts to combine fiction with a serious discussion of major issues of faith and ethics have been repeatedly deflected back to the common denominator of what works commercially. The impression is reinforced by Rakitin's journalistic retelling of the story of the murder which Mme Khokhlakova retails to Alyosha, to which I have already referred above in suggesting Mme Khokhlakova as the representative of a new reader demographic. It shows how quickly and completely a narrative can spin out of control. The murder, it suggests, was committed by Dmitry for money to free himself from the attentions of a barely-anonymised Mme Khokhlakova who was trying to persuade him to run off with her to seek his fortune in the Siberian gold-mines.(xiv.176) This retelling, in conflated form, of a series of narratives which the reader has previously encountered acts to expose the manner in which the commercial imperative can deform the original story. The article bears

almost no resemblance to the original truth, but every reader will understand why it is compulsive reading. Even the name of the town, Skotoprigonevsk, -perhaps 'Cowbothy' gives a sense - which surfaces for the very first time in this medium, plays to the urban reader's urge to mock provincial antics. The process serves as a revealing vignette on the way in which Dostoevsky himself has used commercial devices to ensure he retains reader attention, and hints that readers should be alert to signs of similar narrative distortion.

The culmination of this exposition of loss of control is Ivan's nightmare. Its very form questions whether loss of control applies to the narrative itself, rather than just to what it describes. Its subject matter deals with the unreliability of the method of transmission. Ivan cannot tell whether his devil is 'real' or a hallucination, as Dostoevsky confirms in a letter to Lyubimov: 'Even as he [my hero] denies apparitions are real, as soon as one disappears he insists on its reality'.<sup>192</sup> For Ivan, a real distinction exists. For the reader, both are simply variants of a narrative. At the mimetic level we are invited to compare our own reactions to the devil's narrative to those of Ivan: at the diegetic we must evaluate our own response to the narrator's presentation of the devil. The unusual detail of the description of the devil appears to anchor him in reality but

---

<sup>192</sup> 'Отрицающая реальность призрака, он [мой герой], когда исчез призрак, стоит за его реальность'. Letter to Lyubimov, 10 Aug. 1880, (xiv.227).

simultaneously, and precisely because the level of detail is unusual, puts us on notice that we are being told a story.

The recipient is unable to penetrate behind the transmission mechanism so can never know whether what he sees or understands is underlying 'truth' or simply an artefact of transmission. Recipient response is therefore no real guide to narrative value. As Ivan will discover, there are no intrinsic markers which distinguish one narrative as 'real' and another as 'fantasy': it depends on the response of the recipient, and recipients, even when not suffering from fever, are unpredictable and unrepresentative. The devil, with calculated irony, cites the same example of the apostle Thomas as the narrator used to describe Alyosha's instinctive belief in the first book: 'Thomas believed not because he saw the risen Christ but because, even beforehand, he wanted to believe'.<sup>193</sup> The very argument which appeared to reinforce the primacy of recipient response in its earlier incarnation is now used to suggest that the individuality of each response destroys its value as a tool for the author.

Just as he has done with Smerdyakov, Dostoevsky now sets up the devil as temporary author. At the level of the lowest common denominator, a form of predictable response does exist, - '...your earthy

---

<sup>193</sup> 'Фома поверил не потому, что увидел воскресшего Христа, а потому, что еще прежде желал поверить.' (xiv.227, vs the use of a very similar phrase to describe Alyosha's belief at xiii.25).

realism [where] everything is defined, formulaic, geometrical'<sup>194</sup> - but only in the shape of the overweight merchant's wife whose pre-programmed beliefs the devil longs to be able to accept without question, or of a smallpox vaccine with its reassuring certainty of cause and effect.(xiv.228-29) The effect is independent of genre and works just as well in the realms of melodrama, where an axe in space ceases to be fantastical, has its orbit plotted by astronomers and recorded in commercial almanacs, a staple of the trade in popular literature.(xiv 230)

But beyond this the system breaks down. The artist has no special powers of discernment: 'such dreams are sometimes seen not by writers but by quite ordinary people – civil servants, journalists, priests...'<sup>195</sup> – so cannot act as seer. Much like Dostoevsky in the broader landscape of the novel as a whole, the devil keeps 'philosophising', (*filosofstvovat'*, xiv 230, 231), as Ivan sarcastically complains, but ends up bemoaning his own inability to mount a coherent argument.(xiv.232) Indeed wisdom itself is compartmentalised and trivialised: Gogol-esque doctors specialise in diseases of the left nostril, cures happen not by science but by accident.(xiv.231). The devil's role is reduced to that of defining himself by opposition, critic rather than author, 'x in an indeterminate

---

<sup>194</sup> '...ваш земной реализм. Тут у вас все очерчено, тут формула, тут геометрия... ', (xiv.229).

<sup>195</sup> '...видят такие сны иной раз вовсе не сочинители, совсем самые заурядные люди, чиновники, фельетонисты, попы...' (xiv.229).

equation'.<sup>196</sup> Straightforward answers do not exist in an environment where even framing questions is tricky. 'je pense donc je suis, that I'm sure of, but as for everything else around me, all these worlds, God, even Satan, it remains to be proven whether they really exist independently or are just a figment of my imagination...'<sup>197</sup>

If there is no separately identifiable 'reality' then all is, effectively, story. To make the point, the devil tells an anecdote, the story of the atheist who continues to reject life after death even when offered it after his own death, is condemned to walk a quadrillion kilometres before the heavenly doors will open for him, finally does so and becomes a believer on the instant. The devil corrects himself, the story is, he says, more a 'legend' than an anecdote.(xiv.232-33) The distinction is important: legends are a type of prospectus narrative existing within a cultural tradition which provides a framework for a received interpretation of the narrative. It has a fixed exchange value: 'I sold it for what I paid for it', says the devil, to use a literal translation of the Russian.<sup>198</sup> But reader reception is no longer so reliable. The devil himself, as raconteur, notices that the denouement is a little too pat to be credible.(xiv.234) Ivan, prefiguring Barthes, argues the non-existence of the author since he can reinterpret the devil's narrative wholly in terms of his own personal

---

<sup>196</sup> 'Я икс в неопределенном уравнении.'(xiv.232).

<sup>197</sup> 'Je pense donc je suis, это я знаю наверно, остальное же все, что кругом меня, все эти миры, бог и даже сам сатана, - все это для меня не доказано, существует ли оно само по себе, или есть только одна моя эманация...'(xiv.232).

<sup>198</sup> 'За что купил за то и продал.'(xiv.234).

experience. The devil's satirical plagiarism of Ivan's previous arguments is, with equal plausibility, a demonstration of Ivan's loss of control of his own narrative. Arguments degenerate into absurd wordplay, Jesuitical casuistry or both together, as a friar reassures a noseless marquis that at least he will no longer have to suffer his nose being put out of joint. (xiv 235)

Like a model of the novel in miniature, attempts to introduce philosophy end either in excess or trivialisation. The noseless marquis commits suicide, but this is not the suicide of *Diary of a Writer* where Dostoevsky can debate the topic over four issues, interweaving newspaper reportage with fictional correspondence, a novella about a suicide and eventually the exposition of an ethical position on the matter.<sup>199</sup> Here the suicide supervenes in one line, without explanation. The bald statement: 'The unfortunate young man returned home and shot himself that very night: I was with him right up to the very last moment...' implies an expectation that reader reception is no longer material, that details like rationale and narrative continuity are irrelevant, presumably because the reader is no longer considered able to judge anything but trivia.<sup>200</sup> As if in response, suicide is followed by a juicy titbit of sex and the clergy in a clichéd anecdote of the 'blondinotchka' which can trace its

---

<sup>199</sup> The references are to the following articles: 'The Sentence (*Prigovor*, 10 /76, 1.4, xi.529-31); The Meek One (*Krotkaya*, 11/76, xi.548-74); and 'On Suicide and Arrogance (*O samoubiistve i o vysokomerii*, 12/76, 1.5, xi.593-95).

<sup>200</sup> 'Несчастный молодой человек, возвратясь домой, в ту же ночь застрелился; я был при нем неотлучно до последнего момента...' (xiv.235).

provenance back for over a century.<sup>201</sup> Just as the novel itself shows the attempt to combine successful fiction with intellectual debate continually slides off into excess or cliché, so the novel in microcosm of Ivan's dream parodies the process.

Only the commercial is predictable. All other narrative is, by definition, speculative given the vagaries of reader response. Smerdyakov's suicide even leaves two narratives. The story of his death circulates, newspaper fashion, by word of mouth round the town, carried by Alyosha the reporter. The alternative narrative of his part in the murder is inherited by Ivan, who is now ironically referred to as the 'romantik' (xiv.241) – both Romantic and narrator of romances - and will turn out to be of speculative value only in the trial. And the ultimate test of narrative, by gladiatorial combat, will come in the trial itself, the random outcome of which Dostoevsky signals right from the outset in its title: 'A Miscarriage of Justice' (*Sudebnaya oshibka*). This, the twelfth and final full book of the novel before the epilogue, was serialised in two parts in September and October 1880.

The trial scenes are a dramatic exposition of the speculative nature of narrative. Both counsel, Ivan Kirillovich for the prosecution and Fetyukovich for the defence, present prospectus narratives, which assert

---

<sup>201</sup> See the note to xiv.235 at xiv.379 which explains the origins of the anecdote in an epigram about a French actress of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

the value of their arguments over all others. Both retell the story in words which make it clear that what is at stake here is a literary contest between two narratives rather than an attempt to reveal some notion of truth or reality. The prosecutor's 'factual evidence' turns out to be another narrative variant, since he uses 'facts' which the reader knows not to be true.<sup>202</sup> Fetyukovich even tries to argue that the very facts themselves, the money, the robbery and the murder, did not exist.(xiv.303-13)

Both explicitly refer to the presentation of evidence as akin to the process of writing a novel. The prosecutor accuses Dmitry of poor authorship because, he claims, Dmitry has overlooked crucial details in making his story realistic: 'The main thing there is that a triumphant novelist can be besieged and reduced to dust by details, just those very details reality is always so rich in, and which are always overlooked as completely meaningless and unnecessary trivia by those unfortunate and involuntary authors, to whom they don't even occur.'<sup>203</sup> The defence retorts that melodrama and plausibility are unlikely bedfellows: 'It was just that idea which lay behind the prosecution's suggestion that the money was hidden somewhere in a crevice at Mokroye. And why not in

---

<sup>202</sup> For example, in his 'Treatise on Smerdyakov' which the prosecutor spins to prove that Smerdyakov could not have been the murderer, while the reader knows the opposite. (xiv.285-92).

<sup>203</sup> 'Тут, главное, можно осадить и в прах разбить торжествующего романиста подробностями, теми самыми подробностями, которыми всегда так богата действительность и которые всегда, как совершенно будто бы незначащая и ненужная мелочь, пренебрегаются этими несчастными и невольными сочинителями и даже никогда не приходят им в голову.'(xiv.297).

the dungeons of the Castle of Udolfo, gentlemen of the jury? Isn't the suggestion fantastical, straight out of a novel?'<sup>204</sup>

We may admire their evident skill in re-narrating the evidence to such opposed conclusions. By extension, we may also applaud Dostoevsky's own skill in creating and controlling these two contradictory narratives. But prospectus narrative once again fails to produce anything other than an apparently random outcome. The narrator suggests that the public has made its mind up along gender lines before hearing any evidence at all (xiv.248). The presiding judge favours a sociological interpretation. Rakitin, emerging as a fully-fledged journalist, imposes a political interpretation.(xiv 252) As many critics have noted, the prosecuting counsel is wrong for the right reasons, while the defence counsel is right for the wrong reasons. Neither has a monopoly on right or wrong, just as their jury audience is reliable only in its unreliability.

But just as the trial scenes disprove the value of narrative at one level, so they assert it on another. This is a gripping courtroom drama, a commercial narrative genre which relies on established literary devices to create predictable effects. Its subject matter is sex, money and crime. The narrator is, literally, a court reporter able to produce a quasi-stenographic

---

<sup>204</sup> 'Вот именно это соображение и было причиною предложения обвинителя, что деньги где-то спрятаны в расщелине в селе Мокром. Да уж не в подвалах ли Удольфского замка, господа? Ну не фантастическое ли, не романическое ли это предложение?'(xiv.305).

record of proceedings. He sees the courtroom audience in terms of newspaper demographics and reports separately the responses from the male and female segments.(xiv.244) Sudden plot inversions maintain suspense: contradictory facts, such as Dmitry's confessional letter to Katerina Ivanovna, which is new to the court though not to the reader, are introduced to challenge received assumptions. The break in serialisation comes not at the point where the prosecution hands over to the defence but at the end of chapter 5 when the contradictory testimony of Ivan, who offers Smerdyakov's story and the envelope containing the stolen 3,000 roubles, and of Katerina Ivanovna, who produces Dmitry's letter, creates a dramatic climax.(xiv.269) Dr Herzenstube demonstrates the power of the story by his vivid and sentimental anecdote of Dmitry and the pound of nuts.(xiv.258)

Both prosecution and defence counsel acknowledge the role of the commercial press. Ippolit Kirillovich, reflecting on Russian society, acknowledges that the modern press has been responsible for bringing the graphic immediacy of criminal acts to the public.(xiv.274) His psychological argument about the contradictions of the Karamazov nature is also a literary argument about the credibility of the polarisation and hyperbole which underlies melodrama. (xiv.279). Fetyukovich repeatedly uses illustrations of crimes from popular newspapers to illustrate his points and, implicitly, to keep his audience hooked by journalistic stories which have previously demonstrated their value.(xiv.316)

'After that everything descended into the most awful chaos'.<sup>205</sup> The jury's apparently perverse verdict, contrasted against the reader's own superior knowledge of a different narrative of the crime, is a spectacular demonstration of the speculative nature of narration. It provides a first-hand representation of the difficulty of predicting narrative reception. Readers, it seems, react not to the narrative offered by an author but to another, parallel, discourse of their own invention which can be influenced by unrelated external circumstances, such as gender stereotypes or class distinctions - the narrator records that the men in the courtroom were pleased with the verdict while the women were upset, and attributes the verdict to the reactionary reflexes of the peasantry.(xiv.323) And yet Dostoevsky has successfully led his reader though almost two years of serialisation, from January 1879 to November 1880. His strategy of iterative experiment has paid off if the reader has followed to the end of the story. Multiple retellings of the same narrative allow an author to vary almost every parameter of the text – genre, narratorial position, intellectual weight. The extent and variety of subsequent critical commentary is evidence of the text's ability to support multiple and contradictory reader interpretations.

So the Epilogue, published in November 1880 only two months before Dostoevsky's eventual death, stands in some measure as Dostoevsky's *envoi* to his contemporary reading public and to the future

---

<sup>205</sup> 'Затем поднялся страшный хаос.'(xiv.323).

mass audience he seems to have anticipated in Mme Khokhlakova. Its subject is the enduring value of memory or, in different terminology, the perpetuity value of stories. As early as April 1880 he writes of 'Ilyusha's burial and Alexei Karamazov's funeral oration to the boys, in which the meaning of the whole novel will to some extent be revealed'.<sup>206</sup> This is, apparently, a reversion to the prospectus narrative of the first half of the novel in which the ability to manipulate text is equated to the ability to manipulate reception.

The evidence of Dostoevsky's contemporary correspondence clearly suggests an intent to project a Christian point of view. In the month following the publication of the Epilogue he writes to Blagonravov: 'But a new intelligentsia is coming. They will want to be at one with the common people. The first sign of an unbreakable fellowship with the people is a respect and love for that which the great mass of the people honour and love more and higher than anything else in the world – that is to say, their God and their faith.'<sup>207</sup> A Christian interpretation of Alyosha's speech at the stone would indeed see it as an encomium to faith and community through the power of narrative to provide continuity. The

---

<sup>206</sup> '...похороны Илюши и надгробная речь Алексея Карамазова мальчикам, в которой отчасти отразится смысл всего романа.' Letter to Lyubimov, 29 April 1880, (xiv.181).

<sup>207</sup> 'Но возрождается и идет новая интеллигенция. Та хочет быть с народом. А первый признак неразрывного общения с народом есть уважение и любовь к тому, что народ, всею целостью своей, любит и уважает более и выше всего, что есть в мире, - т.е. своего Бога и свою веру.' Letter to Blagonravov, 19 December 1880, (xvi/2. 254).

novel's biblical epigraph about the grain of wheat which must die to bear fruit suggests the ability to harness experience to create posterity value.

Miller argues that the way in which the book links many of the previously more separate strands of the novel demonstrates the power of this shared dialogue to create its own perpetuity value through common memories.<sup>208</sup> The speech at the stone not only perpetuates the memory of Ilyusha but affirms Alyosha's ability to combine inheritances from both the Karamazov psyche and from Zosima into a transformed articulacy which allows him to create lasting prose. Dostoevsky's 1880 Pushkin speech shares the same theoretical platform. It depicts Pushkin as the descendant of a line of Russian chroniclers and the creator of a Russian eternal feminine in Tatiana, and suggests that the validation of a future set of readers, of which Dostoevsky is the chief representative, should result in a reassessment of both Pushkin's posterity value and Russia's destiny: 'I am speaking merely of the brotherhood of people and of the fact that, perhaps, the Russian heart is most plainly destined, among all the peoples, for universally human and brotherly unity; I see traces of this in our history, in our gifted people, in the artistic genius of Pushkin'.<sup>209</sup>

---

<sup>208</sup> Miller (1992), pp. 131-33.

<sup>209</sup> 'Я говорю лишь о братстве людей и о том что ко всемирному, ко всечеловечески-братскому единению сердце русское может быть изо всех народов предназначено, вижу следы сего в нашей истории, в наших даровитых людях, в художественном гении Пушкина.' (xii.330).

But the Epilogue, like all other prospectus narratives, refuses to behave as apparently intended. Underneath the theme of spiritual redemption lurks a mistrust of just the sort of prospectus narrative represented by Alyosha. The novel's epigraph, after all, implies that the attainment of posterity requires a change of status so fundamental that all memory of a prior state would be lost. The Epilogue depicts a series of attempts to create future value by means of a return to the past. Dmitry imagines his future as a fantastic land full of redskins, the 1750s America of Fenimore Cooper and the last Mohican, in which even he fails to believe, since his one ambition is to escape and return to Mother Russia and hide as quickly as possible.(xiv.330) Katerina Ivanovna looks back to her love for Dmitry, now explicitly described as belonging to the past.[xiv.331] The Snegirev family cling to the ritual aspects of religion to master their grief.(xiv.335) The genre reverts to a kind of Dickensian pathos which seems to refer back to a much earlier phase of Dostoevsky's writing career. Even the treatment of the past is equivocal. Ivan is effectively written out of the script. We are left with a perfunctory reference to his health (xiv.324) and never find out if he lives or dies. Zosima, for all that he may live on through Alyosha, is also ironically demoted by Ilyusha, whose corpse does not smell.(xiv.334)

There seems to be a real sense in which the narrative is fighting with itself. Alyosha may acquire a new fluency in his speech at the stone, but the reader may remember that his previous attempts at extended

communication have all ended in in the failure of the medium, as in Zosima's hagiography, or in loss of control, as in the Cana of Galilee episode. His speech in the Epilogue dwells on the value of memory and the need to perpetuate the memory of Ilyusha and of the camaraderie of the twelve boys into their future lives. Emotional intensity is conveyed through pathos and sentimentality which teeters on the edge of cliché, the point at which an excess of iteration attacks credibility. All previous narratives of children, whether from the Ilyusha/Kolya thread or from the iterating anecdotes of the suffering of children, have been characterised by excess either of shock or of sentimentality.

All have drawn attention, in the same way as the image of St John the Merciful/St. Julien l'Hospitalier, to their status as narratives and have prompted the reader to assess their credibility. I think that this final image is profoundly ambiguous. We experience it in two dimensions, simultaneously aware of the attraction of its spiritual scope and of a rejection of its emotional overload. We are aware of the narrative skill and commercial power which have kept us reading for some seven hundred pages or almost two years of serialisation. But there is something unresolved in this resolution, a sense that the desired equilibrium is not to be had, that narrative has, indeed, become speculative. The fact that this dialogue continues right up to the closing pages of *The Brothers Karamazov* is an indication that, for Dostoevsky, no definitive answer exists. Like roulette, completion delivers only random outcomes. The fact

that Dostoevsky does not resolve the balance between fictional credibility and the capacity of fiction to sustain a serious moral message may be an indication that, for him, there is no sustainable point of balance. The real moral challenge, for author and reader alike, is how to negotiate the continuous, fibrillating switchback from one to the other.

## Conclusion

Dostoevsky calls the the fictional town in which he sets *The Gambler* 'Roulettenburg'. He returns again and again to the theme of speculation. The roulette table is both an object of addiction in his life, an iterated theme in his works and correspondence, and a symbol of the Russian character. By the time he started *The Brothers Karamazov*, though, his addiction had long since been overcome. The need to gamble had been replaced by a far more conservative attitude to risk as Anna Grigor'evna took over more and more of Dostoevsky's business dealings. Roulette is not mentioned a single time in the novel. Dostoevsky's writing habits, and particularly the planning of the novel, reveal a way of working fundamentally different to the impetuous approach to *The Idiot* of a decade earlier which had led him to write the entire first book before working out the remainder of the plot. I think we should see *The Brothers Karamazov* as an exploration of ways of moderating the risk of failure in a

changing publishing market. Perversely, this risk management strategy is itself so novel that it creates an entirely new set of risks.

Faced with a publishing market which, to repeat, aped French mass market publishing strategies without a comparable readership, Dostoevsky's strategy makes perfect sense. The choice of a courtroom drama clearly responded to a proven commercial driver in the growing boulevard newspaper industry: readers, and especially the newer readers from an emerging bourgeoisie, were interested in criminal psychology, detection and legal process, particularly in their more sensational aspects. The genre of the courtroom drama plays to this readership and places a bet that future readerships will retain this fascination. But the actual readership of Katkov's thick journals was used to a quite different diet, much of which responds to the various strains of prospectus narrative with which Dostoevsky experiments, and with which he was directly familiar from his own experience of commercialising *Diary of a Writer*. With its emphasis on the competitive retelling of stories, the courtroom drama also provides a platform for experimentation from which an author can explore which variants attract which readers, particularly in a serialised format. Passages which may fail with one segment, or one generation, of the readership may still find favour with others. The genre itself also provides the subject of the novel, as the author imagines how the iterative revoicings of the narrative are received by his own in-story characters. The success of this risk mitigation strategy is evidenced by the

fact that the novel has travelled so well through time, has effectively penetrated the mass market, and has accumulated such a wide variety of competing explications.

The strategy also affords the modern critic an opportunity to observe how these commercial strategies influence the text itself. I have argued in this chapter that commercial drivers are evident within the text and are frequently referred to and discussed by Dostoevsky within the narrative itself. We can, for example, identify the patterns of iteration in the text and demonstrate that these serve both commercial and novelistic purposes. We can show how different genres of narration correspond to different modes of transaction and ways of constituting narrative value. We can suggest how these estimates of narrative value lead to further textual experimentation to explore how value can be modified. To ignore the commercial aspects of narrative leads to an incomplete understanding of the text.

Finally, we can perhaps suggest that Dostoevsky's famous 'unfinalisability' is itself a successful commercial strategy. In attempting to write for an undeveloped but predicted mass audience as well as for a more limited contemporary audience, in trying to combine intellectual weight with compulsive narrative, in seeking ways to assert dearly held beliefs without alienating readers or inadvertently traducing his own case, a strategy of avoiding definition is perfectly logical. The value of his own

memory, the perpetuity value of his own texts, depends in part on this ability to touch multiple audiences through multiple media whilst trying to maximise the likelihood of a good reception. 'Dostoevsky and fiasco' writes John Jones, 'are never far apart'.<sup>210</sup> Playing the odds reduces the damage of any single fiasco and recognises that the constraints of writing within a fictional genre make it impossible to fix values even for a single reader. From the all-in strategy of the hero of *The Gambler*, playing his last coin on the tables in Roulettenburg, Dostoevsky has shifted to a more cautious tactic of multiple bets. His narrative plays are more deliberate, accepting fiasco as one losing bet amongst other winning ones. If Roulettenburg is where Dostoevsky learned to gamble, then *The Brothers Karamazov* is where he finally masters the art of placing the bet. Roulettenbook, perhaps?

\$\$\$\$\$\$

---

<sup>210</sup> John Jones (1983), p. 314.

## *Chapter IV: Zola*

### Zola, Inc. -The Business of Narrative

If Dostoevsky wrote for a mass readership which remained illusory in his lifetime, Zola emerged into a French publishing industry ripe for change. A more literate, more urbanised and, albeit slowly, richer public could afford to buy not just newspapers but books. Zola became the leading large-scale entrepreneur of this new market, borrowing freely from journalistic and commercial techniques to develop his business, as much businessman as novelist. His rise is that of big business, not just in the publishing industry but across the French industrial landscape as new forms of corporate ownership were introduced. His subject is big business, from the department store to the railways to the stock exchange. His novels are themselves products of the processes he describes. Even his naturalism is as much an economic as a literary phenomenon.

To illustrate the evolution of this process over the central span of Zola's writing career when he was publishing *Les Rougon-Macquart*

(1871-93), I have selected two works from either end of the cycle.<sup>1</sup> *La Curée* (1872) and *L'Argent* (1891), respectively the second and eighteenth works in the series, describe the business career of a single central character, Aristide Saccard. Their publication dates are separated by nineteen years. The first predates Zola's commercial breakthrough as a writer with *L'Assommoir* (1876) and allows us to understand some of the strategies Zola used to enhance narrative value. The second comes from a period when Zola's success had been firmly established for fifteen years and when he was about to introduce a new product range in the shape of *Les Trois Villes*. The comparison allows us to understand just how these narratives of business also become part of the business of narrative.

## **The commercialisation of the book**

By the early 1880s the book had reacquired a substantial degree of economic independence from the newspaper and periodical press. We have seen in the chapter on Balzac how, in the 1830s, prose fiction was forced to migrate to the press, as the most effective platform on which to reach the contemporary reader, by a combination of the undeveloped reader market, inadequate technology and lack of capital. By the 1880s

---

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller description of the origins, preparation and evolution of *Les Rougon-Macquart* see Becker, Colette, with Véronique Lavielle, *La Fabrique des Rougon-Macquart. Edition de dossiers préparatoires*. 7 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003).

many of the conditions which had forced this migration had radically altered. A mass market readership for books independently from *romans-feuilletons* had begun to emerge. True, the overall size of the potential market had barely increased, with low birth rates and high infant mortality limiting population growth from 35.4 million in 1846 to just 38.3 million in 1891. But the urban population, where literacy was concentrated, had ballooned, rising over the same period from 8.6 million to 14.3 million.<sup>2</sup> Literacy, driven by state provision of primary education for males since the *loi Guizot* of 1833 and for females since the *loi Falloux* of 1850, was almost universal and would spread further with the *lois Ferry* of 1881 and 1882 which made primary education first free, then mandatory. Furet and Ozouf's statistical evaluation of different methods of literacy assessment indicates levels of illiteracy of some 57% in 1831-35 but only around 6% in 1891-1895.<sup>3</sup> Literacy among females, an important demographic for the novel, rose more slowly but had nonetheless reached 66% by the early 1870s, rising to over 70% in urban centres and over 92% in the *département* of the Seine.<sup>4</sup>

Increasing leisure time, more disposable income available for spending on leisure pursuits such as reading, and reductions in the cover price of books all helped to increase the size of the readership. James

---

<sup>2</sup> Price (1981), p. 215, and Palmer, Michael, *Des Petits journaux aux grandes agences. Naissance du journalisme moderne, 1863-1914*. (Paris: Aubier, 1983), p. 11, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Furet, François and Jacques Ozouf, *L'Alphabétisation des Français de Calvin à Jules Ferry*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), pp. 30 and 292.

<sup>4</sup> *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 445.

Smith Allen suggests that, correcting for male/female and urban/provincial skew, the 'real' readership for fiction had risen from just over two million readers in 1821, or some 6.7% of the total population, to around 9.4 million in 1891, or around 24.5% of the population. Within these overall estimates, he suggests that by far and away the fastest growth was recorded during the two decades of the 1870s and 1880s, each of which saw the addition of around 2 million new readers. Implicit in these estimates is the fact that the demographics of reading was changing, from the largely bourgeois, educated readership of the mid-century to the beginnings of a mass market which would eventually encompass a far broader social spectrum. Allen nonetheless cautions against the assumption that this was a swift process: the spread of literacy is scant evidence of the actual practice of reading fiction.<sup>5</sup>

The broader economic context suggests that there were many other reasons for the slow pace of change. Poor economic growth, and in particular the three decades of relative underperformance which began towards the end of the end of 1860s, impeded both the spread of literacy and the exploitation of its benefits. Competition from lower cost imports, a series of natural and man-made disasters ranging from the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to phylloxera, and a failure to adapt to new technologies led to labour productivity growing by less than 1% per annum over the

---

<sup>5</sup> Allen, James Smith, *In the Public Eye: A History of Reading in Modern France, 1800-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 56-70 and Appendix, Table A.7, 'Estimate of Active Readers in France 1801-1936'.

thirty years to the late 1880s/early 1890s. By 1890 France's per capita income was under 60% of that of Great Britain.<sup>6</sup>

This was no broad consumer revolution. Rather, it was confined to the bourgeoisie and uppermost layers of manual workers. Roger Magraw argues that only after 1870 did rising wages, falling food prices, and shorter working hours allow spending on non-essential items to increase. Even then, working class families spent most of their income on food and rent. Less than ten per cent were able to spend a tenth of their income on books, amusements or other consumer goods.<sup>7</sup> Anne-Marie Thiesse, analysing reading habits in the Belle Epoque, suggests that no significant increase in disposable income for leisure pursuits among the lower classes occurred until after 1900. She points out that most books, other than the cheapest imprints, were still luxuries which could be easily replaced by much cheaper daily newspapers, and that even the bargain popular editions at 1fr. were still out of reach for many. By contrast, in 1882 the wages of a Parisian cabinet maker, by no means amongst the poorest, would have amounted to no more than 8fr. per day, and would not grow for the rest of the decade.<sup>8</sup> Even though median industrial salaries had risen by 48% between 1875 and 1905 (equivalent to an annual rise of some 1.25%), a one sou paper in 1900 was still equal to

---

<sup>6</sup> Tombs (1996), p. 154.

<sup>7</sup> Magraw, Roger, 'Producing, Retailing, Consuming: France 1830-70', in *French Literature, Thought and Culture in the Nineteenth Century. A Material World*, ed. by Brian Rigby (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 59-85, pp. 63-66.

<sup>8</sup> Charle (1991), p. 292.

12.5% of the price of a kilo of bread, or one third the price of a metro ticket. Women were typically even worse paid.<sup>9</sup>

To be competitive, books needed to be cheap and, if they were to reach a mass readership, their content had to address a layer of consumers more used to the cheaper flysheets and boulevard newspapers. Technological developments and improvements in distribution, pioneered by the newspaper industry, were indeed enabling books to be sold more cheaply, in ever increasing volumes, to a wider audience. Marinoni's rotary press massively increased printing capacity, while improvements in mechanical composition, inking and techniques for illustration, from lithography at the beginning of the century to photogravure at its end, all increased printing capacity, reduced costs through longer print-runs and improved product quality across the publishing spectrum.<sup>10</sup> Paper costs dropped significantly, from 100fr. per kilogramme in 1870 to 44fr. per kilogramme by 1888, with the increasing use of woodpulp-based paper in the 1860s and 1870s and the removal of paper tariffs.<sup>11</sup> The development of the railway network from 6,520 kilometres in 1857 to 22,000 kilometres in 1880 not only speeded access

---

<sup>9</sup> Thiesse, Anne-Marie, *Le Roman du quotidien. Lecteurs et lectures populaires à la Belle Epoque*. (Paris: Le Chemin Vert, 1984), pp. 11-24.

<sup>10</sup> For fuller descriptions of technological improvements over the period, see particularly *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 57-67; *Histoire générale de la presse française*, ed. Bellanger *et al.* (1969), vol.iii, pp. 63-99, and three articles by Gilles Feyel, the last with Benoît Lenoble, in *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa *et al.* (2011), pp. 97-212.

<sup>11</sup> *Histoire générale de la presse française*, ed. Bellanger *et al.* (1969), vol. iii, pp. 284; *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 53-56 and 61-63; and *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa *et al.* (2011), p. 122.

to the provinces but also created a new readership among the travelling public which Louis Hachette addressed both through kiosks and special editions.<sup>12</sup> The size of the potential provincial audience was convincingly demonstrated by Moïse Millaud and *Le Petit Journal* (established in 1863), which rolled out its own distribution system across almost the whole of provincial France and by 1911 sold 80% of its 835,000 circulation in the provinces.<sup>13</sup>

Many of the marketing tools developed for newspapers also proved relevant to books.<sup>14</sup> Price promotions had already reduced the prices of the cheapest imprints to 1fr. per volume across both Charpentier and Hachette's entire popular editions by 1856. Distribution improved dramatically. Bookstore growth outpaced the rise in population, doubling outside Paris in the period 1851-78.<sup>15</sup> Railway kiosks, another key outlet, grew from 43 in 1853 to 1,151 in 1895. Poster campaigns were used to promote new themes and new titles, as witness Millaud's 1865 promotion of the *faits divers* columns of *Le Petit Journal* by placards proclaiming 'Crimes et Châtiments' in enormous letters – Dostoevsky *avant la lettre*.<sup>16</sup> Zola's own experience in the publicity department of Hachette where he

---

<sup>12</sup> Price (1981), pp. 22-25.

<sup>13</sup> Palmer (1983), p. 341.

<sup>14</sup> For a good general survey of the evolution of the commercialisation strategies of the press in the nineteenth century see Gilles Feyel and Benoît Lenoble, 'Commercialisation et diffusion des journaux au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle' in *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa *et al.*, (2011), pp. 180-212.

<sup>15</sup> Allen (1991), p. 44. For statistics on bookstore and railway kiosk growth, see Mollier, Jean-Yves, 'Zola, le Champ littéraire et l'argent' in *Cahiers naturalistes* 78 (2004), 91-102, pp. 93-94. He records 2,428 bookstores outside Paris in 1851, 5,086 in 1878.

<sup>16</sup> Morienvall (1934), p. 219.

worked from 1862 to 1866, bartering free copies of new books against (he hoped) positive reviews in other papers, brought him face to face with the expanding market for prose fiction. While many of these advances related more to the newspaper and periodical industry than to the book trade, they left behind a fertile trail of new routes to market and new readers which the book was able to exploit in the course of its own quest for independence.

But perhaps the most important spin-off from newspapers to the book publishing area lay in the vastly increased availability of capital and credit. Thomas Piketty demonstrates, with overwhelming evidence, that the Belle Epoque was a period when financial inequality in France across the social spectrum reached levels never previously – or indeed subsequently – seen.<sup>17</sup> Returns on investments – from government *rentes* to Parisian property – had exceeded the growth rate of the economy as a whole for much of the century. As a consequence, the amount of wealth passed on by inheritance grew exponentially, compounding the problem. The rich became richer while the poor, with nothing to invest, stagnated. Capital accumulation becomes simultaneously a force for funding the

---

<sup>17</sup> Piketty, Thomas, *Le Capital au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2013) and *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 2014). Page numbers refer to the translation. What follows is a very abbreviated summary of the complex argument which Piketty makes in relation to inequality. He also underlines the fact that French tax and inheritance records are amongst the most complete and extensive in the world, such that the reliability of the data and conclusions relating to France is correspondingly higher. The available data series for France begin in the early 1800s. Key passages on Belle Epoque France are at pp. 260-64, 337-43, and 393-96. His references to Vautrin's lesson occur at pp. 238-42, 279, 404-07, 410 and 412.

development of a mass market while simultaneously stunting its growth. By the 1890s the top ten percent of the population owned almost 90% of total wealth; the top one percent almost 60%, while the majority had virtually no accumulated savings at all. As Piketty notes on more than one occasion, Vautrin's advice to Rastignac to marry wealth, rather than try to earn it, turned out to be prescient.

As a consequence, though, the supply of capital did improve and new corporate protections, such as the limited liability company (in the form of the *société anonyme*, introduced in the precursor to its present form in 1867), evolved to help control investment risk. The capital requirements for the development of the railway system were so huge – over 1.2fr. billion in 1852-55 alone – as to demand a wholesale restructuring of the French equity and debt capital markets, which thereafter became important sources of capital to fund industrialisation in other sectors from mines to textiles. Roger Price uses the volume of bills discounted at the Bank of France as a proxy for the evolution of the capital market, on the basis that faster circulation of goods ties up more credit, and shows an almost threefold rise from an annual average of 5.5fr. billion in 1851-60 to 14.5fr. billion in 1861-75.<sup>18</sup>

Capital flowed in particular to the publishing industry because, in the right hands, it had become an attractive investment proposition. By

---

<sup>18</sup> Price (1981), pp. 22, 153-55.

1884 *Le Petit Journal* had paid-in capital of 25fr. million, an enormous sum for the age, and produced an annual profit of over 4.5fr. million.<sup>19</sup> It had also become a *société anonyme* in 1881, benefitting from changes in corporate law which promoted the creation of larger groups with better access to capital markets and less reliance on the family or single entrepreneur-based wealth which had characterised the early growth of the press in the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>20</sup> By 1881 there were 73 press stocks quoted on the Paris Bourse.<sup>21</sup>

Newspapers, in particular, had become adept at creating multiple revenue streams. A growing readership led to higher circulation revenues, notwithstanding the price discounting needed to attract new readers. Total newspaper print-runs increased from 73 copies per thousand inhabitants in 1881 to 244 copies per thousand in 1914, placing France on a par with the United States in terms of press penetration.<sup>22</sup> Brand extensions allow leading titles to spawn a shoal of spin-offs targeting distinct market segments: Millaud clusters *Le Journal de Paris*, *Le Magasin pittoresque*, *La Musée des familles*, and an illustrated weekly, *Le Journal illustré*, around *Le Petit Journal*. New readers in turn allowed the development of an accelerating income stream from both classified and display advertising. For example, Patrick Eveno's analysis of profitability

---

<sup>19</sup> *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa *et al.* (2011), p. 175.

<sup>20</sup> Tombs (1996), pp. 147-48.

<sup>21</sup> Eveno, Patrick, *L'Argent de la presse française des années 1820 à nos jours* (Paris: Editions du CTHS, 2003), p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Eveno (2003), p. 29.

at *Le Figaro* shows that in the period from 1879-81 the paper was profitable on the basis of copy sales alone: advertising revenues added a further 15% of total revenues in 1878, representing almost pure profit, and that by 1889-91 the proportion of advertising revenues has risen to 33% of revenues, or some 2fr. million per annum.<sup>23</sup> The first advertising agencies emerged as early as the 1840s. New categories of advertising were allowed: pharmacies, for example, from 1867 following approval at their annual industry confederation conference.<sup>24</sup>

Paid editorial, almost always undisclosed as such, also developed into a substantial income stream. Villemessant, the proprietor of *Le Figaro*, boasted that his target was to get every line of the paper paid for in this way. Between 1875 and 1890 the Crédit Foncier is recorded as having spent 60fr. million on press 'subsidies', while the Panama canal company invested 12fr. million in paid articles in an attempt to boost its share price before its eventual bankruptcy, Stock and debt issues became virtually impossible without these payoffs. The Russian government continued to buy favourable press coverage right up till the outbreak of the First World War in support of its issue of foreign bonds – France was the only external market in which it was able to issue debt.<sup>25</sup> 'Aujourd'hui

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>24</sup> Zeldin, Theodore, *France 1848-1945. Taste and Corruption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 169.

<sup>25</sup> Zeldin (1980), pp. 165-76. For more general surveys of the economics of the French press in the latter half of the nineteenth century see *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa *et al.* (2011), pp. 141-80; *Histoire générale de la presse française*, ed. Bellanger *et al.* (1969), vol. iii, pp. 100-293; and Eveno (2003), pp. 19-75.

ce ne sont plus les partis qui créent les journaux, ce sont les banquiers. Ils les créent pour lancer une affaire' writes Jules Simon in *Le Matin* of 12th August, 1884. *La presse financière* becomes not just an important influence in shaping a new incarnation of Sainte-Beuve's *littérature industrielle*, but a driving force in promoting the long-delayed industrial revolution in France.

After years of serial bankruptcies, peaking in the 1840s and 1850s, the book publishing industry was also finally becoming a better investment proposition.<sup>26</sup> Rising incomes and falling book prices combined to create an almost fourfold increase in household disposable income available for book purchases between 1840 and 1910, even if from a low base and with a marked acceleration towards the end of the period with the advent of Fayard's *livre populaire* at 65 cents in 1905.<sup>27</sup> The same technologies which had allowed the newspaper press to reduce prices, boost sales and increase margins - cheaper paper, faster presses, productivity improvements, better distribution networks - also worked for the book trade. The number of books published, which had stayed in a range of 6-7,000 per annum throughout the 1830 and 1840s, started to rise towards the end of the 1850s and reached an annual average of around 13,000 by the 1880s.<sup>28</sup> Using a different source, Frédéric Barbier

---

<sup>26</sup> *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), iii.125, table 8.

<sup>27</sup> *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), iii.108.

<sup>28</sup> Allen (1991), table 1.1, p. 38, sourced from the returns to the *Bibliographie de la France*.

estimates that the number of titles published increased from 6,220 in 1840 to 28,143 in 1900, while over the same time average print runs increased from just under 2,000 to 11,239, implying a combined twenty-sixfold increase in the volume of books produced.<sup>29</sup> Publishing dynasties began to appear, such as those of Hachette, Havas or Charpentier. The mutual attractions of wealth, influence and status seem to draw publishers and financiers together: Calmann Lévy marries his daughter to the banker Siegfried Propper and his son Paul marries into the Dutch Becker-Fuld banking family.<sup>30</sup> Backed by inherited wealth and an investment market which favoured the media sector, publishers began investing directly in the book industry for the first time, as illustrated by Calmann Lévy's significant expansion of his book distribution network in the 1880s.<sup>31</sup>

But it is equally clear that until the 1880s the book trade, as a separate business from press publishing, continued to be a struggle. Mollier's analysis, in his *Histoire du capitalisme d'édition*, of Georges Charpentier's business suggests that it made revenues in the three financial years from 1880-82 of, respectively, 831,174fr., 635,474fr., and 815,706fr., and profits before interest and tax of 181,190fr., 100,523fr., and 117,158fr. Nonetheless, once the costs of financing the debts of an

---

<sup>29</sup> *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 116, 122: the statistics are based on official returns from printers in the years 1840, 1860 and 1880. Despite the difference between the sources there is clear evidence of a substantial increase.

<sup>30</sup> Mollier (1984), p. 446.

<sup>31</sup> Mollier (1984), p. 441.

estimated 600-700,000fr. Charpentier had incurred in building his business were taken into account, Mollier speculates that he would have made a loss – and this for the foremost literary publisher of his time with writers from Flaubert, Maupassant, Huysmans, Daudet and Edmond de Goncourt to Zola in his stable.<sup>32</sup> His financial situation deteriorated to such an extent that he came close to selling the business to Calmann-Lévy in 1883.

By 1885, though, Charpentier was back on his feet financially. What had driven the turnaround? A good part of the answer can be summarised in one word: Zola. The French book publishing trade had seen spectacular successes before. Charles Joseph Panckoucke had established his publishing dynasty in pre-revolutionary days on the back of the distribution in France of the *Encyclopédie*: Mollier argues that he was the first publisher to recognise the power of volume distribution, and Lyons suggests that he reached the limits of practical economic scale within the Ancien Régime.<sup>33</sup> Alexandre Dumas's *La Dame aux camélias*, first published in 1848, eventually required 24 successive editions to satisfy demand on top of an initial print run of 6,000, large for its day.<sup>34</sup> Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, published in 1863, sold 168,000 copies and was translated into five languages by the end of 1864, earning its author an estimated

---

<sup>32</sup> Mollier (1988), pp. 220-23, and Mollier (1984), pp. 453-54.

<sup>33</sup> Mollier (1988), pp. 20-30 and Lyons (2008), p.45.

<sup>34</sup> Mollier (1984), p. 265.

107,000fr., an early demonstration of the power of scandal (in this case reinforced by a formal ecclesiastical ban) to open new readerships.<sup>35</sup>

But these were isolated successes. By and large print runs remained stuck in the low thousands. The publishing history of Zola's early works illustrates how difficult it was to achieve scale in book format. *Thérèse Raquin*, after appearing as a three-episode serial in *L'Artiste* in August 1867, was eventually published in book form in December of the same year by Zola's first publisher, Lacroix, in an edition of 1,500 copies with a further 200 for overage and publicity.<sup>36</sup> The first edition of the opening volume of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, *La Fortune des Rougon*, published in October 1871, failed to sell out and was re-marketed in 1872 as the 'second' edition. The launch of the next, *La Curée*, was interrupted by the imminent failure of Lacroix and Zola's transfer to his new publisher, Georges Charpentier, who was able to buy from Lacroix the rights to the entire *Rougon-Macquart* series together with the plates and unsold copies of the two previous volumes, for 800fr. By the publication of *L'Assommoir* in 1877 the first five volumes of *Les Rougon-Macquart* had sold a cumulative total of some 40-50,000 copies.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Mollier (1984), p. 322, and *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, pp. 390-91.

<sup>36</sup> Mitterand, Henri, *Zola*, 3 vols. (Paris: Fayard, 1999-2002), vol. i, p. 571.

<sup>37</sup> For the sources of all the data on the print-runs of Zola works see the *Dictionnaire d'Emile Zola*, ed. Becker *et al.*, (1993) pp. 421-27, and Mollier (2004), 91-102.

*L'Assommoir*, printed in a first edition of 4,000 in January 1877, sold over 40,000 copies in that year alone. Not only that, but it also reignited interest in the preceding titles. By the middle of the year every copy of *L'Assommoir* sold led to the sale of almost the same number of copies of the earlier volumes in the series.<sup>38</sup> Over the course of 1877 and 1888 Charpentier would put on sale 75,000 copies of *L'Assommoir*, of which 15,000 in an expensive illustrated edition, 25,000 copies of *Une Page d'Amour*, and a further 10,000 copies of the earlier volumes. Henri Mitterand calculates that Zola made a total income of 65-80,000fr. from his publications over the course of 1877-78, tax free. Emboldened, Charpentier printed 55,000 copies of the first edition of *Nana* on 15 February 1880, and even so was forced to order a further 10,000 by the evening of the first day of sale.<sup>39</sup> The best-seller had come of age. First print runs of subsequent works in the series averaged some 50,000 copies, rising to 66,000 for the final two. All three volumes of *Les Trois Villes* were printed in first editions of 88,000. By Zola's death in 1902 over 1.8 million copies in book format of *Les Rougon-Macquart* had rolled off the press.

---

<sup>38</sup> Precise evidence for this statement is not available. However, comparison between figures for the initial print-runs given by Paul Alexis in his memoirs of Zola (*Emile Zola. Notes d'un ami* (Paris: Charpentier, 1888, reprinted Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001, also at <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:oxfaleph012282998>, accessed 27 April 2016, p. 105) and later publication totals for 1877 and 1880 cited in the *Dictionnaire d'Emile Zola*, ed. Becker *et al.*, (1993), p. 421, along with private correspondence with Jean-Yves Mollier, all indicate that the acceleration which the success of *L'Assommoir* would lead one to expect did in fact happen.

<sup>39</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, p. 510, although Alexis records slightly different figures. Alexis (2001), p. 119.

## The new economics of fiction

Why was Zola able to become the catalyst for the book's reacquisition of its economic independence in France? Was he simply in the right place at the right time to take advantage of a transition which would have happened anyway? Or was he able to impart additional 'value' to his narratives which started or accelerated the process? And if the latter, are there specific qualities in his texts which can be identified with this economic function?

As we have seen, the conditions for the development of a mass readership for prose fiction both during and in the decade following the Second Empire were hardly propitious. The vast majority of the population lived on income levels too low to permit discretionary spending on anything but the popular press. Any attempt to expand this market had to contend with the fact that its tastes and expectations had already been conditioned by the boulevard newspapers. So to understand Zola's contribution to the way in which literary value was created, we need to consider the cultural context in which his fiction began to appear.

The steep growth in press circulation from the 1860s was fuelled not just by the economics of the volume and price but by the techniques of popular journalism. Millaud's innovation with *Le Petit Journal* in 1863 was essentially one of degree rather than nature. There was little evidence of any fundamental shift in popular taste, more or less irrespective of social class. The key cultural drivers of voyeurism, fashion, the exotic and the

taxonomic had remained virtually unchanged since Girardin's earlier press revolution of 1836 despite the expansion in the readership over the intervening period.<sup>40</sup> Voyeurism, or the fascination of every social class with the *mores* of those they considered above and, especially, beneath them, as well as with the hidden *mœurs* of their own classes, had proved resiliently popular - notably by Sue in *Les Mystères de Paris*. Fashion, or the thrill of the evanescent, had been identified as the focus of a key target reader demographic as early as Girardin's introduction of *La Mode* in 1829 and was able to adapt to expanding markets with ease, as Zola illustrates in *Au Bonheur des dames*.

The exotic, or the draw of all things foreign, was just as evident from the crowds flocking to each of the roughly decennial *Expositions universelles* across the second half of the century as it had been to earlier readers of *Mille et une nuits*. And taxonomy, or the urge to understand through description and classification, could be traced back variously to the *Encyclopédie*, to Léon Curmer's *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, to the sociological and criminological investigations of a Parent-Duchâtelet or a Vidocq, or to the emergence of the detective novel. Kalifa's

---

<sup>40</sup> Establishing and defending the parameters of what constitutes a 'key cultural driver' is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I rely here on distinctions drawn by others, in particular Kalifa in *L'Encre et le sang* (Kalifa (1995)) and *Les Bas-fonds* (Kalifa (2013)) together with Chevalier, in *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, for the notions of voyeurism and 'taximanie', the urge to know through classification (Chevalier (1958)); Anne Green, in *Changing France: literature and material culture in the Second Empire* (New York: Anthem Press, 2011) and <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:oxfaleph000545742>, accessed 27 April 2016, for the importance of fashion, and Guise in his extensive investigation of the 1832-34 'folie du conte' in *Le Roman-feuilleton 1830-1848: la naissance d'un genre* for the emphasis he places on the role of the exotic in the early development of the press (Guise (1975)).

investigation in *Les Bas-fonds* of the links between this prurient interest in the underclasses, the mania for classification (which he calls 'taximanie'), and the evolution of tastes in fiction shows clearly how popular tastes are able to travel through time.<sup>41</sup> The preceding chapter on Dostoevsky has also demonstrated that similar concerns were shared by Russian readers despite the remoteness and earlier stage of development of the Russian market. The relevance of these issues to today's press also suggests that to an extent they can be seen as cultural constants.

What was different, though, was the degree to which Millaud, and swiftly thereafter his competitors, were prepared to push the sensationalism of their coverage of these topics to attract the attention of readers. 'Mettez dans votre cornue 25 duels, 12 empoisonnements, 1 enfant perdu, 1 agent de police, 2 forçats, 4 mouchards, 1 beau jeune homme mystérieux, 3 assassinats et 2 suicides: faites chauffer à blanc et étendez sur le papier avec une plume d'oie, coupez par tranches que vous servirez une à une, en renvoyant chaque fois "au prochain numéro", et ouvrez avec confiance votre coffre-fort.'<sup>42</sup> The unnamed journalist from *Satan* in 1868 is satirising the *roman-feuilleton*, but could just as easily have been writing about contemporary journalistic practice.

---

<sup>41</sup> Kalifa, (2013), ch. 4, 'L'Empire des listes', pp. 145-70.

<sup>42</sup> *Satan*, 29 Jan 1868, cited by Roger Bellet in *Presse et journalisme sous le Second Empire*, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967), p. 200.

The link between sensationalism, excess, and profitability established itself rapidly. The Troppman murders of 1869 are frequently cited to demonstrate how a sensational crime was able to boost sales at *Le Petit Journal*, which jumped from 357,000 when Troppman's first six bodies were found on 23 September to 594,000 by the time of his execution on 16 January 1870.<sup>43</sup> Kalifa's investigation of the links between crime and the press in *L'Encre et le sang* shows clearly how the volume and manner of crime reportage was linked to circulation. He cites Paul Féval, writing in 1866: 'le crime est en hausse, il se vend, il fait prime: au dire des marchands, la France compte un ou deux millions de consommateurs qui ne veulent plus rien manger, sinon du crime, tout cru.'<sup>44</sup> By 1902 the journalist Henri de Noussanne, asking 'Que vaut la presse quotidienne française?', estimated that crime reporting had within a few decades become the sixth largest category in the main daily newspapers.<sup>45</sup>

Nor did the quest for the sensational stop at crime stories. Vaillant makes the point that the cycle of revolutions and wars which characterised the long nineteenth century created a backdrop against

---

<sup>43</sup> Palmer (1983), pp. 332-33, and Morierval (1934), pp. 229-30.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Féval, 'La Fabrique des crimes' in *Le Grand Journal* (2, 9 and 16 December 1866), cited in Kalifa (1995), p. 29.

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Kalifa (1995), p. 19. Noussanne records it as occupying some 4.9% of overall editorial copy, but Kalifa thinks the true figure was nearer 8% and still rising. For a broader analysis of the importance of crime and court reporting to the press see the whole of the chapter which this quotation introduces, entitled 'L'irrésistible essor du récit de crime' in Kalifa (1995), pp. 19-52.

which the sensational was perhaps the only normal.<sup>46</sup> Periodicals use different aspects of sensation as a form of branding. *Gil Blas* became the place for louche anecdote, as Jules Bertaut notes in relation to the strategy adopted by its editor, Auguste Drumont: 'La frénésie de la bataille littéraire autour du naturalisme, le goût du public pour les choses très osées et même tout à fait crues, sous prétexte de vérisme intégral, lui ont donné l'idée de créer une feuille où la littérature aura une large place et où l'on manifesterait une belle audace en toute matière...'<sup>47</sup> *Le Figaro's Echo de Paris* column became the go-to source of society scandal: 'L'indiscrétion y est érigée en art. On le lit pour être au courant de la chronique scandaleuse.'<sup>48</sup> David Baguley suggests that Louis Napoleon's 'rewriting' of himself as emperor after the 1851 coup d'état sets a tone of excess, political hyperbole, which characterises the whole of the Second Empire.<sup>49</sup>

The drive to sensationalism and excess affected not just content but the format and genre of journalistic narration as well. Compression, allied with sensation, became a hallmark of this new journalism. Alexis, writing in 1888, records the process as follows: 'Depuis quelques années, à côté du grand journalisme politique, reléguant la littérature au rez-de-

---

<sup>46</sup> *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa et al. (2011), pp. 777-78.

<sup>47</sup> Bertaut Jules, *L'Opinion et les moeurs*, (Paris, Ed de France 1931), p. 139, cited in Thérenty, Marie-Eve, *La Littérature au quotidien* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2007), pp. 43-44.

<sup>48</sup> Cited in *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa et al. (2011), p. 286, from an August 1877 article in *Le Messager de L'Europe*.

<sup>49</sup> Baguley, David, *Napoleon III and his Regime. An Extravaganza* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), pp. 90-95.

chaussée, ou l'enclavant à la troisième page, sous la rubrique 'Variétés', entre les faits divers et les annonces, il en sortait de terre un nouveau, dit 'Petit Journalisme' mais plus vivant, plus moderne, approprié au besoin d'enquête de l'époque, nourri surtout d'actualité, d'informations, de faits, reléguant les théories politiques au second plan, accordant plus de place à la littérature.<sup>50</sup> Thérenty and others argue in *La Civilisation du journal* that Millaud brought the then experimental techniques of the department store, which Zola records in *Au Bonheur des dames*, - 'pile 'em high, sell 'em cheap' , - to the newspaper through a combination of a pared-down presentation and a focus on trivia, delivered partly via the *faits divers* column and partly through the clipped style of Anglo-Saxon journalism.<sup>51</sup> Zola explicitly acknowledged the stylistic influence: 'J'aime la presse d'informations; elle est la coupe de la vie; on y puise les extases passagères, les impressions fugitives, toutes choses qui me paraissent bonnes, parce qu'elles sont courtes'.<sup>52</sup>

The growth of the popular *faits divers* columns enabled more crimes, accidents or scandals to be covered though compression of the material reported. Most newspapers stuck to the traditional four-page format until well into the 1880s, partly to reduce paper and composition costs but mainly because press speeds simply did not permit any more.

---

<sup>50</sup> Alexis (2001), pp. 65-66.

<sup>51</sup> See Kalifa *et al.*, 'Les Scansions internes à l'histoire de la presse' in *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa *et al.* (2011), pp. 249-68 and Anne-Claude Ambroise-Rendu, 'Les Faits divers', *ibid.*, pp. 979-97.

<sup>52</sup> 'M. Zola et le journalisme' in *Le Gaulois*, 22 August, 1888, pp. 1-2.

Space was therefore at a premium, particularly with a significant and growing part of the back page taken up by advertising. Editorial compression, especially outside the main articles, was essential and became a significant influence on journalistic style. The 'need to squeeze' favoured sensationalism through shock headlines and a concentration on gory detail.

Compression also eroded the distinction between fact and fiction. Real life could be stranger than fiction. Journalists reported the extraordinary in hyperbolic language. If the facts were not readily available they invented them.<sup>53</sup> Some even became the heroes of their own stories as they tracked criminals or dug up scandal. Later French detective fiction represents the hero as a reporter – as witness Gaston Leroux's *Rouletabille* or Maurice Leblanc's *Isadore Beautrelet*.<sup>54</sup> The extravagant claims made in advertisements, a trend already established at the time Balzac was writing *César Birotteau*, revealed the commercial effectiveness of reality mediated by fiction. By the 1870s the practice had infected even the *petites annonces*, as illustrated by a series of libertine personal advertisements of a more or less fictitious character which appeared in certain papers from 1875.<sup>55</sup> Readers participated too: Thérenty suggests that they become attuned by the compression of the

---

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Sarah Mombert's chapter entitled 'La Fiction' in *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa *et al.* (2011), pp. 811-32.

<sup>54</sup> Kalifa (1995), p. 102 and more generally the chapter 'Portrait du reporter en héros', pp. 82-104.

<sup>55</sup> *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa *et al.* (2011), p. 286.

*faits divers* to supplying their own fictionalised expansion of the headline, with the need to start the process often signalled by the use of a cliché such as ‘Vengeance au vitriol’ or, ‘Le Dégoût de vivre’.<sup>56</sup>

Compression gave rise to ‘prefabrication’, or the importation of quasi-industrial techniques into journalism. Producing a newspaper was a collective commercial and industrial exercise. Daily publication imposed daily work schedules, both on the profession of writing and on reader expectations.<sup>57</sup> Increasing demand for up-to-the-minute news gave rise to recognisable techniques of iteration, of shorthand rubrics and headlines to allow readers to categorise articles instantly: ‘stereotype’ and ‘cliché’ are both words which derive from nineteenth-century press processes. Even the serialisation of literature leads to a process of disassembling and reassembling akin to a production line. Popular works of literature become replicated as formats, sometimes parodied, sometimes seeking to capitalise on a popular success. Sue’s *Les Mystères de Paris*, itself an undertaking on a commercial scale, is copied by Zola’s *Les Mystères de Marseilles*, by Féval’s *Les Mystères de Londres*, to name but two passengers on this particular bandwagon. And scale itself becomes an objective with clear market benefits. Balzac had led the way with *La Comédie humaine*;

---

<sup>56</sup> Thérenty (2007), pp. 135-44.

<sup>57</sup> For a more extended discussion of the impact of the professionalisation (and perhaps also the industrialisation) of journalism on style, layout and content see chapter 1 of Thérenty (2007), pp. 47-120.

---

Zola would follow with *Les Rougon-Macquart*. As Zola remarked to Louis Desprez in 1882: 'Un livre, c'est une pierre, vingt livres, c'est un mur'.<sup>58</sup>

The drivers behind these stylistic shifts can be seen as predominantly economic. Increasing circulation meant, primarily, attracting new readers from the growing fringes of the market, from the new urban literate classes created by industrialisation and education and from the increased penetration of the provincial *départements* which better distribution and sales networks allowed. In the popular press the tendency towards compression aligned with the need to establish a camaraderie with new readers unused to lengthy polemics. The pithy one-liners and backslapping familiarity of Timothée Trimm's *Premiers-Paris* in *Le Petit Journal* attest to this shift. 'Au *Petit Journal*, on flattait le peuple, personnifié par les concierges, les ouvriers, les petites gens...' writes Zola, and Millaud confirms the strategy in a letter to Villemessant: 'Il faut avoir le courage d'être bête'.<sup>59</sup>

These developments are intimately connected with the emergence of naturalism. Thérenty argues that the participation of naturalist writers in journalism evidences the closeness of naturalist fiction to contemporary reportage, but the influence flows in both directions.<sup>60</sup> Naturalism exploits the porosity of the boundary between fact and fiction

---

<sup>58</sup> Desprez, Louis, *L'Evolution naturaliste* (Paris: Tresse, 1884), p. 215.

<sup>59</sup> Cited in Bellet (1967), pp. 59, 60.

<sup>60</sup> Thérenty (2007), p. 149.

by proposing a genre of fiction based apparently on a representation of everyday reality which overlaps substantially with the point of view and the stylistic modes of the popular press. Zola himself makes the comparison in an 1889 article in *Le Peuple*: 'Nous nous servons, dans nos créations d'artistes, dans l'imaginaire, de l'investigation que le journaliste actuel porte sur les faits réels et sur les actions vivantes du drame quotidien.'<sup>61</sup>

Compression, excess and sensation, through an unalleviated focus on the worst of human nature, create texts in which fiction enhances realism. Roger Ripoll argues that the naturalist vision must incorporate a mythopoeic dimension, itself a product of sensation and hyperbole, as a means of uniting familiar and traditional modes of storytelling with current cultural perceptions and a documentary approach to description.<sup>62</sup> Thérenty suggests that a mixture of fiction and reality is seen by readers as a necessary mode of representing the real – that it does its job well, that reality itself needs to take account of the fictional in order to be properly credible.<sup>63</sup> In this context Maupassant's claim, in the preface to *Pierre et Jean*, that reality can only be adequately represented by fiction, seems more a confirmation of contemporary journalistic practice than a provocative new idea: 'Faire vrai consiste donc à donner

---

<sup>61</sup> Article entitled 'Le Reporteur' in *Le Peuple*, 11 March 1889, cited in Palmer (1983), p. 87, n. 102.

<sup>62</sup> Ripoll, Roger, *Réalité et mythe chez Zola*, (Doctoral thesis: Université de Paris IV, 1977, reproduced by Champion, 1981), pp. 1-28.

<sup>63</sup> Thérenty (2007), pp. 150-51.

l'illusion complète du vrai, suivant la logique ordinaire des faits, et non à les transcrire servilement dans le pêle-mêle de leur succession.'<sup>64</sup> The proposal that fiction can be based on a process of experimentation through fact, scientific analysis and rational deduction, which Zola will advance in his 1881 *Roman Expérimental*, had already been tested much earlier by the new genre of the *roman policier* initiated in 1868 by Gaboriau and his detective hero, Monsieur Lecocq. And just as Gaboriau's serialised novels had helped drive the circulation of *Le Petit Journal*, so naturalism acquired an economic value as a genre capable of attracting readers.

But in emerging from the popularisation of journalism, naturalism is also forced to confront the separation of the book from the newspaper. Initially the *roman-feuilleton* remains a core part of the newspaper strategy, as it delivers an emotional punch which journalistic reporting cannot match. Millaud again: 'Et avec ça, soyez au courant de toutes les découvertes, de toutes les inventions, vulgarisez toutes les choses qui s'enfouissent dans les lourdes revues. C'est le feuilleton qui me procura le palpitant qui plaît aux masses : vous autres, donnez l'écho de l'opinion moyenne, et parlez de tout pour avoir l'air d'en savoir plus long que tout le monde.'<sup>65</sup> But as journalism invaded the territory of fiction, so the need

---

<sup>64</sup> Maupassant, Guy de, *Pierre et Jean*, ed. by Daniel Leuwers and Pierre Cogny (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), p. xv.

<sup>65</sup> Cited in Palmer (1983), p. 29, n. 26, from a report by 'Jean-Jacques' in 'A Thomas Grimm', *La Petite République Française*, 23 November 1887.

to rely on serialised novels reduced. *Le Matin*, founded by an American in 1884 and published by the entrepreneur Bunau-Varilla from 1885, rejected the *roman-feuilleton* entirely in favour of what Zola describes as 'le flot déchainé de l'information à outrance', a journalistic style based on clipped, Americanised news reporting.<sup>66</sup> Although it was unusually radical in this, the fact that the newspaper no longer needed the *feuilleton* to make its economics work enabled a gradual divergence in content from the book. Zola goes on to describes it as what we would now call dumbing down: 'L'information [...] a transformé le journalisme, tué les grands articles, tué la critique littéraire, donné chaque jour plus de place aux dépêches, aux nouvelles grandes et petites, aux procès-verbaux des reporters et des interviewers...'.<sup>67</sup>

By the mid-1880s it seems clear that the newspaper and the novel had become distinct products which could still coexist aesthetically within the same format if it suited, but which no longer relied on each other economically. Zola concurs, but also points out the consequences: 'La situation est exactement contraire à celle de jadis: on vend aujourd'hui le journal pour le journal, et l'on donne un feuilleton par-dessus le marché', and his chapter on the *roman-feuilleton* in *Les Romanciers contemporains* makes the point that naturalist novels do not operate as economic drivers for the daily press as effectively as the tear-jerking sentimentality of an

---

<sup>66</sup> Article entitled 'Le Journal' in *Les Annales politiques et littéraires*, 22 July 1894, p. 51.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Emile Richebourg.<sup>68</sup> The would-be serious novelist needed to create a product which would satisfy both reader and publisher in a stand-alone format.

This had a series of implications for authors. Newspapers needed to rely less on star novelists or journalists to drive sales. *Le Matin*, under Bunau-Varilla, denied by-lines to journalists as a matter of policy as well as eschewing the *roman-feuilleton*.<sup>69</sup> Authorial identities were concocted by publishers: Timothée Trimm became nationally famous as the *nom de plume* of the leader writer for *Le Petit Journal* - but the real Napoléon Lespès, the man behind the *plume*, utterly failed when he moved, *cognito*, to a rival paper.<sup>70</sup> The world of the press is one where authorial identity can easily become confounded with the brand of the product. The Goncourt brothers, typically, fret about this: 'Ce temps est le commencement de l'écrasement du livre par le journal, de l'homme de lettres par le journaliste de lettres.'<sup>71</sup> On the other hand the author who chose to promote him- or herself had an array of promotional tools developed for the press but readily adaptable to the stand-alone book market, publishers willing and able to spend money on promotions or on

---

<sup>68</sup> From a long article entitled 'Les Romanciers contemporains' in *Le Messager de L'Europe*, (September 1878), reprinted in *Le Figaro* of 22 December 1878, cited in *Ecrits sur le roman*, ed. by Henri Mitterand (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), pp. 208, 211-12.

<sup>69</sup> *Histoire générale de la presse française*, ed. Bellanger *et al.* (1969), p. 312.

<sup>70</sup> Morienvall (1934), pp. 205-08.

<sup>71</sup> Cited in Bellet (1967), p. 142, from the *Journal* of the Goncourt brothers without reference.

longer print-runs to satisfy growing demand, and a readership demonstrably prepared to devote more leisure spending to books.

Moreover, there could be little doubt that the power of the story, in both aesthetic and commercial terms, remained undiminished. The successes of Ponson du Terrail or Féval were rooted in the traditions of the *bibliothèque bleue*, in popular superstition, fairy stories and heroic epics which demonstrate the enduring ability of these genres to withstand modernisation, and even mass production with all its defects, without losing their capacity to carry an audience. Mallarmé, in *Etalages*, celebrates the emergence of narrative fiction, for so long the unsung bedrock of the press, to its rightful place as a product in its own right: 'Plutôt la Presse, chez nous seuls, a voulu une place aux écrits – son traditionnel feuilleton en rez-de-chaussée longtemps soutint la masse du format entier: ainsi qu'aux avenues, sur le fragile magasin éblouissant, glaces à scintillation de bijoux ou par la nuance de tissus baignées, sûrement pose un immeuble lourd d'étages nombreux. Mieux, la fiction proprement dite ou le récit, imaginaire, s'ébat au travers de 'quotidiens' achalandés, triomphant à des lieux principaux, jusqu'au sommet; en déloge l'article de fonds, ou d'actualité, apparu secondaire.'<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Mallarmé, Stéphane, *Etalages*, <http://short-edition.com/classique/stephane-mallarme/etalages>, accessed 26 August 2015, p. 3.

That this gift was not lost on the publishers as well is demonstrated by the increasing role of *la presse financière*. I have already referred to its role in improving newspaper profitability, but it also helped to display the raw power of narrative through its role in a series of share scams.<sup>73</sup> In the early 1850s Jules-Isaac Mirès, banker, press baron and one of the prototypes for Saccard in *L'Argent*, turned the innocuously named *Journal des chemins de fer* into a financial paper which he then used to promote other companies in his portfolio, eventually owning a stable of six newspapers used for this purpose before the eventual failure of his main vehicle, the Caisse Générale des Chemins de fer, in 1860. The scandal of the Panama canal company, shown by the subsequent Flory enquiry to have dispensed a total of 104.9fr. million over a nine year period to support the price of its shares and bonds, of which 12-13fr. million to the press, illustrated not just the scale of the financial operation but also the ability of both press, readers and holders of securities to sustain a good narrative, based on a genuine French success on the international scene at a point when France felt itself beleaguered. Payment for promotion, or for the suppression of negative publicity, became the norm and in the 1880s specialised advertising agencies grew up to exploit this market. The power of the story had been recognised and captured by the financial community, which realised that if the illusion were created with enough skill and chutzpah, its dissociation from underlying reality would pass

---

<sup>73</sup> For a wider discussion of the venality of the French press in the latter part of the nineteenth century, from which the details in this paragraph are drawn, see Zeldin (1980), pp.144-266 and Eveno (2003), pp. 57-75.

unnoticed. Prospectus fraud achieved its effect precisely by cutting through traditional expectations of genre and literary hierarchy to tap into underlying cultural constants.

Other essentially naturalist concerns blend easily with fiction. The marriage of contemporary scientific enquiry with the mystery story produces the detective story, first popularised by Gaboriau with *Monsieur Lecoq*, and developed by the translations of Sherlock Holmes in the 1890s and by Maurice's Leblanc's *Arsène Lupin* from 1905. Popular interest in the ability to convert scientific progress into industrial reality, symbolised by the Eiffel Tower and the Expositions Universelles of 1889 and 1900, combined with a long-established and essentially Romantic thirst for exotic adventure to create a platform for Jules Verne, translations of H.G. Wells, and later extra-terrestrial adventures. Frequently poor workmanship created texts which appeared approachable, down-to-earth, *lisible* for an expanding audience. This is a literature which believed in itself and, as long as the power to create illusion rooted in the reader's own expectations, conventions and prejudices remained intact, was relatively untroubled by the reflexivity and self-doubt which had always characterised a section of the literary community.

Naturalism emerges as a genre which had both the cultural and commercial attributes to which readers and publishers of books could respond. Its realism helped it to penetrate class barriers. Its espousal of

the reader's voyeuristic point of view and mania for classification mirrored stable popular tastes. Its stylistic tendency towards sensationalism and excess derived from the demonstrable success of just the same techniques in the context of journalism. And the equally demonstrable power of the right narrative to drive sales, combined with increasing pressure in some parts of the newspaper world to push the brand of the paper over the fame of the writer, created an environment which favoured the emergence of a powerful champion of the book.

### **Zola as promoter of story and book**

Zola shows an instinctive understanding of literature as an economic commodity. His clearest statements on the subject are to be found in an article entitled 'L'Argent dans la littérature' published first in the Russian 'thick' periodical *Le Messager de l'Europe* in March 1880 and subsequently serialised in *Le Voltaire* from 23-30 July of the same year. The mere fact that it was first published in, of all places, a Russian journal, tells its own story: when Zola's relationship with its publisher, Mikhail Stasyulevich, had started in 1874 Zola was a relative unknown and Stasyulevich's terms, both economic and editorial, were far more accommodating than anything he had been offered in the French market.<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, pp. 230-39.

The article has long been recognised as an important statement of Zola's commercial awareness, but the key points bear re-stating here since they form an important part of my argument.<sup>75</sup> Zola emphatically rejects Sainte-Beuve's arguments that the commercialisation of literature has impaired its quality. On the contrary, the ability to earn a living from writing allows new talent to emerge: 'Autrefois, il coûtait très cher; aujourd'hui, les bourses des plus humbles peuvent se faire une petite bibliothèque. Ce sont là des faits décisifs; dès que le peuple sait lire, et dès qu'il peut lire à bon marché, le commerce de la librairie décuple ses affaires, l'écrivain trouve largement le moyen de vivre de sa plume.'<sup>76</sup> The increasing volume of production and the expansion of the readership replaces patronage by whim with a more democratic system of rewarding success: '...c'est la foule des lecteurs elle-même qui juge et qui fait les succès. [...]...l'œuvre naît de la foule et pour la foule.'<sup>77</sup> He even includes some thoughts on the trickle-down effect of greater investment in the entire publishing industry – '...tout un petit peuple qui vit de nos œuvres, qui gagne des millions avec notre travail'.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Colette Becker refers to it as a very important article (Becker, Colette, *Les Apprentissages de Zola* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993)), p. 97, and Christophe Charle uses it in support of his illustration of the contemporary economic power of the theatre (Charle, Christophe, *La Crise littéraire à l'époque du naturalisme* (Paris: Presses de l'École Normale Supérieure, 1979, p.79)), but it has in fact more often been ignored in critical appraisals, perhaps as overshadowed by *Le Roman expérimental* published later in the same year. It merits a one-line note in Mitterand's three volume biography (Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, p. 475, n. 3) and is not mentioned at all in, for example, Frederick Brown's *Zola, a Life* (London: Macmillan, 1995) or Hemmings's *Emile Zola* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

<sup>76</sup> Zola, Emile, 'L'Argent dans la littérature' in *Le Roman expérimental*, ed. by François-Marie Mourad (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), p. 182.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190, 191.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

But he is careful to distinguish between literature and the *feuilleton*, which in his mind have become two separate marketplaces characterised by different readerships and, consequently, different writers. ‘...ils [les feuilletonistes] se sont créé un public spécial qui lit uniquement les feuilletons, ils s’adressent à ces lecteurs nouveaux, illettrés, incapables de sentir une belle œuvre. Dès lors, il faudrait plutôt les remercier, car ils défrichent les terrains incultes, comme les journaux à un sou qui pénètrent jusqu’au fond des campagnes.’<sup>79</sup>

The article was written at a time when Zola was himself about to give up journalism, having finally reached a position where his income from publishing in book format was sufficient to permit this. Nonetheless, he still depended on the serialisation of his novels before their publication in book format, as a type of highly effective advertising (as well as a profitable activity in its own right). His dismissal of the ‘*feuilletonistes*’ as a lesser species of *littérateur* comes across as slightly patronising and indicates that increasing wealth was, perhaps, accompanied by growing hubris. I will return to this issue later.

In reality, Zola had been introduced to the commercial aspect of literature before he even published his first work. His early career as a publicity clerk, later advertising manager, at Hachette, from 1862 to 1866, would have given him a fine understanding for the economic value of

---

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

literature, how public taste could be influenced and, in turn, what the ingredients of literary success were. His job involved promoting new titles published by Hachette by means of distributing free copies together with favourable reviews, which he often wrote himself, for publication under the by-line of a regular reviewer in the columns of other periodicals. Writing these *tract-annonces*, or mini-prospectuses, – a development inaugurated during his time at Hachette, possibly by Zola himself, – required an understanding of what would resonate with both popular and critical taste. His contemporary letters to his friend Antony Valabrègue show how thoroughly Zola took the commercial lesson on board: ‘Si vous saviez combien peu le talent est dans la réussite, vous laisseriez là plume et papier, et vous vous mettriez à étudier la vie littéraire, les milles petites canailleries qui ouvrent les portes, l’art d’user du crédit des autres, la cruauté nécessaire pour passer sur le ventre des chers confrères.’<sup>80</sup>

The focus of Hachette’s publishing roster on works of public reference and education, such as the collection *Bibliothèque des connaissances utiles*, Littré’s *Dictionnaire de la langue française* or Michelet’s *Histoire universelle*, would have revealed the commercial potential of the scientific, the classificatory and the comprehensive. The effectiveness of the volumes themselves as ‘gifts’ in exchange for favourable reviews would have been tangible proof of literary value. And

---

<sup>80</sup> Letter to Valabrègue, 24 September 1865, *Correspondance*, ed. Bakker *et al.* (1978-95), vol. i., p. 413.

finally, the experience of transformational financial success was there for all to see. Louis Hachette was a self-made man who had created a publishing dynasty with three family branches involved in the business by the time of Zola's arrival. It would eventually absorb close to half of the French publishing industry. In Zola's time its headquarters had grown to occupy a 10,000 square metre city block with a new *galerie de ventes*, opened in 1863, built on a cast-iron skeleton in the manner of the new railway stations.<sup>81</sup>

'Je battraï monnaie autant que possible. D'ailleurs, j'ai foi en moi et je marche gaillardement.'<sup>82</sup> The cocky self-assurance of a slightly later letter to Valabrègue does indicate the seriousness with which Zola dedicated himself to learning the business of being a writer. The terms of the 1864 contract with his publisher Albert Lacroix for the publication of *Contes à Ninon* suggest strongly that Zola was prepared to trade cash for distribution, since he agreed to take no royalty payments on the entire first edition and self-financed the launch publicity.<sup>83</sup> Despite the aversion to popular newspapers – and indeed, to newspapers of any sort, - which Alexis records,<sup>84</sup> in 1865 he started writing for *Le Petit Journal* not, as he explained to Valabrègue, for money but to reach a broader audience:

---

<sup>81</sup>For more details on Zola's career at Hachette, see Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, pp. 321-48, Becker (1993), pp. 95-111, or Brown (1995), pp. 101-25, from which the details given here are variously sourced.

<sup>82</sup>Letter to Valabrègue, 8 January 1866, *Correspondance*, ed. Bakker *et al.* (1978-95), vol. i., p. 434-35.

<sup>83</sup>Mollier, (2004), p. 91.

<sup>84</sup>Alexis, (2001) p. 58.

'...Mais je considère aussi le journalisme comme un levier si puissant que je ne suis pas fâché du tout de pouvoir me produire à jour fixe devant un nombre considérable de lecteurs. C'est cette pensée qui vous expliquera mon entrée au *Petit Journal*.'<sup>85</sup> On leaving Hachette, one of his first acts in joining Villemessant's newly minted team at *L'Événement* was to announce his arrival by an exchange of polemical letters published in the columns of the paper with the editor of a rival paper, *Le Nain Jaune*, which had castigated Zola's own recently published *La Confession de Claude*.<sup>86</sup> His early training in authorial promotion seems to have borne fruit quickly.

Zola demonstrably remained conscious of the novel as an object of exchange throughout his career. I think this should be seen as a material influence on his output. *Thérèse Raquin* (1867) provides an immediate demonstration of how Zola uses devices which have both literary and commercial impact. We hardly need Louis Ulbach's outraged condemnation of it as 'la littérature putride' to understand that Zola is using the same technique of sensationalism and excess which had proved such a successful commercial tactic in Millaud's populist journalism.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, a much earlier article in the Lyon-based *Le Salut Public* had aligned Zola with what he clearly sees as a popular trend: 'Mon goût, si

---

<sup>85</sup> Letter to Valabrègue, 6 February 1865, *Correspondance*, ed. Bakker *et al.* (1978-95), vol. i., p. 405.

<sup>86</sup> Mitterand, Henri, *Zola journaliste* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1962), p. 51.

<sup>87</sup> *Le Figaro*, 23 January 1868, p.1.

l'on veut, est dépravé; j'aime les ragoûts littéraires fortement épicés, les œuvres de décadence où une sorte de sensibilité malade remplace la santé plantureuse des époques classiques. Je suis de mon âge.'<sup>88</sup> Murder, psychosis and a double suicide are the staples of the *faits divers*.<sup>89</sup> The motif of the voyeur is everywhere. Thérèse and Laurent are spied on by the cat François, in their imaginations by Camille's corpse, finally by the paralysed Mme Raquin.<sup>90</sup>

This is narrative targeted at a readership prepared to pay to be scandalised. Baguley identifies the violation of the '...contractual relationship of shared conventional expectations' as a defining characteristic of naturalism.<sup>91</sup> *Thérèse Raquin* challenges conventional expectations of the limits of contemporary fiction in a manner likely, based on the precedent of *Le Petit Journal*, to expand its readership and commercial viability by seeking a *succès de scandale*. Zola had already admitted that this was a legitimate promotional gambit: 'L'habileté consiste une fois l'œuvre faite, à ne pas attendre le public mais à aller vers lui et à le forcer à vous caresser ou vous injurier...'<sup>92</sup> He is therefore

---

<sup>88</sup> 'Mes Haines' in *Le Salut Public*, 24 February 1865. Zola, Émile, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand and others, 21 vols., (Paris: Nouveau monde, 2002-2010), vol. i, p. 754.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Kalifa (1995) pp. 19-53 or *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa et al. (2011), pp. 979-97, for more extended analyses of the typical content of the *faits divers* columns.

<sup>90</sup> Zola, Emile, *Thérèse Raquin*, ed. by Robert Abirached (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), pp. 196, 212, 240.

<sup>91</sup> Baguley, David, *Naturalist Fiction: the Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, reprinted 2005), p. 167.

<sup>92</sup> Letter to Valabrègue, 8 January 1866, *Correspondance*, ed. Bakker et al. (1978-95), vol. i., p. 434-35.

supplying a market need which, conveniently, happens to suit his personality and can be legitimised on the grounds of both morality and solvency. If the pursuit of scientific experimentation which Zola asserts in the preface to the novel leads involuntarily to more scandal, then the gratification of tabloid tastes cannot be laid at the door of the author: 'Les amours de mes deux héros sont le contentement d'un besoin; le meurtre qu'ils commettent est une conséquence de leur adultère...'<sup>93</sup>. After all, making money is good for writers, as he will claim in *L'Argent dans la littérature* – 'L'argent a émancipé l'écrivain. L'argent a créé les lettres modernes.'<sup>94</sup>

In this Zola is evidently different from most of his contemporaries. The Goncourt brothers may have incurred their share of Louis Ulbach's wrath for *Germinie Lacerteux* – 'le beau procédé que celui d'étaler des chairs meurtries', he spits.<sup>95</sup> But when they write, in the preface to the novel, 'Vivant au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans un temps de suffrage universel, de démocratie, de libéralisme, nous nous sommes demandés si ce qu'on appelle 'les basses classes' n'avait pas droit au Roman...'<sup>96</sup> it is quite clear that the right is to have a novel written *about* the lower classes for the benefit of an elite, middle-class audience peering over the brothers' shoulders, and that the assertion of democratic rights may be more that of

---

<sup>93</sup> *Thérèse Raquin*, ed. Abirached (2001), p. 24.

<sup>94</sup> *Le Roman expérimental*, ed. Mourad (2006), p. 192.

<sup>95</sup> *Le Figaro*, 23 January 1868, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> Goncourt, Edmond and Jules de, *Germinie Lacerteux*, ed. by Nadine Satiat (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), p. 55.

the implied reader against the censor for his right to read about 'les basses classes' than any promotion of an egalitarian morality. The privileged financial position from which the Goncourts were able to write translates into a point of view significantly different from that of Zola. Most evidently, Zola's prose is simply more emphatic, more prone to excess, than that of the Goncourts. Compare the opening scene-setting from each work. Zola's linguistic register is far from neutral and conveys a clear social commentary through repetitive emphasis : 'Ce passage à trente pas de long et deux de large, *au plus*; il est pavé de dalles *jaunâtres, usées, descellées, suant* toujours une *humidité âcre*; le vitrage qui le couvre, coupé à l'angle droit, est *noir de crasse*.'<sup>97</sup> The Goncourts, by contrast, contains just three adjectives and is otherwise far more neutrally descriptive: 'Ceci se passait dans une petite chambre dont la fenêtre montrait un étroit morceau de ciel coupé de trois noirs tuyaux de tôle, des lignes de toits, et au loin, entre deux maisons qui se touchaient presque, la branche d'un arbre qu'on ne voyait pas.'<sup>98</sup>

Both passages convey a similar social context of poverty and constraint, but Zola's entire linguistic register here is more sensationalist, more visceral than that of the Goncourts. It is difficult not to see an element of commercialism in this comparison: the stronger colours of Zola's palette, combined with the proposition that this is a scientific

---

<sup>97</sup> *Thérèse Raquin*, ed. Abirached (2001), p. 15, my italics.

<sup>98</sup> *Germinie Lacerteux*, ed. Satiat (1990), p. 59.

investigation of human psychosis, are techniques designed to attract a broader spectrum of readers just as much as to articulate plot. Where others intellectualise, Zola talks, memorably, of 'banquisme': 'Vous, vous avez eu une petite fortune, qui vous a permis de vous affranchir de beaucoup de choses. Moi qui ai gagné ma vie absolument avec ma plume, qui ai été obligé de passer par toutes sortes d'écritures honteuses, par le journalisme, j'en ai conservé, comment vous dirai-je cela? un peu de *banquisme*...Oui, c'est vrai que je me moque comme vous de ce mot *Naturalisme*, et cependant, je le répéterai sans cesse parce qu'il faut un baptême aux choses, pour que le public les croie neuves...'.<sup>99</sup> Naturalism is at once a carnivalesque tool for attracting attention, just as *saltimbanques* do, and for banking the profits from the resulting audience.

## From promoter to managing director

Over the course of Zola's career as a writer there occurs a significant change in the way he uses commercial device. The shift can be readily demonstrated, in headline terms at least, by a comparison of similar passages taken from works at different points in Zola's career. Zola returns time and again to descriptions of Paris. One of the first occurs in

---

<sup>99</sup> As recorded by the Goncourts in their journal. *Journal: Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. by Robert Ricatte and others, 3 vols. (Paris, Robert Laffont, 1956), vol. ii, pp. 728-29, their italics.

*La Curée*, as Saccard recollects a panorama of Paris from the heights of the Butte Montmartre in the company of his first wife at the start of his first rise to riches. The passage predates by several years Zola's emergence as a successful writer with *L'Assommoir* and dates from a period when he was still very much trying to establish himself both financially and in the literary canon.

'On était à l'automne; la ville, sous le grand ciel pâle, s'alanguissait, d'un gris doux et tendre, piqué çà et là de verdure sombres, qui ressemblaient à de larges feuilles de nénuphars nageant sur un lac; le soleil se couchait dans un nuage rouge, et, tandis que les fonds s'emplissaient d'une brume légère, une poussière d'or, une rosée d'or tombait sur la rive droite de la ville, du côté de la Madeleine et des Tuileries. C'était comme le coin enchanté d'une cité des *Mille et une Nuits*, aux arbres d'émeraude, aux toits de saphir, aux girouettes de rubis. Il vint un moment où le rayon qui glissait entre deux nuages fut si resplendissant, que les maisons semblèrent flamber et se fondre comme un lingot d'or dans un creuset.

'Oh!, vois, dit Saccard, avec un rire d'enfant, il pleut des pièces de vingt francs dans Paris!' (i.388)

This rather painterly passage is not just a description of Paris. It directs the reader towards towards a representation of the process of

wealth creation. It uses a sustained metaphor of wealth, ('fonds', the triple repetition of 'or', the three precious stones) to foreshadow Saccard's rise. The premonition of his ascent requires the reader to focus on how his success will be achieved. At the same time the text proposes and promotes its own worth as narrative. The direct allusion to *Mille et une nuits*, as well as the indirect intertext to Balzac's representation of Rastignac challenging Paris at the conclusion of *Le Père Goriot*, links the text to an established literary success. It uses journalistic techniques of sensation and compression to attract and retain the reader's attention. The image is hardly naturalistic: it uses an exaggerated colour saturation ('rosée d'or/girouette de rubis/lingot d'or') picked out against a misty, defocalised background ('gris doux et tendre/verdure sombre/brume légère') to create a memorable impression. The passage is compressed and I quote it in its entirety: three sentences and a quotation to create the picture and to move on to the next. It even refers twice to the process of compression – the essence of *Mille et une nuits* in a 'coin enchanté' the melting of streets into 'un lingot d'or dans un creuset'. It draws on established cultural stereotypes to accelerate the reader's ability to pigeonhole the effect the author is seeking to create. The reference to *Mille et une nuits* links not just to literary success but to the stock image of the Oriental pleasure dome and thence to a series of connections to the exotic which the vocabulary of dew, jewels and gold reinforces. The viewpoint is doubly voyeuristic, with the reader permitted to peer over

Saccard's shoulder to share what we assume is his view of a secret transformation.

And finally the painterly nature of the image is itself important. The reliance on a critical vocabulary based on visual perception and interpretation creates a link to modernity– to new ways of seeing reality, as the Impressionists had proposed, and to new technologies such as the contemporary advances in chromolithography, the first appearance of colour in newspapers and magazines, and hand-coloured photographs. It could also be taken to refer to the uncertainties of artistic reception, which Zola had seen at first hand, and had discussed extensively in his journalism during the 1860s, in relation to the reception of artists like Manet and Cézanne who dared to contest established hierarchies, just as Saccard will do in his search for wealth.<sup>100</sup>

By journalistic intertext, by reference to modernity and by claims of literary lineage, this narrative seeks to promote itself as sharing the same commercial inevitability of success as Saccard. But it can only do so much: ultimately the response is left up to reader reception. Zola is using narrative device as a tool for suggestion, to strengthen the psychological

---

<sup>100</sup> E.g. articles on Cézanne and Manet in 'Mon Salon' (1866), his 1867 study of Manet, 'Edouard Manet, étude biographique et critique', and a further article on Manet in the 1868 'Mon Salon', all reprinted in *Emile Zola. Ecrits sur l'art*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 90-93, 112-19, 137-70 and 196-200.

credibility of Saccard's desire for wealth and, in so doing, to convince readers of the value of the narrative they are reading.

Fourteen years later Zola returns to a series of descriptions of Paris, and particularly of the Seine, in *L'Œuvre* (1886).

'Et là, dans la Seine, éclatait la splendeur nocturne de l'eau vivante des villes, chaque bec de gaz reflétait sa flamme, un noyau qui s'allongeait en une queue de comète. Les plus proches, se confondant, incendiaient le courant de larges éventails de braise, réguliers et symétriques; les plus reculés, sous les ponts, n'étaient que des petites touches de feu immobiles. Mais les grandes queues embrasées vivaient, remuantes à mesure qu'elles s'étaient, noir et or, d'un continuel frissonnement d'écailles, où l'on sentait la coulée infinie de l'eau. Toute la Seine en était allumée comme d'une fête intérieure, d'une féerie mystérieuse et profonde, faisant passer des valse derrière les vitres rougeoyantes du fleuve. En haut, au-dessus de cet incendie, au-dessus des quais étoilés, il y avait dans le ciel sans astres une rouge nuée, l'exhalaison chaude et phosphorescente qui, chaque nuit, met au sommeil de la ville une crête de volcan.

Le vent soufflait, et Christine grelottante, les yeux emplis de larmes, sentait le pont tourner sous elle, comme s'il l'avait emportée dans une débâcle de tout l'horizon'.(iv.339-40)

By this time Zola had been established as a successful writer for almost a decade, was able to command the longest print-runs in France for his novels, and was becoming wealthy from the proceeds of his writing. On first analysis, it seems that this text uses many of the same techniques we have identified in the passage from *La Curée*. The overall impression, though, is more *self-consciously* artistic than in the passage from *La Curée*. This sense of self-awareness is both central to the principal themes of this novel about an artist and the artistic temperament, and indicative of Zola's evolving approach to his readership.

The description of the Seine is not merely suggestive of the Impressionist viewpoint in its treatment of reflections on water, but betrays an increasing tendency to condition the reader's response. We are told how to view the scene: the entire composition of the image is carefully articulated, with a foreground and a background ('les plus proches.../...les plus reculés.../en haut...'), a colour palette ('...noir et or.../...une rouge nuée...'), and perspective ('...un noyau qui s'allongeait.../... des vases derrière les vitres rougeoyantes...'). We are given hints about how to interpret the scene. The extract comes shortly before Claude's suicide, so an atmosphere of impending doom is in the air, picked up in this passage by the images of the volcano looming over Paris and by the forthcoming 'débâcle'. We are, I think, left unsure if this is the, by now, familiar Zolian practice of foreshadowing plot though metaphor,

or if it is some more fundamental view of Paris, one perhaps held by Zola himself.

This is not yet fully developed 'prospectus' narrative, seeking to assert an authorial or narratorial point of view. But it does provide evidence of Zola developing further tools for manipulating reader response by channelling it into a preconstructed narrative frame which may, ultimately, lead to a different relationship with the reader. In *L'Œuvre* the effect is one of degree rather than of substance. By 1891, Zola's techniques had shifted once again, as we can see in this extract from *L'Argent*:

'Mme Caroline leva les yeux. Elle était arrivée sur la place, et elle vit, devant elle, la Bourse. Le crépuscule tombait, le ciel d'hiver, chargé de brume, mettait derrière le monument comme une fumée d'incendie, une nuée d'un rouge sombre, qu'on aurait crue faite des flammes et des poussières d'une ville prise d'assaut. Et la Bourse, grise et morne, se détachait, dans la mélancolie de la catastrophe, qui, depuis un mois, la laissait déserte, ouverte aux quatre vents du ciel, pareille à une halle qu'une disette a vidée. C'était l'épidémie fatale, périodique, dont les ravages balaient le marché tous les dix à quinze ans, les vendredis noirs, ainsi qu'on les nomme, semant le sol de décombres.'(v.360-61)

Saccard's ruin has happened: his fall has destroyed the lives and dreams of his less culpable followers. Mme Caroline reflects on the consequences. The description builds towards the final sentence, using the momentum of Saccard's defeat to extend the metaphor of war and plague across market, city and sky. The final sentence, in a trick which, since *Germinal*, had become a Zolian trademark, pans out cinematically to a global perspective. The ambiguity which, in *L'Œuvre*, had still allowed us to attribute the vision of the Seine as much to Claude's artistic sensibility as to Zola is here attenuated to the edge of credibility. Just possibly, and only on reflection, the 'épidémie finale' could still be Mme Caroline's point of view. More plausibly, and I think the way most readers would approach this sentence, this has become the assertion of Zola's own viewpoint which we are expected to accept as the logical conclusion of an utterly compelling narrative.

A few years later, this trend has become dominant. In *Paris*, published in 1898 in the middle of the Dreyfus affair, Zola again describes a view from Montmartre:

Pierre s'approcha du vitrage. C'était le même effet qu'il avait vu déjà, lors de sa première visite. Le soleil oblique, qui descendait derrière de minces nuages de pourpre, criblait la ville d'une grêle de rayons, rebondissant de toutes parts sur l'immensité sans fin des toitures. Et l'on aurait dit quelque semeur géant, caché dans la

gloire de l'astre, qui, à colossales poignées, lançait ces grains d'or, d'un bout de l'horizon à l'autre. [...]

En effet, à mesure que le soleil s'abaissait derrière le lacis des nuages, il semblait que le semeur de l'éternelle vie lançait sa flamme d'un geste volontaire, à cette place, puis à cette autre, dans un balancement rythmique qui choisissait les quartiers de labeur et d'effort. Là-bas, une brûlante poignée de semence tomba sur le quartier des Ecoles. Puis, là-bas, une autre poignée éclatante alla fertiliser le quartier des ateliers et des usines. [...]

Et, devant eux, à longs gestes, de la vivante poussière d'or de ses rayons, le soleil ensemencait Paris, pour la grande moisson future de justice et de vérité.<sup>101</sup>

It is difficult to read this passage as anything except a direct *ex cathedra* pronouncement of an authorial viewpoint. Selling the narrative to the reader has become subordinate to the delivery of a message. If we accept Baguley's contention that the essence of naturalism is to shock the reader's preconceived critical hierarchies, then the attempt to manipulate rather than challenge seems like a *fêlure* in the concept of naturalism itself.<sup>102</sup> The commercial device of 'saturation', so often effective before, is

---

<sup>101</sup> Zola, Emile, *Paris*, ed. by Jacques Noiray (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), pp. 415-16.

<sup>102</sup> Baguley (2005), pp. 164-83.

still in evidence but seems oddly overblown, attached not to the city but to a detached metaphysical construct of productivity ('sèmeur/sémençe/moïsson'). It is as though Zola has become so convinced of his ability to carry his readership that he believes it will now follow him wherever he leads. The self-awareness which led him to write, in *Le Roman Expérimental* of 1880, 'Dans notre temps de science, c'est une délicate mission que de prophétiser' has clearly deserted him by this point in his career.

This progression towards prospectus narrative is familiar to all readers and critics of Zola. Zola himself had announced it shortly after publishing *L'Argent*, if we are to believe his contemporary biographer, Robert Sherard, who in his 1893 study records him being quite open about his intention to proselytise his views: 'Quand ma situation de fortune s'améliora, quand je sentais que je devenais une puissance, la question monétaire ne devint qu'une considération secondaire, et j'employai mon feuilleton comme une tribune.'<sup>103</sup> This process of gradual politicisation is, I think, intimately linked to Zola's rise as a commercial writer and to parallel changes in his perception of narrative value. Understanding how this shift occurs, and particularly how it affects the middle part of Zola's writing career as the *Rougon-Macquart* series comes to an end, is the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

---

<sup>103</sup> Robert. H. Sherard, *Emile Zola, a biographical and critical study* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1893), cited in Mitterand (1962), p. 210.

Before developing this argument it may be useful to situate it in the broader landscape of critical approaches to Zola. Most acknowledge the fact that he wrote for money but few, if any, focus more than incidentally on how this might have affected his literary output, irrespective of their critical point of departure. Mitterand, in many ways the father of modern Zola criticism and author of a broad range of studies from the biographical to the narratological and the textual, consistently (if not consciously) seems to skirt the issue. His masterly biography tracks the parallel course of Zola's business life and his literary output but never quite investigates how the former influences the latter.<sup>104</sup>

Becker, a disciple of Mitterand, does the same: her study of Zola's apprenticeship at Hachette again records the commercial experience Zola acquired from his time in the publishing world and juxtaposes the stories he wrote during this period, but seems to draw back from seeing them as experiments in selling, as much as writing, narrative.<sup>105</sup> She and Mollier have, however, between them done more than any others to track down publication statistics for Zola's works during his lifetime, crucial for understanding the contemporary year-by-year evolution of Zola's business as a novelist.<sup>106</sup> My own efforts to follow this trail through direct

---

<sup>104</sup> For the sake of convenience I repeat full bibliographic details for the works mentioned in these overview paragraphs describing the critical context. Mitterand, Henri, *Zola, L'Histoire et la fiction* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1990).

<sup>105</sup> Becker, Colette, *Les Apprentissages de Zola* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993). The quotation is at p. 8.

<sup>106</sup> *Dictionnaire d'Emile Zola*, ed. Becker *et al.* (1993), pp. 421-27, and Mollier (2004), 91-102.

enquiry of Hachette, now the owner of the Grasset-Fasquelle archives in which the Charpentier records are kept, has led me to believe that publication records prior to 1900 have been discarded, probably destroyed, so it may well be that their work remains the most detailed analysis of this process we are likely to obtain.

Those who approach Zola from a more narratological or sociological perspective tend to do the same. Ripoll's vast exploration of the role of myth in Zola barely acknowledges literature as a commercial product.<sup>107</sup> Jacques Noiray, similarly, investigates the role of the machine and automation as image, metaphor and political symbol, the machine as 'accoucheuse de l'avenir' but barely considers how the machine of Zola's own commercial enterprise fits into this schema.<sup>108</sup> Nor does Baguley, in many ways the bedrock of modern critical approaches to Zola in his analysis of the naturalist perspective, and despite his recognition of Zola's stylistic innovations, particularly in genre, as an ingredient in the recipe for commercial success.<sup>109</sup> Philippe Hamon comes closer, in recognising how many of Zola's characters are proxies for participants in the process of creating fiction, from author to critic to reader, but he sees this as Zola taking care to situate his characters in a historical landscape reinforced by

---

<sup>107</sup> Ripoll, Roger, *Réalité et mythe chez Zola*, 2 vols. (Doctoral thesis: Université de Paris IV, 1977, reproduced by Champion, 1981).

<sup>108</sup> Noiray, Jacques, *Le Romancier et la machine*, 2 vols. (Paris, Corti, 1981). The quotation is from vol.ii, p. 284.

<sup>109</sup> Baguley, David, *Naturalist Fiction: the Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, reprinted 2005) and *Zola et les genres* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 1993).

links to literary as well as historical reality, rather than as an invitation to consider the novel itself as the subject of that process.<sup>110</sup>

Those who take a sociological approach tend to recognise the innovations Zola brought to the representation of commerce and the changing demographics of its participants, often including the publishing industry, but by and large do not investigate the link between Zola's representation of business and his own agency as a businessman selling narrative. So Christophe Reffait, writing about the role of the *Bourse* in contemporary literature, sees Zola's representation essentially as a commentary on capitalism. In particular he recognises the importance of the stock exchange as a contemporary symbol of a growing gap between experience and the ability to interpret that experience, an aspect which I will develop as an important step in understanding Zola's evolving authorial position as someone who can bridge that gap for his readers.<sup>111</sup> Brian Nelson and William Gallois take similar standpoints: Nelson sees Zola as a commentator on the growth of the bourgeoisie, while Gallois treats Zola as a highly politicised author – 'the aesthetic cannot be politically impartial', - and *Les Rougon-Macquart* as an encyclopædia of the political economy of capitalism, with each novel describing a different

---

<sup>110</sup> Hamon, Philippe, *Le personnel du roman : le système des personnages dans les Rougon-Macquart d'Emile Zola* (Genève: Droz, 1983), pp. 39-55.

<sup>111</sup> Reffait, Christophe, *La Bourse dans le roman du second XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Champion, 2007)

aspect.<sup>112</sup> He does see the novel as an element of the economic cycle and, in particular, as an illustration of how capitalism appropriates and internalises narrative for its own purposes, but essentially this remains a political reading which does not follow up the questions about the way in which this process of internalisation has affected the product itself. David Bell, marrying political and economic analysis, comes closer to this question when he examines Saccard's sales techniques in both *La Curée* and *L'Argent*, which he sees as Zola's 'economic' novels along with *Au Bonheur des Dames*.<sup>113</sup> He recognises that Saccard is essentially selling forms of narrative, but never quite focusses on this aspect and does not make the connection that Zola is doing the same thing.

Three critics come closest to addressing this issue. Chantal Pierre-Gnassounou's 1999 *Zola. Les Fortunes de la Fiction* not only recognises that many of Zola's novels are allegories of the process of creating fiction, but also links this to Zola's own role in creating narrative for his public and the techniques he uses to ensure his readers follow what she sees as his purposes.<sup>114</sup> She tends, however to downplay economic motivation as a driver, as this quotation illustrates: 'Assurément, la perte du lecteur est un péril que Zola n'a cessé d'expérimenter, en particulier sur le chantier des Ebauches, où régulièrement se croisent les attentes du lecteur, qui

---

<sup>112</sup> Nelson, Brian, *Zola and the Bourgeoisie* (London: Macmillan, 1983) and Gallois, William, *Zola: The History of Capitalism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000). The quotation is at p. 31.

<sup>113</sup> Bell, David, *Models of Power: Politics and Economics in Zola's Rougon- Macquart* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988).

<sup>114</sup> Pierre-Gnassounou, Chantal, *Zola. Les Fortunes de la fiction*. (Paris: Nathan, 1999). The quotation is at p. 206.

veut qu'on 'l'intéresse beaucoup' et les impératifs d'une poétique naturaliste qui exige en définitive du romancier qu'il ne fasse pas son intéressant.' My argument here diverges from her position as regards the relative importance of the economic driver. Hélène Gomart's comparison of financial dealings in Balzac's *César Birotteau* and Zola's *L'Argent* provides a compelling analysis of how Zola links narrative device with the representation of transaction.<sup>115</sup> Her notion of *Les Rougon-Macquart* as an extended financial transaction, the record of Félicité Rougon's investment in her offspring, is a good example of how Gomart has been successful in broadening the scope of Zola criticism.

Finally, Goux's work on the role of money in literature cannot be ignored, particularly in dealing with *L'Argent* on which he has written specifically. More than anybody, he has drawn critical attention back to Zola's largely forgotten essay 'L'Argent dans la littérature', discussed earlier in this chapter. He starts from the proposition, which he sees as self-evident, that writing is a commercial activity producing money, and that writing about the process of producing money is an entirely natural position for Zola, as the narrator of his age, to occupy.<sup>116</sup> That, too, is my starting point, and the remainder of this chapter takes us though the way in the relationship between the fiction of business and the business of

---

<sup>115</sup>Gomart, Hélène, *Les Opérations financières dans le roman réaliste* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004). The example of *Les Rougon-Macquart* as a financial investment is at p. 183.

<sup>116</sup>Goux, Jean-Joseph, 'Emile Zola: de l'Argent de l'écriture à l'écriture de *L'Argent*' in *Les Frontières littéraires de l'économie*, ed. by Martial Poirson, Yves Citton and Christian Biet (Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 2008), 145-60.

fiction evolves over the course of Zola's literary career, pausing to look in more detail first at *La Curée*, Zola's first novel about business and the second work of the cycle, and *L'Argent*, the last about business and eighteenth novel of *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

### ***La Curée* – the narrative of business**

*La Curée* evidently occupied a significant place in Zola's plans for *Les Rougon-Macquart*. It figures twice in Zola's first recorded list, entitled *Notes générales* and dating from the end of 1868, of the ten works which were to make up the cycle, first as 'Un roman sur les grandes démolitions de Paris', then as 'Un roman sur la famille d'un parvenu'.(v.1735) It still occupies two of the ten slots in the plan which Zola submitted to Lacroix in 1869 as the basis of his contract, this time as novels about 'la vie sotte et élégamment crapuleuse de notre jeunesse dorée' and 'les spéculations véreuses et effrénées du Second Empire'.(v.1772) Ultimately, through *La Curée*, *Au Bonheur des Dames* and *L'Argent*, the theme of business would occupy a larger share of *Les Rougon-Macquart* than any other topic. Once the outlines of family genealogy had been established in *La Fortune des Rougon*, the very title of which signals a preoccupation with a commercial as well as familial heredity, it was the first subject to which Zola turned his attention.

But as only the second work in the series, and only the seventh work of prose fiction which Zola had published, we should also recognise *La Curée* as an experimental text in terms of what would work with readers and publishers. At the time when Zola was constructing his first outline of the cycle he was also studying how to write, as illustrated by three notes all written around the turn of 1868-69. His note on *Différences entre Balzac et moi* not only shows his ambition as a writer but also identifies narratorial position – the Balzacian interpreter of society versus the Zolian reporter of fact – as a key point of differentiation.(v.1736-37) The *Notes générales sur la marche de l'œuvre* (1868/69) discuss how to integrate this narratorial point of view into a series of novels which deal with the representation of excess: 'Orgie d'appétits et d'ambition. Soif de jouir...poussée du commerce, folie de l'agio et de la spéculation...'(v.1738-41). *Notes générales sur la nature de l'œuvre* continue this theme but also, importantly, deal with matters of style. In these, Zola shows how closely the representation of excess is linked to the use of excess as a narrative device. The reader, he says, responds to strong sensation: 'Garder dans mes livres un souffle un [*sic*] et fort qui, s'élevant de la première page, emporte le lecteur jusqu'à la dernière.'(v.1742) Even this may not be enough: at times the reader must be pushed resolutely out of his or her comfort zone: 'Ne pas oublier qu'un drame prend le public à la gorge. Il se fâche, mais n'oublie plus. Lui donner toujours, sinon des cauchemars, du moins *des livres excessifs* qui restent dans la mémoire.'(v.1744, my italics). Zola clearly struggles to reconcile the theoretical hiatus between his

insistence on a neutral, scientific narratorial stance and a mode of representation which seems to imply the opposite. Eventually, the need for a saleable product seems to win out: 'Il ne faudrait pas croire' he reassures Lacroix in the first plan for the cycle (1869), 'd'après ce plan, que l'œuvre sera dure et rigide comme un traité de physiologie ou d'économie sociale. Je la vois vivante, et très vivante.'(v.1758)

*La Curée* is both a novel about business and an early exploration by Zola of the business of writing a novel. By comparing the way in which Zola represents business with the literary devices he uses to sell his novel to its readers we can understand more about how the need to be commercially successful influences the text itself.

### ***The commercial value of sensation***

*La Curée's* very birth is a story of scandal and commercial intrigue. Zola opened his dossier in preparation for *La Curée* in February 1869, started writing the novel itself in May 1870, was forced to pause after the first chapter for more than a year by war and revolution, and in all probability did not complete the text until the final months of 1871.<sup>117</sup> Serialisation began in Louis Ulbach's *La Cloche* on 29 September 1871 (before the novel had been completed) but was suspended thirty eight

---

<sup>117</sup> For a detailed discussion of the probable composition dates of *La Curée* see Robert Lethbridge, 'La Préparation de *La Curée*. Mise au point d'une chronologie' in *Cahiers naturalistes* 51 (1977), 37-48.

days and twenty seven episodes later, on 5 November, as a result of reader protests and threats of a prosecution for obscenity. Publication of the entire text in book format followed later in the same month, but the impending bankruptcy of Zola's publisher, Lacroix, meant that the usual launch promotions could not be afforded and the first edition of 2,000 copies failed to sell out.<sup>118</sup> Despite the threat of an obscenity trial, which was normally good for business, its appearance remained critically unnoticed until Lacroix's successor, Charpentier, brought out a second edition a year later.(v.1577-78)

Zola's own financial position was barely better than that of his publisher. His contract with Lacroix provided for a monthly stipend of 500fr. for two novels a year. To pressure him to perform, Zola's commitment was evidenced by bills of exchange redeemable against delivery of manuscripts, a clause which would eventually cost Zola some 30,000fr. when it proved impossible to fulfil.<sup>119</sup> His basic annual income was thus 6,000fr. His income from journalism had suffered from a peripatetic existence over the previous two years, as he moved from Paris to Marseille to escape the Prussian invasion of 1870, from Marseille to Bordeaux and thence to Versailles to report on the government in exile in 1871, and finally back to Paris at in March 1871, a stay interrupted by the Commune which caused a further temporary displacement. The

---

<sup>118</sup> Alexis (2001) p. 105.

<sup>119</sup> Mollier (1988), p. 218.

cancellation of the serialisation of *La Curée* deprived him of a further source of income, and his tendency to sail close to the wind in his journalism came close to costing him his position at *La Cloche* again in 1872, and succeeded in sinking his new vehicle, *Le Corsaire*, at the end of that year.<sup>120</sup>

From the very beginning of Zola's writing career there is a tension between sensation and commercial success. On the one hand scandal was a key tool of journalism as well as an effective method of self-promotion: it got a writer noticed and, as Balzac, Flaubert and a host of other writers had demonstrated, could be a foundation stone of a successful literary career. On the other, the volatility of political sensitivities and the continued existence of censorship laws made for an unpredictable environment in which publications could be closed virtually overnight, as Zola had discovered with *Le Corsaire*. It was still difficult for a new novelist to achieve success without the direct help of the daily press, as Zola's experience with *La Curée* had shown. The few examples of success through publication only in book format, such as Hugo's *Les Misérables*, tended to confirm that this avenue could only be used by established authors.

Increasingly, however, journalism and serialisation seem to be perceived as promotional tools to be used alongside, rather than in

---

<sup>120</sup> Mitterand (1962), pp. 168-170.

substitution for, publication in book format. Zola exploits Ulbach's cancellation of the serialisation of *La Curée* by writing him a letter which he asks Ulbach to publish in *La Cloche* three days after the serial was pulled.<sup>121</sup> He uses it explicitly to promote his wider novelistic enterprise, in phaseology which might have been drawn straight from the advertising copy he was used to writing at Hachette: '*La Curée* n'est pas une œuvre isolée, elle tient à un grand ensemble, elle n'est qu'une phrase musicale de la vaste symphonie que je rêve. Je veux écrire l'"Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le second Empire.' Le premier épisode, *La Fortune des Rougon*, qui vient de paraître en volume...' Scandal and sensation become at once justification and lure: '*La Curée*, c'est la plante malsaine poussée sur le fumier impérial, c'est l'inceste grandi dans le terreau des millions.' But the idea that the book format serves a different purpose from the promotional tool of the newspaper is already present: 'Quand *La Curée* paraîtra en volume, elle sera comprise.' Zola would later formulate his perception of journalism as a form of promotion more explicitly. Journalism, he maintains, is an essential tool for representing reality - 'un écrivain qui n'a pas été journaliste est incapable de prendre et de peindre la vie contemporaine' - as well as a platform for publicity:

---

<sup>121</sup> Letter to Ulbach, 6 November 1871, published in *La Cloche*, 8 November 1871. *Correspondance*, ed. Bakker *et al.* (1978-95), vol.iii., pp. 303-05, from which the three quotations in this paragraph are drawn.

'...mon marteau c'est le journalisme que je fais moi-même autour de mes œuvres.'<sup>122</sup>

Sensation evidently had commercial value, as the preceding section has shown. Other writers apart from Zola formulated explicit commercial strategies based on it. Charle cites a letter from a then unknown Georges Darien to his publisher Stock, outlining a marketing plan which could be applied almost word for word to *Les Rougon-Macquart*: '...il s'agit de faire du pétard [...] du pétard à haute dose mais du pétard intermittent. [...] de ces romans inoffensifs entrelardés de romans à pétard je voudrais faire paraître une paire tous les ans [...]. Pour une période de 7 ans il me faut donc 14 romans.'<sup>123</sup> It helped that the material of sensation required no invention but could be drawn directly from the pages of newspapers and from the lives of those around. Darien himself had been both a prison camp guard and an inmate in a notorious French penitentiary in Tunisia, and would later be suspected of being the author of daring robberies which he then wrote about in *Le Voleur*.

Despite its ostensible setting in 1862, *La Curée* dealt with issues which were still current and causing sensation at the time of its composition. Its plot derives in part from a polemical article by Jules

---

<sup>122</sup> The first quotation is from an 1878 article in *Le Messager de L'Europe. Œuvres Complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, 15 vols. (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1962-69), vol. 14, pp. 329-30. The second is from *Correspondance*, ed. Bakker *et al.* (1978-95), vol. iii, p. 23.

<sup>123</sup> Stock P.-V., *Mémoire d'un éditeur*, 3 vols. (Paris: Stock, 1935-38), cited by Christophe Charle in 'Le Champ de la production littéraire' in *Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. Chartier and Martin (1982-86), vol. iii, p. 155.

Richard in *Le Figaro* of 25 February 1869 excoriating the excesses of Haussmann's modernisation of Paris.<sup>124</sup> Other sources, particularly Jules Ferry's 1868 *Les Comptes fantastiques d'Haussmann*, a collected series of articles chronicling Haussmann-related scandal, reveal how incestuously real-life events, sensation and journalistic practice were conjoined. The power of journalism had been deployed by Mirès and the Péreire brothers to sell shares in the Caisse Générale des Chemins de fer and the Crédit Mobilier up to the very brink of bankruptcy, and the lesson had not been lost on Zola. In 1884 Desprez even recorded Zola's views on the relationship between real life and the press in terms which expressly link it to the process of literary creation: 'La presse nous renseigne sur tout. Les tribunaux livrent aux romanciers des documents précieux. Comme l'écrit M. Zola: *un procès est un roman expérimental qui se déroule devant le public.*'<sup>125</sup> Ripoll argues that Zola transforms his sources by the process of writing into a description of animal appetites let loose. He uses the transformation as evidence of Zola's ability to link his material to the constants of myth. Another, simpler explanation is that Zola is simply selecting from his source material what will sell the narrative.

*La Curée* exploits the commercial power of excess in both subject and style. Its key plot threads of incest, property fraud and the

---

<sup>124</sup> See Robert Lethbridge, 'Du nouveau sur la genèse de 'La Curée'' in *Les Cahiers naturalistes* 45 (1973), p. 28. For a fuller review of the many journalistic and other sources of *La Curée*, see particularly *Genèse, structure et style de La Curée*, ed. Becker *et al.* (1993) and the notes to the Pléiade edition, (i.1570-80).

<sup>125</sup> Desprez (1884), p. 231, his italics.

extravagance of the *nouveaux riches* are all variants on this single common theme. The suspension of its serialisation one episode ahead of the incest scene – which had been already been typeset but which never appeared in print – is proof enough that sexual scandal attracted notice, even if unwelcome. Zola's protestations to his readers - that he was merely reproducing the 'faits orduriers, les aventures incroyables de honte et de folie, l'argent volé et les femmes vendues' which his three years of research had uncovered - conveniently omit to mention the commercial advantages of this strategy.<sup>126</sup> Even his choice of type of incest –between stepmother and stepson, rather than mother and son, implies a fine distinction between what would work commercially and what remained taboo.

Prurient material is mirrored in stylistic excess. Zola creates a kind of 'high definition' reality in which techniques of focus, colour saturation and compression combine to produce an impression of a medium perfused by the very excess which it depicts. The long list of carriages in the Bois de Boulogne which opens the first chapter (i.320-21) is a technique borrowed literally from journalism, since the description is taken almost verbatim from an article in *Le Figaro* of 10 April 1870.<sup>127</sup> The length of the list mirrors the scale of the wealth it represents. Maxime and

---

<sup>126</sup> Letter to Ulbach, 6 November 1871, published in *La Cloche*, 8 November 1871, in *Correspondance*, ed. Bakker *et al.* (1978-95), vol.iii, pp. 303-05.

<sup>127</sup> See *Genèse, structure et style de La Curée*, ed. by Becker, Colette, with Henri Mitterrand and Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine, (Paris: SEDES, 1987), pp. 60-61, for a side-by side comparison of the two texts.

Renée, stuck in the traffic jam, take the place of *faits divers* columnists reporting titbits of scandal about those who pass within their focus. The sexually charged nature of their commentary serves to confirm the reader's expectations of the genre offered and offers a tantalising glimpse of even stronger revelations to come. Sexual and financial transgression is reflected in the intensity of the colour palette Zola chooses: 'Ce péttillement des harnais et des roues, ce flamboiement des panneaux vernis dans lesquels brûlait la braise rouge du soleil couchant, ces notes vives que jetaient les livrées éclatantes perchées en plein ciel et les toilettes riches débordant des portières, se trouvèrent ainsi emportés dans un grondement sourd, continu, rythmé par le trot des attelages.'(i.321) Both colour and sound are represented in spikes of vibrancy ('péttillement/flamboiement/braise/éclatantes') against a muted but possibly threatening background ('grondement sourd'). Each reinforces the other in a kind of synæsthesia in which sound implies colour ('notes vives') and colour sound ('péttillement', onomatopœically evoking the clinking of brassware as well as the sparkle of polish).

Linguistic and stylistic excess is used to represent moral excess. Zola builds his climax carefully. From the Bois de Boulogne the reader is taken to the Hôtel Saccard, where architectural excess is used to the same effect.(i.330-33) Then fashion, in the form of the tantalising layers of Renée's dress.(i.336) Then the story itself acquires unexpected baggage in the shape of an immense flashback to fill in Saccard's history. The

flashback covers two chapters out of seven, eighty pages out of two hundred and eighty. This is a story of excess, described by excess, told using excess as narrative device. 'Elle [la fortune des Saccard] brûlait en plein Paris comme un feu de joie colossal. C'était l'heure où la curée ardente emplit un coin de forêt de l'aboiement des chiens, du claquement des fouets, du flamboiement des torches.'(i.435) I shall have occasion to come back to this point in a different context later.

The technique culminates in Zola's description of the hothouse, the *serre*, at the Hôtel Saccard. Here the representation of an excess which will shortly translate into incest uses the medium of linguistic excess itself. 'C'était le rut immense de la serre, de ce coin de forêt vierge où flambaient les légumes et les floraisons des tropiques.'(i.487) The list of plants which join the sexual frenzy, which stretches over three pages and twenty-six enumerated and capitalised Plant Species, comes to symbolise a sexual transgression so extreme that it can only be represented by a parallel narrative disruption.

It is, perhaps, questionable that this was Zola's intention. The list has a long history as a narrative device in French literature, from Rabelais to Balzac and Flaubert, so Zola's use of it is perhaps no more than a form of experimentation with an established technique which seems to respond well to his own totalising apprehension, in addition to offering the convenience of a modern, factory-style manufacturing technique.

Certainly, the narrative disruption echoes the sexual disruption of incest and the gender disruption of Renée's assumption of the male sexual role.(i.485) But just as the cancellation of the novel's serialisation seems to take Zola by surprise, as the previously quoted letter to Ulbach indicates, so the bathetic effect of this lapse into narrative prolixity is at such odds with the intensity which it seems intended to create that the question seems legitimate. He uses the technique again, more effectively, in *Le Ventre de Paris* where lists seem an appropriate way to describe the functioning of a central market,(e.g. i.626-28, 636-37) and then at even greater length and with multiple reprises, in *La Faute de L'Abbé Mouret* (i.1345-53, 1361-64, 1377-79, 1385-90), then seems to recognise its pitfalls and avoids it thereafter. But it is, perhaps, a useful reminder that this is still only the second novel of *Les Rougon-Macquart* and that Zola is still learning his trade as a writer.

Both the *serre* and the list are also motifs of another import from journalism: compression. Again, *La Curée* represents compression by assimilating it as a stylistic device. It starts with an image of compression in the traffic jam in the Bois de Boulogne.(i.320) Saccard's mansion compresses both architectural ornamentation (i.331) and social classes.(i.335) Renée's corsets compress her body in a kind of sexual shorthand.(i.336) Despite its length, the flashback history of Saccard's past is still a compression of his story and contains episodes of symbolic brevity, as for example the one paragraph description, described as 'un

roman', of Renée's fling with an employee known only by his first name of Georges.(i.423). Her photograph album contains, in a single volume, a 'gazette scandaleuse' of the sexual proclivities of the *monde* and the *demi-monde* (i.427). And the construction of the novel itself reflects Zola's sensitivity to the effects of compression as a novelistic device for managing suspense. The very first chapter gains narrative impulsion just as the traffic jam unblocks and gains pace from that point. The extended flashback is *coitus interruptus* in the progression of Renée and Maxime's affair after the foreplay of the first chapter. Even the ultimately bathetic list of flowers is intended, the reader suspects, as an orgasmic climax to sex in the *serre*.(i.486-89)

*La Curée* is a novel which stays close to proven contemporary journalistic techniques for creating narrative value in the shape of text which, based on the evidence of the reception of contemporary newspapers, readers would both read and be prepared to pay for. Nonetheless, Zola's actual track record at converting theory into sales was still largely unproven. In choosing the subject of *La Curée* as a narrative of business, Zola also seems to asking how his own business of writing works, what criteria readers use to assign value to a narrative and how to reproduce those characteristics in his own works. That is the subject of my next section.

---

## ***The representation of commerce***

What business is Zola actually describing in *La Curée*? Ostensibly Saccard's property dealings, and by extension the reified social world of Paris in the Second Empire where everything and everyone is not only ultimately for sale but where values for properties in the *demi-monde* are almost tradeable commodities: '...ces créatures dont les amants payaient le luxe, et qui étaient cotées dans le beau monde comme des valeurs à la Bourse.'(i.510) *La Curée* has the potential to be a highly politicised, polemical narrative, and many critics read it that way. The rapidly jettisoned preface to the Lacroix edition, dated 15 November 1871, states a clear polemical objective: 'J'ai voulu montrer l'épuisement prématuré d'une race qui a vécu trop vite et qui aboutit à l'homme-femme des sociétés pourries; la spéculation furieuse d'une époque s'incarnant dans un tempérament sans scrupule, enclin aux aventures; le détraquement nerveux d'une femme dont le milieu de luxe décuple les appétits natifs. Et, avec ces trois monstruosité sociales, j'ai essayé d'écrire une œuvre d'art et de science qui fût en même temps une des pages les plus étranges de nos mœurs.'

Becker agrees: '*La Curée* ne peut être qu'une œuvre polémique qui dénonce un régime et prédit sa fin prochaine. L'expiation viendra

fatalement.<sup>128</sup> Ripoll is less sure and argues that its polemical qualities are rapidly overtaken by the process of creating fiction.<sup>129</sup> Mitterand thinks that Zola is 'avant tout un conteur', and *La Curée* demonstrates his ability to spot a good story.<sup>130</sup> The carefully engineered contrast between the moral, sexual and architectural excesses of the Hôtel Saccard and the puritanical abstemiousness of the Hôtel Béraud, home of Renée's parents, lends itself to a wide variety of different interpretations, mostly along political, moral or social lines.<sup>131</sup> But it can also be seen, more simply, as an example of Zola's sensitivity to what will attract readers. The Hôtel Saccard, home of scandal, dominates the novel in part because, literally and literarily, it contains all the juicy bits, like a column from the *Echos de Paris*. The Hôtel Béraud provides contrast but not content and does not support the same weight of narrative. Of Christine Béraud, Renée's sister, Becker writes that she is the 'antithèse de sa sœur, dont le rôle est de représenter ce que Renée aurait pu devenir si elle avait été élevée autrement et si elle avait vécu dans un autre milieu.' Perhaps, but she also serves to remind the reader that, if this had happened, there would have been no story at all.<sup>132</sup> Baguley's reading of the novel, which points out the proximity of *La Curée* to the world of fairytale, with Renée as,

---

<sup>128</sup> *Genèse, structure et style de La Curée*, ed. Becker *et al.* (1987), p. 62.

<sup>129</sup> Ripoll (1981), pp. 487-514.

<sup>130</sup> Mitterand (1990), p. 8.

<sup>131</sup> For example, Janice Best sees it as a moral commentary in 'Espace de la perversion et perversion de l'espace. La génération du récit dans *La Curée*' in *Cahiers naturalistes* 63 (1989), 109-16, while Bernard Joly sees it as part of an extended metaphor which contrasts old and new France ('Le Chaud et le froid dans *La Curée*' in *Cahiers naturalistes* 51 (1977), 56-79, p.73), and Clayton Alcorn sees it as a study of sociological types in '*La Curée*; les deux Renée Saccard' in *Cahiers naturalistes* 51 (1977), 49-55.

<sup>132</sup> *Genèse, structure et style de La Curée*, ed. Becker *et al.* (1987), p 95.

successively, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White and finally Beauty and the Beast, rather supports the importance of simple 'good stories' in the text.<sup>133</sup>

At this stage in his career, Zola seems to be at least as much interested in a saleable story as in polemic. Through his characters, he asks the direct question: what makes something saleable? '...je ne suis pas à vendre', says Renée to Sidonie (i.506) - but of course she is, and her saleability depends on a combination of desirable physical characteristics, sex appeal, availability, opportunity and money. And the same is true of the novel itself. Its content can be sexed up by precisely the combination of titillation, intrigue and money Zola uses for its content; its availability can be enhanced through better distribution, longer print-runs; opportunity comes from Zola's ability to spot a gap in the market which naturalism fills, and money comes from both from the capital markets and the expanding readership.

In fact, narrative turns out to be a vital component of value in every dimension. In the fictional world of *La Curée* objects acquire value not because of their intrinsic worth but because of the stories attached to them, and the implication is that narrative is equally essential in the world outside the novel. Saccard gives a fabulously expensive diamond necklace

---

<sup>133</sup> Baguley, David, *Zola et les genres* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 1993), pp. 33-41.

to Renée which, according to gossip, his mistress Laure d'Aurigny had been forced to sell.(i.321,337) In wearing the necklace, Renée displays the story as much the stones, and the fiction duly distracts from Saccard's lack of real assets. But we later discover that this is only one level of the story. Saccard has himself conspired with Laure to invent another layer of the 'histoire'. In this version, she sells him her jewels, he helps her use the money to buy back some of her debts at a huge discount (and takes a commission on the way through); in doing so the market believes this display of wealth proves he is solvent and she desirable, so his credit goes up, and she trades on the story of her attractiveness to lure other, richer lovers to replace her diamonds.(i.465) Unlike real assets, stories are versatile, cheap and effective. Saccard becomes a machine for converting reality into fiction: 'La vérité était que la dot de Renée n'existait plus depuis longtemps; elle avait passé, dans la caisse de Saccard, à l'état de valeur fictive.'(i.463) His fortune is based on this device: inventing fictitious businesses producing fictitious profits for which real compensation is payable from Haussmann's valuation committees.(i.392-93) His business philosophy is based on delivering the story rather than the goods: 'Il se disait souvent: 'Si j'étais femme, je me vendrais peut-être, mais je ne livrerais jamais la marchandise; c'est trop bête.'"(i.421)

The notion of Saccard as a form of author is one to which I will revert in more detail in the next section, since its role in *L'Argent* is even more significant. But even at this stage of Zola's own development as an

author it seems to be used as a tool to explore narrative value. There are overt similarities between Zola and Saccard. They share similar origins: both come from Provence, both started as journalists, both bear changed names (Zola from his father Francesco Zolla), both build their fortune by peddling fictions of different types. Both share a similar method of work based on detail and meticulous preparation, Saccard in inventing the documentation for his claims to the expropriations committee, Zola in the 469 pages of the dossier for *La Curée*, a technique he had tried only once before but which was to serve him for the remainder of *Les Rougon-Macquart*. Zola automates his production line, while Saccard conceives of his family as a corporate enterprise: 'L'idée de famille était remplacée chez eux par celle d'une sorte de commandite où les bénéfices sont partagés à parts égales...' (i.426) The process of fiction is itself undergoing a commercialisation which Zola reflects in his narrative. Bell follows this theme in his analysis of *La Curée* as an economic novel and shows how, at the precise point when Saccard discovers Renée and Maxime's relationship and starts to think of himself for the first time as a husband and a father, his immediate reaction is to search for economic, not emotional, revenge in the shape of the contract for the sale of Renée's property.<sup>134</sup>(i.570-71)

---

<sup>134</sup> Bell (1988), p. 78. His reading of *La Curée* as an economic novel, rather different from mine, is in Chapter 3, 'Deeds and Incest: *La Curée*', pp. 57-97.

According to Saccard's formula, narrative value depends on preparation and pitch: 'Le fond de l'histoire importe peu; ce sont les détails, le geste et l'accent qui sont tout.'(i.525) Zola shows Saccard doing exactly what he, Zola, is doing in real life as a writer, a would-be modern Balzac with his very own Rastignac. Both author and character are arch-manipulators of words. Saccard creates credibility through research, planning, on-the-ground detail, and by 'power narrative' – the projection and assertion of his story with a strength and intensity which brooks no resistance. Time and time again Zola shows us how he, Zola, and he, Saccard, achieve this. To illustrate the process, we can simply revert to Saccard's vision from Montmartre of Paris overflowing with gold.(i.388)<sup>135</sup> The intensity of the image is naturally associated with Saccard's own excitement, to the point where the reader tends to forget that the author is actually Zola. But Zola is actually demonstrating just how commercially he, Zola, can manipulate words, just as his creature Saccard will mint money out of them. Saccard's complex scheming with Larsonneau to defraud the compensation committee is credible partly because of the detail of his meticulous planning, which Zola describes at length.(i.392-93)

But Saccard's planning is also Zola's, and the very trick which Saccard uses to convince the compensation committee to accept his claim is precisely that which Zola is using to persuade the reader to accept the

---

<sup>135</sup> See p. 379.

text. Later, Zola even has him describe the process in terms of authorship: 'Il n'avait pas conscience du nombre incroyable de ficelles qu'il ajoutait à l'affaire la plus ordinaire. Il goûtait une vraie joie dans ce conte à dormir debout qu'il venait de faire à Renée; et ce qui le ravissait, c'était l'impudence du mensonge, l'entassement des impossibilités, la complication étonnante de l'intrigue. ...D'ailleurs, il mettait la plus grande naïveté à faire de la spéculation de Charonne tout un *mélodrame financier*.'(i.526, my italics)

In this context, excess and the naturalist perspective, which seem at first to be unlikely bedfellows, blend into a complementary sales strategy for Zola's fiction. The strategy is drawn from contemporary journalism and has the effect of increasing the credibility of the story and, at the same time, partially depoliticising it. Thérenty, writing about the sensational tone of the reporting of the 1869 Troppmann case, comments 'Le roman-feuilleton de cette époque se présente souvent comme un fait divers continu et exacerbé au moment où le fait divers triomphe à la tête des journaux.'<sup>136</sup> Zola's authorial viewpoint, based on copious research and preparation, resembles that of the journalist, as Zola himself confirmed in the 1888 preface to Paris's *La Vie parisienne*: '...nous autres romanciers qui faisons nos livres de documents, qui allons regarder la vie avant d'en parler, qui ne coordonnons que des notes prises sur les choses

---

<sup>136</sup> Thérenty, Marie-Eve, 'Le réel' in *La Civilisation du journal*, ed. Kalifa et al. (2011), 1533-42, p. 1536.

et les gens de notre entourage, nous procédons identiquement comme le journalisme étudiant l'actualité...'<sup>137</sup> Up to a point, the sensationalisation of the evidence serves to enhance its verisimilitude, just as high definition and vibrant colours can make a television picture seem more real. Here the novel has a clear advantage over journalism as sensationalism can be passed off as the viewpoint of an in-story character. Zola even provides an illustration of what happens when sensation is not perceived to be accompanied by adequate factual underpinning, in the shape of the Société générale des ports du Maroc which fails because it never progresses beyond the stage of being a fiction: '...une enquête judiciaire avait démontré que les ports du Maroc n'existaient que sur les plans des ingénieurs, de fort beaux plans...' (i.540)

The combination of an apparently factual representation with a linguistic and stylistic register which depends crucially on techniques of excess, high definition, colour saturation and intensity is, if we are to believe Zola's representation of Saccard, the key to narrative value. The very subject of the novel itself, Saccard and his ability to construct the false prospectus, reinforces the probability of commercial success by allowing Zola to represent in his character's mouth exactly the narrative devices he is simultaneously using to convince his own readers.

Polemicism, it turns out, is an effective sales strategy: the novel appears to

---

<sup>137</sup> Zola, Emile, Preface to *La Vie parisienne* by Parisis (Emile Blavet), (Paris: Ollendorff, 1889) <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k215491q/f6.image>, consulted 4 July 2016, p. vi.

condemn the excess it depicts, while simultaneously exploiting the representation of excess, via a text which itself relies on excess as a diegetic device, as an effective way to sell a book in the business environment of the early 1870s. *La Curée* is as much a commentary on the conditions of doing business as a professional writer in the newly-minted Troisième République as it is a critique of *mœurs* in the Second Empire.

### ***L'Argent* – the business of narrative**

By the time Zola came to write *L'Argent* in 1890, eighteen years after the publication of *La Curée*, his career as a novelist had become a big business. His choice of big business as a theme reflects not only his personal experience but a perception that ways of doing business were themselves changing. *L'Argent*, whether deliberately or not, is both the story of that process and a demonstration of the process in action. The story has become big business, and big business has become the story.

### ***Growing the business***

Making money was evidently important to Zola, as Alexis records ' Enfin, pour tout dire, outre ce penchant inné vers les études scientifiques, outre le rêve ancien d'une œuvre générale, outre l'instinct d'une originalité à dégager et le désir de délimiter d'avance sa carrière de

romancier, d'en chasser l'imprévu, l'argent lui-même, la question d'argent, le poussa à entreprendre *Les Rougon-Macquart*.<sup>138</sup> Judging by the results, he was a capable businessman. Shortly after Zola published *La Débâcle* in 1892, a contemporary journalist in *Le Figaro* made an attempt to estimate Zola's total earnings for *Les Rougon-Macquart* to that date.<sup>139</sup> He arrives at a total of approximately 1,600,000fr., of which 300,000fr. from serialisation rights in *feuilletons* (at prices rising from 25 cents to 2fr. per line over the period), 800,000fr. from book sales (by then a total of 1,338,000 copies sold at royalties rising from 40 to 60 cents per copy), 200,000fr. from foreign translation rights, and a further 300,000fr. from Zola's share of theatrical receipts. Only Hugo, who in 1862 had turned down an offer for *Les Misérables* of 150,000fr. from Hachette in favour of 240,000fr. from Lacroix, could match Zola. Others were far behind – Flaubert received 16,000fr. for *L'Education sentimentale*, 10,000fr. for *Salammbô*.<sup>140</sup>

The journalist comments that, for 20 years of work, this was actually less than might have been supposed. It indicated that Zola's business required continual attention to each strand of his commercial strategy to maximise its financial potential. The Zola 'brand' first had to be established. The relatively muted reception of the first six volumes in the

---

<sup>138</sup> Alexis (2001), p. 85.

<sup>139</sup> 'Les Bénéfices de Zola', article by Gaston Davenany in *Le Figaro*, 9 September 1892, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k282284r>, accessed 4 July 2016, p. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Mollier (2004), p. 97.

series, both in terms of copies sold and critical responses, suggests that this process was taking time and considerable effort. Only with the publication of *L'Assommoir* in 1876 did the brand gain real market acceptance and, with it, a definitive change in Zola's financial and commercial fortunes. It is difficult to pinpoint just what caused the change, and the real explanation may lie in an accumulation of small differences in both text and market. It received particularly heavy promotion from its *feuilleton* publisher, Yves Guyot, who saw it as a way to boost the circulation of his new journal, *Le Bien public*, and a further boost when it was re-promoted by Catulle Mendès who had picked it up for his weekly, *La République des lettres*, in July 1876 after *Le Bien public* had dropped it in the wake of subscriber complaints. The furore which surrounded the second half of the work, with accusations of 'malpropreté' and pornography levelled at Zola, certainly seems to have played a part in its success, but the extent to which this debate amongst critics reached the wider public should not be over-estimated.<sup>141</sup> Mitterand thinks that its combination of rigorous attention to detail, superior novelistic construction and fortuitous timing at a moment of societal change enabled *L'Assommoir* to reach out to a far broader readership than before.<sup>142</sup>

Viewed as a commercial proposition, though, it seems evident that this was a much more successful attempt to establish the brand than

---

<sup>141</sup> As, for example, in Albert Millaud's article of 1 September 1876 in *Le Figaro*. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k276077s/fl.image>, accessed 4 July 2016, pp. 1-2.

<sup>142</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, pp. 313-14.

before. *L'Assommoir* is more assertive in its themes, more graphic in its descriptions, and above all closer to a predominantly urban readership than its recent predecessors. Anatole France, writing contemporaneously in *Le Temps* of 27 June 1877, certainly thought so: '*L'Assommoir* n'est certes pas un livre aimable, mais c'est un livre puissant. La vie est rendue d'une façon immédiate et directe. Les personnages, fort nombreux, y parlent le langage des faubourgs. Quand l'auteur, sans les faire parler, achève leur pensée ou décrit leur état d'esprit, il emploie lui-même leur langage.'<sup>143</sup> It established a clear Zolian voice, incapable of being mistaken for any other contemporary novelist. It must have been an indication to Zola that the commercial strategies which he had begun to develop in *La Curée* of naturalism and sensation were capable of paying off now that the brand had become visible.

It also demonstrated that what we would now call a multimedia approach to distribution could also be a successful way of diversifying Zola's sources of income. For the first time the volume of copies sold in book format showed that this was a profitable activity on a stand-alone basis for publisher and writer. *L'Assommoir* was published in book form on 24 January 1877, sold 38,000 copies in its first year, and reached its

---

<sup>143</sup> France, Anatole, 'Les Romanciers contemporains. M. Emile Zola', article in *Le Temps*, 27 June 1877, at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k226951d/f4.image.langFR>, accessed 28 April 2016, pp. 3-4.

91st edition on 31 December 1881.<sup>144</sup> At an approximate average royalty of 50 cents per copy this represented income of some 45,500fr. over five years, and a stream of income which would continue to accrue until copyright expired. By comparison, Zola's one-time earnings from the *feuilleton* publication rights were 9,000fr. It was clear that if enough copies could be sold, then the future value of the income stream from selling titles in book format was substantially greater than the one-off *feuilleton* rights.

With *L'Assommoir*, Zola had demonstrated not just that it was possible to attract a book-buying readership of this size but that it was possible to achieve this by a novelistic formula which appeared to be repeatable in a way which previous successes, such as Renan's *Vie de Christ*, were evidently not. It meant that the role of the *feuilleton* in the publishing process could change to that of a promotional platform, as *L'Assommoir* had, perhaps fortuitously, demonstrated. It gave publishers the confidence to plan longer initial print-runs. From *L'Assommoir* onwards every Zola novel had sold more than 50,000 copies in the Charpentier edition by the time the series came to an end in 1893: of the earlier works, only *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret* had broken this barrier. Six had exceeded 100,000 copies. First-year print runs of over 50,000 for the most popular titles were the norm. Charpentier's willingness to increase

---

<sup>144</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, pp. 308-09 and more generally pp. 301-15 for a fuller account of the publication of *L'Assommoir*.

---

Zola's royalties in regular steps from 40 cents per copy to an eventual 75 cents per copy in 1892 is a good indication of the increasing profitability which scale production brought. Finally, others had also proved that this was a replicable phenomenon: the popular romantic melodramas of Georges Ohnet, published by Paul Ohllendorff, had achieved volumes similar to that of Zola, with *Serge Panine* (1880) and *Le Maître des forges* (1883) reaching cumulative sales of 300,000 copies over four years.<sup>145</sup>

Zola's approach to improving his earnings potential seems to become more and more business-like. Diversity remained important. Out of Zola's total earnings in 1876 of 34,200fr., less than a third came from the sale of serialisation rights for *L'Assommoir*, while 6,000fr. came from his monthly salary from Charpentier, and a further 19,200fr. from journalism. Royalties from book sales of *L'Assommoir* began to flow in 1877 and, as I have shown, its success had a knock-on effect on sales of prior titles which also picked up significantly, allowing Zola to negotiate the first of a series of increases in his royalty rate with Charpentier.<sup>146</sup> Even though this distribution would change with the increasing importance of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, the continuing diversity of income sources indicates that Zola was intent on developing the business of being a writer across multiple fronts. Journalism was more a means of publicity for 'brand Zola' and was accordingly dropped when, by 1880, his name

---

<sup>145</sup> Mollier (1984), p. 435.

<sup>146</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, p. 304, n. 1.

was well enough known and he could make more by writing books. He experiments with brand extensions, particularly into theatre where, despite a consistent lack of critical acclaim for his theatrical adaptations jointly with the impresario William Busnach, he still seems to have made good money. The 1879 stage version of *L'Assommoir*, for example, ran for over 350 performances and earned box office takings of over 600,000fr., while *Nana* had a run at *L'Ambigu* in 1881 of some 135 shows and box office receipts of some 400,000fr.<sup>147</sup> His business skills improved. From 1881, on the back of the world-wide success of *Nana* in translation, he took personal charge of selling the foreign rights to his novels separately from the domestic rights which Charpentier retained under the 1877 contract: *Pot-Bouille*, for example, fetched 10,000fr. from the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna.<sup>148</sup> He took to selling domestic serialisation rights by auction and managed to raise the price from the 8,000fr. paid by *Le Bien Public* for the initial rights to *L'Assommoir* to, ultimately, 50,000fr. for the rights to each of the *Trois Villes* trilogy.<sup>149</sup> Zola even tried his hand at writing erotica.<sup>150</sup>

Success brings wealth, critical acclaim, at least in some quarters, and a belief in his own abilities as a storyteller. Naturalism becomes formulated in *Le Roman expérimental* and is elevated to the status of

---

<sup>147</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, p. 470-72 and 655.

<sup>148</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, pp. 615, 614, 431.

<sup>149</sup> Pagès, Alain and Owen Morgan, *Guide Emile Zola* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002), pp. 145-46.

<sup>150</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, p. 607.

---

literary school. Followers, in the shape of various literary circles, 'Les Cinq', the devotees of 'Bœuf nature' and the invitees of the 'Soirées de Médan' are recruited. Zola uses the prominence of his journalism to promote his status as the nation's novelist-in-chief. An article in *Le Messager de l'Europe* incautiously exhibits his disdain for most of his contemporary competitors.<sup>151</sup> Along with this, Zola's own work begins to show a greater concern with artistic control, with the ability of the writer to replicate predictable effects on the reader. We have already seen how Claude Lantier's framing of his painting of the Seine in *L'Œuvre* betrays a technique which steers the viewer's eye to a preselected perspective.<sup>152</sup> But Claude struggles again and again with the impossibility of condensing fragmentary experience into an artistic whole (iv, 46-47, 203). Claude may fail to complete the task, but Zola succeeds. He alone can narrate the world. Claude leaves nothing behind: even his sketches have been destroyed. Zola leaves not only *L'Œuvre* but also the entire body of his creative output.

Completion is permanence, the creation of posterity value. Zola is conscious of being the man of the hour, *l'homme nécessaire* in Sandoz's words (iv.359), just as Delacroix and Courbet rose at their appointed times.(iv.45) Judgement is in the hands of the reader but, if the contemporary audience fails to understand, posterity will provide a

---

<sup>151</sup> *Le Messager de l'Europe*, September 1879, cited in Mitterand (1962), p 212.

<sup>152</sup> See p. 304.

second chance. The positioning is almost Napoleonic (and, as with the Goncourts, with an ironic overtone of the Romantic), with the artist uniquely able to apprehend reality in its full state of fragmentation and to reassemble the jumbled pieces into a relevant political and social order.

Zola's increasing self-confidence as a novelist is perhaps most forcefully displayed in *Le Rêve* (1888). Its self-conscious differentiation from its immediate precursor, *La Terre* (1887), marks it as an experiment. Zola chooses a genre part way between fairytale and hagiography, a *conte bleu* told in a register of simple pathos which had been a staple of popular literature and oral tradition. His selection of the only real mass medium which predated the popular press both exploits a genre with proven commercial credentials and announces a confidence in his ability to reinterpret this classical genre for a modern readership. It also, I think, betrays a degree of hubris in his ability to pick whatever narrative modality he wishes, secure in his ability to turn any genre into a blockbuster. He even uses his own reputation as a novelist of sex and violence to maintain narrative tension: part of the suspense is derived from an expectation of the irruption of typical Zolian excess into the self-aware demureness of the text. Anatole France notes sarcastically. 'Je préférerais pour mon goût une chasteté moins tapageuse.'<sup>153</sup>The very fact that the sex never really happens is an indication of the sheer strength of

---

<sup>153</sup> 'France, Anatole, 'Le Rêve, par Emile Zola', article in *Le Temps*, 21 October 1888, at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k231936g/f2.item.zoom>, accessed 28 April 2016, p. 3.

'brand Zola' by this stage: he has, in effect, kept readers reading to the end precisely by *not* behaving as usual.

*Le Rêve* is, in equal measure, an example of Zola's narrative virtuosity, an assertion of his own belief in his storytelling powers, and a demonstration of the commercial power of this combination. A first edition of 44,000 sold out immediately, and at Zola's death it was his fourth most frequently bought novel after *Nana*, *La Débâcle*, and *L'Assommoir*. *L'Argent*, which follows three years later in 1891, turns this combination into the very subject matter of the novel itself and, in doing so, reveals an important aspect of the relationship between a narrative of business and the business of narrative.

### ***Manufacturing the story***

While the story was assuming the form of a business, the form of business in France was itself changing. A new law in 1867 had introduced the *société anonyme* and permitted capital to flow into businesses with the protection of limited liability, provoking a wave of corporate consolidation and the foundation or expansion of many modern corporate groups, including France's largest book publisher, Hachette Livre, now part of the Lagardère group. The notion of limited liability had long been associated with speculation and fraud. England had forbidden all forms of companies limited by shares without specific permission by government

charter from 1720 in consequence of the speculative bubbles caused by John Law in France and by the South Sea Bubble in England. A form of limited liability had been proposed under the French Revolution but had not come into effect until 1808, and even then could only be used with specific government approval on a case-by-case basis, a situation which obtained until the change of law in 1867. Despite interim legislation in 1856 in response to liberalisation of the laws on Joint Stock Companies in England, the system remained cumbersome, difficult to access, and open to abuse through back doors such as limited partnerships which were widely preferred until the 1856 legislation cut off this avenue.

The 'baggage' which the concept of limited liability brought with it consisted of two rather contradictory strands. On the one hand it had historically been associated with fraud and underhand dealings, either through direct abuse of the concept or through indirect avoidance of the controls it was meant to impose. On the other it stood for a kind of remote and ponderous respectability as a form of governance adopted by only the largest corporations, principally in the financial, transport, mining and public works sectors, licensed under government authority with a history of capricious inconsistency in the way in which it was exercised. From 1867 the requirement for government approval was removed and limited liability became accessible to all forms of corporate activity. The *société anonyme* became effectively normalised, and although it took time to become established the number of 'S.A.'s established more than doubled

in the second half of the 1870s to over 400, compared to a cumulative total of 651 during the entire prior period from 1808 to 1867.<sup>154</sup>

In writing about the growth of the corporate entity Zola was tackling a topical and modern issue. Its chief characteristic was, as the name suggests, anonymity. The *société anonyme* could not be identified with a single owner. Responsibility for its actions lay with the nebulous concept of the company itself, separated from its owners by an insulation barrier of limited liability. The very etymology of one of its signifiers in both French and English, *corporation*/corporation, suggests an image of a body bound by a set of rules rather than controlled by a head.<sup>155</sup> The corporation was indeed represented by a board of directors who in theory could not delegate their responsibilities, but in practice could temporise and obfuscate for extended periods. And yet corporate power over the growing workforce working within the larger corporations, from railways to banks, as industrialisation and urbanisation progressed was evidently considerable. Even the concept of being an employee, in Balzac's day used almost exclusively to designate a civil servant, had been privatised. By 1881, French banks employed over 50,000. The number of employees in Paris would rise from 126,000 in 1866 to 352,000 in 1911. Le Bon Marché

---

<sup>154</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the introduction of the *société anonyme*, see Lefebvre-Teillard, Anne, *La société anonyme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Du Code de commerce à la loi de 1867, histoire d'un instrument juridique du développement capitaliste* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992), pp. 1-35 and 419-49.

<sup>155</sup> Larousse, Pierre, *Grand Dictionnaire universel du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. v, (Paris, Larousse, 1869), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k2053572/f171.item.zoom>, accessed 26 April 2016, pp. 167-69.

employed 1,788 in 1877: by 1887 the number had almost doubled.<sup>156</sup> The press itself had followed suit, as evidenced by the 73 quoted media companies on the Paris *Bourse* in 1881. As Mollier writes: 'Une page est tournée, celle de la féodalité des éditeurs, un autre plus anonyme lui succède, celle de la société, comparable en cela à n'importe quelle SA ou SARL du temps.'<sup>157</sup> This was the world Zola was writing about.

Where Zola clearly differentiates himself from his contemporaries, I think, is in his apperception and critique of the rise of 'big business', represented by its avatar the corporate entity, as the political and sociological phenomenon of the age.<sup>158</sup> At one level, Zola's intuition leads to an aesthetic which denies subjectivity, individuality and rationality in favour of automated responses, mindless consumption and complete subjugation to the corporation – the railway workers of *La Bête humaine*, the department store customers of *Au Bonheur des dames*, the miners of *Germinal*. At another, it allows him to recognise a 'comprehension gap' in

---

<sup>156</sup> Charle (1991), pp. 187-93.

<sup>157</sup> Mollier (1988), p. 318.

<sup>158</sup> He is, of course, not entirely alone but the trend seems to have been more widespread in English literature, as might be expected given the earlier development of the joint stock company there. Balzac's theatrical drama *Mercadet, ou Le Faiseur* (written 1840, first published 1848), which deals with a conman who is himself duped by another conman, was pirated by Georges Lewes for his comedy *A Game of Speculation*, (1851), which turns the hero into a fraudulent promoter of the Great Indian Emerald Company. Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*, (1875) with its central plot of Melmotte's Great South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway company, is perhaps the closest parallel to Zola's *L'Argent* and, indeed, the plots bear some resemblance. Even Gilbert and Sullivan joined in with their 1893 *Utopia Limited*, a satire on limited liability companies and the legislation which created them, in which the king of Utopia transforms his entire country into a limited liability corporation. See Moody, Jane, 'The Drama of Capital: Risk, Belief, and Liability on the Victorian Stage' in *Victorian Literature and Finance*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 91-109.

the shape of the inability of a society contemporaneously to understand the basic principles of its own functioning. At a third level, it allows him, I believe, to present *Les Rougon-Macquart*, and particularly *L'Argent*, as the story of the rise of the business of narration.

As *Les Rougon-Macquart* progresses, so Zola opposes two quite separate models of corporate behaviour. On the one hand we have a model in which the corporation is still capable of being controlled by a superior individual; on the other a situation in which any possibility of control has passed into the hands of the corporate entity itself. The fissile Rougon-Macquart family itself becomes a metaphor for this process, with its tendency towards entropic autonomy pitted against Félicité Rougon's quest for total control of the dynasty which frames the entire narrative, from her attempt to direct its history in *La Fortune des Rougon* to her struggle to rewrite it in *Le Docteur Pascal*. Both the Saccard of *La Curée* and Octave Mouret of *Au Bonheur des dames* belong to this model of the *homme nécessaire*, in the right place at the right time, and represented as able to control both their businesses and their destinies just as Zola is himself able to control his narrative. The closeness with which Mouret's ability to control stock units is matched by Zola's narrative prowess in marshalling the detail of his descriptions of the department store sends an apparently unequivocal message to the reader that the business of narrative can be managed as efficiently as that of women's fashion. Yet we are, I think, still left with a sense of lurking *fêlure*. Just as the market itself

in *Le Ventre de Paris* assumes a brooding presence which seems capable, at this stage in an unformulated way, of influencing the lives of those who live within it, so the business of the department store – not its physical incarnation, nor even its complexity, but the idea that this is a form of corporate machine with its own momentum and direction – seems poised to overwhelm Mouret's fragile control at any moment.

In the *ébauche* for *Germinal* Zola is quite explicit about the need to choose between these two models of commercial behaviour. 'Mais deux cas se présentent: prendrai-je un patron qui personnifie en lui-même le capital, ce qui rendrait la lutte plus directe et peut-être plus dramatique? Ou prendrai-je une société anonyme, des actionnaires, enfin le monde de la grande industrie, la mine dirigée par un directeur appointé avec tout un personnel, et ayant derrière lui l'actionnaire oisif, le vrai capital? Cela serait certainement plus actuel, plus large, et poserait le débat comme il se présente toujours dans la grande industrie. Je crois qu'il vaudra mieux prendre ce dernier cas.'<sup>159</sup> In his contemporary notes on Leroy-Beaulieu's *La Question ouvrière au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* Zola goes further in considering how to represent big business in a novelistic context: 'Alors, j'aurai d'une part les ouvriers et de l'autre la direction, puis derrière les actionnaires, avec les conseils d'administration, etc (tout un mécanisme à étudier). Mais, après avoir posé ce mécanisme discrètement, je pense que je laisserai de côté les actionnaires, les comités, etc, pour en faire une sorte de tabernacle reculé,

---

<sup>159</sup> BN ms. 10307, F<sup>os</sup> 402-03, cited at iii.1827.

de dieu vivant et mangeant les ouvriers dans l'ombre; l'effet à tirer sera plus grand, et je n'aurai pas à compliquer mon livre par les détails d'administration peu intéressants.'<sup>160</sup> Taken together, these two statements form a powerful case for considering Zola's 'mythologising' prism as, at least in part, a method of describing the rise of 'la grande industrie'.

The Compagnie des mines de Montsou, referred to throughout as 'La Compagnie' in a typical Zolian device which transforms a single pit into a generic representative of its entire species, is a clear manifestation of the faceless power of the corporate in *Germinal*. In *L'Œuvre*, even art itself can be corporatized. Naudet, '...un spéculateur, un boursier, qui se moquait radicalement de la bonne peinture'(iv.186) reinvents art, in a reflection of Zola's own past career at Hachette, as a product of marketing: consumer desire is created through the perception of monetary value, not artistic worth.(iv.185-86) He owns artists: Fagerolles, a rising name, is 'un peintre à lui...un ouvrier à ses gages' (iv.290). And the final scene of Lantier's funeral is saturated with images of corporate invasion – the industrialisation of death in the neat, factory-like lines of the new cemetery at Clignancourt (iv.358); the shunting train which drowns out the funeral service (iv.361), and finally, in a typical Zolian expansion, the representation of the entire century as a failed corporation: 'C'était une faillite du siècle...'.(iv.360) In *La Bête humaine* it is the railway company,

---

<sup>160</sup> BN ms. 10307, F<sup>os</sup> 357-63, cited in Ripoll (1981), p. 703.

the Compagnie de L'Ouest, which owns the workers and controls not just their waking hours, through the railway timetable, but who they sleep with or marry, through supervised accommodation.(iv.1224-25, 1242) The corporation is the emblem of an apparently inexorable evolutionary process towards a more efficient society, yet it disrupts causality through its inability to explain its apparently irrational actions – and how, indeed, could a headless body respond? The Compagnie de l'Ouest, not the organs of government, decides whether the truth of Grandmorin's murder is revealed or suppressed.(iv.1124-25, 1315-17) The railway becomes its ambiguous, slippery symbol, on the one hand of ownership, possession, order, and on the other of exploitation, abuse of power, and dispersal.

The shift of agency to a formless corporate machine evidently makes life harder to interpret: the 'comprehension gap', the hiatus between the occurrence of an event and the point at which its origins or motivation becomes generally understood, expands. Zola devises many symbols to illustrate this, from the shrouded decision-making processes of the mining company in *Germinal* and *La Bête humaine* to the opaque procedures and transaction structures of the *Bourse* in *L'Argent*. Reffait specifically links the latter to the growth in importance of the quoted *société anonyme*.<sup>161</sup> Since, under this structure, shareholders are free to transact their shares independently, with no reference to any form of central control or, in the case of bearer shares, knowledge of the

---

<sup>161</sup> Reffait (2007), pp. 440-43.

transaction, understanding what is happening *en temps utile* is a virtual impossibility. His argument implies that the failure of the Banque Universelle is somehow implicit in the structure of modernity, which obliges it to take a form which will ultimately destroy it, an argument which echoes Baguley's presumption of entropy as a condition of the naturalist perspective.<sup>162</sup> We may question how Zola's own ability to understand this comprehension gap is consistent with its essential unknowability, and in due course my argument will return to the point. For the moment, though, let us continue to follow the trail of the corporate entity.

Zola represents the corporate as infinitely replicable once critical mass is achieved, and definable only by narrative – just like his own business. The Compagnie des mines de Montsou will simply reallocate capital to buy or dig new mines to replace those lost – unlike the individual pits under private ownership which, like Deneulin in *Germinal*, are forced to sell to big business.(iii.1523) Its business is effectively invisible as it exists underground: what gives it reality are the stories of its operations rather than the pits themselves. The corporation exists fully only *through its narrative*: its scope is verifiable only by its books of accounts. The railway conglomerate simply rewrites its own story if threatened. Reality is manipulated or suppressed to ensure narrative continuity. Senior employees spend their time grooming the narrative to

---

<sup>162</sup> Baguley (2005), pp. 204-23.

make it as attractive as possible for the shadowy boards of directors, and behind them shareholders, who take the place of corporate readers. M. Camy-Lamotte, agent of the company, feeds evidence to the judge and destroys compromising documentation.(iv.1314-23) Narrative is the true creator of lasting value: even the runaway train which closes *La Bête humaine* is perhaps less a political symbol than a metaphor of the posterity value of the story in the hands of the reader. The driverless coaches, glimpsed from town to town as they rush through the night on endless rails, represent the survival of the tale of the end of empire just as much as the end of empire itself.(iv.1330-31)

*L'Argent* is the novel in which narrative itself becomes big business. The plot is based on three real-life corporate dramas: the rise and fall of the Union Générale from its incorporation in May 1878 to its bankruptcy in January 1882, the fate of the Caisse Générale des Chemins de fer and its promoter, the banker and press baron Mirès, in the 1850s, and the story of the epic battle between the Péreire brothers and the Rothschilds which led ultimately to the bankruptcy of the Péreire's corporate vehicle, the Crédit Mobilier, in 1867. The Union Générale scandal had happened less than a decade before the publication of *L'Argent* itself, within the personal experience of many of Zola's readers. Mitterand has demonstrated how closely the plot of *L'Argent* mirrors that of the Union Générale, down to the level of the exact scale and timing of individual share price movements.(v.1238-42) Halina Suwala has also

shown how the sensational demise of the Union Générale had itself spawned a shoal of other literary works, creating, as it were, its own literary subsidiary.<sup>163</sup>

In adopting such a high profile corporate history as the basis for his novel *Zola* is, I think, suggesting several important propositions to his readers. The simple choice of a plot revolving around a corporate debacle implies that the world of the corporate entity, distinct from that of a specific commerce or an industry, is itself a compelling and contemporary object of literary focus. He implies that the corporate vehicles from which big business operates are themselves projections in narrative of an underlying structure too complex to grasp. Further, these narratives may be an independent source of durable value, just as the story of the Union Générale has survived its bankrupted business. And as a virtuoso creator of narrative, he proposes himself to the reader as the scribe of business, capable of rendering legible its baffling complexity. It is worth examining each of these propositions in more detail.

Zola's focus is now firmly on the corporate vehicle. *L'Argent* tells the story of the rise and fall of the Banque Universelle, S. A. It is the history of a company, not of the underlying business, since much of that business

---

<sup>163</sup> Suwała, Halina *Autour de Zola et du naturalisme* (Paris: Champion, 1993), which incorporates and revises an earlier article, 'Le Krach de l'Union Générale dans le roman français avant *L'Argent* de Zola' in *Cahiers naturalistes* 27 (1964), 80-90. The relevant chapter from the 1993 work is to be found at pp. 155-92.

is a fraud and never exists. The corporation itself, however, is very much in focus. Zola spares no detail: readers are subject to the arcana of subscription rules for new shares in a *société anonyme*,(v.113) to the rules for the selection of board directors,(v.132) to a two thousand word description of an annual general meeting.(v.164-68) The role and importance of the corporation have clearly changed since the time of *La Curée*, when a single superior individual had no need of corporate structures to create a business, and, indeed, since that of *Au Bonheur des dames*, when such a man could dominate the company he has founded. In *L'Argent* Saccard cannot realise the scale of his plans without the help of collective capital mobilised through the structures of the *société anonyme*. The whole of the first three chapters, almost a third of the novel, are devoted to showing Saccard's attempts to raise this capital. His rise is also that of the corporate, as the dominant form of big business.

The corporate entity is visibly more the *narrative* of a business rather than the business itself. The Banque Universelle is essentially a story told, or a prospectus sold, by Saccard. His credibility is its creditworthiness and vice versa: narrative terminology becomes irredeemably confused with that of business. *Croyance* leads to *créance* when he mixes religion with business and persuades the Beauvilliers family to subscribe, based on faith.(v. 126) Shareholders are described as 'la foule croyante'.(v.129) Like the earlier Société des ports du Maroc of *La Curée*, the Banque Universelle has a far more convincing existence in

narrative than it does in reality. Its very name projects scale but gives no indication of whether anything lies behind the story. It exists through its stock, trading as inscriptions in a register until paid up and then as bearer certificates.(v.241) Its growth is recorded in narrative rather than in constructions: the literary device of its 'bilan' allows the narrative of profits to be written and published long ahead of the reality, '...l'effet colossal de ce bilan anticipé paraissant dans tous les journaux... La Bourse va prendre feu...'(v.243)

The business project itself is more a compendium of literary genres than a business plan: from the *Mille et une nuits*, thrice cited in the text,(v.82, 233, 252) comes the exotic middle eastern setting, from mediaeval Grail epics the quest for the *Trésor du Saint-Sépulcre* (v.80), from Verne-esque travel literature the concept of voyaging through *terra incognita* on railways and steamers,(v.61-63) from fairy-tale the image of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow or, in this case, in Saccard's vaults: 'Dans le sous-sol, où se trouvait le service des titres, des coffres-forts étaient scellés, immenses, ouvrant des gueules profondes de four, derrière les glaces sans tain des cloisons, qui permettaient au public de les voir, rangés comme les tonneaux des contes, où dorment les trésors incalculables des fées.'(v.229)

Saccard's rise is therefore the story of how he constructs the story of the Banque Universelle. He has regularly been compared to an author in

critical analyses, and he is indeed referred to in terms as a virtuoso *littérateur*, the *poète* of the financial world (v.101, 219, 243)<sup>164</sup> But his position is as much that of the chief executive of a publishing business as that of an author. He acts as publisher and editor. He receives contributions from others, like articles in a newspaper: from Hamelin the main lines of the story (v.61-63, 75), from Mme Caroline the infill detail, 'descriptions colorées...renseignements débordants' (v.75), edits them into a coherent prospectus, then puts the product into circulation.(v.125). He also performs the functions of a corporate executive: he develops its business plan;(v.74-75) he names the company;(v.82) he raises capital for the business;(v.107) he worries about its corporate profile;(v.115) he promotes the business in the press.(v.119) He imitates the press barons of the age by buying not just advertising space but titles, journalists and critics, and the story of his press subsidiary forms a distinct sub-plot to the main story of the novel. *L'Argent* is, in a very real sense, a narrative of the business of fiction.

It explores how narrative value is created and destroyed. In the very first chapter Zola, through the medium of Saccard, compares and contrasts a complete range of transaction types. They fall into three

---

<sup>164</sup> The point is a critical commonplace too frequent to reference exhaustively. Corinne Saminadayar-Perrin in 'Fictions de la Bourse' in *Cahiers naturalistes* 78 (2004), 41-62 analyses *L'Argent* as a mirror of the process of fiction, as does Hamon in his preface to the 1988 Livre de poche edition of *L'Argent*. Pierre-Gnassounou's already cited *Zola, Les Fortunes de la fiction*, contains perhaps the most complete survey of how Zola places his characters in roles which resemble positions in the publishing process, from author to critic and reader. Pierre-Gnassounou, (1999), pp. 25-88.

distinct categories: those where value can be controlled, those where it is constantly challenged but can be manipulated, and those where it cannot be controlled at all. The first category comprises prospectus and theft; the second, auction and speculation; the final, gift, charity and political redistribution. Prospectus is represented by the plans which Saccard begins to construct for his as yet unformulated new project, a narrative which projects a view of value and seeks to control the reception of that message to the last degree.(v.22) Theft, represented by Busch and his attempt to blackmail Saccard which this chapter initiates, turns out to be remarkably similar to prospectus. It is simply another form of narrative which acquires value through preparation, detailed research and careful presentation: the parallels with Saccard's narrative and with Zola's are heavily ironic.(v.33-38) Busch, trading shares by weight, even has his own variant form of scale.

Just as prospectus and theft are opposite sides of the same coin, so auction and speculation also sub-divisions of a continuum. The Bourse, introduced to the reader from the first page, operates an auction mechanism in which the value of shares and the narratives they represent is determined by the operation of the market.(v.11-22) It can be manipulated to an extent via its propensity to convert credulity into credit, but its greatest threat is its scale, the opacity which its size brings, and the apparent dislocation between risk and reward, which converts auction into speculation. Speculation itself is a form of auction where

excess, another kind of scale, obscures motivation and thus renders the process ungovernable. The cameo of Baronne Sandorff in the first chapter shows precisely this: her mixture of predictable financial motivation and sexual excess leads to capricious investment behaviour.(v.29-30) Finally, gift is represented by three forms of exchange which are all dismissed as impractical because they lack scale or the ability to be scaled: by a demonetised exchange in the shape of Mme Conin's sexual favours, bestowed by a process which only she can control;(v.32-33) by charity, which Sigismond rejects as insulting (v.42) and which the Princesse Orviedo will later show to be ineffectual, and by political redistribution, rejected even by Sigismond as utopian.(v.46) Mauss also notes this conflict between industrial scale and the relevance of gift: 'It appears that the whole field of industrial and commercial law is in conflict with morality. The economic prejudices of the people and producers derive from their strong desire to pursue the thing they have produced once they realise that they have given their labour without sharing in the profits.'<sup>165</sup>

The value of Saccard's story is precisely measured and converted, through the mechanism of the Bourse and the share price of the Banque Universelle, into monetary equivalents. From an initial issue price of 500fr. it rises to a high of 3,060fr. before crashing to its final suspension price of 430fr, and that, in a nutshell, is the plot of the book.(v.131, 252, 333) The stock price itself becomes a lever to create narrative value by

---

<sup>165</sup> Mauss (2011), p. 64.

---

regulating dramatic tension and pace. The rise from the initial issue value to 2,000fr. takes 121 pages;(v.131-252) from there to the peak valuation takes 58 pages;(v.252-310) the crash itself, just 23 pages.(v.310-33) The share price of the Banque Universelle tracks, and eventually becomes, its narrative. The Bourse becomes a metaphor for a collective readership, of such a scale that its methods of valuation become utterly opaque and immune from challenge. Like the mine in *Germinal* and the railway in *La Bête humaine* it is characterised by images of consumption and circulation, another body with no head. It is another variant of the Zolian corporate, a collective entity which is both an unavoidable platform for modern business and an ultimate surrender of individual agency.

Scale must be met with scale in the modern world. The conclusion which Saccard's investors, as the collective readers of his manuscript, must reach is that scale, in terms both of the reach of the story and of the narrative force with which it is created and projected, are the defining characteristics of success. In order to survive, the story must become big business, 'il faut un projet vaste, dont l'ampleur saisisse l'occasion'(v.115), says Saccard, in the same breath as he describes the *société anonyme* as the only vehicle for the size of his ambitions. Even he is mistaken, Zola suggests, in believing in his own importance: ultimately narrative outlives both individuals and corporates. Saccard is not required for the posterity of the Banque Universelle, just as Bontoux is no longer required to tell the story of the Union Générale. Its continuation depends not on

creditworthiness, which is fallible, but on the credibility of its story. The techniques which Saccard uses to present this story are themselves derived from the business of merchandising narrative. In the hands of Jantrou, the editor of his tame newspaper, business and narrative become one: 'Il songeait d'abord à écrire une brochure, une vingtaine de pages sur les grandes entreprises que lançait l'Universelle, mais en leur donnant l'intérêt d'un petit roman, dramatisé en un style familier; et il voulait inonder la province de cette brochure, qu'on distribuerait pour rien, au fond des campagnes les plus reculées.'(v.175) Even fictional scale works: the rumour of the size of Sabatani's penis is enough to guarantee his success with the Parisian ladies, just as that of the Banque Universelle's success is enough to fill the fraudulent accounts which he is fronting for Saccard.(v.118,215) And when Saccard fails, his excuse is that even he failed to act on a large enough scale: 'Moi, si j'avais eu à jeter au gouffre les quelques centaines de millions nécessaires, je serais le maître du monde.'(v.383)

### ***The story of a crash, or the crash of the story?***

Saccard's narrative is not Zola's. Zola, in contrast to Saccard, is manifestly capable of managing scale. *L'Argent* is the eighteenth novel of a series which had sold over 1,200,000 copies at the time of its publication. No other French writer came close to the size of his publishing empire. Following its publication, Zola's next novel *La Débâcle*, appeared

simultaneously in French and in translations into German, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Czech, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and Russian.<sup>166</sup> The *feuilleton* was serialised in London one day after its appearance in France. Saccard, implicitly, has failed to control the corporate monster, while Zola has succeeded, and the fact that subsequent generations continue to read the story demonstrate how Zola has successfully laid the foundations for the posterity value which has eluded Saccard.

Zola implies that he is able to remain unaffected by the hubris which Saccard displays. Gundermann, 'le maître de la Bourse et du monde'(v.21), part portrait of James de Rothschild, the epitome of big business in the financial world, Saccard's nemesis, shows some characteristics strangely reminiscent of Zola (or perhaps of how Zola would like to see himself).<sup>167</sup> Like Zola as businessman, Gundermann represents scale. Like Zola as naturalist, he operates without emotion on the basis of observation, preparation and deduction, 'l'ouvrier impeccable'.(v.96). Like Zola as writer, he is a simple, unaffected virtuoso: 'Il n'était point un spéculateur, un capitaine d'aventures, manœuvrant les millions des autres, rêvant, à l'exemple de Saccard, des combats héroïques où il vaincrait, où il gagnerait pour lui un colossal butin, grâce à l'aide de

---

<sup>166</sup> Mitterand (1999-2002), vol. ii, p. 1067.

<sup>167</sup> Mitterand notes that Zola's preparatory notes for *L'Argent* include several pages on James de Rothschild, drawn principally from his reading of Ernest Feydeau's *Mémoires d'un coulissier*, which were incorporated almost in their entirety into his portrait of Gundermann.(v.1255).

l'or mercenaire, engagé sous ses ordres; il était, comme il le disait avec bonhomie, un simple marchand d'argent, le plus habile, le plus zélé qui pût être.'(v.95)

He is also a reader and critic of Saccard's prospectus, and a hint that Zola, too, is a fine judge of narrative value. Overt manipulation of investors or readers, Zola implies, is the hallmark of an unskilled operator, the sort of behaviour to which Saccard and Jantrou, plotting to deceive the subscribers to their newspapers, may resort but to which he, Zola, does not need to stoop: 'Et, de leur prodigalité, de tout cet argent qu'ils jetaient de la sorte en vacarme, aux quatre coins du ciel, se dégageait surtout leur dédain immense du public, le mépris de leur intelligence d'hommes d'affaires pour la noire ignorance du troupeau, prêt à croire tous les contes, tellement fermé aux opérations compliquées de la Bourse, que les raccrochages les plus éhontés allumaient les passants et faisaient pleuvoir les millions.'(v.176)

But Zola may be closer to Saccard than he cares to admit. Gomart memorably describes Zola's own drive for scale as an operation on the *marché à terme* in which Zola is a perpetual short seller of the novels he owes Charpentier, trying to cover his position by risk mitigation strategies to ensure each will realise full value when delivered.<sup>168</sup> All his risk mitigation strategies involve exactly what he condemns: reader

---

<sup>168</sup> Gomart (2004), p. 269.

manipulation. Her analysis shows how manipulative Zola's narrative style in *L'Argent* has become, using prolepsis, iteration and concatenation as ways to modify the reader's perception of value, just as the in-story characters use the same techniques to manipulate the outcomes of their own deals.<sup>169</sup> Goux argues that Zola's search for scale is another aspect of manipulative risk mitigation: he sees it as Zola's way of discounting the uncertain future value of his novels into immediate present value by maximising the size of the immediate readership without the need to wait for the judgement of posterity, just as Saccard tries to anticipate the profits of the Banque Universelle.<sup>170</sup> The need to maximise the readership requires predictable narrative values and, hence, a series of ultimately fruitless strategies to impose a kind of narrative gold standard with absolute values against which success or failure can be measured.

Both show how Zola's narratives become more manipulative of the reader as *Les Rougon-Macquart* progresses. In part this can be attributed, as Goux implies, to the establishment of 'brand Zola' as a known narrative commodity. Before the Zola-aware reader has even opened the first page of *L'Argent*, s/he will be expecting a plot which ends in the death or ruin of the main characters. From the outset Zola quietly hints that Saccard's rise will end in failure: the construction of the very first chapter, which shifts from Saccard's ambition, up through the apex of the Stock Exchange

---

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121-64.

<sup>170</sup> Goux, in *Les Frontières littéraires de l'économie*, ed. Poirson et al. (2008), p.153.

in the shape of Gundermann, then back down to the threat from the underworld of Busch and La Méchain, mirrors the shape of the work as a whole.(v.11-49) By the end of the novel, as the price of Banque Universelle stock tumbles, even the weather joins in presaging Saccard's defeat.(v.323) The entropic essence of the naturalist perspective is a trademark which conditions readers as much as it pretends to be a dispassionate record of observed reality.

Zola's confidence in his narrative virtuosity leads to a degree of sloppiness in the construction of the narrative. As many critics have noted, the story of Saccard's private life, and in particular of his illegitimate son Victor, is poorly integrated into the central plot about the Banque Universelle. Mitterand traces this faultline back to the *ébauche* '...il reste *deux* romans dans *L'Argent* ...celui de l'homme privé et celui de l'homme de Bourse.'(v.1252, Mitterand's italics) Successful narrative devices are overworked: the construction of the first chapter as a mirror of the entire plot of the novel, tracking a process of rise and fall, is copied in the fifth and ninth chapters, all three of which end with a salutary reminder of the alternative world of Busch and La Méchain.(v.32-49, v.137-38, 281-94) Minor characters seem to be treated as disposable stage props. Mère Eulalie, mistress of the precocious Victor in the cité de Naples, is used as a rather transparent device for intensifying the picture of degradation Zola is seeking to convey.(v.150) Once the effect has been created, she is conveniently disposed of a mere six pages later in order to

allow Victor's rescue by Mme Caroline.(v.156) Characters become caricatures: the trio of monothematic brokers, Pillerault the optimist, Moser the pessimist, Salmon the silent,(v.14-18, 297); later Jacoby of the heavy stomach and the thundering bass voice.(v.88, 301) Even Saccard, the pirate with charisma, described five times as 'corsaire'(v.56, 130, 275, 331, 336)and twice as 'bandit' (v.228, 278), comes close to caricature at times. Perhaps most seriously, Mme Caroline's vacillations, whether in her relations with Saccard, in her investment in the Banque Universelle, or in her view of money as productive or destructive, seem at odds with her portrayal as a strong, independently minded woman.

Through these cracks in the narrative emerges a more politicised perspective. Even in *La Curée* it is noticeable that passages where the story falters allow a much more direct authorial voice to emerge. From the bathos of the enumeration of the plants in the *serre* slides a sudden polemical edge: 'Ce joli jeune homme, ....se trouva être, aux mains de Renée, une de ces débauches de décadence qui, à certaines heures, dans une nation pourrie, épuisent une chair et détraquent une intelligence.'(i.486) As time goes on and Zola's belief in his own role as national storyteller-in-chief strengthens, so the adoption of a political or moral position becomes more and more difficult to avoid. He is clearly aware of this and tries a number of tactics to mitigate it. In *L'Argent* he confronts squarely, from the *ébauche* onwards, the evident danger that writing about money implies taking a position on the impact of capitalism

in society. His solution is to adopt a deliberately neutral stance, hiding behind the justification he expresses in *Le Roman expérimental* of the role of novelists as ‘moralistes expérimentateurs’ and for the novel as a powerful tool of political and social analysis.<sup>171</sup> He explicitly recognises money as a force for both good and evil. ‘Ne pas frapper sur l’argent. La pire et la meilleure des choses. Les grandes choses qu’on fait avec.’ (v.1246). In the text of the novel itself he transplants these arguments into the reported thoughts of the already impaired character of Mme Caroline, contrasting ‘...l’horrible argent, qui salit et dévore’(v.221) against money as ‘le fumier dans lequel poussait cette humanité de demain.’(v.224)

But what he fails to recognise is that this decision not to take a stance is a stance in itself. The *ébauche* also reveals how close he felt personally to the portrayal of Mme Caroline ‘Me mettre tout entier là-dedans’(v.1248), and perhaps some of her contradictions have also crept in. Her inner voice of reason suspects that the mere process of achieving scale involves a loss of agency: ‘Une société au capital de cent cinquante millions, et dont les trois cent mille titres, cotés trois mille francs, représentent neuf cents millions: cela pouvait-il se justifier; n’y avait-il pas un danger effroyable dans la distribution du colossal dividende qu’une pareille somme engagée exigeait, au simple taux de cinq pour cent?’ (v.382-83) Perhaps, too, these are evidence of Zola’s own doubts

---

<sup>171</sup> *Le Roman expérimental*, ed. Mourad (2006), p. 71.

which have leached into the character of Mme Caroline. He, however, has a vested interest in the viability of the process of scaling up, at least in so far as the publishing industry is concerned, since that is the very basis of his own success. Saccard discovers that, as scale increases, so the process requires more and more intervention by its manager to avoid a loss of control. Zola's fiction undergoes a similar evolution.

Politicisation sneaks in by the back door, much as it had in *Germinal* through the record of the politicised reality of the mining communities he was describing. Charle sees this as characteristic of the contemporary press as well, which moved, under the influence of advertising and paid advertorial, from passively reflecting public tastes to actively trying to shape them, and it is perhaps not surprising to see Zola in the vanguard of this movement.<sup>172</sup> In *L'Argent* the opposition of two alternative political realities does not make either less political. The many, often diametrically opposed, political readings of *L'Argent* attest to its continuing polemical resonances: and it remains clearly possible to impose a political reading on the work, from Nelson's view of it as evidence of how far Zola had shifted towards a stance supportive of an enlightened form of bourgeois capitalism, to Reffait, who sees it more as a dialectical discussion of the incompatibilities of market-based capitalism and democracy, to Gallois who reads it as a commentary on French

---

<sup>172</sup> Charle, Christophe, *Le Siècle de la presse, 1830-1939* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004), p. 141.

cultural imperialism.<sup>173</sup> Pierre-Gnassounou sensibly sees this increasing level of authorial intrusion as less a political statement *per se*, and rather what she calls the fear of narrative ‘incomplétude’, a lacuna in which an interpretation other than that of Zola can emerge.<sup>174</sup> She sees the ‘mouche d’or’ in *Nana*, the representation of *Phèdre* in *La Curée*, and the battle of the Maigres and the Gras in *Le Ventre de Paris* as examples of this tendency to make sure the reader ‘gets it’.

Perhaps, though, this is simply another successful commercial strategy? After all, texts which follow the politicisation of their readership, and which can be interpreted to appeal to many constituencies in an increasingly splintered society, represent a credible way of maximising market share. The technique, however, comes at a price. Married with scale and financial resources, politicisation has the potential to turn narrative into a powerful ‘tribune’, as Sherard records Zola’s contemporary intentions in 1893.<sup>175</sup> Politicised narrative requires a greater level and visibility of authorial control, just as Saccard is forced to intervene more and more actively as his need for the narrative of the Banque Universelle to prevail becomes more acute. Serious contradictions start to appear at this juncture. Zola describes a world in which the acquisition of scale irresistibly disempowers the individual and assumes autonomous agency, yet when it comes to his own business he appears to

---

<sup>173</sup> Nelson (1983), pp. 158-88, Reffait (2007), pp. 331-455, Gallois (2000), pp. 119-48.

<sup>174</sup> Pierre-Gnassounou (1999), pp. 91-122.

<sup>175</sup> See p. 387 for the full quotation and reference.

be confident that this process can somehow be averted. Goux wonders if Zola has run out of road as a novelist: 'N'est-il pas légitime de se demander alors si Zola n'atteint pas là, dans le jeu déchainé de ce tourbillon qui devient démentiel et qui dérouté toute notion de valeur stable et de réel, les limites de sa propre représentation réaliste ou naturaliste de la société?'<sup>176</sup> The entire naturalist perspective points to a universal principle of entropy, yet *Les Rougon-Macquart* describes an imploding society which has manifestly survived to the point of its description twenty years later. And even if aspects of that society have disappeared, like the Banque Universelle, Zola's narrative has successfully recreated them. Durable narrative value is attainable only at the price of contradicting the very tenets of naturalism itself.

*Le Docteur Pascal* can perhaps be seen as an attempt by Zola to resolve some of these contradictions. Pascal has spent his career in an individual search for a new chemical compound to cure diseases. His withdrawal from society, from big business, from the compromises of scale is symbolised both by his physical isolation in a remote house and by his enforced abstention from money as bankruptcy looms. He eventually realises that the placebo effect of plain water, injected under the right circumstances, can produce just as powerful a therapeutic response as the elusive drug itself. It is an apparent affirmation of the

---

<sup>176</sup> Goux, Jean-Joseph, 'Monnaie, échanges, spéculations. La mise en représentation de l'économie dans le roman français au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle' in *La Littérature au prisme de l'économie* ed. by Francesco Spandri (Paris: Garnier, 2014), 51-70, p. 67.

power of the individual as author, who alone can render the narrative of a drug as effective as the drug itself. The job of the doctor, or the writer, is to create not the drug but the conditions under which the story of the drug acquires credibility.

Like Pascal, part-portrait of Zola himself as the autobiographical detail in the text indicates, Zola believes he, as an individual, has that gift.<sup>177</sup> But Pascal's voice eventually fails because, as an individual, he is too weak to promote it sufficiently and cannot compete with the scale of *Félicité Rougon*, corporate representative of the Rougon empire and its reputation. The very fact that Zola's novel about Dr Pascal was printed in three editions totalling 88,000 copies in the first year of its publication (1893), suggests that Zola had made his own choice in favour of scale. The same would remain true of all his further output despite its increasingly politicised and tendentious tones. All three of the *Trois Villes* cycle had initial editions of 88,000. By Zola's death in 1902 *Lourdes* had been through seven editions totalling 143,000, while *Rome* and *Paris* had two editions each with totals of 100,000 and 93,500 copies respectively. Even though sales were slowing, and would slow more with *Les Quatre Evangiles*, these were still enormous print-runs for the time. Zola, as Goux implies in relation to *L'Argent*, seems to be trying to anticipate posterity

---

<sup>177</sup> For a summary of the similarities, both autobiographical and philosophical, between Zola and Pascal, see v.1570-75.

value by generating as much current value from the titles as possible.<sup>178</sup> By this stage, rather than the power of the story, it is the reach of Zola's brand, the muscle of the production machine behind him and the willingness of capital providers to invest which sustain the business of Zola, Inc.

In a sense, Zola was indeed *l'homme nécessaire*. He arrived on to a literary scene at a time when technological advances enabled a mass readership to be reached with affordable products. He used the techniques of popular journalism, which had already opened up this market, as a springboard to establish his brand. He brought some of the methods of the production line to the manufacture of novels. He acquired the commercial skills of promoting literature early in his career. Even naturalism becomes in his hands as much a sales tool as a literary philosophy. He showed how literature could become big business. And, inevitably, the business of literature becomes his subject. More than any other French writer of his time, he captures the emergence of the corporate entity, the faceless *société anonyme*, as the vehicle and emblem of big business, and the loss of individual agency which this brings. And, with magnificent irony, he eventually falls victim to the phenomenon he has done so much to document, as his later novels succumb to a self-defeating demand for authorial control. But the very fact that we still read Zola today attests to his ultimate success in creating a narrative with true

---

<sup>178</sup> Goux (2008), p. 153.

posterity value, even if history has adjusted the relative valuations.

Saccard, I feel, would have understood.

\$\$\$\$\$\$

## *Chapter V: Conclusion*

### Accounts

This thesis has revealed a curious lacuna in critical analysis of nineteenth-century prose fiction. Scholars discuss the novel's representations of economic realities, or how an author uses the novel to critique aspects of political economics. They admit the importance of economic influences in the author's own life. They investigate at length the commercialisation of the press and the means of production of printed works. But when it comes to seeing novelistic narrative as an economic commodity in its own right and, as such, a revealing commentary on the conditions of its own production, all but a few back off. This thesis has tried to show how that omission can be remedied and the potential benefits of doing so.

With hindsight, it is not difficult to understand how this lacuna has developed. In France, successive waves of criticism first created it and then, over time, have begun a slow and, so far, incomplete process of

filling it in. The initial rejection of the industrialisation of literature by Sainte-Beuve and his followers reinforced a prejudice against judging aesthetic production by commercial standards which has never been entirely eradicated. Over the last fifty years the importance of historical, cultural and economic context has become far more widely recognised. Critics such as Donnard, Mitterand and Mollier have shown how research into economic, publishing and biographical detail can generate a richer background from which new critical interpretations can spring. The current wave, led by Kalifa, Thérenty, Lyon-Caen and Vaillant, has not only linked developments in the popular press and popular culture with the development of prose fiction but has also shown how economic analysis, especially of press and book production, can be relevant to literary criticism. In Russia this process has barely started, while in English literary criticism it is rather more fully developed, as my introductory chapter has demonstrated. But for all this growing awareness of the relevance of economics as a tool in the critic's armoury, there still seems to be a reluctance to recognise that prose fiction does function as a commodity and that it is legitimate to discuss it as such. Even attempts to promote 'economic criticism' as a discrete field of study in its own right have largely foundered because of this hesitation to see the text itself as an economic agent and to develop the tools to examine it as such.

So this thesis is a logical extension of the direction of travel of current critical trends. It uses the growing evidential base relating to the

economics of the publishing industry and the development of readership demographics to support a view of how an author might have perceived and responded to the demands of both readership and publisher. It builds on analysis of the poetics of transfers of style and content between the press and the extensively serialised prose fiction of the nineteenth century. It incorporates current work on cultural history to achieve a better understanding of economic drivers. Finally, it applies the economic concepts which have been so widely recognised in studies of publishing as an industry to the study of individual narratives, not in the sense of seeking a statistical approach but rather in terms of thinking of literary device as having economic as well as aesthetic agency.

In each of these areas, the thesis has shown that the economic perspective plays a more important role than critics have so far allowed. As a means of interpreting texts, it can generate a quite different critical point of view by focussing attention on the nature of the exchange between author and reader. As a method of analysing authorial behaviour, it throws light on commercial motivations, or on reactions to external economic developments, both as evidenced by the text itself, which were previously ignored or underplayed. As a way of understanding social and cultural drivers, it supplies a framework for linking changes in patterns of commerce, particularly within the publishing industry, with changes in the production of novels. As a branch of economic investigation, it allows us to import tools and techniques from a related discipline which have

seldom been used in literary analysis and which enable us to uncover the economic agency of the text itself.

This is hardly a radical departure in critical approaches; rather, it simply imports into the critical viewpoint the commercial changes which have been such an important part of the novel's development over the last two centuries, particularly in Europe. It requires us to recognise that any given literary device may have a dual role as both aesthetic and economic agent. Unravelling the functions of each requires detailed textual analysis, since the text itself is the best evidence we have of the author's 'point of sale' perspective. The text contains valuable clues, often overlooked, about how authors perceived the reception of their works, about who they thought they were writing for, and about how they shaped the text to try to manipulate reader redemption.

The methodological framework developed in this thesis specifically addresses economic context, modes of transaction between author and reader, and pragmatic definitions of literary value, but the framework is neither mandatory nor exclusive. It is, however, broad enough to be widely applicable: there is no reason why it should not be as valid for a modern internet author as for an eighteenth-century writer financed by patronage. At either extreme the publishing context defines a contemporary notion of 'reach', or the extent of penetration of the possible readership, and a direction of travel as the readership evolves.

Considering literature as transaction differentiates succinctly and successfully between writing under patronage, writing for payment by the column inch, and writing for free (whether enabled by technology or enforced through piracy), and forces the critic to consider how the differing nature of the transaction with the reader changes authorial strategy and, consequently, the economic as well as the aesthetic implications of that strategy. And defining literary value as that synchronically accessible at the point of sale to the author, as demonstrable by contemporary evidence, helps to establish a basis of comparison between, say, an eighteenth-century author of independent means writing for a small readership of literate and aristocratic friends, and a modern internet author writing for a potentially huge but anonymous audience and trying to develop techniques to get noticed amidst the clutter.

The methodology has been able to demonstrate that it can produce new critical insights. The chapter on Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, for example, takes the literary device of iteration, a central pillar of the genre of the courtroom drama, and shows the role which this device plays in an economic context as a means of testing audience reception to different modes of retelling. Analysis of the publishing context provides an explanation for why this experimental technique might be required, in the shape of the demonstrable disconnect between contemporary publishing strategies and the stage of development of the

contemporary readership. An examination of the many representations within the text of characters offering narrative for consumption to other in-story characters not only alerts a modern reader to his or her own role as the recipient of Dostoevsky's narrative but provides a framework by which s/he can evaluate its credibility. When these are taken together, a text more often treated as a novelistic discussion of philosophical and ethical issues acquires a new dimension as an enquiry into what constitutes a successful novel.

'Economic criticism' can also suggest new angles on authorial motivation. Re-reading *Splendeurs* in its economic context, as a rolling commentary on the evolution of the press during a period of momentous change in the industry, prompted a quite new approach to the novel as a kind of experimental test-bed for new modes of prose fiction. The approach highlighted the correlations between external economic trends in the industry, for example the changing competitive dynamics between Balzac and Sue, or the growing importance of the periodical press as the leading vehicle for prose fiction, and stylistic or diegetic changes in the product which Balzac offered to his readers. Combining this with parallel changes in the way in which Balzac represents transaction in *Splendeurs* produced a body of evidence pointing to significant differences in the way in which Balzac produces, and relates to, his own output over time. From this, a change in authorial motivation could be demonstrated based on

textual and economic analysis rather than on surmise about authorial intention.

An economic perspective on the text can also indicate new aspects of social and cultural development. The chapter on Zola shows how his own commercial strategies for engaging with the growing mass readership for his novels are intimately linked to changing modes of corporate structure and commerce in contemporary France, as well as to the growing importance of narrative as a phenomenon in French cultural life. Zola's own writings are themselves a form of big business. The novels simultaneously perform what they describe. Telling the story has become an enterprise of industrial scale in its own right, with its own distinctive brand, style and promotion. Representations of his in-story characters telling stories or concocting fictions, surprisingly frequent once the reader is sensitised to notice them, become test-beds for Zola's own commercialisation of the novel. The literary devices which Zola uses become an integral part of the sales strategy of the novel. Naturalism is re-interpreted as an economic driver for the development of a mass readership. Zola's evolving representation of the power of the story over the course of the cycle of *Les Rougon-Macquart*, and from there to what we now see as the collapse of his narrative power in later works, both chronicles and critiques the role of the story in society as well as providing new perspectives on Zola's own authorial motivation.

Economic criticism is just as much a branch of economics as it is an avenue of literary scholarship. This thesis has demonstrated how tracing the history of the book format across the French publishing industry of the 1830s to the 1880s, with cross-references to its parallel evolution in some other markets, particularly that of Russia, has identified changes in the terms of trade between authors, publishers and readers and has been able to link these changes in authorial production. It has also illustrated how categorising transaction – both those represented in the text and those implicit between author and reader – into known economic categories (prospectus, auction, speculation, gift) can provide an analytical framework which emphasises a particular mode of economic agency. Once we start to notice how the author represents transaction between the in-story characters, we become sensitised to our own transaction with the author, even at a distance of over a century. In turn, this leads to reflections on why the narrative has survived over time, and how it has acquired posterity value. It can also highlight the importance of narrative as a commodity in non-literary spheres as a tool of communication used by all of society, from politics to business to human relations. No doubt an economist would have framed the analysis differently, and perhaps conducted it in different terms. But this approach has relevance as a method of analysing economic and cultural history, just as it has to literary criticism.

*'Que 'vaut' le récit?'* There may be no definitive answer to Barthes's question, but perhaps his point was not to answer but simply to ask it. His quotation marks around *'vaut'* imply an awareness that this economic term may not be fully transferable to the world of aesthetics, but that the question still needs to be asked. I began this thesis with a quotation from *The Way We Live Now* in which Trollope pokes fun at Lady Carbury's view of the novel as an exclusively economic commodity, and literary value as equivalent to sales potential. He, too, is reminding us that it is possible to think of the novel in terms other than those of artistic appreciation. Our modern world provides us with countless everyday examples of the importance of narrative, the power of the story, to everything from advertising to business, to politics, to literature. Over the past two centuries selling the story has evolved from a cottage industry to, arguably, the biggest business in the world. Understanding and manipulating narrative is fundamental to countless professions and is overwhelmingly the most powerful argument for the importance of the humanities as a university discipline. This thesis is not an attempt to impose economics on literature. It is, simply, a demonstration of how narrative is inseparable from the creation of economic value.

\$\$\$\$\$\$

## Appendix A

### Serialisation of *The Brothers Karamazov*<sup>1</sup>

		<i>Book</i>
<b>1879</b>	Jan	Preface, I, II
	Feb	III
	Mar	
	Apr	IV
	May	V, 1-4
	Jun	V, 5-7
	Jul	
	Aug	VI
	Sept	VII
	Oct	VIII, 1-4
	Nov	VIII, 5-8
	Dec	(apology for delay)
<b>1880</b>	Jan	IX
	Feb	
	Mar	
	Apr	X
	May	
	Jun	
	Jul	XI, 1-5
	Aug	XI, 6-10
	Sept	XII, 1-5
	Oct	XII, 6-14
	Nov	Epilogue

<sup>1</sup> Todd, William Mills III, 'The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Serial Publication' in *Dostoevsky Studies* 7(1986), 87-97, p. 97.

## Appendix B

### The 38 retellings of the murder

<i>Iteration</i>	<i>Full/ Partial</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Page reference</i>
1	F	The murder as related by the narrator: (book 8 ch. 4, 'In the Darkness').	xiv.29-32
2	P	Dmitry to Fenya, reported direct dialogue about his blood-covered clothes.	xiv.34
3	P	Dmitry to Perkhotin, same type of dialogue. Dmitry alleges a fight.	xiv.36-37
4	P	Perkhotin's speculations in the inn. Reported indirect speech and direct dialogue.	xiv.43-44
5	P	Dmitry's reflections on the murder at Mokroye. Reported internal monologue in the form of a prayer.	xiv.66-67
6	P	Dmitry's arrest at Mokroye. He is accused of parricide. Reported direct dialogue.	xiv.72
7	P	Perkhotin interrogates Fenya. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description	xiv.73
8	P	Perkhotin interrogates Mme Khokhlakova. Speculation about a possible murder. Reported direct dialogue.	xiv.75-77
9	F	The narrator's report of what the police have	xiv.79-81

		learned of the murder from the inhabitants of the Karamazov house. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	
10	F	Dmitry's interrogation, as reported by the narrator. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.82-116
11	P	The evidence of the innkeeper, Trifon Borisovich and his staff, Stepan and Semyon, and of the driver Andrey. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.118
12	P	The evidence of Kalganov. Reported direct dialogue.	xiv.118
13	P	The evidence of the two Poles and Dmitry's offer of 3,000R for them to leave Grushenka. Reported indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.118-20
14	P	The evidence of Maksimov. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description	xiv.120
15	P	The evidence of Grushenka. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.120-22
16	F	The newspaper report of the crime written by Rakitin in the Petersburg newspaper <i>Rumours</i> , as told to Alyosha by Mme Khokhlakova, followed by Mme Khokhlakova's speculations about Dmitry's guilt. Indirect speech, paraphrased article by narrator, dialogue.	xiv.175-79
17	P	Alyosha tells Ivan that he (Ivan) is not the murderer. Reported direct dialogue	xiv.198
18	F	Dmitry's version of the murder as told to Ivan. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.200-01

19	F	Smerdyakov's confession, in three parts. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.201-06, 208-11, 215-24
20	P	Discussion between Ivan and Alyosha about Ivan's motivation for the murder. Reported direct dialogue.	xiv. 206
21	P	Revelation of Dmitry's incriminating letter to Katya Ivanovna. Narrated description, verbatim reproduction of letter.	xiv.211-13
22	P	Ivan's intention to confess, as told to Alyosha after the devil scene. Reported direct dialogue.	xiv.240-41
23	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution: 1. Grigory. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.249-52
24	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution: 2. Rakitin. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.252-53
25	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution: 3. Snegirev. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.253-54
26	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution: 4. Trifon Borisovich and staff. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv. 254
27	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the prosecution: 5. The Poles. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description	xiv.254
28	P	The evidence of the expert witnesses at the trial: 1. Dr. Herzenstube (as both expert witness and witness for the defence). Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial	xiv.255-56, 258

		description.	
29	P	The evidence of the expert witnesses at the trial: 2. The Moscow doctor. Reported indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv. 256-257
30	P	The evidence of the expert witnesses at the trial: 3. Dr. Varvinsky. Reported indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.257
31	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the defence: 1. Alyosha. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description	xiv.259-62
32	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the defence: 2. Katerina Ivanovna (twice). Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.262-64, 269-72
33	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the defence: 3. Grushenka Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.264-66
34	P	The evidence of the witnesses for the defence: 4. Ivan. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv.267-69
35	F	The speech of the prosecutor. Reported direct speech.	xiv.273-99
36	F	The speech of the defence counsel. Reported direct speech.	xiv.300-20
37	P	Dimitry's final plea. Reported direct speech.	xiv.320-21
38	P	The jury's verdict. Reported direct dialogue, indirect speech, narratorial description.	xiv. 321-23

## Select Bibliography

*Works referred to in the notes to the text are identified on first mention by their full bibliographic record as set out below and thereafter by the name of their author and the year of their publication or, in the case of collections of articles, by the title of the volume.*

### Primary Works

- Balzac, Honoré de, *Ecrits sur le roman*, by Stéphane Vachon (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2000)
- *La Comédie Humaine*, ed. by Pierre-Georges Castex, 12 vols. (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1976)
- *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Maurice Bardèche, 28 vols. (Chambéry, Club de l'honnête homme, 1963)
- *Œuvres diverses*, ed. by Pierre Georges Castex and Roland Chollet, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1990)
- 'Lettre adressée aux écrivains français du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Revue de Paris*, nouvelle série XI (1834), 62-82
- 'La Femme comme il faut', in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, <http://www.bmlisieux.com/litterature/bibliogr/curmer01.htm>, accessed 9 July 2016
- *Le Colonel Chabert*, ed. by Maurice Allem (Paris: Garnier, 1964)
- *Le Colonel Chabert*, ed. by Pierre Citron (Paris: Marcel Didier, 1961)
- *Correspondence*, ed. by Roger Pierrot, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 2006-11)
- *Lettres à Madame Hanska*, ed. by Robert Laffont, 2 vols. (Paris, Editions Robert Laffont, 1990)
- Baudelaire, Charles, *Curiosités esthétiques. L'Art romantique*, ed. by Henri Lemaître (Paris: Garnier, 1962)
- *Les Fleurs du mal*, ed. by Antoine Adam (Paris: Garnier, 1961)

- 
- *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Claude Pichois, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1975)
- *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Claude Pichois, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1975)
- *Petits Poèmes en prose*, ed. by Henri Lemaître (Paris: Garnier, 1962)
- Bourget, Paul, *Le Disciple* (Paris, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1946)
- Chateaubriand, *Atala, René, Les aventures du dernier Abencérage*, ed. by Jean-Claude Berchet (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1996)
- Champfleury, *Le Réalisme* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1857)
- *Chien-Caillou. Fantaisies d'Hiver*, ed. by Bernard Leuilliot (Cahors: Editions des Cendres, 1988)
- *Feu Miette*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5436187x.r=feu-miette> , accessed 9 July 2016, pp.113-33.
- *Grandeur et décadence d'une serinette*, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5531023b>, accessed 9 July 2016, pp. 9-84.
- Collins, Wilkie, 'The Unknown Public' in *Household Words* 18:439 (21 August 1858) 217-22
- Dostoevsky, Fedor, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*, 30 vols. (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Nauka, 1972-90) ('PSS 1972-90 i-xxx')
- *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii F.M.Dostoevskogo v XVIII tomakh*, 18 vols. and three supplementary volumes (Moscow: Voskresen'e, 2003-05) ('PSS 2003-05 i-xviii; Suppl. i-iii')
- *Crime and Punishment*, trans. by Oliver Ready (London: Penguin, 2014)
- *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. by David Magarshack (London: Penguin, 1958)
- *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Vintage, 2004)
- *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. by David McDuff (London: Penguin, 1993, reissued 2003)
- *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. by Constance Garnett and ed. by Susan McReynolds Oddo (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011)

- 
- *The Notebooks for The Brothers Karamazov*, ed. by Edward Wasiolek (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971)
- *A Writer's Diary*, trans. by Kenneth Lantz, ed. by Gary Saul Morson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009)
- Flaubert, Gustave, *Œuvres complètes*, 16 vols. (Paris: Club de l'honnête homme, 1971-75)
- Gautier, Théophile, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, ed. by Michel Crouzet (Paris: Gallimard, 1973)
- Goncourt, Edmond and Jules de, *Charles Demailly*, ed. by Adeline Wrona (Paris: Flammarion, 2007)
- *Germinie Lacerteux*, ed. by Nadine Satiat (Paris: Flammarion, 1990)
- Goncourt, Edmond de and Jules de, *Journal: Mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. by Robert Ricatte and others, 3 vols. (Paris, Robert Laffont, 1956)
- Hoffmann, E. T. A. *Sämtliche Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. by Hartmut Steinecke; Wulf Segebrecht and Gerhard Allroggen, 6 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985-2004)
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel, *Twice-told Tales* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974)
- Hugo, Victor, *Les Contemplations*, ed. by Pierre Albouy (Paris: Gallimard, 1973)
- Mallarmé, Stéphane, *Étalages*, <http://short-edition.com/classique/stephane-mallarme/etalages>, accessed 9 July 2016
- Maturin, Charles, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, ed. by Douglas Grant and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Maupassant, Guy de, *Pierre et Jean*, ed. by Daniel Leuwers and Pierre Cogny (Paris: Flammarion, 1992)
- Mérimée, Prosper, *La Vénus d'Ille. Colomba. Mateo Falcone*, ed. by Patrick Berthier (Paris: Gallimard, 1999)
- Murger, Louis Henry, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (UK: Dodo Press, 2011)
- Nerval, Gérard de, *Aurélia, précédé des Illuminés et de Pandora*, ed. by Michel Brix (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1999)
- *Les Filles du Feu, Les Chimères et autres textes*, ed. by Michel Brix (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1999)

- 
- *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. by Jean Guillaume and Claude Pichois, 2 vol. (Paris: Garnier; 1966)
- *Œuvres*, ed. by Henri Lemaître (Paris: Garnier; 1966)
- Nodier, Charles, *Contes*, facsimile of 1859 edition by Magnin, Blanchard, Paris (Elibron Classics, 2007)
- Poe, Edgar Allan, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (London: Collector's Library, 2003)
- Sade, Donatien-Alphonse-François, marquis de, *Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981)
- Stendhal, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, ed. by Fabienne Bercegol (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2000)
- *Le Rouge et le Noir*, ed. by Anne-Marie Meininger (Paris: Gallimard, 2000)
- *Lucien Leuwen*, ed. by Anne-Marie Meininger (Paris: Gallimard, 2002)
- *Vie d'Henri Brulard*, ed. by Béatrice Didier (Paris: Gallimard, 1973)
- Sue, Eugène, *Les Mystères de Paris*, ed. by Judith Lyon-Caen (Paris: Gallimard, 2009)
- *Le Juif errant* (reprint of Paulin edition of 1845: Bibliolife, 2013)
- Tolstoy, Lev, *Anna Karenina*, 2 vols. (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1967)
- *Chto takoe iskusstvo*, [http://www.rvb.ru/tolstoy/01text/vol\\_15/01text/0327.htm](http://www.rvb.ru/tolstoy/01text/vol_15/01text/0327.htm) , accessed 9 July 2016
- *Detstvo, Otrochestvo, Yunost'* (Moscow: EKSMO, 2009)
- *Ispoved'*, [http://az.lib.ru/t/tolstoj\\_lev\\_nikolaewich/text\\_0440.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/t/tolstoj_lev_nikolaewich/text_0440.shtml) , accessed 9 July 2016
- *Povesti i rasskazy*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1974)
- *Voina i mir*, 4 vols. (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1968)
- *Voskresenie* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964)
- Zola, Émile, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand and others, 21 vols. (Paris: Nouveau monde, 2002-10)

- 
- *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, 15 vols. (Paris: Cercle du livre précieux, 1962-69)
- *Les œuvres complètes*, ed. by Denise LeBlond-Zola and Maurice Le Blond, 54 vols. (Paris: Bernouard, 1927-1929)
- *Correspondance*, ed. by Bard Bakker and others, 10 vols. (Montréal: Presses de l'université de Montréal and Paris: CNRS, 1978-95)
- *Correspondance. Choix de textes*, ed. by Alain Pagès (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2012)
- *Les Rougon-Macquart*, ed. by Henri Mitterand, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1960-67)
- *Contes et nouvelles*, ed. by Roger Ripoll, (Paris: Gallimard-Pléiade, 1976)
- *Le Roman expérimental* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006)
- *Lourdes*, ed. by Jacques Noiray (Paris: Gallimard, 1995)
- *Rome*, ed. by Jacques Noiray (Paris: Gallimard, 1999)
- *Paris*, ed. by Jacques Noiray (Paris: Gallimard, 2002)
- *Thérèse Raquin*, ed. by Robert Abirached (Paris: Gallimard, 2001)
- *Ecrits sur l'art*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine (Paris: Gallimard, 1991)
- *Ecrits sur le roman*, ed. by Henri Mitterand (Paris: Flammarion, 2004)
- Preface to *La Vie parisienne* by Parisis (Emile Blavet), (Paris: Ollendorff, 1889) <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k215491q/f6.image>, accessed 4 July 2016

## Newspapers and Periodicals

*L'Artiste*  
*La Cloche*  
*Le Constitutionnel*  
*L'Epoque*  
*Le Figaro*  
*Le Gaulois*  
*La Gazette de France*  
*La Gazette des tribunaux*  
*Le Journal des débats*  
*La Mode*  
*Le Musée des familles*  
*Le Parisien*  
*Le Petit Journal*  
*La Presse*  
*La Revue de Paris*  
*La Revue des deux mondes*  
*Le Temps*  
*Gil Blas*  
*Peterburgsky listok*  
*Russky vestnik*  
*Vestnik Evropy (Le Messenger de l'Europe)*

---

## Secondary Works

### *Collective Works*

*A New Word on The Brothers Karamazov*, ed. by Robert Louis Jackson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2004)

*Artful Deceptions. Les Supercheries littéraires et visuelles*, ed. by Catherine Emerson and Maria Scott (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006)

*Balzac dans l'empire russe* (Paris: Paris Musées/des Cendres, 1993)

*Balzac et le style*, ed. by Anne Herschberg-Pierrot, Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes, collection du bicentenaire (Paris: Sedes, 1998)

*Balzac Œuvres complètes. Le Moment de La Comédie humaine*, ed. by Claude Duchet and Isabelle Tournier, Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes (Paris: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 1993)

- 
- Balzac ou la tentation de l'impossible*, ed. by Robert Mahieu and Franc Schuerewegen, Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes, collection du bicentenaire (Paris: Sedes, 1998)
- Balzac*, ed. by Michael Tilby (Harlow: Longman, 1995)
- Balzac*, ed. by Stéphane Vachon (Paris: Presses de l'université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999)
- Balzac. Une poétique du roman*, ed. by Stéphane Vachon, Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes (Paris: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 1996)
- Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii, The*, ed. by William Leatherbarrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture, The*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel, The*, ed. by Deirdre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Cambridge History of Victorian Literature, The*, ed. by Kate Flint (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012)
- Champ littéraire fin de siècle autour de Zola*, ed. by Béatrice Laville (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2004)
- Civilisation du journal, La*, ed. by Dominique Kalifa, Philippe Régnier, Marie-Eve Thérenty and Alain Vaillant (Paris: Nouveau monde éditions, 2011)
- Companion to the Victorian Novel, A*, ed. by William Baker and Kenneth Womack (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002)
- Cultural Discontinuity and Reconstruction. The Byzanto-Slav Heritage and the Creation of a Russian National Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Jostein Børtnes and Ingunn Lunde (Oslo: Solum, 1997)
- Currencies. Fiscal Fortunes and Cultural Capital in Nineteenth Century France*, ed. by Sarah Capitanio, Lisa Downing, Paul Rowe and Nicholas White (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005)
- Editeur et son siècle, Un. Pierre-Jules Hetzel (1814-1886)*, ed. by Christian Robin (Saint-Sébastien: ACL Edition Société Crocus, 1988)
- Entertaining Tsarist Russia: tales, songs, plays, movies, jokes, ads and images from Russian urban life, 1779-1917*, ed. by James von Geldern and Louise McReynolds (Bloomington, IND., Indiana University Press, 1998)

- 
- Français peints par eux-mêmes, Les. Encyclopédie morale du dix-neuvième siècle publiée par Léon Curmer*, ed. by Pierre Bouttier, 2 vols. (Paris: Omnibus, 2003) and <http://www.bmlisieux.com/litterature/bibliogr/curmer01.htm>, accessed 9 July 2016
- French Literature, Thought and Culture in the Nineteenth Century. A Material World*, ed. by Brian Rigby (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993)
- Dostoevsky Archive, The*, ed. by Peter Sekirin (Jefferson: McFarland, 1997)
- Dostoevsky: A Collection of Essays*, ed. by René Wellek (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962)
- Dostoevsky. New Perspectives*, ed. by Robert Louis Jackson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983)
- Histoire de l'édition française*, ed. by Roger Chartier and Henri-Jean Martin, 4 vols. (Paris: Promodis, 1982-86)
- Histoire générale de la presse française*, ed. by Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godeschot, Pierre Guiral and Fernand Terrou, 5 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1969)
- Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. by Deborah Martinsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914*, ed. by William Mills Todd III (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978)
- Littérature au prisme de l'économie, La*, ed. by Francesco Spandri (Paris: Garnier, 2014)
- New Economic Criticism, The. Studies at the Intersection of Literature and Economics*, ed. by Martha Woodmansee and Mark Osteen (London: Routledge, 1999)
- Nineteenth-century Novel, The. A Critical Reader*, ed. by Stephen Regan (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001)
- Novaya Ekonomicheskaya Kritika*, ed. by Mikhail Gronas, in *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 58 (2002), 7-87.
- O Dostoevskom. Stat'i*, ed. by Donald Fanger (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966)
- Paratextes Balzaciens. La Comédie humaine en ses marges*, ed. by Roland le Huenen and Andrew Oliver (Toronto: Centre d'études du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle Joseph Sablé, 2007)

- Penser avec Balzac*, ed. by José-Luis Diaz and Isabelle Tournier, Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes (Paris: Christian Pirot, 2003)
- Presse et Plumes. Journalisme et littérature au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. by Marie-Eve Thérénty and Alain Vaillant (Montpellier: Nouveau Monde Editions, 2004)
- Querelle du roman-feuilleton, La: littérature, presse et politique: un débat précurseur, (1836-1848)*, ed. by Lise Dumasy (Grenoble: ELLUG, Université Stendhal, 1999)
- Répertoire pratique de législation de doctrine et de jurisprudence* (Paris: Dalloz, 1925)
- Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation*, ed. by John Bowlt and Stephen Bann (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1973)
- Russianness: studies on a nation's identity: in honor of Rufus Mathewson, 1918-1978*, ed. by Rufus Mathewson and Robert Belknap (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990)
- The Reader in the Text*, ed. by S. R. Suleiman and I. Crosman (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980)
- Victorian Literature and Finance*, ed. by Francis O'Gorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Zola, genèse de l'œuvre*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2002)

### ***Books and Articles***

- Alexandrov, Mikhail, *Fedor Mikhail Dostoevsky v vospominaniyakh tipograficheskogo naborshchika v 1872-1881 godakh* at [http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij\\_f\\_m/text\\_0590.shtml](http://az.lib.ru/d/dostoewskij_f_m/text_0590.shtml), accessed 9 July 2016
- Allemand, André, *Unité et structure de l'univers balzacien* (Paris: Plon, 1965)
- Alcorn, Clayton, 'La Curée; les deux Renée Saccard' in *Cahiers naturalistes* 51 (1977), 49-55
- Alexis, Paul, *Emile Zola. Notes d'un ami* (Paris: Charpentier, 1888, reprinted Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001, also at <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:oxfaleph012282998>, accessed 27 April 2016)

- 
- Allen, James Smith, *In the Public Eye: A History of Reading in Modern France, 1800-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)
- Altick, Richard, *The English Common Reader. A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, second edition (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998)
- *The Presence of the Present. Topics of the Day in the Victorian Novel* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991)
- Anderson, R. B., 'The Idiot and the Subtext of Modern Materialism', *Dostoevsky Studies*, 9 (1992), 77-89
- Andréoli, Max, 'La Politique rationnelle selon Balzac: esquisse d'une description synchronique' in *L'Année balzacienne*, (1979), 7-35
- 'Structure du temps dans *La Comédie humaine*' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:9 (2008), 141-63
- *Le Système balzacien: essai de description synchronique*, 2 vols. (Paris and Lille, 1984)
- Andrew, Joe, *Writers and Society during the Rise of Russian Realism* (London: Macmillan, 1980)
- Any, Carol, *Boris Eikhenbaum. Voices of a Russian Formalist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994)
- Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, ed. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)
- Baguley, David, *Critical Essays on Emile Zola* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1986)
- *Naturalist Fiction: the Entropic Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, reprinted 2005)
- *Zola et les genres* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 1993)
- *Napoleon III and his Regime. An Extravaganza* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000)
- Bairoch, Paul, *Commerce extérieur et développement économique de l'Europe au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Mouton, 1976)
- Bairoch, Paul, Jean Batou and Pierre Chèvre, *La Population des villes européennes 800-1850: bande de données et analyse sommaire des résultats* (Geneva: Droz, 1988)

- Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Sovetskaya Rossiya, 1979)
- *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)
- *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)
- Barb ris, Pierre, *Aux Sources de Balzac: les romans de jeunesse* (Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1980)
- *Le Monde de Balzac* (Paris: Arthaud, 1973)
- *Le Prince et le marchand. Id ologiques: la litt rature, l'histoire* (Paris: Fayard, 1980)
- *Mythes balzaciens* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1972)
- Bard che, Maurice, *Balzac romancier: la formation de l'art du roman jusqu'  la publication du 'P re Goriot' 1920-1935* (Geneva: Slatkine reprints, 1967)
- *Balzac, romancier* (Paris: Plon, 1943)
- Barel-Moisan, Claire, 'Le plaisir de coordonner les mondes. La lecture comme assemblage d'un cycle romanesque' in *L'Ann e balzacienne*, 3:12 (2011), 465-90
- Barnett, Graham, *Histoire des biblioth ques publiques en France de la r volution   1939* (Paris: Promodis, 1987).
- Barthes, Roland, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970)
- Bartlett, Rosamund, *Tolstoy, a Russian Life* (London: Profile Books, 2010)
- Baudry, Marie, 'Lecteurs et lectrices dans *La Com die humaine*' in *L'Ann e balzacienne*, 3:1 (2010), 21-38
- Bayley, John, *Tolstoy and the Novel* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966)
- Beaven, Miranda 'Aleksandr Smirdin and Publishing in St. Petersburg, 1830-1840' in *Canadian Slavonic Papers*; 27:1(Mar, 1985), 15-30
- Becker, Colette, 'Les « machines   pi ces de cent sous » des Rougon' in *Romantisme*, 40 (1983), 141-52
- *Les Apprentissages de Zola* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993)

- Becker, Colette, with Gina Gourdin-Servenièrre and Véronique Lavielle, *Dictionnaire d'Emile Zola* (Paris: Laffont, 1993)
- Becker, Colette with Jean-Louis Cabanès, *Le Roman au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. L'explosion du genre* (Ligugé: Bréal, 2001)
- Becker, Colette, with Véronique Lavielle, *La Fabrique des Rougon-Macquart. Edition de dossiers préparatoires. 7 vols.* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003 -)
- Becker, Colette, 'Zola et l'argent' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 27-40
- Becker, Colette, with Henri Mitterand and Jean-Pierre Leduc-Adine, *Genèse, structure et style de La Curée* (Paris: SEDES, 1987)
- Belinsky, Vissarion, *Sobranie sochinenii v 9-i tomakh*, 9 vols. (Moscow, Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1976)
- Belknap, Robert, *The Structure of The Brothers Karamazov* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967, reprinted Northwestern University Press, 1989)
- *The Genesis of The Brothers Karamazov* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990)
- 'The Gentle Creature as the Climax of a Work of Art that Almost Exists' in *Dostoevsky Studies, New Series*, 4 (2000), 35-42
- Bell, David, *Models of Power: Politics and Economics in Zola's Rougon- Macquart* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988)
- Bellet, Roger, *Presse et journalisme sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967)
- 'La Bourse et la littérature dans la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle' in *Romantisme*, 40 (1983), 53-64
- Beltran, Alain and Pascal Griset, *La croissance économique de la France: 1815-1914* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1988)
- Benjamin, Walter and Harry Zohn, 'The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov', *Chicago Review*, 16 (1963), 80 -101.
- Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt and Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992)
- *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999)

- *The Writer of Modern Life* (1835-39), ed. by Michael Jennings, trans. by Howard Eiland and others, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006)
- Bérard, Suzanne, *La Genèse d'un roman de Balzac. Illusions perdues* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1961)
- Berdyaev, Nikolai, *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Zakharov, reprinted 2001)
- Berg, William, *The Visual Novel. Emile Zola and the Art of his Times* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992)
- Bergeron, Louis, *Banquiers, négociants et manufacturiers parisiens. Du Directoire à l'Empire* (Thèse lettres, Paris IV, 1974)
- Berlin, Isaiah, 'The Hedgehog and the Fox' in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, ed. by Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer (London: Random House, 1998)
- Bernard, Claude, 'Le Problématique de l'« échange » dans *Le Chef d'œuvre inconnu* d'Honoré de Balzac' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:4 (1983), 201-13
- Bernheimer, Charles, *Figures of Ill Repute. Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-century France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989)
- Berthier Patrick, 'Le spectateur balzacien' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:1 (2000), 279-99
- 'Folbert, Chabert, Falbert' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:8 (1987), 394-98
- Best, Janice, 'Espace de la perversion et perversion de l'espace. La génération du récit dans *La Curée*' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 63 (1989), 109-16
- Birch, Edmund, 'Keys: Press and Privacy in the Goncourts' *Charles Demailly*' in *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 42:3-4 (Spring-Summer 2014), 206-20
- Bitsilli, Petr Mikhailovich, 'O vnutrennei forme romana Dostoevskogo', in *O Dostoevskom. Stat'i*, ed. by Donald Fanger (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966), 4-56
- Bordas, Eric, 'Pratiques balzaciennes de la digression' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:20 (1999), 293-316
- 'Rythmes du récit balzacien, ou des mesures sensibles du romantisme français' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:1 (2000), 159-84
- *Balzac, Discours et détours* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires de Mirail, 1997)

- Borderie Régine, 'La Peur: une 'passion du récit'' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:11 (2010), 313-33
- Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Forms of Capital*, tr. by Richard Nice, at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>, accessed 2 April 2016
- *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979)
- *Les Règles de l'art : genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1992)
- Bourget, Paul. *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, ed. by André Guyaux (Paris: Gallimard, 1993)
- Bouvier, René and Edouard Maynial, *De quoi vivait Balzac?* (Paris: Deux-rives, 1949)
- *Les Comptes dramatiques de Balzac* (Paris: Fernand Sorlot, 1938)
- Bouvier, René, *Balzac, homme d'affaires* (Paris: Champion, 1930)
- Bouvier-Ajam, Maurice, 'Les opérations financières de la Maison Nucingen' in *Europe*, 429-30 (January/February 1965), 28-52
- Bowman, Frank P., 'La Nouvelle en 1832: la société, la misère, la mort et les mots' in *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, 27(1975), 189-208
- Braun, Maximilian, *Dostojewskij. Das Gesamtwerk als Vielfalt und Einheit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976)
- Bray, Patrick, 'Balzac and the Chagrin of Theory' in *L'Esprit Créateur*, 54:3 (Fall 2014)
- Brion Charles, 'Scepticisme éthique et rédemption religieuse : Balzac lecteur de *Faust*' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 11:1 (2010), 267-89
- Brodsky, Iosif, *Vlast' stikhi. O Dostoevskom*, (1980) at <http://brodsky.ouc.ru/vlast-stikhiy-o-dostoevskom.html>, accessed 9 July 2016
- Brombert, Victor, *The Hidden Reader: Stendhal, Balzac, Hugo, Baudelaire, Flaubert* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988)
- Brooke-Rose, Christine, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal. Studies in Narrative and Structure, especially of the Fantastic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)

- Brooks, Jeffrey, *When Russia Learned to Read. Literacy and Popular Literature 1861-1917*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)
- 'How Tolstoevskii Pleased Readers and Rewrote a Russian Myth' in *Slavic Review*, 64:3 (Autumn, 2005), 538-59
- Brooks, Peter, *Reading for the Plot* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984)
- *The Melodramatic Imagination. Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976 and 1995)
- *Troubling Confessions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
- *Realist Vision* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2005)
- Brown, Frederick, *Zola, a Life* (London: Macmillan, 1995)
- Browning, Gary, 'Zosima's "Secret of Renewal" in *The Brothers Karamazov*' in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 33:4 (Winter, 1989), 516-29
- Brunetière, Ferdinand, *Evolution des genres dans l'histoire de la littérature* (Paris: Pocket, 2000)
- Burton, Richard, 'The Unseen Seer, or Proteus in the City: Aspects of a Nineteenth-century Myth' in *French Studies*, 42:1 (1988), 50-68
- Busch, R. L., 'Dostoevsky's Major Novels and the European Gothic Tradition', in *Russian Language Journal*, 40 (1986), 57-74
- Butler, Ronnie, 'Dessous économiques dans *La Comédie humaine*. Crises politiques et spéculation' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:2 (1981), 267-83
- Capitanio, Sarah, 'Les Mécanismes métaphoriques dans *La Curée*', in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 61 (1987), 181-93
- "L'Hypertextualité chez Zola. Le cas de *La Curée*' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 68 (1994), 49-62
- Castex, Pierre-Georges, *Le Conte fantastique en France de Nodier à Maupassant* (Paris: Librairie Joseph Corti, 1951)
- Catteau, Jacques, *Dostoevsky and the Process of Literary Creation*, trans. Audrey Littlewood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989)
- Chaline, Jean-Pierre, 'Les Bourgeois et l'argent : un exemple provincial au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle' in *Romantisme*, 40 (1983), 31-40

- Chances, Ellen, 'Tolstoy and Dostoevsky: Links between *Brothers Karamazov* and *Anna Karenina*' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 15 (2011), 17-27
- Charle, Christophe, *La Crise littéraire à l'époque du naturalisme* (Paris: Presses de l'école normale supérieure, 1979)
- *Naissance des "intellectuels" 1880-1900* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1990)
- *Histoire sociale de la France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991)
- *Le Siècle de la presse, 1830-1939* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004)
- Charpentier, Georges, *Trente Années d'amitié. Lettres de l'éditeur Georges Charpentier à Émile Zola, 1872-1902*, ed. by Colette Becker (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1980)
- Chevalier, Louis, *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris pendant la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1958)
- Chollet, Roland, 'Balzac journaliste et le tournant de 1830' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:2 (1981), 123-38
- *Balzac journaliste* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983)
- Christa, Boris, "'Money Talks": The Semiotic Anatomy of *Krotkaia*' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 4 (2000), 143-52
- 'Dostoevskii and Money' in *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevskii*, ed. by William Leatherbarrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, Review of Matthew G. Lewis, 'The Monk' in *The Critical Review*, 2.19 (Feb. 1797), 194-200
- Colin, René-Pierre, *Schopenhauer en France: un mythe naturaliste* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1979)
- Collins, Irene, *The Government and the Newspaper Press in France, 1814-1881* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959)
- Crouzet, M., 'L'Argent romanesque' in *Romantisme*, 40 (1983), 115-18
- Dale, R. C., 'Le Colonel Chabert: Between Gothicism and Naturalism' in *L'Esprit créateur*, 7 (1971), 11-17
- Dällenbach, Lucien, *Le Récit spéculaire: essai sur la mise en abyme*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1977).

- 'Le tout en morceaux' (*La Comédie humaine* et l'opération de lecture II) in *Poétique*, 42 (1980), 159-69
- 'Du fragment au cosmos (*La Comédie humaine* et l'opération de lecture I)' in *Poétique*, 40 (1979), 420-31
- Dalton, Elizabeth, *Unconscious structure in The Idiot* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979)
- Danow, David, *The Dialogic Sign: Essays on the Major Novels of Dostoevsky* (New York: Lang, 1991)
- Darnton, Robert, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (ACLS Humanities E-Book, 1984, revised edition 2009), <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2164/2027/heb.01687.0001.001> , accessed 9 July 2016
- *The Business of Enlightenment : A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1979)
- *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London: HarperCollins, 1996)
- Daumard, Adeline, 'L'Argent et le rang dans la société française du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle' in *Romantisme*, 40 (1983), 19-29
- Delany, Paul, *Literature, Money and the Market. From Trollope to Amis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)
- Desprez, Louis, *L'Evolution naturaliste* (Paris: Tresse 1884)
- Dianina, Katia, 'The Feuilleton, an Everyday Guide to Public Culture in the Age of the Great Reforms' in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 47:2 (Summer, 2003), 187-210
- Donnard, Jean-Hervé, *Balzac, Les Réalités économiques et sociales dans La Comédie humaine* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1961)
- Dorontchenkov, Ilya, Charles Rouble and Ilya Gur'yanova, *Russian and Soviet views of modern Western art: 1890s to mid-1930s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)
- Drevon, Marguerite and Jeannine Guichardet, 'Fameux Sexorama', in *L'Année balzacienne*, (1972), 257-74
- Driscoll J., 'Chelovek bez interesa: Ekonomika dareniiia v romane F M Dostoevskogo *Idiot*' in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 58.6 (2002) 55-73.

- 
- Dubern, Eugène, 'La Rente française chez Balzac' in *L'Année balzacienne*, (1963), 251-68
- Dufour, Philippe, *Le Réalisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1998)
- Eagleton, Terry, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, revised 1996)
- Eikhenbaum, Boris, *Moi Vremennik. Marshrut v bessmertie* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Agraf, 2001)
- Erickson, Lee, *The Economy of Literary Form: English literature and the industrialization of publishing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)
- Eveno, Patrick, *L'Argent de la presse française des années 1820 à nos jours* (Paris: Editions du CTHS, 2003)
- Fanger, Donald, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967)
- Farrant, Tim, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (London: Duckworth, 2007)
- *Balzac's Shorter Fictions. Genesis and Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Felkay, Nicole, *Balzac et ses éditeurs 1822-1837. Essai sur la librairie romantique* (Paris: Promodis, 1987)
- Feltes, Norman N., *Literary Capital and the Late Victorian Novel* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993)
- Ferguson, Niall, *The Ascent of Money* (London: Allen Lane, 2008)
- Flath, Carol, 'The Passion of Dmitrii Karamazov' in *Slavic Review*, 58:3 (Autumn 1999), 584-99
- Fish, Stanley, *Is there a Text in this Class?: the Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980)
- Frank, Joseph, *Dostoevsky*, 5 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976-2002)
- Frazier, Melissa, *Frames of the Imagination. Gogol's Arabesques and the Romantic Question of Genre* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000)

- 
- *Romantic Encounters. Writers, Readers and the Library for Reading*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007)
- 'Turgenev and a Proliferating French Press: The Feuilleton and Feuilletonistic in *A Nest of the Gentry*', in *Slavic Review*, 69:4 (Winter 2010), 925-43
- 'Dostoevsky, Wilkie Collins and the Science of Sensation', unpublished draft, Jan 2014
- Furet, François and Jacques Ozouf, *L'Alphabétisation des Français de Calvin à Jules Ferry*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977)
- Fusso, Susanne, *Discovering Sexuality in Dostoevsky* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006)
- Gagnier, Regenia, *The Insatiability of Human Wants. Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
- Galenson, David W. and Jensen, Robert, *Careers and Canvases: The Rise of the Market for Modern Art in the Nineteenth Century* (National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 9123, September 2002)
- Gallagher, Catherine, *The Body Economic. Life, Death and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)
- Gallois, William, *Zola: The History of Capitalism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000)
- Genet, Jean, 'A Reading of *The Brothers Karamazov*', trans. by Arthur Goldhammer, in *Grand Street* 47 (Autumn 1993), 172-76
- Genette, Gérard, *Figures II* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1979)
- *Palimpsestes* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982)
- Gest, John Marshall, *The Law and Lawyers of Honoré de Balzac*, a paper presented to the Pennsylvania Bar Association on 29 June 1911, (<http://www.archive.org/details/lawlawyersofhono00gest>; accessed 10 July 2016)
- Gibson, Alexander Boyce, *The Religion of Dostoevsky* (London: SCM Press, 1973)
- Gide, André, *Dostoïevsky* (Paris: Plon, 1923)
- *Journal, 1889-1939* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992)

- 
- Gildea, Robert, *Children of the Revolution. The French 1799-1914* (London: Penguin, 2009)
- Gille, Bertrand, *Histoire de la Maison Rothschild*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1965)
- Girardin, Emile de, 'Enquête commercial sur l'industrie littéraire' in *Musée des Familles*, 2 (Nov.1834), 45-47
- Goldsmith, Raymond 'The Economic Growth of Tsarist Russia 1860-1913' in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 9:3(April 1961), 441-75
- Gomart, Hélène, 'L'interminable opération à terme d'Aristide Saccard' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 71-90
- *Les Opérations financières dans le roman réaliste* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004)
- Gontard, Maurice, *La Bourse de Paris 1800-1830* (Paris: Edisud, 2000)
- Gourmont, Rémy de, *Le Problème du style* (Paris: Société du Mercure de France, 1907)
- Goux, Jean-Joseph, *Freud, Marx: économie et symbolique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973)
- *Les Monnayeurs du langage* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1984)
- *Frivolité de la valeur. Essai sur l'imaginaire du capitalisme* (Paris: Blusson, 2000)
- 'Emile Zola: de l'Argent de l'écriture à l'écriture de *L'Argent*' in *Les Frontières littéraires de l'économie*, ed. by Martial Poirson, Yves Citton and Christian Biet (Paris: Editions Desjonquères, 2008), 145-60
- Grav, Peter, *Shakespeare and the Economic Imperative* (London: Routledge, 2008)
- Green, Anne, *Changing France: Literature and Material Culture in the Second Empire* (New York: Anthem Press, 2011) and <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:oxfaleph000545742>, accessed 27 April 2016
- Grossman, Leonid, *Balzac and Dostoevsky* (Letchworth: Prideaux Press, 1975)
- *Seminarii po Dostoevskomu* (Letchworth: Prideaux Press, 1972)
- *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennaya Akademiya Khudozhestvennykh Nauk, 1925)

- 
- Guise, René, 'Balzac et la presse de son temps' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:2 (1981), 7-35
- 'Balzac et le roman feuilleton' in *L'Année balzacienne*, (1964), 283-338
- *Le Roman-feuilleton 1830-1848: la naissance d'un genre*, 36 microfiches, Doctorat d'état, (Nancy: Nancy II, 1975)
- Gur'ev, A., *Ocherk razvitiya kreditnykh uchrezhdenii v Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Yakor' Press, 1904, reprinted Moscow: Yukis, 2010)
- Guyon, Yves Félix, *La Société anonyme* (Paris: Dalloz, 1994)
- Haggis, D. R., 'Scott, Balzac and the Historical Novel as Social and Political Analysis: *Waverley* and *Les Chouans*' in *Modern Language Review*, 68:1 (Jan. 1973), 51-68
- Hamon, Philippe, *Le personnel du roman: le système des personnages dans les Rougon-Macquart d'Emile Zola* (Genève: Droz, 1983)
- Harrison, Carol, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-century France* (Oxford: Oxford, 1999)
- Hatin, Eugène, *Bibliographie historique et critique de la presse périodique française* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1866)
- *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse en France* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1859-61)
- Hazan, Eric, *The Invention of Paris: a History in Footsteps*, trans. by David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2010)
- Heathcote, Owen, 'La lettre d'adieu comme protocole de lecture chez Balzac' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:11 (2010), 79-96
- Hemmings, Frederick, *Emile Zola* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966)
- *Culture and Society in France 1848-1898* (London: Batsford, 1971)
- *Culture and Society in France 1789-1848* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987)
- Herrnstein Smith, Barbara, *On the Margins of Discourse. The Relation of Literature to Language*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978)
- Hingley, Ronald, *Russian Writers and Society 1825-1904* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967)

- 
- Hirsch, Eric, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975)
- Hirschman, Albert, *The Passion and the Interests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977)
- Holland, Kate, 'The Fictional Filter: *Krotkaia* and *The Diary of a Writer*' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 4 (2000), 95-116
- *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2013)
- Holland, Norman, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968)
- Holquist, Michael, *Dostoevsky and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977)
- Hudspith, Sarah, *Dostoevsky and the Idea of Russianness* (London, Routledge, 2004)
- Hughes, Linda and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991)
- Huret, Jules, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (Paris: Charpentier, 1891 and <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k49807k>, accessed 10 July 2016)
- Iser, Wolfgang, *The Act of Reading: a Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978)
- Ivanov, Vyacheslav, *Freedom and the Tragic Life. A Study in Dostoevsky* (New York: Noonday Press, 1957)
- Jackson, Robert Louis, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966)
- *Dialogues with Dostoevsky: The Overwhelming Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993)
- James, Tony, *Dream, Creativity and Madness in Nineteenth-century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)
- Janin, Jules, 'Histoire du journal en France' in *Revue de Paris*, 12 (December 1834), 169-92
- 'Historiettes' in *Revue de Paris*, 2 (January 1834), 245-59
- 'Manifeste de la jeune littérature' in *Revue de Paris*, 1 (January 1834), 5-30

- 
- Jauss, Hans, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982)
- Jefferson, Ann, *Reading Realism in Stendhal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
- *Biography and the Question of Literature in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- *Genius in France. An Idea and its Uses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015)
- Joly, Bernard, 'Le Chaud et le froid dans *La Curée*' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 51 (1977), 56-79
- Jones, John, *Dostoevsky* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983)
- Jones, Malcolm, *Dostoevsky after Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- *Dostoevsky and the Dynamics of Religious Experience* (London: Anthem Press, 2005)
- Jonge, Alex de, *Dostoevsky and the Age of Intensity* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1975)
- Kahn, Andrew, *Pushkin's Lyric Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Kahan, Arcadius, *Russian Economic History: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Roger Weiss (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989)
- Kaiser, Thomas E., 'Money, Despotism, and Public Opinion in Early Eighteenth-century France: John Law and the Debate on Royal Credit' in *The Journal of Modern History*, 63.1 (Mar., 1991), 1-28
- Kakridis, Yannis, 'Smerdjakov's Suicide Note' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 14 (2010), 145-51
- Kalifa, Dominique, *L'Encre et le sang* (Paris: Fayard, 1995)
- *La Culture de masse en France. 1. 1860-1930* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2001)
- *Les Bas-fonds* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2013)
- Kanes, Martin, 'Zola, Balzac and 'La Fortune des Rogron'' in *French Studies*, 18:3 (1964), 203-12

- 
- Kavanagh, Thomas M., *Dice, Cards, Wheels : A Different History of French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), also available at <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:oxfaleph000594445>, accessed 10 July 2016
- Kinder, P., 'Balzac, Girardin et la publication de *La Maison Nucingen*' in *L'Année balzacienne* (1979), 15-46
- Konotopov, M. V. and S. I. Smetanin, *Istoriya ekonomiki Rossii* (Moscow: KnoRus, 2008)
- Kovaleva, M.M., '*Literaturnaya gazeta v 1841-1845gg.*', in *Voprosy istorii pechati* (Sverdlovsk: Ural'ski Gosudarstvennyi Universitet, 1974), 72-94.
- Kremer-Marietti, Angèle, 'Philosophies de l'argent au XIXe siècle' in *Romantisme*, 40 (1983), 7-18
- Kristeva, Julia, 'Holbein's Dead Christ', in *Zone*, 3 (1989) 238-69
- *Soleil noir: dépression et mélancolie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999)
- Kufaeu, Mikhail, *Istoriya russkoi knigi v XIX veke* (1927, reprinted Moscow: Pashkov Dom, 2003)
- Küpper, J., *Balzac und der 'effet du réel'. Eine Untersuchung anhand der Textstufen des Colonel Chabert und des Curé du Village* (Amsterdam: Verlag B.R. Grüner, 1986)
- Labouret, Mireille, ' 'Fabriquer le temps' à rebours. Problèmes romanesques et mécanismes reparaissants dans *La Torpille*' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:3 (2002), 181-203
- 'À propos des personnages reparaissants. Constitution du personnage et 'sens de la mémoire' ' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:6 (2005), 125-42
- Lascar, Alex, 'Balzac et Sue: échanges à feuilletons mouchetés' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:11 (2010), 201-21
- 'Vautrin, du roman au théâtre' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:1 (2000), 301-14
- Law, Graham, *Serialising Fiction in the Victorian Press* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000)
- Leatherbarrow, William, *Fyodor Dostoyevsky - The Brothers Karamazov* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

- 
- Lefebvre-Teillard, Anne, *La Société anonyme au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: Du Code de commerce à la loi de 1867, histoire d'un instrument juridique du développement capitaliste* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992)
- Le Men, Ségolène, 'La 'Littérature panoramique' dans la genèse de *La Comédie humaine*: Balzac et *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:3 (2002), 73-108
- *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes: Panorama social du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Les Dossiers du Musée d'Orsay, 1993)
- Lejeune, Philippe, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1975)
- Lemarchand, Guy, *L'Economie en France de 1770 à 1830* (Paris, Armand Colin, 2008)
- Lethbridge, Robert, 'La Préparation de *La Curée*. Mise au point d'une chronologie' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 51 (1977), 37-48
- Levin, Harry, *The Gates of Horn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966)
- Lichtlé, Michel, 'Balzac et la justice de paix' in *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, 44 (1992), 117-40
- 'Balzac et le Code civil' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:20 (1999), 119-40
- 'Images balzaciennes de la justice' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:5 (2004), 261-87
- Lincoln, W. Bruce, *The Great Reforms. Autocracy, Bureaucracy and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1990)
- Lindstrom, Thais, 'From Chapbooks to Classics; The Story of the *Intermediary*' in *American Slavic and East European Review*, 16:2 (April 1957), 190-201
- Lorant, André, *Les Parents pauvres d'Honoré de Balzac* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1967)
- Lord, Robert, *Dostoevsky: essays and perspectives* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970)
- Louandre, Charles, 'Statistique littéraire de la production intellectuelle en France depuis 15 ans', *Revue des deux mondes* 4.235 (1847)
- Lounsbery, Anne, 'Print Culture and Real Life In Dostoevsky's *Demons*' in *Dostoevsky Studies, New Series*, 11 (2007), 25-37
- Lovenjoul, Charles Spoelberch, vicomte de, *Un Dernier chapitre de l'histoire des*

- œuvres de H. de Balzac*, ed. by Jules Janin and Charles Baudelaire (Paris: Editions Dentu, 1880)
- Lukács, György, *Balzac et le réalisme français*, trans. by Paul Laveau (Paris: François Maspero, 1951, reprinted 1967)
- Lyon-Caen, Judith, *La Lecture et la vie. Les usages du roman au temps de Balzac* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006)
- Lyons, Martin, *Reading Culture and Writing Practices in Nineteenth-century France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008)
- Maddison, E.C., *The Paris Bourse and the London Stock Exchange* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1877)
- Maingenau, Dominique, *Le Contexte de l'œuvre littéraire: énonciation, écrivain, société* (Paris: Dunod, 1993)
- Maiorova, Olga, *From the Shadow of Empire. Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology, 1855-1870* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2010)
- Martin-Fugier, Anne, *Les Salons de la III<sup>e</sup> république: art, littérature, politique*, (Paris: Perrin, 2003)
- Martinsen, Deborah, 'Dostoevsky's liars as humiliated poets' in *Dostoevsky i mirovaya kultura*, 13 (1999), 139-46
- 'Shame and Punishment' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 5 (2005), 51-70
- Mauss, Marcel, *The Gift*, trans. by Ian Cunnison, (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954, reprinted by Martino Publishing, 2011)
- Mazet, Léo, 'Récit(s) dans le récit: l'échange du récit chez Balzac' in *L'Année balzacienne*, (1976), 129-61
- McCauley, Karen, 'Production Literature and the Industrial Imagination' in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 42:3 (Autumn 1998), 444-66
- McReynolds, Louise, *The News under Russia's Old Regime. The Development of a Mass-circulation Press* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991)
- McReynolds, Susan, *Redemption and the Merchant God* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008)

- 
- '“You Can Buy the Whole World”': The Problem of Redemption in *The Brothers Karamazov*' in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 52:1 (Spring 2008), 87-111
- Meininger, Anne-Marie, 'Nucingen, d'une révolution l'autre' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:11 (1990), 77-88
- Meyer, Priscilla, *How the Russians Read the French* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008)
- Miller, Robin Feuer, *Dostoevsky and The Idiot* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981)
- *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Twayne, 1992)
- 'Dostoevsky's parables: Paradox and Plot' in *Cultural Discontinuity and Reconstruction. The Byzanto-Slav Heritage and the Creation of a Russian National Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Jostein Børtnes and Ingunn Lunde (Oslo: Solum, 1997), 168-84
- *Dostoevsky's Unfinished Journey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007)
- 'Dostoevsky's *Poor People*: Reading as if for Life' in *Reading in Russia. Places and Manners of Reading, 1760-1930*, unpublished draft (2014)
- Mironov, Boris with Ben Eklof, *The Social History of Imperial Russia 1700-1917* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999-2000)
- Mitterand, Henri, *Zola journaliste* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1962)
- *Zola et le naturalisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1986)
- *Zola, L'Histoire et la fiction* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1990)
- *L'Illusion réaliste. De Balzac à Aragon* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1994)
- *Zola*, 3 vols. (Paris: Fayard, 1999-2002)
- Mochulsky, Konstantin, *Dostoevsky, zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Paris: YMCA, 1947)
- Mollier, Jean-Yves, 'L'Édition en Europe avant 1850' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:13 (1992), 157-73
- *L'Argent et les lettres. Histoire du capitalisme d'édition. 1880-1920*, (Paris: Fayard, 1988)

- 
- *Michel et Calmann Lévy, ou, la naissance de l'édition moderne* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1984)
- *Le Commerce de la librairie en France au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle 1789-1914* (Paris: IMEC Editions, 1997)
- *Louis Hachette, 1800-1864: le fondateur d'un empire* (Paris: Fayard, 1999)
- 'Zola, le Champ littéraire et l'argent' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 91-102
- Moreau, Thérèse, 'Noces d'or : l'économie anti-malthusienne dans l'œuvre de Zola' in *Romantisme*, 40 (1983), 153-65
- Moretti, Franco, *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature* (London: Verso, 2013)
- Morierval, Jean, pseudonym of Henri Thévenin, *Les Créateurs de la grande presse en France. Emile de Girardin, H. de Villemessant, Moïse Millaud* (Paris: Editions Spes, 1934)
- Morson, Gary Saul, *The Boundaries of Genre* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)
- *Narrative and Freedom: the Shadows of Time* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1994)
- 'Paradoxical Dostoevsky', in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 43:3 (Autumn 1999), 471-94
- Morson, Gary Saul and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin. Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990)
- Mortimer, Armine Kotin, 'La Maison Nucingen, ou le récit financier', in *Romanic Review*, 69:1-2 (January-March 1978), 60-71
- *For Love or for Money. Balzac's Rhetorical Realism* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2011)
- Mounod-Anglès, Christiane, *Balzac et ses lectrices* (Paris: Indigo, 1994)
- Murata, Kyoko, 'Assimilation de l'esthétique du roman-feuilleton chez Balzac' in *Balzac et alii, génétiques croisées. Histoires d'éditions*, ed. by Takayuki Kamada and Jacques Neefs, actes du colloque international organisé by the Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes, 3-5 June 2010, <http://balzac.cerilac.univ-paris-diderot.fr/balzacetalii.html>, consulted 22 July 2016

- *Les Métamorphoses du pacte diabolique dans l'œuvre de Balzac* (Osaka: OMUP, 2003)
- Muratov, Mikhail, *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX i XX vekakh : ocherk istorii knigoizdatel'stva i knigotorgovli, 1800-1917 gody* (Moscow: Gosudarstvenoe sotsialno-ekonomicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1931)
- Murav, Harriet, *Holy Foolishness. Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992)
- *Russia's Legal Fictions* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998)
- Naudin-Patriat, Françoise, *Ténèbres et lumière de l'argent : la représentation de l'ordre social dans Les Rougon-Macquart* (Dijon: Université de Dijon, 1981)
- Nelson, Brian, *Zola and the Bourgeoisie* (London: Macmillan, 1983)
- Nettement, Alfred, *Etudes critiques sur le feuilleton roman* (Paris: Lagny Frères, 1847)
- Nisard, Désiré, 'D'un Amendement à la définition de littérature facile' in *Revue de Paris*, 2 (Jan. 1834), 5-24
- Nodier, Charles, 'Du Fantastique en littérature' in *Revue de Paris*, 20 (1830), 205-26
- Noiray, Jacques, *Le Romancier et la machine*, 2 vols. (Paris, Corti, 1981)
- Novak-Lechevalier, Agathe, *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010)
- O'Driscoll, Seamas, *Invisible Forces: Capitalism And The Russian Literary Imagination: 1855-1881* (Harvard: Unpublished doctoral dissertation UMI No: 3194440, 2005.)
- Ollivier, Sophie, 'L'Argent chez Dostoïevski' in *Europe*, 510 (October 1971), 70-84
- Owen, Thomas, *Capitalism and Politics in Russia. A Social History of the Moscow Merchants 1855-1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)
- Palmer, Michael, *Des Petits journaux aux grandes agences. Naissance du journalisme moderne, 1863-1914* (Paris: Aubier, 1983)
- Pagès, Alain and Owen Morgan, *Guide Emile Zola* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002)
- Pagès, Alain, 'Zola face à l'antisémitisme. De la question juive à la question de l'argent' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 103-15

- *Emile Zola, Bilan critique* (Institut des textes et manuscrits modernes, <http://www.item.ens.fr/index.php?id=187040>, accessed 15 February 2015)
- Paperno, Irina, *Suicide as a cultural institution in Dostoevsky's Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997)
- Parent-Lardeur, Françoise, *Lire à Paris au temps de Balzac: Les cabinets de lecture à Paris, 1815-1830* (Paris: Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1999)
- Parkhurst-Ferguson, Priscilla, 'Mobilité et modernité. Le Paris dans *La Curée*' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 67 (1993), 73-82
- Peace, Richard, *Dostoevsky. An Examination of the Major Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971)
- 'Dostoevsky and the Syllogism' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 9 (2005), 72-80
- Pearson, Roger, *Stendhal's Violin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988)
- Péraud, Alexandre, *Le Crédit dans la poétique balzacienne* (Paris: Garnier, 2012)
- Perlina, Nina, *Varieties of Poetic Utterance. Quotation in The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: University Press of America, 1985)
- Petrey, Sandy, *Realism and Revolution: Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, and the Performances of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988)
- Pierre-Gnassounou, Chantal, *Zola. Les Fortunes de la fiction* (Paris: Nathan, 1999)
- Piketty, Thomas, *Le Capital au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2013)
- *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 2014)
- Plessis, Alain, 'La Bourse et la société française du Second Empire' in *Romantisme*, 40 (1983), 41-52
- Pollaud-Dulian, Frédéric, 'Balzac et la propriété littéraire', *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:4 (2003), 197-223
- Polunov, Alexander, *Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Autocracy, Reform and Social Change, 1814-1914*, ed. by Thomas Owen and Larissa Zakharova (Armonk: Sharpe, 2005)
- Pomar, Mark, 'Karamazov's Epiphany: a Reading of "Cana of Galilee"', in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 27:1 (Spring 1983), 47-56

- 
- Pommier, Jean, *L'Invention et l'écriture dans La Torpille d'Honoré de Balzac* (Geneva: Droz, 1957)
- Poovey, Mary, *Making a Social Body. British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)
- *Genres of the Credit Economy. Mediating Value in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)
- Porter, Laurence, 'The Devil as Double in Nineteenth-century Literature: Goethe, Dostoevsky and Flaubert' in *Comparative Literature Studies*, 15:3 (September 1978), 316-35
- Pravilova, Ekaterina, *A Public Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014)
- Prendergast, Christopher, *Balzac. Fiction and Melodrama* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978)
- *The Order of Mimesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)
- *Paris and the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)
- *For the People by the People?: Eugène Sue's Les Mystères De Paris: A Hypothesis in the Sociology of Literature* (Oxford: Legenda, 2003)
- Prévost, Jean, *La Création chez Stendhal* (Marseille: Editions du Sagittaire, 1942)
- Price, Roger, *An Economic History of Modern France, 1730-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1981)
- Price, Munro, *The Perilous Crown. France between Revolutions* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2007)
- Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph, *Manuel du spéculateur à la bourse* (Paris: Garnier, 1857), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k200989b>, accessed 22 July 2016
- Queffelec, Lise, *Le Roman-feuilleton français au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989)
- Quérard, Joseph, *Les Supercheries littéraires dévoilées*, second edition, ed. by Gustave Brunet and Pierre Jannet, 3 vols. (Paris: Paul Daffis, 1869)
- Raimond, Michel, *La Crise du roman : des lendemains du naturalisme aux années vingt* (Paris: J. Corti, 1966)
- Reffait, Christophe, 'L'Argent, un roman politique' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 63-70

- *La Bourse dans le roman du second XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle: discours romanesque et imaginaire social de la spéculation* (Paris: Champion, 2007)
- Reitblat, Abram, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu. Ocherki po istorii chteniya v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, MPI, 1991)
- *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii: istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki o knizhnoi kul'ture Pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2001)
- Rice, James, 'The Covert Design of *The Brothers Karamazov*: Alesha's Pathology and Dialectic' in *Slavic Review*, 68:2 (Summer 2009), 355-75
- Ripoll, Roger, *Réalité et mythe chez Zola*, (Doctoral Thesis: Université de Paris IV, 1977, reproduced by Champion, 1981)
- Robb, Graham, *Balzac* (London: Picador, 1994)
- Rosen, Nathan, 'The Madness of Lise Khokhlakova in *The Brothers Karamazov*' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 6 (2002), 154-62
- 'Ivan Karamazov confronts the Devil' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 5 (2001), 117-28
- Rosenshield, Gary, *Western Law, Russian Justice. Dostoevsky, the Jury Trial and the Law* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005)
- Rousset, Gustave, *Analyse critique et rédaction nouvelle du Code Napoléon* (Toulon: Imprimerie E. Aurel, 1867)
- Sainte-Beuve, Charles Augustin 'De la littérature industrielle', in *Revue des deux mondes*, 4:19 (1839), 675-91
- 'Nouvelles russes', in *Revue des deux mondes*, Nouvelle série 12 (1845), 883-89
- *Premiers lundis* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1886-94) and at <https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/7203262> , accessed 22 July 2016
- Saminadayar-Perrin, Corinne, 'Fictions de la Bourse' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 78 (2004), 41-62
- Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008)
- Schaeffer, Jean-Marie, *Qu'est-ce qu'un genre littéraire?* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989)
- Schilling, Bernard, *The Hero as Failure. Balzac and the Rubempré Cycle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968)

- 
- Schuerewegen, Franc, *Balzac contre Balzac: les cartes du lecteur* (Paris and Toronto: Sedes/Paratexte, 1990)
- Sennett, Richard, *The Rise and Fall of Public Man* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986)
- Shell, Marc, *Money, Language and Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982)
- *The Economy of Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978)
- Shevyrev, Stepan, 'O Kritike voobshe i u nas v Rossii 'in *Moskovsky nablyudatel'*: 1 (1835), 494-525
- Shklovsky, Viktor *Za i protiv. Zametki o Dostoevskom* (Moscow: Sovetsky pisatel', 1957)
- *Energiya Zabluzhdeniya. Kniga o syuzhete* (Moscow: Sovetsky pisatel', 1981)
- Simmel, Georg, *The Philosophy of Money*, ed. by David Frisby and trans. by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Sivert, E.B., 'Who's Who: Non-Characters in *Le Colonel Chabert*' in *French Forum*, 13:2 (1988), 217-28
- Soreph, Gustave, *Défends ton argent : conseils pratiques pour éviter les pièges tendus à l'épargne* (Paris: Larousse, 1909), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5447863h>, accessed 23 July 2016
- St. Clair, William, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- Steiner, George, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959)
- Suwala, Halina, 'Le Krach de l'Union Générale dans le roman français avant *L'Argent* de Zola' in *Cahiers naturalistes*, 27 (1964), 80-90
- *Autour de Zola et du naturalisme* (Paris: Champion, 1993)
- Terdiman, Richard. *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: the Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985)
- 'The Mnemonics of Musset's *Confession*' in *Representations*, 26 (Spring, 1989), 26-48.

- Terras, Victor, *A Karamazov Companion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981)
- *The Idiot, an Interpretation* (New York: Twayne, 1990)
- *Reading Dostoevsky* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998)
- Thérenty, Marie-Eve, *Mosaïques. Etre écrivain entre presse et roman (1829-1836)*, (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003)
- *La Littérature au quotidien* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2007)
- 'Chapitres et feuilletons : les scansion-fantômes de *La Comédie humaine*' in *Balzac et alii, génétiques croisées. Histoires d'éditions*, ed. by Takayuki Kamada and Jacques Neefs, actes du colloque international organised by the Groupe International de Recherches Balzaciennes, 3-5 June 2010, <http://balzac.cerilac.univ-paris-diderot.fr/balzacetalii.html>, accessed 22 July 2016
- Thiesse, Anne-Marie, *Le Roman du quotidien. Lecteurs et lectures populaires à la Belle Epoque*. (Paris: Le Chemin Vert, 1984)
- Thompson, Diane Oenning, *The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Thompson, James, *Models of Value. Eighteenth-century Political Economy and the Novel*. (London: Duke University Press, 1996)
- Todd, William Mills III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin : Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986)
- 'The Brothers Karamazov and the Poetics of Serial Publication' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, 7(1986), 87-97
- 'Contexts of Criticism: Reviewing *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1879.' in 'Literature, Culture, and Society in the Modern Age: In Honor of Joseph Frank', ed. by Edward J. Brown et al., in *Stanford Slavic Studies*, 4:1 (1991), 293-310
- 'Dostoevsky and Tolstoy: The Professionalisation of Literature and Serialised Fiction' in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 15 (2011), 29-36
- *Serialisation: Institutions of Literature as Patterns of Communication*, unpublished paper delivered at Oxford University, 31 May 2012
- "To be Continued": *Dostoevsky's Evolving Poetics of Serialised Publication*, in *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, 18 (2014), 22-33

- *Dostoevsky and the Moral Hazards of Serial Publication*, unpublished paper delivered at 'Genius for Sale! Artistic Production and Economic Context', a conference held at Wolfson College, Oxford, 8 May 2014
- Todorov, Tzvetan, *Genres in Discourse*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard and Robert Scholes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975)
- Tomalin, Claire, *Charles Dickens: A Life* (London: Viking, 2011)
- Tombs, Robert, *France 1814-1914* (Harlow: Longman, 1996)
- Tosi, Alessandra, *Waiting for Pushkin. Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander 1 (1801-1825)* (Amsterdam- New York: Rodopi, 2006)
- Ubersfeld, Anne, 'La Crise de 1831-1833 dans la vie et dans l'œuvre de Balzac' in *Europe*, 429-30 (January/February 1965), 55-68
- Uspensky, B, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. by V. Zavarin and S. Wittig (London: University of California Press, 1973)
- Vachon, Stéphane, 'L'œuvre au comptoir: la moitié de *La Comédie humaine* a paru en feuilletons' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:16 (1995), 349-61
- 'Lire au temps de Balzac' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 3:11 (2010), 7-19
- *Le Dernier Balzac* (Tusson, Editions du Lérot, 1993)
- *Les travaux et les jours d'Honoré de Balzac. Chronologie de la création balzacienne* (Paris: Presses du CNRS, 1992)
- Vaillant, Alain, *La Crise de la littérature. Romantisme et modernité* (Grenoble: ELLUG, 2005)
- Valentino, Russell Scott, 'A Catalogue of Commercialism in Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls*' in *Slavic Review*, 57:3 (Autumn 1998) 543-62
- *Vicissitudes of Genre in the Russian Novel* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001)
- Vernon, John, *Money and Fiction : Literary Realism in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984)
- Vlaskin, A. P., 'Zaochny dialog N.S. Leskova i F.M.Dostoevskogo po problemam religioznosti i narodnoi kul'tury', *Russkaia literatura*, 1 (2003), 16-48

- 
- Vogüé, Eugène-Melchior vicomte de, *Le Roman russe* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1886)
- Volgin, Igor , *Dostoevsky-zhurnalists: (Dnevnik pisatelya i russkaya obshchestvennost)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1982)
- Walker, David, *Consumer Chronicles: Cultures of Consumption in Modern French Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011)
- Wanuffel, I., 'Présence de Hoffmann dans les œuvres de Balzac (1829-1835)', in *L'Année balzacienne*, (1970), 45-56
- Wasiolek, Edward, *Dostoevsky. The Major Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1964)
- Weyl, Roland, 'Balzac et le fait divers' in *Europe*, 429-30 (January/February 1965), 164-70
- Wimsatt, William K., *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, ed. by Monroe C. Beardsley (New York: Noonday Press, 1958)
- Young, Sarah, *Dostoevsky's The Idiot and the Ethical Foundations of Narrative* (London: Anthem, 2004)
- Zakharov, Vladimir, *Genial'ny fel'etonist* in *Dostoevsky PSS* 2003-05, iv.501-13
- Zeldin, Theodore *France 1848-1945. Taste and Corruption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980)
- Ziegler, François de, 'Balzac et Dostoïevski' in *L'Année balzacienne*, 2:14 (1993), 65-73
- Zundelovich, Iakov, *Romany Dostoevskogo* (Tashkent: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, srednyaya i vysshaya shkola UzSSR, 1963, reprinted Moscow: Ardis, 1984)