TOUGH LOVE, HARD BARGAINS: RAPE AND COERCION IN BALZAC

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To begin, a legal theory of rape: "ie cuide nulle fille ne estre viollée que de greant cueur" (Balzac, *Œuvres diverses*, 1: 394). This disturbing opinion is expressed by the judge in Balzac's *conte drolatique* "Comment la belle fille de Portillon quinaulda son iuge". But the idea is not merely a piece of bawdy medieval kitsch: on the contrary, it resonates in the legal language of the late twentieth century, as Susan Brownmiller reminds us:

> The proposition that all women secretly wish to be ravished [...] is bolstered by the claim that "No woman can be raped against her will." A variation runs "You can't thread a moving needle," used with wicked wit by Balzac in one of his *Droll Stories,* and retold *ad nauseam* [...] by law professors seeking to inject a little classroom humour into their introductory lectures. (312)

Even Brownmiller's polemic can allow that Balzac's story is witty, wickedly so. He is certainly more subtle than those law professors who paraphrase him, not least because he presents conflicting views: particularly the uncanny "saige advis" of the judge's servant, who remarks "que il y avoit des viols playsants et des viols trez maulvais, que si la Portillone n'avoyt perceu ni denniers ni plaisirs, il luy estoit deu plaisir ou denniers" (*Œuvres diverses*, 1: 394-5). The servant locates rape within a contractual framework, and it is this element that I wish to explore here. Balzac's work can lead us beyond a literal understanding of rape as the violent imposition of one individual's sexual will upon another, towards the conception of a coercive

ideological structure of rape, where the victim's complicity is obtained through *forced consent*. This figurative structure which can be glimpsed in Balzac's fiction is in some sense at the origin of the literal, non-consensual rape which has traditionally been inflicted by men upon women.

Physical rape is relatively rare in Balzac: more common is the notion of abduction. The French word for "an abduction" is of course *un enlèvement*, but the legal discourse of the early nineteenth century employed the word *rapt* (obviously connected to the English "rape" via the Latin *rapere*, "to seize"). The two concepts are both distinct and blurred: in this period, even an abduction brought dishonour precisely because it provided the setting for a possible sexual violation (consider George Sand's *Mauprat*, where Edmée's entirely chaste kidnapping must remain secret, in order to protect her name). Yet while the word *viol* very unambiguously refers to forced intercourse, *rapt* leaves the question of consent rather vague, as the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* of 1835 shows: while "*le rapt de violence est le rapt proprement dit*", the word is nevertheless initially defined as "Enlèvement, par violence ou par séduction, d'une fille ou d'un fils de famille" (2: 569; emphasis original). I shall explore this difference between rape and *rapt* to examine scenes of abduction, as well as episodes involving actual rape and sexual violence, in order to investigate how the implication or threat of rape carries its own powerful significance quite apart from the physical act, and how the issue of consent is complicated in Balzac's texts.

Le Vicaire des Ardennes (published under the pseudonym "Horace de Saint-Aubin" in 1822) is the story of the eponymous vicar Joseph and his "sister" (and eventually wife) Mélanie. Mélanie is "ravished" twice in the novel, and the interest of these

two kidnappings lies in their limited meaning in the particular contexts in which they occur. The first is the work of "[un] nègre malheureux", and signifies his intense physical desire – he must have it. The sense of Mélanie's second kidnapping is made equally obvious by the kidnapper, Argow: "lorsque je vous ai enlevée, c'était pour vous forcer à m'épouser" (*Œuvres complètes*, 51: 279). The kidnapping represents the mercurial pirate's uncontrollable romantic passion for Mélanie – he must have her. The two crimes are comparable: the violent taking of a woman signifies nothing more than intense desire, physical or romantic, for that woman, and the unrelenting prosecution of the (male) subject's will *regardless of anyone else's*.

This naive paradigm confuses rape with the Romantic notion of "the will", while ignoring the social significance of sexual violence. Our second text exposes this fallacy. The abduction and (unambiguous) rape of Lydie, daughter of the spy Peyrade in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, has nothing to do with desire or romance, and functions first and foremost as a sign for a third party. It signifies a threat from Vautrin to Peyrade, as Vautrin's minion Asie explains: "Votre petite Lydie [...] est en lieu sûr... oh !... vous ne la trouverez jamais ! à moins que vous ne répariez le mal que vous avez fait" (*La Comédie humaine*, 6: 660).[1] The context and significance of this rape is, furthermore, properly "homosocial" in Eve Sedgwick's terms (1-5). Firstly, Lydie's abduction signifies Vautrin's greater power and cunning, and Peyrade's relative vulnerability; secondly, it is carried out by Vautrin as a homosocial favour for his "friend" Lucien de Rubempré; thirdly, that favour aims to procure for Lucien another woman, Clotilde de Grandlieu – hence one female body is exchanged for another; fourthly, the threat of Lydie's violation is

expressed in a grotesque parody of the homosocial agreement *par excellence*, the marriage contract – "elle est *promise* à de Marsay" (6: 661).

The threat of rape, then, represents a signifying structure in *Splendeurs*, with individual acts of rape operating as utterances within that system; rape reinscribes the female body as a sign which allows a certain communication for and between men. Yet if the raping of women in *Splendeurs* serves as a homosocial *lingua franca*, it is only the most extreme example of the use and exchange of women in *La Comédie humaine*. In *La Fille aux yeux d'or* the Marquise de San-Réal says of the dead Paquita's mother,

> "Elle est d'un pays où les femmes ne sont pas des êtres, mais des choses dont on fait ce qu'on veut, que l'on vend, que l'on achète, que l'on tue, enfin dont on se sert pour ses caprices, comme vous vous servez ici de vos meubles." (5: 1108)

The effect of this speech is ironic. The Marquise has just killed Paquita, and is addressing de Marsay, who has come with exactly the same intention: this mysterious land where women are chattels is not very different from Balzac's Paris. Everywhere, women become currency and facilitate communication between men: consider Vautrin offering Victorine Taillefer to Rastignac in *Le Père Goriot* (3: 143-44), and the companionship between Crevel and Hulot springing from their sharing of Valérie Marneffe in *La Cousine Bette* (7: 233-36; see Knight, 170-71).

Nowhere is this more clear than in the marriage contract, which, as we have seen, is parodically associated with rape in *Splendeurs* ("elle est *promise* à de Marsay"). "Ne commencez jamais le marriage par un viol" (11: 955), the "doctor" of *Physiologie du mariage* exhorts, and the very fact that the exhortation is necessary is already a symptom, inscribing rape as a possibility at the origin of

marriage. When in *La Femme de trente ans* Mme d'Aiglemont proclaims marriage "une prostitution légale" (2: 1114), she might more accurately say *viol*.[2] Mme d'Aiglemont's term "prostitution" seems inappropriate, firstly because, as she herself emphasizes, the wife receives nothing in return for this grim duty: "Toujours des devoirs ! [...] rien pour rien est une des plus justes lois". She is neither happy, nor financially rewarded: *ni denniers ni plaisirs*, we recall, equals a *trez maulvais viol*. And secondly, unlike the (Balzacian) prostitute, the wife has no agency in her fate, and this is what Mme d'Aiglemont is referring to: "l'homme fait un choix là où nous nous soumettons aveuglément." Her will is irrelevant; indeed, as Brownmiller points out, the difference between rape and legitimate sex is not, historically, the woman's consent, but her father's, in the form of the marriage contract (ch.1).

Yet Mme d'Aiglemont *did* choose her husband, against her father's better judgement. Is she then speaking generally – about the plight of most women? Or is she suggesting that the choice she made was no choice at all? Mme d'Aiglemont's words convey the idea of a consent which is empty because, she now realizes, it was in some sense extorted from her. Consent, she implies, is meaningless when there is no possibility of dissent. In this, Mme d'Aiglemont anticipates certain radical feminist positions, for as Luce Irigaray has famously claimed:

> La femme, dans cet imaginaire sexuel, n'est que support, plus ou moins complaisant [...]. Qu'elle y trouve, par procuration, de la jouissance, c'est possible et même certain. Mais celle-ci est avant tout prostitution masochiste de son corps à un désir qui n'est pas le sien. (25)

For Irigaray, a woman's pleasure with a man is morbid: when she engages in consensual sexual relations with him, she is effectively raped without her knowing,

since both her "prostitution" and her "masochism" are systemically forced upon her. Her consent is empty, since there is no other option for her but to accept an authoritarian, masculine sexual system. Irigaray's formulation is polemically effective and, in a sense, correct, but I wonder if her conception of the problem is not rather too monolithic. That men have oppressed and continue to oppress women is undeniable; but positions such as Irigaray's subscribe to an illusion of the 'total' male subject, entirely at home within an "imaginaire sexuel" that is properly *his*, which I do not find entirely convincing. I will return to the notion of forced consent, of the structural impossibility of refusal of a certain sexual order; but first, I hope to allow further reading of Balzac to nuance the concept somewhat, in particular its connection to sexual difference.

In Élisabeth Butterfly's recent novel *Dissection du mariage*, the narrator, loathing women in general and his wife in particular, finds in Balzac's *Physiologie du mariage* a coded manifesto and manual for their murder and dissection. His activities bring him to the attention of a secret society of men whose *raison d'être* is, fortuitously, the murder and embalming of women (dissection being rather old-fashioned in their opinion), and who also believe that their work is authorised by Balzac's (145). Butterfly's secret society perhaps takes its cue from Balzac's mysterious "Treize", a group of men whose immense masculine power is described in the preface to *Histoire des Treize* in hyperbolic terms:

> Immense d'action et d'intensité, leur puissance occulte, contre laquelle l'ordre social serait sans défense, [...] foudroierait les volontés, et donnerait à chacun d'eux le pouvoir diabolique de tous. [....] Ce fut treize

> rois inconnus, mais réellement rois, et plus que rois, des juges et des bourreaux qui [...] pouvaient tout. (5: 791-92)

Kings, really kings, and more than kings; judges and executioners: the narrator's emphatic rhetoric insists upon archetypes of masculinity, violence, and power. In the novellas themselves, this power seems to equate to control over women especially. One member of the society, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, gives this romantic advice to fellow member Montriveau: "N'aie pas plus de charité que n'en a le bourreau. Frappe. Quand tu auras frappé, frappe encore. Frappe toujours, comme si tu donnais le knout. Les duchesses sont dures [...] et c'est œuvre de charité que de les frapper. Frappe donc sans cesse" (5: 982). It is not at all clear that Ronquerolles means this advice metaphorically: the phrase "comme si tu donnais le knout" can be read to mean, "as if you were striking her with a whip, when in fact you will only be striking her with your fist".[3] Whether Ronquerolles's words are to be taken figuratively or not, they are certainly disturbing: the language of "les Treize" is the language of sexual violence, of a noisy and self-promoting male dominance.

And indeed, *La Duchesse de Langeais* has as its central episode an instance of *rapt* which I wish to examine more closely. Frustrated by the duchess's tease-like behaviour, Montriveau, aided by "les Treize", kidnaps her and takes her to his home, where he proposes to brand her as punishment. This is not a rape, *un viol*, but a kidnapping, Montriveau insists, with the same pompous rhetoric as the preface employed:

> "[...] Je ne vous ai pas enlevée [...] pour obtenir de vous par violence [...] ce que vous n'avez pas voulu m'octroyer de bonne grâce. Ce serait une

> indignité. Vous concevez peut-être le viol ; moi, je ne le conçois pas." (5: 992)

Once again, a figure of masculine authority is invoked ("D'ailleurs, j'ai des droits sur vous ; mais je ne veux que ceux du juge sur le criminel" (5: 994)), with Montriveau speaking at once as disappointed suitor and as a representative of patriarchal power; hence the branding will serve as both "legal" punishment and metaphorical intercourse.[4] The duchess asks for nothing more, her lover's violent gesture having finally released her deep passion for him; but Montriveau never strikes the blow, claiming, "Je ne me sens plus la foi" (5: 994-99). Peter Brooks has already identified how this scene "evokes a tradition running from the Marquis de Sade to *Histoire d'O*", "a thoroughly patriarchal scenario, a phantasmatic enactment of a male desire for domination" which "Balzac's text goes on to complicate" (76). Brooks conceives this "complication" semiotically: Montriveau, excessively preoccupied with his own plan to mark the duchess in a significant way (that is, in a way which will be significant for him), fails to interpret accurately the signs of her behaviour, and thus loses her for ever as a result of his hermeneutic deficiencies.

I would like, however, to draw attention to another implication of this scene. Montriveau's inability to execute his plan seems to offer a strong allegory of an episode of erectile dysfunction: the mood is established, the lady is willing, but Montriveau "loses faith" and is unable to brandish his weapon as she would apparently like. The sight of the duchess's obvious sexual arousal is too much for Montriveau: "Armand se retourna vivement pour ne pas voir la duchesse palpitante". In a supremely emasculating moment, the would-be executioner sheds two tears. The elaborate *mise-en-scène* which Montriveau concocts can now be seen as an attempt to distract from his own impotence, and this show of masculinity

recalls what Slavoj Žižek finds in his reading of the "rape" scene in David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*: namely, a "comical-spectacular imitation of coital gestures" which "serve[s] to mask the absence of coitus" (*Metastases*, 121), an embarrassingly empty aping of the sexual event. The presence in the apartment of Montriveau's "Treize" brethren is equally fascinating: in some sense, they lend him support, yet in another, they serve as a demanding homosocial audience to whom he must prove his manhood. But Montriveau's perfomance is a flop: his impotence is such that he is unable to execute even a symbolic imitation of the sexual act.

Fellow "Treize" member Henri de Marsay experiences a similar sexual humiliation in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, when he realises that he is standing in for his lover's lesbian partner, whose clothes he has been made to wear in a previous amorous encounter (5: 1091, 1102-03). Yet De Marsay's amenability to sex in drag is not simply the product of Paquita's corrupting influence, for this is not the first time he has cross-dressed: in *La Duchesse de Langeais*, he infiltrates the duchess's convent dressed as a nun, "par prudence" (5: 1036), though no other member of the group has seen the necessity of this precaution. Such sexual ambiguity is moreover hardly surprising in a society whose unidentified founder was inspired by Otway's *Venice Preserved* (5: 791). "*Venise sauvée*" serves in *La Comédie humaine* as a code-word for male homosexuality, or rather, for the subversive slippage between male homosocial affection and homosexual desire which is, as Sedgwick makes clear, both the essence and ultimate taboo of homosociality.[5] It seems, then, that "les Treize" are neither as powerful, nor indeed as masculine, as the ironic preface implied.

This questioning of masculinity, and of the authority which masculinity might guarantee, is constantly at work in Balzac. Men cling to their sense of masculine

power to the last, but they are idiots to do so: Sarrasine confronts the castrato "La" Zambinella crying, "Tu as osé te jouer d'une passion d'homme, toi ?" (6: 1073-74), firmly believing (in spite of what he has discovered concerning the slipperiness of sexuality) that his status *as a man* constitutes a position from which he can threaten violent retribution. Sarrasine does not realise that he, as a man, cannot possibly threaten Zambinella, since Zambinella's body is precisely the site of castration, the ultimate threat *to* manhood; the violence Sarrasine threatens thus only underlines the threatened status of his masculinity. The etiolation of masculine violence is evident elsewhere (in the *Physiologie*) in the figure of the minotaur, who represents perfectly the slip from the threatening power of the domineering husband to the ridiculousness and passivity of the cuckold (11: 986-87), a decline which is expressed grammatically in the shift from the noun *minotaure* to the comical past participle *minotaurisé*.

For Balzac, the only true homosociality is a brotherhood of mediocrity: hence the original title of the reconciliation scene between Hulot and Crevel (in *La Cousine Bette*) who are both being deceived by the same woman: "Deux confrères de la grande confrérie de confrères" (7: 1304). Diana Knight calls the title "wonderfully homosocial" (170), to which we might also add "mercilessly ironic". The text does not accept the patriarchal myth of the essentially good man enslaved by some cunning temptress, since Valérie Marneffe's nature could not be made more obvious – she is posing for a sculpture of Delilah. Instead, Hulot and Crevel represent the total absence of power, their physical priapic virility only making their symbolic impotence more humiliating.

Having established that male violence in Balzac is not as effective as certain male characters might like to think, we should offset this inefficacy by considering representations of powerful women in the texts. While Arlette Michel has argued that the true "power" of the Balzacian woman is her ability precisely to give up power as a sacrifice to love, and that "l'amour est abandon de soi, acceptation du sacrifice, renoncement au pouvoir" (95), it can be seen that certain female characters do nevertheless resist this rather depressing kind of glory, often through acts of violence more typically associated with male characters. Yet even here, there is good reason for regarding their actions as ultimately *dis*empowering, as Owen Heathcote has made clear:

> Women's violence is [...] dissimilar to male violence in that it explicitly asserts independent womanhood, but an assertion and a womanhood which are, alas, still dependent on the male since they are a reaction to male intervention and power. (343)

Thus the sadistic violence of the Marquise de San-Réal, as it is discovered in *La Fille aux yeux d'or* by the male observer de Marsay, fits awfully well into an exploitative tradition which depicts violent and perverse women in order to titillate male readers, and to legitimate the subjugation of women to men. Andrea Dworkin calls this "the meanest theme of pornography: the elucidation of the secret, hidden, true carnality of women, free women. When the secret is revealed, the whore is exposed" (136). Dworkin's argument is ostensibly based on pornography, but the resonance of her arguments evidently extends beyond the purely pornographic, to all male textual reconstructions of female sexuality. And there is indeed something exploitative, something "snuff" about the end of *La Fille* (particularly its fetishistic attention to body parts – Paquita famously bites "les muscles du cou-de-pied de

madame de San-Réal" (5: 1107)). One might be forgiven for regarding *La Fille* as participating in precisely this oppressive eroticism. A second reading might suggest that the violence is the direct result of the intrusion of masculinity (in the form of de Marsay) into the lesbian relationship. If this is the case, although the violence of the Marquise de San-Réal is more effective than that of "les Treize" (she does at least get the job done), it still represents a subjection of the feminine to a masculine logic of destruction. "Violence", claims Dworkin, "is the prime component of male identity" (51); and if we accept this, we should not be surprised that, as Heathcote argues, "the greater violence of women is [...] the last incarnation of male power" (344).

Yet I wish to propose a third reading of the Marquise's actions. In this reading, the violence which concludes *La Fille* would not be a pre-existing female violence, discovered or imagined by the misogynist male gaze evoked by Dworkin; nor would it be a contagious violence imported by the male intruder to corrupt a lesbian idyll. Instead, the Marquise would choose to kill precisely as a *refusal* of both the gaze and the corrupting influence of any third party, regardless of their sex. The Marquise's behaviour would then be the simple and categorical rejection of the translation of her private relationship into a triangular and therefore public relation. To understand what is at stake here, we need to return to the *Contes drolatiques*, and to the servant's assertion that "il luy estoit deu plaisir ou denniers". Sex for the servant is a matter of contractual obligations, a matter, we might say, of public record, a *quid pro quo* subject to external arbitration (by the sceptical judge in the first instance). This is perhaps what the Marquise's violence rejects: the violence of the social regulation of her sexuality. Her refusal of that regulation is also what makes *La Fille aux yeux d'or* a fantastical story, for true realists like the judge's

servant know that it is the very condition of the social. More importantly, the choice whereby one allows one's sexuality to become public is an offer that cannot be refused. Once again, consent is forced: there is no second option, not even an explicit threat of punishment for non-compliance, only the structural impossibility of refusal.

This concept is best explained by Žižek: "Every belonging to a society involves a paradoxical point at which the subject is ordered to embrace freely, as the result of a choice, what is anyway imposed on him" (*Fantasies*, 27). But Žižek's notion is not gendered: this ideological structure, he implies, affects all humans as subjects of ideology, men as well as women. Consider the end of *Illusions perdues*. When Lucien de Rubempré accepts "Carlos Herrera's" offer, he does not really know what is required of him: "—Pourquoi vous intéressez-vous à moi ? quel prix voulez-vous de mon obéissance ?" (5: 707). No threat is made should he refuse: he consents because the only other option is, invidiously, suicide (which Lucien will eventually choose, his self-erasure substituting for the unspeakable "no").
This structure dominates the sexual in Balzac, superseding rape as a violent reinscription of the individual body within a system of social capital. As Žižek emphasises, these "unwritten rules" of consent are both "transgressive" of and "more coercive" than the written Law because, rather than proceeding against the individual's will, they require the individual to accept them wholeheartedly (*Fantasies*, 28-9). It is, therefore, the consenting to the act that counts more than the act itself. Thus when Adeline Hulot finally accepts Crevel's advances in the hope of borrowing money, her offer is rejected: her consent to the sexual economy has been obtained, her reinscription as social value completed (7: 320-27).[6] In other words, a successful *rapt* (in the sense of an abduction of Adeline *from herself*) has made rape

redundant. As decent society already knew, mere exposure to the possibility of rape implies the successful completion of the act.

In his review of *S/Z*, Pierre Barbéris accuses Roland Barthes of reducing what the former calls "une symbolique sexuelle" in Balzac to pure sexual intrigue (118). Barbéris's objection is not conditioned by prudery: he is entirely right to argue that in Balzac the sexual should be read partly allegorically. More recently, Michael Lucey has argued for the situating of Balzacian sexuality within its rightful social context, over and against the purely psychological (and ahistorical) readings of the prevailing psychoanalytic mode of criticism. It is this opposition I am trying to unpick through Žižek, since Žižek's thought represents precisely the co-mingling of the psychical and the socio-political/ideological. As we have seen, the forcing of consent is a feature of all social belonging, not just of sexual behaviour; in the texts I have analysed, the sexual in some sense represents all private life, and the intrusion of the social into the sexual the ultimate threat to privacy. Historically, we might connect this to the regulatory work of the Civil Code of 1804, and its interference in the behaviour of individuals and families; thus the fantasy of escape through violence, as exemplified at the end of *La Fille aux yeux d'or*, would represent a rather reactionary harking-back to a strictly imaginary time when the *foyer* was somehow impenetrable to the social gaze (as the Marquise's *petite maison* is, before the appearance of de Marsay).

Yet there is more to Balzac's texts than this. If Balzac responds to a specific legislative event, he does so only insofar as that event rehearses a transhistorical paradigm of socialisation. It is the process whereby an imaginary binary relationship is opened up to the scrutiny of the threatening social Other. We can

now re-read the transition from the "Romantic" to the "Realist" version of rape from Balzac's juvenilia to his mature fiction. It represents the dying of two illusions: those of the intimate imaginary relationship, and of the indomitable individual will or desire (this is of course precisely the function of the Oedipus complex). In their place is the notion of an indifferent social machinery able to appropriate any individual's body and, simultaneously, that individual's consent: the *rapt de violence* is in some sense a *rapt de séduction*, coercive yet consensual. Thus every socialisation is itself an abduction, a snatching away of the subject, and that *rapt* perpetually threatens the subject's rape and reinscription as a signifier for another. Feminists such as Irigaray would argue that, whether or not this ideological structure affects men and women indifferently, it is fundamentally patriarchal, and that it is women who suffer the most from its real-life ramifications. This is true: but what this shows is that men are in some way the more deceived, doubly alienated by a patriarchal ideology which valorises masculine power, while simultaneously enacting the symbolic emasculation of the subject in so traumatic a manner that men are pathologically driven to inflict their own raping upon others. This, then, is the violent, castrating schizophrenia of patriarchy: as Michel Serres puts it, "la loi phallique seule châtre" (99).

So the act of rape can be seen as an attempt to mask the male subject's sense of impotence caused by the moment of his socialisation, which only ever succeeds in repeating the original scene: he either rapes or, like Montriveau, weeps. Balzac's rapist attempts to recover a debt he imagines is owed to him: *denniers ou plaisirs*, some postponed *jouissance*. He pursues something he thinks he lost at that traumatic moment of birth into the social world, though in truth he lost nothing, having brought nothing. He certainly did not gain, however – *ni denniers ni plaisirs*

– the "debt" of his rape being cancelled out by the empty gesture of his consent. At that originary social moment, he can only say "yes" to an impossibly hard bargain.

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NOTES

1. Henceforth all references to Balzac are to *La Comédie humaine*.

2. Indeed, half a century later, "un viol légal" is still precisely how Claire Vautier will describe marriage in the first section of her novel *Adultère et divorce* (1889).

3. We might compare this advice with the equally chilling maxim of *Physiologie du mariage*: "La puissance ne consiste pas à frapper fort ou souvent, mais à frapper juste" (11: 960).

4. A parallel can be drawn between this episode and the "trial" of Milady in Dumas's *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, which demonstrates the same co-mingling of the sexual and the legal (since Milady is not only a traitor, but also Aramis's unfaithful wife), and the same suppression of female transgression by a pompous homosocial coalition. The failure of Montriveau's plan, as opposed to the resounding success of the musketeers', arguably reveals Balzac to be the better (and certainly the more modern) writer.

5. Consider Vautrin's referencing this work in his conversations with Eugène de Rastignac (3: 186) and Lucien de Rubempré (5: 707) which are at once homosocially transactional and homosexually seductive.

6. Cf. Žižek, on David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* (*Fantasies*, 185). Consider also the deferred "consenting" and ultimate rejection of Marie Arnoux in *L'Education sentimentale*.

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